

Regular Meeting of the Advisory Board of Recreation and Parks
Held at the Falls Church Community Center, Kenneth R. Burnett Building
223 Little Falls Street, Falls Church, Virginia 22046

Minutes
March 2, 2016

1. Call to Order

Mr. Selby called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Introductions of board members were made.

Members present were Kathy Chandler, Charley O'Hara, Leslie Rye, and Steve Selby. City Council Liaison Marybeth Connolly was present. Staff members present were Danny Schlitt, Director of Recreation & Parks, and Amy Maltese.

2. Receipt of Public Petitions and Board Member Petitions

Juanita Bowman of 114 Gresham Place wanted to listen to and discuss the plan for the W&OD which they read of in the Falls Church News-Press. Ms. Bowman noted that why the plan was not discussed with the neighbors that would be most affected around Gresham Place. Wants to meet neighbors and board that are proposing a 4.4 million dollar project.

Danny Schlitt responded that the plan was a project of Development Services and was presented to the board last month. He also stated that he would let Paul know they showed up tonight.

Charley O'Hara responded that in the paper it will tell you all the dates the public hearings were held. It is a fluid document/planning document. Charley encouraged they speak to Paul.

Juergen Tooren – President of Gresham Park Association – Six years ago, a letter was sent on behalf of the association.

Came tonight because they strenuously oppose a bike path through the park, citing ecological damage of urban forest and they don't see utility of directing bike traffic away from the Metro stop. Also disappointing with the little investment they see in the existing walking path.

Another neighbor – W&OD trail leaves the City on Little Falls Street and does not see why we should reroute another jurisdiction's bike traffic into Falls Church. Additionally, the existing path is engineered as best as possible with a crosswalk. Gresham place is serene and they do not think it is necessary to add traffic.

Paul – Emailed this evening responding to Juergen. Provided background information and included the 2010 letter submitted by the HOA and a resolution from 1991 designating the area as a nature path. However the resolution does not limit future use. Regarding limited environmental issues, the trail could go north of the stream as to not mess with the existing park. Paul suggested some new language to the motion to acknowledge that the bike path should be designed to limit environmental impacts.

Resident asked if it is considered wetlands.

Paul responded that it is within an RPA but would work to mitigate impacts through engineering by use of rain gardens or other means.

Danny proposed that Gresham neighbors meet with Gresham Place neighbors in another room.

3. Minutes

Charley O'Hara motioned to approve the January 6 meeting minutes. Leslie Rye seconded the motion. Upon unanimous voice vote, the motion passed.

4. Recreation Director's Report – No Report

5. New Business

Big Chimney's Park Master Plan and revision

Danny Schlitt, thanked folks for taking survey. Trying to move as quickly as we can. Goal is to use feedback to revise Master Park Plan, get the plan approved by City Council and that will help write the site plan which will turn into construction documents. Finances look good but have not yet been finalized. Funding would become available on July 1. It will take some time though.

Amy Maltese, presented survey results (attached)

Revised Park Plan was distributed. (attached)

Feedback from residents:

-Regarding ghost structure, if it can't be turned into a playground, perhaps it could be used to be turned into a gazebo.

-Youth – 169 West Annandale – Julia – monkey bars, balance beam, water fountain, swings, tables, They like the berm because the ride down it on bikes or sledding,

Danny, regarding the berm, may be needed to remove for drainage. Also likes that it will open up the park and give it a welcoming feel.

-Will we address landscaping between park and bowling alley.

Danny – that is absolutely something we will look at and clean out

-Youth – 169 West Annandale – Nick – monkey bars and bigger slide, tree house, birthday area and jungle gym.

-Resident – Are there plans for Shirley Street?

Danny – Still not sure what plans for Shirley Street are. No plans at this time. If we did, it would be very small such as demonstrating art work.

-Resident – plan has taken into account a lot of suggestions. Performance area is still in the plan. She feels that most neighbors very strongly feel they do not want a big public presence.

-Another resident seconded the strong feelings against performance area.

Danny – it has been discussed in the past and in there just as a possibility. IT is still a fluid document

Leslie – performance area can also be very broad – performance area at Frady Park is very small.

Resident – Water feature is only 2 months of the year and will attract more mosquitos. Neighbors want big green space, water feature would take away from greenspace.

Resident – suggested a climbing wall – could be used by all ages.

Danny – perhaps we could have a wall that on one side kids can throw or toss baseballs or lacrosse balls to it and have a climbing wall on the other side.

Resident – likes water feature but has a pool and does not need it.

Resident – they like the trees, if any needed to be cut down, wouldn't mind cutting down the trees with the droppings.

Danny – if we do cut any trees down, we would put back as many, if not more.

Resident – would like more swings. A peaceful park and a park geared for kids is possible. Ability to have seating in an area away from playground/different zones.

Resident – Memorial to Doctor – what are the plans for the rock?

Danny – it may temporarily be removed but would still tell the story

Charley – we are going away from rock memorials so it may come back in another form. It is something they will consider. It needs to be in a prominent place and something you won't trip over.

Danny – we still may need an archeological dig

Danny – if you have any comments, please email myself or Amy. Please send any feedback by the 15th of this month so we can start getting the word "Draft" off the plan

Resident – Are we considering a dog park? Resident thinks it is too small and would be unhealthy.

Danny – on the survey, the interest was not very high. The City has a desire to find a place but does not think this is the place but we may bring back dog waste removal system.

Process moving forward:

Will bring revised Master Park Plan to council by May and hopefully at that point we can confirm funding. Engineering will take a significant amount of time. Then architect will come in to build park.

Steve Selby – Continue showing up at meetings and speak to your council members. Keep lobbying.

Marybeth Connolly – Regarding the archaeological dig, perhaps a class can get involved. Please keep her in the loop.

Danny – there is a \$50,000 proffer that is already available from the West Broad building and he spoke with the City Manager about using it to get a project manager to keep the project moving.

Steve – they would support this.

6. Old Business

W&OD – Revisit as a group- This is still going to go through a site plan review. This is a vision and a guide. They want to approve it as a vision and a guide subject to more community involvement. Charley made a motion of an edited statement removing the "whereas" language, include "subject to further community discussion", remove "I further move", take out "Through Crossman Park". Motion was seconded by Kathy. All approved. Official content below:

1. The Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park (the "W&OD") is one of the largest park spaces in the City and offers tremendous opportunities for enhancing quality of life within the City of Falls Church.
2. The W&OD Park Master Plan: The City's Greenest Street (the "Master Plan") incorporates and advances policy and design goals identified in the City's Comprehensive Plan and other master plans, like increasing transportation mode choices, better connecting the City's park system, and treating the W&OD as one of the City's great streets.
3. The Master Plan identifies grant funding sources that can dramatically reduce the cost of developing the City's portion of the W&OD.

4. The Advisory Board of Recreation and Parks recommends that the City Council adopt the Master Plan as a vision and guide for developing the City's portion of the W&OD, subject to further Community involvement and discussion; that the City seek strategic land acquisition opportunities contiguous to the W&OD that can provide additional recreational and cultural amenities or natural areas easily accessible to the public; that the City design and engineer the proposed improvements in a way that limits impacts on existing walking trails and limits negative environmental impacts; and that the City refurbish and restore existing pedestrian paths and educational signage in coordination with implementing the Master Plan.

Motion requested by neighbors of Big Chimneys

A discussion was had around the language of the motion proposed.

Charley motioned, Kathy Amended, Leslie seconded. All were in favor.

Amended content is below:

Addendum to March 2, 2016, motion regarding funding of improvements at Big Chimneys Park by the City of Falls Church Recreation and Parks Advisory Board

In passing this motion, the Advisory Board recognizes the following:

1. Improvements at Big Chimneys Park are consistent with the City of Falls Church *Parks for People Comprehensive Plan* and the adopted policy passed by the City Council.
2. The Rushmark/Harris Teeter Project (301 West Broad Street) is an ongoing public and private investment that provided one million dollars (\$1 million) from the sale of land with the intention of renovating Big Chimneys Park.
3. Economic benefits from a high quality Big Chimneys Park would include:
 - Further encouragement of positively and appropriately scaled redevelopment in the City.
 - Creation of a sense of place, which attracts more people to the area and leads to more shoppers and restaurant patrons. This translates to greater direct revenue to the City.
4. Environmental benefits of a high quality Big Chimneys Park would include:
 - Absorbing storm-water runoff and buffering streams. Big Chimneys Park has an incomplete storm water structure that needs to be renovated.
 - Lowering ambient air temperature.
 - Improving air quality.
 - Providing habitat for plants and animals.
5. Social benefits of a refurbished park would include community cohesion, a “know-your-neighbor” social capital, which will be helpful in getting to know the new residents of the Rushmark Apartments.

6. The system of Connected Parks would connect existing spaces throughout the City, such as Big Chimneys Park to Cavalier Trail Park.
7. Given the higher proportion of younger residents in Falls Church City (compared to surrounding jurisdictions and the state), improvements at Big Chimneys Park can be designed to better serve those younger residents. According to 2013 U.S. Census Bureau estimates:
 - The 18 and under segment makes up 26% of our population (compared to 17% in Arlington, 24% in Fairfax, and 23% in Virginia overall).
 - The under 5 population is 7.1% (compared to 6% in Arlington, 6.7% in Fairfax, and 6.2% in Virginia overall).

A discussion resumed about Crossman Park and the W&OD plan. The board explained to neighbors the motion that passed and their reasoning behind it.

7. Motion to go in to closed session pursuant to Virginia Code Â§2.2-3711. (A) 10. Discussion or consideration of honorary degrees or special awards; [Recommendation for 2015 Grand Marshal] Kathy – made a motion, Charley seconded

Kathy- I certify that we only talked about what we said we were going to talk about when we went into closed session. All said yes.

8. Adjournment

Kathy Chandler motioned to adjourn the meeting; Leslie Rye seconded the motion. Under unanimous voice vote, Mr. Selby adjourned the meeting.

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