

Recreation and Parks Advisory Board Meeting
July 20, 2016
Department of Recreation and Parks Headquarters
Conference Room #1
7120 Oakland Mills Road
Columbia, MD 21046

Members Present:

Dr. Joel Goodman, Chair; Sylvia Ramsey, Vice Chair; Dave Brown; Joanne Kiebler; Tom Franklin; Dan Tracy and Williams Santos

Members Absent:

Cindy Vaillancourt and Jonathan Gresham

Staff Present:

John Byrd, Executive Secretary; John Marshall, Chief, Bureau of Parks; Laura Wetherald, Chief, Bureau of Recreation; Mike Milani, Chief, Bureau of Administrative Services; Lauren Davis, Assistant to Ms. Wetherald and Recording Secretary.

Dr. Goodman called to order the July 20th meeting of the Recreation and Parks Advisory board at 7:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

Approval of minutes: Motion was made by Mr. Santos to approve the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Director's Report:

Mr. Byrd acknowledges the public that were in attendance for this meeting. He mentioned this meeting is not a hearing and that there are no motion's to be made.

Mr. Byrd gave an update on our Land Preservation Park and Recreation Plan (LPPRP). He stated that we had a great meeting with the Sasaki Associates and we had two public meetings last week. There were lively discussions about various issues in the County and Department. Sasaki Associates will take all that information back and come back to Recreation

and Parks with a report. The statistics from the survey have been completed and we have seen some preliminary information from that report. Overall, Sasaki Associates thought that the response was positive for the Department and that most people thought we are on the right track with the services we offer.

Mr. Byrd stated that the next step is to have another public meeting in September. He stated that we are on schedule and that we should have a draft out by November.

Mr. Byrd announced that the Maryland Environmental Trust Easement was approved. They have worked out some issues with the neighbors along Belmont Woods Road. It was unanimously approved on July 6, 2016. Today Mr. Byrd signed off on it and next the County Executive will sign off on it. This process took about two and a half years to work out and now we can move forward with everything.

Mr. Byrd passed out correspondence that we received from residents regarding the customer service that our staff provided.

Public Comments:

Dr. Goodman welcomed the public guests that were in attendance.

-Savage Mill Land Swap

Ellen Long: 8800 Baltimore Street, Savage MD 20723.

Ms. Long stated that last Wednesday she attended a meeting at the North Laurel Community Center that was sponsored by Howard County Recreation and Parks. There was an impressive display of slides and lectures depicting the wonderful things that Recreation and Park does for its residents. Unfortunately, it did not recognize many of the listed perks when it came to her town of Savage. Ms. Long stated that they have a bridge that desperately needs to be painted and repaired; that they have an historic 1796 home that is going to ruin; a park that needs cleaned up, and a land swap to enrich the pockets of a developer at the Savage Mill. Ms. Long stated that the community of Savage Mill was told as recently as May 2, 2016 from Mr. Paul Walsky that a site plan needs to be approved

prior to a submitted form from the Department of Recreation and Parks to the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund for land conversion approval. She stated that they are not adverse to development and they have reached out to the Bozzuto Group many times for a compromise. The Bozzuto Group has rejected or ignored our good faith urging to build a less dense development. Due to the impending land swap, the developer will now have more land to destroy the look and feel of Savage Mill. Ms. Long mentioned that it includes only 5 acres where the developer wants to cram 35 houses and 29 townhomes on 3 acres. They also want to put two singles on the other two. Ms. Long stated that they will make Savage Mill a nightmare due to the traffic, overcrowding of schools, the negative environmental impact, and the historic integrity of Savage Mill. She stated that the developer continues to get do overs while the plans continue to get rejected. She urged Recreation and Parks to wait until site plans are approved before we jump into this mess and enable a wealthy developer by giving him park land. Ms. Long asked, "Why the Howard County Open Space Fund can't be considered to preserve 5 acres of park land?" She is concerned that there will not be much park land left if this developer is able to build in Savage Mill.

Dr. Goodman responded by saying it was a good testimony but wondered if there was a better time and place to voice their concerns.

Dr. Goodman asked Mr. Byrd on guidance as to where this project stands and if the Board can really be of any help.

Mr. Byrd responded by saying that the County is considering an equal land swap with the developer. They are aware that there are a lot of questions about this land swap and the County Executive will be answering those questions shortly when he gets back from his vacation.

Mr. Byrd clarified that DNR does not need to have an approved site development plan. They need to have a plan that is within reason of the final plan that will most likely be approved. DNR will review the recommendation of the local jurisdiction on the plan that is presented to

them. Since the County Administration has indicated approval of this land swap, he does not believe that the Board has jurisdiction over the decision that will be made. The Board can certainly voice their opinion over this matter.

Dr. Goodman responded by stating if the process calls for a public hearing with public testimony, then that is when the Board is called in to make a motion.

Question by a guest: “If the plan is later changed substantially, what happens then?”

Mr. Byrd responded by saying that they can’t “bait and switch.” DNR is mostly concerned about the equal exchange and the value of that exchange.

Question by a guest: “Are they concerned about community sentiments?”

Mr. Byrd responded by saying he is not sure if they take that into consideration. However, the community can always send their sentiments since they can’t turn them down.

Mr. Frank: 9570 Whiskey Bottom Road, Laurel MD 20723.

Mr. Frank stated that this topic is very near and dear to his heart. He is a descendant of Cornel Henry Ridgeway who is the first owner of that land. Through deaths and wills, the property has been passed on to various owners. Mr. Frank stated that he has spoken to the Recreation and Parks Director, Mr. John Byrd. He stated that they have contacted the owner with an offer to potentially keep this as park land. Mr. Frank has been trying for years to get an APFO with parks criteria in it. He stated that the owner has indicated that he would be willing to accept offers for us to preserve this property. With being a national historic landmark, we can get support through various historic entities. He stated that the amount is relatively small for the County. Mr. Frank believes that Howard County has influential people that can help make this deal happen.

Susan Garber: 9100 Gorman Road, Laurel MD 20723.

Ms. Garber is the Board Chairman of the Savage Community Association. This is a 5 acre development that is surrounded by parkland. As a result of the land swap we lose the parkland. The preliminary sketch plans that the developer says that the area they have for development is now 7.68 acres. That's more than a 50% increase in the land. Ms. Garber states that Mr. Byrd has been very patient with her group over the past 2 years. She continued to state, "You may feel that the department doesn't have the power to do anything about this, however, I believe the department and the members of the advisory board are the people who can and should do something about it. The department is obligated to the land and water conservation fund and to program open space, to make sure that parkland is used for the purpose that they are intended for. Parkland is not used to benefit a developer. I worry about the person in charge of completing the application because I don't see how they can justify giving this land to a developer. I also worry that if this land swap is approved, you are sending a horrible precedent to every other developer that wants to build near parkland. It is not out of the question to ask the developer to reduce the total amount of units to be built. It is also not out the question to return to the drawing board to put forth something that actually meets the intent of the zone that was created specifically for this piece of property that the environment and historic features would be preserved. Thank you for your time."

John Garber: 9100 Gorman Rd, Laurel MD 20723.

Mr. Garber asked Mr. Byrd "Is it correct that only POS money was used?" Mr. Byrd responded by saying, "Land and water conservation was used. It was actually federal money that goes through DNR through the same allocation process."

Ms. Kiebler asked, "Where is this land swap located and what are we getting in return?"

Mr. Byrd responded by stating, "That it's 5 acres directly at the rear of the Savage Mill parking lot. I would like to keep it as parkland but the

Developer decided to develop the land. We had a long discussion about purchasing it; however, the price of that land has escalated exponentially.”

Mr. Byrd stated that we have about \$1.6 million in total to spend on Program Open Space funds for FY17 and that does not buy much in Howard County anymore.

Mr. Byrd stated that in exchange for the land swap we would get slopes on the river side of the current 5 acres and another separate parcel along the river behind the old ruins down on the hill. Mr. Byrd also stated, “We felt that this exchange was valuable to the environment.”

Victoria Laidler: 8529 Fair Street, Savage, MD 20763.

Ms. Laidler mentioned that the development is going to go over top of the river trail that was just put in a few years ago. “Since the trail has been put it, it has been so much easier for people to get down to the river and see things from that part of town. It is a real shame to see the County sacrifice this better access for Recreation and Parks to build houses.”

Mr. Byrd stated that the Developers agreed to construct a new access and to build a permanent path to the park.

Dr. Goodman responded: “Sounds like it would be nice if the Developer had a community meeting to let you all know exactly what is going on.”

Dr. Goodman asked if there are any responses from the Board.

Dr. Goodman spoke for the Board: “I think we all look forward to some communication and hearing from the County Executive’s office and Department of Planning and Zoning on where the project stands and what our part may be in that.

Myra Phelps: 8808 Baltimore Street, Savage, MD.

“Another concern of ours is that every time we have a meeting, they brought plans in but when it came time to submit the plans, they were not the plans that were shown to us. This has happened 3 or

4 times.”

Dr. Goodman responded “This will not go away from us after tonight. We do not have another Board meeting until September, which is dedicated to the Land Preservation.” However, we are available by email for you to provide updated information.

-Oakland Mills Village

Virginia Thomas: Columbia, MD.

Ms. Thomas is the Co-Chair of the Oakland Mills Village Board in Columbia, MD. Ms. Thomas stated “We just completed a village center community plan which includes a pretty extensive area. The purpose is to revitalize Oakland Mills. We need your help to revitalize an old community. We need to be more aggressive in how we are going to change things in Oakland Mills. Our merchants in Oakland Mills are in a lot of trouble. We came up with an idea and that is a sports facility. This facility can include tennis courts, track and field, an ice rink, and a 50 meter pool. My hope over the years is to see a 50 meter pool in the area. We need stadium style seating for a 50 meter pool and an ice rink. This is an economic issue. For example, the hockey kids are spending more than \$500,000 a year to go to Prince Georges County to play hockey. What has the County done to really provide these services?”

Mr. Santos asked, “Approximately, how many players do you have at a hockey tournament? How would a hockey tournament not be an issue right next door?”

Ms. Thomas responded: “I don’t know, but Bud can answer that question for you by writing a statement to you. It really isn’t right next door but it would not be an issue. We wish the park would bring in economic development for the village center.”

Mr. Milani responded: “We have had a lot of discussion with your Village Board about the use of Blandair Park. We have cut the lights back from 11:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and etc. Last weekend we had a huge tournament, all the hotels within a 10 mile radius were sold out, and the

Village Center was packed.”

Ms. Thomas responded: “I don’t mean to be critical, but the County has failed to meet the needs of our swimmers, the kids that should be getting letters in the school system, our hockey players, and indoor track runners. Please keep all of this in mind when you are going over your master plan.”

Stephanie Castillo: 3739 Ligon Road, Ellicott City, MD 21042.

Ms. Castillo is the President of the Clippers Parent Board. Ms. Castillo stated: “We are a group of Columbia Association swimmers. I think you are all aware that Howard County does not have an indoor facility capable of holding a competitive meet, short course or long course. The only place we can hold a meet is at Howard County Community College, which is an aging facility. We pay them several thousands of dollars to rent it and we can’t even allow spectators to sit. If Howard County were to build a facility like the facility in Prince Georges, then Maryland swimming could commit to hosting all of their championship meets. If we build a truly competitive area, then we could bid for larger national meets such as sectionals and Olympic trials.”

Mr. Tracy asked “Have you ever priced the cost of this facility?”

Mr. Byrd responded “It is almost \$1 million a year to operate and about \$30 million to build.”

Bureau of Parks:

Mr. Marshall stated that we had minor damage during the storm that hit the county on June 21st. The damages included:

- a) Flooding at Gary J. Arthur Community Center at Glenwood (replacement of floor);
- b) Bent net poles at both Alpha Ridge Park and Western Regional Park;
- c) Three sections of fence were damaged at the Patapsco Female Institute Historic Park;
- d) Fencing by the shop was destroyed at Western Regional Park;

- e) Significant tree damage throughout the parks system with Western Regional Park being the hardest hit.

Mr. Marshall reported our response to the storm:

- a) (10) 2-person chainsaw teams were assembled the night of the storm and helped clear roads;
- b) Staff manned debris sites where neighbors could drop off tree debris;
- c) A chipper and truck team was assembled to assist the Department of Public Works with the massive cleanup in the western part of the County.

Mr. Marshall passed out the new flyer for the "Smash and Grab" education program. He mentioned that the Police are very help with this program and the new flyer. Centennial Park is the most hit location in the Department.

Mr. Marshall reported that the big elm tree that was lost at Belmont will be replanted in November.

Bureau of Recreation:

Ms. Wetherald reported that camps are still going strong and people are still registering. We also revamped the Recreational Licensed Childcare camps. We made specialty camps from cooking, arts & crafts, sports, and drama.

Ms. Wetherald reported that Solar Fest was held at Alpha Ridge Park. We only had 25 people registered and by the end of the week we had over 100 people and 50 walk-ins.

Ms. Wetherald passed out the flyer for the Traveling Bands summer concert series.

Ms. Wetherald reported that they have just announced the Celebration of Sports 8th Annual Golf Tournament for Friday October 7th at Fairway Hills Golf Course. The banquet will be held on October 25th at Turf Valley Country Club in Ellicott City.

Ms. Wetherald reported that the Rockburn Car Show will be held at Rockburn Branch Park on Saturday, August 20th from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Ms. Wetherald reported that the Department will continue with the Holiday in the Park event in December at Centennial Park.

Ms. Wetherald stated that we are still looking for indoor space for programming. And we are looking for outdoor space to expand our Pickleball program.

Ms. Wetherald talked about the Ravens Quarterback Joe Flacco attending one of our flag football camps.

Bureau of Administrative Services:

Mr. Milani stated that we have reached the end of the year and we tried to spend all the money that we could. He stated that Cindy Guion and her staff did a great job in paying all the bills.

Mr. Milani reported that now as we head into the New Year, we will sit down as a group and reallocate some areas where we traditionally overspend each year.

Mr. Milani reported that there is a lot of staff turnover and promotions within the Department.

Bureau of Capital Projects, Park Planning and Construction:

Mr. Byrd reported on behalf of Raul Delerme. The work at Timbers at Troy Golf course is about to begin. The bids are due August 17th.

Mr. Byrd reported that the construction at Troy Park will start up again at the end of July. A preconstruction meeting is scheduled for July 22nd.

Mr. Byrd reported that the Belmont brick paver patio, walkway and tent pad plan will be sent for approval. Then next step would be to start on construction.

Mr. Byrd reported that the bathrooms at Blandair Park were vandalized right before a big tournament. Facilities fixed it by the start of the tournament.

Old Business:

No old business

New Business:

Mr. Byrd stated that the Recreation and Parks Annual Crab Feast is August 23rd at the Timbers at Troy Clubhouse.

There being no further discussion Mr. Franklin made the motion to close the meeting. Mr. Brown seconded the motion.

Dr. Goodman adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.



Dr. Joel Goodman, Chairman



John R. Byrd, Executive Secretary