

## **Blandair Planning Committee Minutes**

Meeting was held on Wednesday, April 23, 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, Jim Sanborn, Joan Lancos, Roger Gabin, Jim Eacker, Paul Farragut, Wesley Queen, Randy Clay, Sally Scott Marietta, Sandy Curtis, Frank Eastham, Josh Manley, Maurice Simpkins, Sylvia Ramsey, Cathy Latham 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  
Mike Bosiacki, 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  
Doris J. Bedsaul, Recording Secretary

### **Call to Order and Announcements**

Mr. Arthur welcomed everyone, distributed the Member List for approval and reminded members to sign in and pick up an agenda at each meeting.

Bridget Mugane sent an e-mail requesting that the minutes be summarized. Mr. Arthur wanted the last minutes to be more detailed because of the importance of re-convening the Committee, but from now on, they will be 4-5 pages. Committee agreed with this format. The approved minutes will be on the website. The Department's website has been updated. ([www.howardcountymd.gov/RAP](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/RAP) - click on Capital Projects and Park Planning and then Blandair Regional Park Capital Project N3102).

Mr. Arthur thanked Clara Gouin, Brenda Mercado and Raul Delerme.

Mr. Arthur distributed a copy of the meeting notice in today's Sun papers and said it will also be advertised in the Columbia Flyer.

He introduced Jim Eacker (Howard County Conservancy) who is a committee member, and welcomed back Paul Farragut. Mr. Arthur also welcomed the public, stating that they may submit written questions, which he will give to the Committee to review. The Department will then reply back. All members agreed with this procedure. Mr. Arthur distributed letters from Johnnie Creech and Joyce Eng, and the reply to each letter. There were no comments from the Committee.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Sanborn moved to approve the minutes of March 12<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Gabin seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously.

**Mr. Arthur asked for questions** on the Synopsis of the Three Public Meetings from 2003.

Mr. Gabin had a question on #1. Park Access –“ The Committee determined that access to the park by vehicle to an internal parking lot was warranted through Glenmont.” Mr. Gabin stated that he did not remember it that way.

Mr. Arthur stated that it was that way in the minutes, but this issue must be resolved.

Mr. Manley questioned #4. Park Lighting – will there be lighted pathways throughout the park? Mr. Arthur stated that in regional parks we do not light pathways and the park is closed by 11 p.m. We do provide low lights at parking lots and access roads, so that patrons can exit safely.

Ms. Lancos questioned the lights at ball fields. Mr. Arthur stated that we will use solar lights when possible – they are not as bright as flood lights. The lighted areas will be athletic fields and parking lots, as well as the access and egress from those fields. There will be no lights on the Glenmont area side. Park hours are dawn to dusk and athletic fields will close at 11 p.m.

Ms. Lyons, from the public, asked about lights affecting the Emerson Hill area, but Mr. Arthur requested that she write her question down for the committee to address.

Mr. Manley asked about #5. ADA Issues – what type of playgrounds will be available for children with disabilities? Mr. Arthur reported that all playgrounds now have accessible features.

### **Advisory Committee Reports**

Mr. Arthur stated that some issues need to be resolved about access via Glenmont and Timesweep Lane. He and staff had attended the last Glenmont Homeowner’s Association meeting.

Mr. Tunell, a member of the Glenmont Homeowner’s Association was invited to speak on Summer Hollow access. The HOA will meet on May 12<sup>th</sup> to discuss the issue. He distributed papers for review, and said that Soaring Hill Road should access the park, instead of Summer Hollow Lane. He was concerned that traffic would also impact Billow Row to reach Summer Hollow. There are 24 driveways on Billow Row and only 13 on Soaring Hill. He felt that it was a shorter route to use Thunder Hill and Soaring Hill to reach the park. Mr. Arthur indicated that Mr. Tunell’s option will be considered.

Mr. Mayhew, President of the Cinnamon Tree Community Association, spoke about his neighborhood's opposition to using Timesweep Lane for park access. Their concerns are traffic, noise, and lights in this area.

He submitted a petition with over 50 signatures from the Emerson Hill and Cinnamon Tree communities opposed to access via Timesweep Lane. Mr. Mayhew said that he is excited about having a park but his concern is traffic, especially after the ball games are over. Mr. Arthur said that a new traffic study will be conducted.

Mr. Clay questioned the sizing of the parking lots. Mr. Arthur replied that finalizing the master plan will enable us to determine the number of parking spaces.

Mr. Brudis inquired if we are considering abandoning Old Montgomery Road. Mr. Arthur said that we may consider closing portions of Oakland Mills Road if it is feasible.

#### **Consultants' Presentation – Mr. Tony Olsen (WR&A)**

Mr. Olsen introduced all the team members and presented two refinements to the Master Plan. He stated that the wetland investigation has been done and the Forest Stand Delineation work is scheduled next week. He has started the traffic study and will be discussing the Route 175 interchange with the State Highway Administration. They had an initial meeting to re-acquaint SHA with the project and to understand the approval process. WR&A is still in the site investigation and master planning phases; and not into the design phase yet. He compared Refinement 1 and Refinement 2 with the original Master Plan.

Mr. Bailey explained that the refined plans are fundamentally the same as the original master plan with a few tweaks, such as shifting the multi-purpose fields to the east and moving the tennis courts closer to the active areas. A skate park was also added. Mr. Bailey asked for feedback on the size of picnic pavilions to help adjust the amount of parking.

Ms. Gouin advised that the sizes would vary but are typically for 100 to 150 people. There should be one for each activity area, including sports fields or picnic/playground areas.

Mr. Bailey showed the ball fields on the north side of Route 175 as being for more temporary or occasional use and not to be programmed. Mr. Arthur stated that the fields are intended to be programmed for use and would be lighted.

Ms. Lancos indicated that she remembered that the fields on the north would not be lighted. Mr. Arthur stated that there had been discussion on it and we would buffer the Blandair House from the multi-purpose fields by placing them in the center of the park, and utilizing a technically advanced lighting system that will have minimal visual impact. He stated that, over the last three years, the need for those fields has increased because of the growth in lacrosse and tackle football.

#### **Discussion**

The Committee discussed several issues pertaining to the refined plans, such as the large green area with the circling road and different options for the nature center and parking lots.

They discussed dividing the playing fields into two areas, adding a skate park, and moving the tennis courts closer to the playing fields.

Ms. Latham would like to see a field eliminated and the area used for planting bay grass for students to transplant in the Bay.

Mr. Bailey showed the vehicular and pedestrian access points and the parking/use areas. He also spoke on the design of the proposed bridge with some wildflower plantings along Route 175, to give a transitional experience from the high speed road, and the need to get park patrons to slow down and be aware of the various activities going on in the park.

Mr. Hannan explained that Route 175 has access control which means that SHA acquired the rights to access the roadway through this area. We will work with SHA to meet their objectives in order to get a break in the access controls. SHA would consider full access with a bridge, and right-in and right-out access. There will be many standards that we must meet as we are tying into a high speed road. The bridge would cost about \$10 million and would provide an opportunity for park users to go from one side of the park to the other without having to deal with Route 175 traffic. Mr. Arthur stated Route 175 may be three lanes in the future.

The Committee also discussed the gas line that crosses the north area. Its ownership must be determined, and any restrictions to grading or development on it must be applied to the plan.

Mr. Lapointe (GWWO architect) said that it is important to stitch the two halves together to create a unified park. He discussed sustainability (LEED/green building), existing historic contexts, and guidelines for creating a visual theme. He stated that there are some common elements in the farm buildings and materials that we can utilize in designing the new park structures.

Mr. Arthur asked if it would be possible to use one or two of the barns for the laboratory for some environmental education. He said there are about 13 buildings in addition to the Manor House, and we want to make the buildings as useful as possible for environmental education or historical interpretations. Mr. Eastham, Principal of Oakland Mills High School agreed. Ms. Gouin stated that one requirement of the MHT is that we can't alter the outside of buildings.

Ms. Lancos questioned the lights on the north fields. Mr. Arthur recalled that, at the public hearing, he was asked about the number of fields that will have lights and he replied, "all of them." He stated that we were going to create a balance on the north and the south so that all the activity would not necessarily be on the south side; there would be some active recreation on the north side, so that a balance could be achieved.

Mr. Eastham stated the need to look at issues dealing with youth because many facilities are close to residential properties. The south portion especially, is surrounded by high density housing. He felt that youth would be attracted there and we need to plan accordingly. He felt

that the skate park may present some problems. He also suggested that the ball fields on the South Area be placed towards Route 175, away from the residential areas.

Mr. Arthur responded that we have full-time staff at all regional parks – dawn to dusk—when the park is open. The Department of Recreation and Parks also relies on the neighbors of the park to let us know if there is a security problem or potential safety hazard, and we work with the Police Department. We have already placed security cameras at Blandair.

Ms. Latham would like to eliminate activities that would draw people in after hours to congregate, such as a skate park. Mr. Grabowski reported that we need a skate park because it is the third-largest growing sport in the United States. (The Department of Recreation and Parks will soon be opening the first skate spot in Howard County at Centennial Park). He stated that one is planned for Blandair's south side because there will be more activity there and it will be an easier to keep an eye on the patrons. Mr. Clay stated that we have the opportunity here for a skate park. Mr. Arthur asked the Committee Members to look at placing the Skate Plaza close to the building so that staff could supervise it. Mr. Eastham agreed to have the skate park there.

### **Closing Comments**

- Tonight's WR&A presentation will be placed on the website.
- Mr. Arthur asked Committee Members to review the presentation and formulate some ideas to start finalizing this master plan.
- Mr. Olsen stated at the next meeting the design team will come back with refinements.
- Mr. Gabin requested that a survey be formulated with specific questions. Mr. Arthur agreed.
- The tour of the Blandair Mansion and site is scheduled for Saturday, May 3, 2008 at 9:00 a.m. (Rain date on Sunday, May 4 at 9:00 a.m.) Meet at Blandair – vans, coffee, and light refreshments provided. (Member's guests also are invited.)
- Meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.
- Next meeting scheduled for May 14, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. at the Department of Recreation and Parks Headquarters, Conference Room 1.

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