

Blandair Planning Committee Minutes

Meeting was held on Wednesday, March 12, 2008, at 7:00 p.m. at the Department of Recreation and Parks Office, 7120 Oakland Mills Road, Columbia, MD 21046-1677.

Present – Planning Committee Members:

Tony Brudis, Lou Parlette, Bridget Mugane, Jim Sanborn, Joan Lancos, Roger Gabin, Robert Cummings, Randy Clay, Sally Scott Marietta, Sandy Curtis, Josh Manley, Maurice Simpkins, Mary Catherine Cochran, Sylvia Ramsey, Barbara Boras (Ms. Boras from the Village of Oakland Mills here tonight as Ms. Latham could not be here tonight as she had knee surgery) and Sarah Uphouse.

Consultant:

Tony Olsen, Project Manager, Whitman, Requardt & Associates (WR&A)
Tom McGilloway, Mahan Rykiel Associates
Tom Hannan, Whitman, Requardt & Associates (WR&A)
Mark Lapointe, GWWO
Charlie Bailey, Mahan Rykiel Associates

Present – Department of Recreation and Parks:

Gary J. Arthur, Director
Raul Delerme, Administrator Capital Projects and Park Planning Division
Clara Gouin, Park Planner
Brenda Mercado, Support Technician, Capital Projects and Park Planning Division
Doris J. Bedsaul, Recording Secretary

Opening Remarks

Mr. Arthur welcomed and thanked everyone for volunteering for the new Blandair Regional Park Planning Committee.

He summarized the project for the new members and assigned the Committee to finish the job that started many years ago. The Blandair property was purchased in 1997 from the heirs of Elizabeth Smith. After a lengthy court battle, the county received the property and started the process of planning for this regional park. We began with a 23-member Committee in November 2001 and met about 19 times in 19 months, ending in August 2003. This Committee was charged with developing a regional park on the east side of Columbia. They evaluated what should constitute a regional park on the 300-acre parcel (200 acres on the north side and 100 on the south side of Route 175).

Committee members were asked to communicate with their respective communities and they also analyzed the surrounding neighborhood. Members were divided into three sub-committees: natural environmental, historical, and passive/active recreational. The sub-committees met separately and then made their presentations to the full Committee. After extensive deliberations, the recommendations of subcommittees were synthesized into the Master Plan. The Committee felt it had created a balance between active and passive recreation (map included in the re-cycled folder for each member—Master Plan Blandair Regional Park).

Mr. Arthur stated that three public meetings were scheduled at various school locations. Approximately 274 citizens attended and 76 made comments on a mixture of topics. At the Committee's last meeting they decided to approve the Master Plan as presented at the public meetings, and through a future consultant would refine the plan to address other concerns that were presented at the meetings. (Also included in the folder is a synopsis of the three public meetings). The comments are grouped into 13 categories: park access, preserving natural areas, traffic, park lighting, ADA issues, parking, balanced activities – north and south, wildlife, historic preservation, budget, noise buffering, volunteers, and environmental and other regulations.) We will review each category as we get further into our meetings. We will need to tweak the master plan as it exists and receive input from other areas of the community. We need to finalize the master plan and come up with consensus on what the master plan will be.

Mr. Arthur stated we haven't been able to start the planning sooner because the money was not available, but he felt that once we start a project we need to complete it.

Mr. Arthur reported that, unfortunately, in 2003 Program Open Space funds went from \$4 million down to \$2 million, and this money was used for projects that were in front of Blandair. The Department of Recreation and Parks recently opened Meadowbrook Park and Western Regional Park, and is also designing North Laurel Community Center and Robinson Nature Center. We are estimating (from 2005) \$23 million for the completion of Blandair Regional Park.

Mr. Arthur indicated that he met with the Oakland Mills community several times over the last three years and heard their concerns about the plans for their side of Blandair. Also, Mr. Arthur received comments from Long Reach

Village Association that indicated they wholeheartedly support the vision of the Blandair Committee for the Master Plan and wished us much luck.

Mr. Arthur asked if there were any questions. There were no questions/comments at this time.

Mr. Arthur asked each Committee Member for their commitment when we have a consensus on the master plan, that they support that decision. By consensus we will establish a final product for the master plan. Mr. Arthur asked if there were any comments.

Ms. Lancos commented that she felt it was unfair that the last time the Committee agreed to the master plan, then not everyone stuck to that decision. She felt that her 19-months of work on the project were diminished. Ms. Lancos stated that she surely hoped that everyone would agree to go along with the consensus.

Mr. Simpson asked, what is the consensus?

Mr. Arthur answered that the consensus would be that a master plan has been realized and we are going from there to design. The consultant will be charged with taking this master plan as finalized and moving forward to final design of the project. Mr. Arthur indicated that this is not the final plan; we have not finished.

Mr. Arthur indicated that there are other issues from neighborhoods that surround Blandair. Mr. Gabin stated that he did not see any advertisement of this meeting – do the neighborhoods know that this committee is active again? Mr. Arthur indicated that Cathy Latham is the representative for the Oakland Mills Village Board and Sandy Curtis is representing the Glenmont community. Mr. Arthur stated that it is the charge of each committee member to take the information from our meetings to relate to your community; he does not want it to be a shock to communities. Ms. Mugane suggested that the meeting dates be listed in the Flier. Mr. Arthur said that we would.

Mr. Curtis reported that he does not feel the work of the previous committee members has been diminished in any way from what other people have done. The people that have participated in this mission had very strong feelings about what they wanted to accomplish.

Mr. Arthur reported that in Howard County, departments hire the Department of Public Works to fulfill their construction requirements, so all parks are channeled through the Department of Public Works. We try to formulate a plan, then we present it to the community and then we hire a consultant through the Department of Public Works. We work with the consultant to finalize the design and we also work with the Department of Public Works staff as project managers for this project.

Mr. Arthur introduced the Department of Public Works staff:

Ron Lepson, Bureau Chief

Steve Sharar, Chief, Transportation and Special Projects Division,

Mark Kovach, Project Manager, Transportation and Special Projects Division

Mr. Arthur introduced his staff -- Department of Recreation and Parks:

John Byrd, Chief, Bureau of Parks and Program Services

Raul Delerme, Administrator, Capital Projects and Park Planning Division

Clara Gouin, Park Planner

Brenda Mercado, Support Technician III, Capital Projects and Park Planning Division

Doris Bedsaul, Administrative Aide (recording secretary)

Mr. Arthur introduced Mr. Tony Olsen, Whitman Requardt and Associates

Mr. Olsen will give a presentation this evening at which time he will introduce the design team members.

Committee Members introduced themselves:

Bob Cummings – lives in Long Reach, off of Phelps Luck, and about 3 miles from the park, retired employee of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, previous urban planner. Currently working part time for the Department of Housing and Community Development (previous member)

Dave Grabowski—here as a representative as the Elkridge Youth Organization, Elkridge Adult Athletic Association, (EAAA), Chair, Howard County Recreation and Parks Advisory Board, Member, Planning Board (previous member).

Mary Catherine Cochran – President, Preservation Howard County (previous member)

Sandy Curtis – resident of Glenmont, lived there for 25 years, has studied urban planning at the University of Maryland, has been involved with the construction business. (previous member)

Roger Gabin – Long Reach resident for 25 years, lives on the NE corner of the northern parcel, computer/scientist /systems engineer, active in the Boy Scouts and outdoors. (previous member)

Joan Lancos – served 10 years on the Howard County Planning Board, 10 years on the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board, currently on the Robinson Nature Center Planning Committee, works for the Village of Hickory Ridge. (previous member)

Sally Scott Marietta – lives close to the park at the end of Sleeping Dog Lane, past employee for the State of Maryland, working now with IBM. (previous member)

Bridget Mugane – resident of the community on the south side – lives in Hawkins Farm and is also coordinating with the Tarleton townhomes, previously on the Long Reach Village Board, President, Howard County Citizen’s Association, lawyer. (previous member)

Sylvia Ramsey – lives in Long Reach (previous member)

Lou Parlette – born at Blandair in 1933; she knows a lot of history and has pictures (previous member)

Sarah Uphouse – Village Manager at Long Reach (previous member)

Barbara Boras – here for Cathy Latham, Village Board Member for Village of Oakland Mills, master gardener; she lives on Thunder Hill Road (new member)

Randy Clay – works for Department of Planning and Zoning, urban planner, lives in Baltimore County (new member)

Maurice Simpkins – lived in Oakland Mills on Jacob’s Ladder for 28 years and currently lives downtown in Lakeside condo building, former regional president of Ryland, member of various boards (Board of Appeals), contributed to Thunder Hill Park Alliance. (new member)

Jim Sandborn – Dayton resident, horticulturist, graduated from the University of Maryland, worked in agricultural research, farmer/developer. (new member)

Tony Brudis – civil engineer, Vice Chair – Howard County Recreation and Parks Advisory Board, former president, Howard County Youth Program (previous member)

John Manley – sophomore at Howard High School, lived in Swanfield and now resides in Elkridge. He will graduate in 2010. (new member)

Overview of the planning process and time-line – Steve Sharar, Department of Public Works

Mr. Sharar stated that we want to complete the master planning process by November 2008. Subsequent to that we are looking to submit the site development plan to the Department of Planning and Zoning for the first area of construction by February of 2009. The first area of construction will consist of at least two fields, restrooms and parking. We are hoping for approval of this plan by September 2009, and subsequent to that, receiving a building permit for the restroom by December 2009. We hope to take bids for construction of the first area by January 2010 and begin construction by March 2010. The new construction area will be opened in October 2010 and other sections of the park will follow as funding allows.

One of the major issues to deal with will be the connection to Maryland Route 175. Maryland Route 175 is a controlled access highway and the connection will have to be approved by the State Board of Public Works. It will require a significant effort to meet the requirements of the State officials and the access will have to serve all the residents of the county.

Mr. Arthur indicated that members are encouraged to take any notes, but the Department of Recreation and Parks will be taking minutes. At each meeting we will approve the minutes.

Mr. Arthur stated that at our previous meetings, we did not want our meetings to be interrupted by the public comments. If the public wants to make comments/questions, we will place a writing pad on the table and they are encouraged to write their comment/question there.

Mr. Simpkins asked what would happen if we decided not to answer their question.

Mr. Arthur stated that it must be in the scope of our Committee to answer – it may be something that a traffic consultant or State Highway Administration must handle. Mr. Arthur would get the consensus of the committee and then he would respond. Also e-mails will be accepted.

At the start of the meetings, Mr. Arthur will inform the public that materials are available on which to write their comments or questions.

Mr. Arthur informed the Committee members that they will be busy with about 4-5 meetings until June, and then we will have a public meeting at the Oakland Mills Community Association. After we receive the public input from Oakland Mills we will make a determination about the input and then have a final master plan discussion in front the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board.

Mr. Delorme stated that we will have a very aggressive schedule of meetings to attend (see attached meeting schedule).

Ms. Mugane asked if members of the public are invited to the September 10th and October 15th meeting.

Mr. Arthur stated that the public would be invited to the public meetings.

The public meetings will be publicized. Mr. Arthur requested that the committee members get the word out also.

Ms. Boras asked if the Department of Recreation and Parks could e-mail the Blandair Planning Committee the proposed schedule of meetings to the Village of Oakland Mills Board so they can place on their website. Ms. Gouin will take care of this assignment.

Mr. Simpkins asked if we have a plan to start to work from.

Mr. Arthur replied that we have a master plan that was approved by the Committee and indicated that when that plan was approved it was understood that we had certain problems with that plan. Mr. Arthur stated that after Ms. Gouin's presentation Mr. Simpkins may have a better understanding of the

Master plan. The Department will need to resolve the 13 points of concern and the Glenmont access to the park. We will need to come up with an alternative or we need to, as a group, unite and say this will remain the same. The Route 175 access has not been determined – it may be right-in, right-out only.

Mr. Arthur spoke that he understands from the apartment residents on Watch Tower that they are not interested in having a parking lot right outside of their apartments. This issue needs to be resolved.

Mr. Arthur stated that skateboarding is a very popular activity now in all areas of the county. This may need to be a concern for the master plan, and, yes, the master plan will take some tweaking.

Mr. Arthur introduced Mr. Tony Olsen, Project Manager, Whitman Requardt and Associates. The County's Charge to the Consultants: Howard County charges Whitman Requardt and Associates, and their Design Team, to design Blandair Regional Park as an outstanding space that will be safe, green, attractive, and fun for all citizens of Howard County and will contribute to the quality of life for many generations to come. We look forward to a ribbon-cutting in October 2010.

Team Introduction/Qualifications

Mr. Olsen stated that he is a Senior Vice President of Whitman Requardt and Associates (WR&A) and the Project Manager for this project.

Tom Hannan, PE, Lead Transportation Engineer, WR&A

Tom McGilloway, Lead Landscape Architect and Park Planner, WR&A

Chris Ho, Lead Civil Engineer, WR&A and resident of Long Reach

Mark Lapointe, Lead Architect, GWWO

Charlie Bailey, Civil Engineer and Planner, resident of Oakland Mills

Mr. Olsen spoke that on behalf of the team they are excited to be working on this project with the County and also thanked the Committee Members for their work on this project. He said that all the tasks, with the exception of some miscellaneous activities like soil borings and possibly traffic counts, will be done by the firms assembled here tonight. In terms of how the work will be divided – Whitman, Requardt and Associates will be front managers for the project and also will be providing civil and site development, engineering, surveying and technical services.

He then gave a powerpoint presentation about WR&A's experience and qualifications. (Please see the Blandair website for the powerpoint presentation).

Mr. Olsen introduced Tom Hannan, Transportation Engineer. He will provide engineering services in dealing with the issues of getting the access to and from the park. The important thing is the external access on Route 175 and the opportunity for possible community access to the park. The level of access on Route 175 could go from no access (which would put all the access in and out of the community), and then gradually build up to right-in/right-out on Route 175, and a partial traffic signal on Route 175, up to a full traffic signal on Route 175 to an overpass on Route 175 combined with right-in/right-out access, all the way down to a full interchange at Route 175.

Mr. Hannan compared this to the Hollifield area on Route 40 which is a similar situation: right-in/right-out driveways. In this case they have an underpass that goes underneath the road.

(Mr. Hannan referred to a map when speaking).

Mr. Hannan indicated that he would be working with the State Highway Administration and the County. He reported that he has a good working relationship with the State's traffic engineer and he has worked with him for a number of years and also has a good working relationship with the permit staff. He believes that the State Highway Administration will recognize the importance of this park and they will want the area to be safe.

Mr. Olsen said if there is an overpass, we need to know how to make the connection pedestrian-friendly. They will explore the access from the community, or whether it would only be pedestrian access or no access at all. A park this size will divide itself into several distinct areas; this is good for a variety of activities. One of things that excited them about the master plan was how it responded to the natural hedgerows that are already in place and reminds us of the historic landscape. The different use areas were separately by some of the hedgerows. They feel it is important to draw upon some of the cultural and historical aspects of the site to get some definition of the form of the plan.

Marc Lapointe of GWWO spoke that there are different approaches to where the park amenities would be placed in association with the historical structures. He showed examples of the Mount Vernon and Monocacy Visitor Centers to

illustrate different methods of creating a contextual approach in a historic atmosphere.

Charlie Bailey of Mahan Rykiel Associates spoke on parking that is a reality to parks and serves the park. In the master plan, parking is located in the “outdoor rooms” nestled in between tree masses. We will look at this more closely to refine later. We might also see if we should apply some models that were used at Centennial Park and Glenelg Country School, and also examples of sustainable practices to resolve that parking – should it be paved or could we use other types of surfaces?

Wayfinding will be very important so people know how to get from point- to-point, or to another area of the park on both the pedestrian level and vehicular level. Wayfinding is extremely important in the larger park area. Consistency of materials, signage, forms of building all come together to form a great model like Centennial Park.

Sustainable design is a good practice, and the LEED certification process comes to the forefront.

Mr. Arthur stated that the County now requires buildings to achieve LEED certification.

Mr. Olsen stated that the relationship to adjacent neighborhoods will be a big issue when we design pathways/roads around the perimeter of the park.

Mr. Bailey reported that they went through a similar process on a smaller scale for North Laurel Park and the proximity to adjacent neighborhoods was a concern. This will be something that we will need to review before the final master plan is completed.

In conclusion, Mr. Olsen indicated that they value the Committee’s time in planning this park. Mr. Arthur thanked the consultants for their presentation tonight.

Mr. Gabin asked if shields will be used for lights at the park.

Mr. Arthur reported that the Department has success with shielded lighting with the newest technology. We can save 20-30% of our electric bill with the newest technology and the number of footcandles can be aimed right at the point of use

instead of spreading over into the neighborhoods. Western Regional Park is a great example of that type of technology.

Mr. Arthur will supply some pictures for demonstration.

Ms. Lancos asked if the lighting is the same at Western Regional Park as at the school. Mr. Arthur indicated that the schools went with a different type of lighting.

Mr. Arthur stated that Ms. Gouin will go over the master plan for the new members and for the previous members. He said that certainly, athletic fields/active recreation were part of the master plan, but also so was preservation and environmental concerns and passive recreation.

Mr. Arthur reported the current master plan was created in 2003 and we need to make it better now to best serve the community. We will be making some tough decisions in building this park and we always run into the same problems: noise, crime, traffic, devaluing of property and lighting and/or defacing existing topo of the property. This Committee will have to reach a consensus and then we will need to sell that consensus to the public.

Ms. Ramsey asked about the wildlife – about 300 deer on the property – what will happen to them? This area is also a fantastic habitat for birds, woodcocks in particular. What about bikes and pedestrians, not just cars?

Mr. Arthur mentioned that in the spring of 2003, this Committee made a motion for him to pursue managed deer hunting immediately. At this date, over 100 deer have been removed from Blandair and we FLIR surveyed the property every spring and we have noticed a dramatic drop in the number of deer on this property.

Mr. Arthur reported that the Department has been working on the control of the multi-flora rose. Mr. Byrd stated that about 60 acres have been under the invasive management; we have been mowing it annually.

Mr. Arthur indicated that it is a great bird habitat, but multi-flora rose is also a very invasive plant that we believe needs to be controlled. He stated that it is out of control on the north side. The Department has had a plan for the last three years to try to get it under control.

Ms. Gouin thanked all the firms involved with this project and said we are excited to be working with them.

Ms. Gouin gave a review of the proposed Blandair Regional Park. The entire property consists of 300 acres situated on both sides of Route 175, right in the middle of Columbia. It is divided into three parcels: north area 200 acres, south parcel 100 acres, and a small parcel called the woodlot is 11 acres. The woodlot area will not be developed.

The north area divides itself into several types of activities. We have tried to preserve in the plan a swathe of natural area across the northern part of this parcel. Planned for this area: preserved woodlands, preserved wetlands, trails, preserved meadows, a small nature center and picnic areas. All in all, this area will be kept in its natural state.

The historic area is 28 acres consisting of the old Blandair Farm and its outbuildings (about 15 outbuildings). We have a wonderful report on the history of Blandair that was prepared by Mr. Tom Reinhart. The mansion area and the farm buildings will lend themselves to historic interpretation, to farm activities, and to farm events such as an apple butter festival. At one time there were orchards and gardens behind the house.

The active part of the North Area park will be primarily in the southwest corner and this consists of three multi-purpose fields. These are not the softball fields with back stops and super structures; these are primarily for soccer and other games where the goals are removable.

There is also a festival area and an informal play area, where we might put on events like the Wine in the Woods.

The north preserves a great deal of the natural area. In the forest delineation that was done originally, we have approximately 81 acres of forest and about 35 acres of forest that was not of good quality. Under forest preservation regulations, we have to preserve about 50 acres and we will have more than that.

There are also support facilities for the activities in the north – such as parking lots, but not extensive roads going through. Other support facilities are the picnic shelters and restrooms. There is also a children's garden planned for what is now a meadow.

Ms. Gouin stated that we have tried to connect the bike paths into the park. Within the park there are approximately three miles of trails in the northern area and two miles in the southern area. We are planning for approximately five miles of trails in the park.

Ms. Gouin indicated that the southern area will be developed as the active sport part of the park. There will be two softball fields and two multi-purpose fields that can be walked to from the high school. This area will also contain the picnic area, restroom, playground and parking lot. It will not need access from Route 175 because we could access it from Oakland Mills Road which already comes into the park.

This area will also have some other activities: playground, picnic areas, horseshoes with pathways coming in through the natural areas. There is a perennial stream that comes through here that will be protected. Up in the northwest corner is where we will have a tennis complex with horseshoes, a shelter, and small playground and it can be access from Oakland Mills Road.

The south portion will also have the maintenance area, as well as support facilities, such as parking lots and access roads.

The north area has more of the natural areas preserved and the historic complex.

Ms. Gouin reported that the master plan can be changed to some extent. The plan that we have now needs to be tweaked and refined. The design group will determine the number of parking spaces needed for certain types of activities. The shape of the parking lots could be different configurations. The buildings will have a LEED component. There will be one multi-purpose building and the maintenance building, shelters/restrooms and the nature center. They all have the potential to be green buildings.

Ms. Gouin reported that a few items have come up since the Committee's meeting a few years ago. One is that there has been a sundial made to honor Ms. Nancy Smith and friends of hers are donating money to have the sundial at Blandair. They would like to have an area to place it in with a garden for people to come and contemplate. We will need to find an area for this sundial. Ms. Gouin walked the area with Mr. Byron Hall who is involved with the Foundation.

Ms. Gouin mentioned that we may want to have an area for a skate park; possibly in the southern portion as this will be the active part of the park. Also we may need an area for a dog park.

In conclusion, Ms. Gouin stated that the final master plan will be up to the Committee to decide. We know that there will be some updating and tweaking. At this time, we don't know how we will get in and out of the park, but we can use the southern area now.

Ms. Gouin mentioned that when the park is planned we will have signage for all parts of the park. We will also need storm water management facilities.

Josh Manley had a question about conceptual design and did not want this to be a historical property surrounded by ultra-modern design.

Mr. Lapointe said we will work together to find the appropriate level of design, such as by not just copying the architectural details of the existing buildings, but integrating them.

Ms. Mugane asked about the other unique aspects of Blandair which is located in a heavily developed part of the community with a lot of townhomes, especially on the south side, and townhomes on the east side. This is very dense residential property – I think it has two implications – we have about 1,000 school age children on the north side and 3,000 on the south side. The south side is somewhat more dense – population wise.

1. Folks have a strong need for recreation, but we are short of recreation on the south side for youth as well as for adults.
2. We have to be very thoughtful in buffering the park periphery from the surrounding well- developed neighborhoods.

Ms. Lancos mentioned in the last five years Howard County has built Western Regional Park, Meadowbrook Park and is planning for North Laurel. She requested, for the next work session, to have an update on where we are on ball fields, court sports and information from previous studies.

Mr. Arthur said this information should be available from the Comprehensive Plan. Hopefully, Mr. Eastham will be here with information regarding the needs for the school as well.

Mr. Cummings asked about the status of the historic buildings.

Mr. Arthur would like to arrange a tour of the Blandair Mansion one Saturday. We have received about \$1.6 million to put into the Mansion. The National Park Service has just completed the exterior and is just about ready to go inside with the renovations.

Ms. Marietta asked if anyone was living at Blandair now?

Mr. Arthur answered that we have a tenant there now.

Ms. Marietta reported that youth are motor biking, especially on the weekends.

Mr. Arthur will talk to the tenant on this matter.

Mr. Cumming asked about the relationship of the design team and the historic trust.

Mr. Arthur reported that since the property was bought with Program Open Space money, we have a commitment to the Maryland Historical Trust, and have dedicated a certain easement to the Trust.

Ms. Gouin reported that anything that we do with the 28-acre easement property, in terms of renovation, must go through the Maryland Historical Trust.

Ms. Gouin mentioned that, in the historical area, we are trying to bring in water and sewer service from the adjacent neighborhood. It would come onto the property behind the large hay barn, and come down the old farm lane to the Mansion. In the future, if we have restrooms in the nature center they would feed into that same sewer system.

Ms. Gouin reported that the archeological work was done on the proposed sewer route to see if this would disturb anything that was significant and the architectural results are being reviewed by the Maryland Historical Trust before we can proceed to the engineering drawings.

Ms. Gouin has asked our design team to also plan for the land use in the historical easement, such as, any parking that might be necessary, or any extension of the roads. All work on the buildings is being done by the National Park Service.

Mr. Arthur will be in touch with the Committee members regarding the tour. It will take about 2-3 hours one Saturday – 9:00 a.m. on May 3rd with a rain date May 4.

Homework Assignments: Please review the 13 points enclosed in your packet – (Blandair Master Plan – A Synopsis of the Three Public Meetings). We will discuss them at the next meeting.

Mr. Arthur requested that Mr. Curtis please go back to his Glenmont community and get a final word from them about their access to the park.

Mr. Arthur asked Ms. Boras to talk to Mr. John Lanham who is on Timesweep Lane, and is President of the townhome association. Mr. Arthur met with him at one of the meetings at Oakland Mills. He asked Ms. Boras to invite him to our meeting to express his views on the parking lot as designed in the master plan and possibly we can put that to rest.

Ms. Boras gave Mr. Arthur two letters from residents from that area to be entered into our file. Committee members will receive a copy and they will be entered into the minutes.

Mr. Simpkins raised a question about the children's garden.

Mr. Arthur stated that the children's garden was an idea of Mr. Robert Moon who was chair of the environmental committee. He has an idea of a children's garden that he saw in Cleveland.

The size of the children's garden is about 2 ½ to 3 acres.

Mr. Arthur mentioned that the children's garden will probably have to be revised from the intent that Mr. Moon had.

Mr. Arthur stated that the Committee meetings are informal: if you wish to discuss something, please raise your hand. If the discussion becomes contentious, Mr. Arthur will administer Robert's Rules of Order.

All agreed.

Mr. Cummings shared that his daughter got married last May at the Children's Garden in Fort Collins, Colorado. Mr. Arthur asked Mr. Cummings to bring in pictures.

A question was raised if a group would be interested in volunteering and/or fundraising to maintain a larger children's garden, would it be considered?

Mr. Arthur answered that we would consider it, and stated that we are talking about just the three acres.

Ms. Cochran said that if the community feels strong about having the children's garden they should ask the government to pay for it.

Mr. Gabin asked about the potential uses of the Manor House.

Mr. Arthur answered that we are still in discussion with a museum for the first floor and maybe housing some of the historical society's collection on the second floor, but nothing has been firmed up yet.

Mr. Arthur said if a restaurateur would be interested in pursuing it we would talk to them.

Mr. Clay stated that he has been involved in master planning for the Oakland Mills village center and the Columbia Town Center as well. There has been discussion about how these different pieces relate to one another.

Mr. Arthur stated that connectivity has been part of the discussion, but, through the public meetings, we met some resistance in certain neighborhoods to do that. It will be something that we will have to decide. We have had some neighborhoods that think it is a great idea to access the park from their neighborhood and we have had input from the northwest corner and the Thunder Hill community that did not want access to their property.

Someone reported that it would be helpful to see the context of the site, maybe just standing beyond the borders of the area to see how it relates or how it connects.

Mr. Arthur mentioned that the staff of WR&A will be attending our meetings and we will have their knowledge to help us.

Ms. Boras reported that in one of the letters given to Mr. Arthur there is concern about this matter. Mr. Arthur invited Ms. Boras to contact them if they wish to come to our meeting, or write a letter or e-mail with their reviews. That is certainly one of the things we are interested in pursuing.

Mr. Gabin asked if there had been a recent traffic survey of the areas: Route 175 / Glenmont area.

Mr. Arthur answered that we have asked our consultant to do a traffic study. We did have one previously, which is about 3 or 4 years old now.

Ms. Mugane asked for a membership list of the committee members. Ms. Bedsaul will have it ready at the next meeting.

Mr. Arthur asked that everyone please sign in and supply their e-mail address. Our intent is to have a website and keep updated on our meetings for the Blandair Regional Park. We will list our upcoming meetings on the website too.

Mr. Arthur thanked everyone for attending the meeting and volunteering to work on this task to plan Blandair Regional Park.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Next meeting scheduled for April 23, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. at the Department of Recreation and Parks

/db

2 letters enclosures

I:\blandair\minutesmar08