**Start Time: 6:02 pm End Time: 6:35 pm**

Welcome. My name is Scott Monroe. I am with Howard County Recreation and Parks, and I am the Project manager for the Old Montgomery Road Garden Plots project.

Goals and Deliverables

The Goal is to create a 100 new Community Garden Plots of which 25 will be ADA accessible. The plan shows a total of 126 Garden Plots. (Side 2 of the Presentation)

Resident: Who will be managing these plots?

Scott Munroe: We are still determining how to manage the garden plots and are in negotiations.

Vision Statement

Howard County aims to increase the number of garden plots available to our residents. The County is seeking to set a new standard for garden plots within the County that improves the usability and appearance of Community Gardening locations as a pilot project. Create a place where garden plots are protected from the pressure of deer and other animals that can damage garden crops. Create a site that has accessible plots that improve access for all residents. (Side 2 of the Presentation)

Mission Statement

The Community Gardens at Old Montgomery Rd will be a pilot project to test improvements to community garden plots that will help with deer and other animals that damage crops, create a more uniform and pleasingly organized space, provide improved access to residents with disabilities by having 25 ADA Accessible garden plots, provide a safe and affective area where residents can raise crops and other vegetation for themselves and their families. (Side 2 of the Presentation)

Resident: Can I ask you a question? We are from Brightfield, and we back up to the woods there. Is that our woods?

Scott Munroe: The garden plots will be on County property and not near the Brightfield property line.

Resident: Are you going to take down any of the woods/trees?

Scott Munroe: The woods and trees will remain on the property. This line here is the back of the Brightfield community. These woods right here are all on County property.

Resident: Will you be removing any trees there?

Scott Munroe: We aren’t touching any of the woods. This right here is the piece of property where we are building the garden plots.

Residents talking to each other:

* First resident: That shows the back of our houses.
* Second resident: Oh, so that is back of our property. Okay.

Scott Munroe: All of these woods are staying put, and are not going away. When we did this we wanted it to all fit on one parcel. This is what the site looks like right now, and as you can see the site goes from the top of the hill and is all grass and weeds. This is the layout we are going to be proposing. One of the other things also happening during this project is the Department of Highways is doing improvements along Old Montgomery Road such as adding sidewalks. So, there will be access down underneath Route 100 all the way up to Brightfield.

Resident: So, under Route 100?

Scott Munroe: Under Route 100 all the way up to Brightfield.

We will do some regrading to the median part of the plot, will have material bins available, and ADA accessible, half size, and large size garden plots. The entire area is ADA accessible.

Resident: Will there be lights?

Scott Munroe: Lights will not be installed for the garden plots.

Resident: Will parking have designated ADA spots?

Scott Munroe: There will be designated ADA parking.

The pathways will be made of crushed stone and mesh. The only impermeable area will be from the road to the end of the ADA accessible parking.

There will be deer fencing with a thicker mesh at the bottom to stop rabbits, rodents ,etc.

The beds will be lined with concrete corner pieces and one level of wood, possibly oak, the interior will have pavers, so the gardeners can be used to create pathways or stepping stones.

Resident: Is Maryland School of the Deaf aware of this?

Scott Munroe: Yes, and we hope Susan Potts with the Therapeutic Recreation Division will be able to run some programs with the School of the Deaf.

Resident: It actually looks very nice.

Scott Munroe: We were quite happy to get this land from DPW to create the garden plot.

It was supposed to be a park at one time.

Yes, it initially was.

Resident: What about the other side of Old Montgomery Road?

Scott Munroe: Some of it belongs to DPW and some is owned by the state.

Resident: Who usually uses garden plots?

Scott Munroe: Families trying to make ends meet, people interested in gardening, and people interested in organic farming.

Resident: Will the County be helping to create the gardens?

Scott Munroe: When this first goes in all beds, fencing, pathways, soil, etc. will be provided by the County.

Resident: Who will up-keep it and oversee it?

Scott Munroe: The Columbia Gardeners Association will be caring for the garden plots. They care for our other gardens.

Resident: Will they have water?

Scott Munroe: Yes, there are waterlines in the plan. The ADA plots have water closer to them. We would also like to be able to provide electricity.

Resident: So, water will run to the end?

Scott Munroe: Yes, the waterline runs through the middle and reaches out to the plots.

Resident: This is only used in the summer time, right?

Scott Munroe: It depends on the weather. Certain plants, like lettuce, can be planted in late March or April.

Resident: Do you have specific ADA plots?

Scott Munroe: Yes, they are the “U” shaped plots on the outside of the garden plots and are set up to be higher. (Slide 8 of the Presentation)

Resident: Where do you get the soil from?

Scott Munroe: We will work this out with the contractor. In the past, we used soil from the County’s transfer station. I use it and it seems to work well.

Resident: When do you think you will get this underway? When do you see people using the plots?

Scott Munroe: Depending on when we are able to get the planning completed, we are hoping to have the ribbon cutting in the fall and to start the development in the spring. We are working to bring a contractor on quickly.

Resident: Will people have to set up the blocks and gardens?

Scott Munroe: The contractor will take care of the grading, fences, waterlines, etc. We are hoping to have the same contractor working on Old Montgomery Road to do this project, since some of the land will be used for staging.

Resident: Where is the stream that runs along the property? The deer use that stream all the time.

Scott Munroe: The deer will still be able to use the stream by going around the garden plots.

Resident: Don’t touch the deer. There aren’t as many of them now.

Scott Munroe: That is interesting and not what we have been hearing.

Resident: Once these get up and running, will these be self-sustaining or how will they be paid for?

Scott Munroe: The group who runs this will be maintaining these plots and will rent them out to the public. Renters will need to keep up their plots as part of the rental agreement. The group will make up their costs through the rentals and we will make They don’t cost the County a lot. Howard County will have the most garden plots per capita when this project is completed.

Resident: Are there any in the Columbia area or Columbia proper?

Scott Munroe: Not in Columbia, but there is one in Long Reach. The deer fencing there is lighter. The garden plots are getting used. We are trying to build something more ascetically appealing that people will want to use.

Resident: You supply the initial soil. As time passes, will the gardeners need to supply their own soil?

Scott Munroe: Yes, it will be the gardener’s responsibility to upkeep their soil. We may help from time to time with soil.

Resident: I think this is a good idea.

Resident: It is hard to garden in our own backyards. This would be very nice to have.

Resident: As long as they keep it neat and clean, so it doesn’t look run down.

Scott Munroe: That is why we developed this the way we did, to keep it looking nice.

Resident: So, the whole thing is fenced in?

Scott Munroe: The garden plot area is fenced in, but not the rest of the parcel.

Resident: Do you have a copy of this picture?

Scott Munroe: No; however, this presentation will be posted to our website, and you are welcome to take a picture of it now.

Resident: Do we go to the Recreation and Parks website?

Scott Munroe: Yes, you can go to the website and there will be a link. The meeting link is in the middle of the page, scroll down to garden plots concepts, click on it , and you will see the information.

Resident: How far does Brightfield go back? Just to the trees? And then all the weeds belong to the County?

Scott Munroe: The red lines show the property boundaries are located. Anything below the red line is Howard County. (Slide 6 of the Presentation)

Resident: Oh, so it does end at the trees, and the red line is where our property ends?

Scott Munroe: Yes, so some of the trees are part of the Brightfield property. Anything beyond the red line is County owned. (Slide 6 of the Presentation)

Resident: What is the estimated cost of a garden plot?

Scott Munroe: That hasn’t been finalized yet. You can check the Columbia Gardeners Association website.

Resident: Thank you. We appreciate it.

Resident: You answered a lot of our questions.

Resident: Did you say this would start in the fall?

Scott Munroe: We were hoping to have this project started this fall; however, it may take until next spring.

Resident: It is direct 24-hour access to our backyards and people coming up through the trees would have access to our backyard. That is part of our concern.

Scott Munroe: There is going to be a good slope on the back side of this, so it won’t be an easy way to get back up.

Resident: Please just leave the weeds there. We had people living in our back yards because there is water.

Scott Munroe: The weeds are going to stay.