

LAKE ACCOTINK PARK MASTER PLAN REVISION

SEPTEMBER 19, 2019 COMMUNITY MEETING SUMMARY

A community meeting was held on September 19, 2019 at Cardinal Forest Elementary School to provide an update on lake management and to discuss future planning for the park. The meeting was jointly hosted by Supervisors Cook and McKay and the Park Authority. Ninety-three names were captured on the sign-in sheets although total attendance exceeded this number. Officials and staff in attendance included:

Supervisor John Cook, Braddock District
Supervisor Jeff McKay, Lee District
Supervisor Pat Herrity, Springfield District
Aimee Vosper, Deputy Director of the Park Authority
Sara Baldwin, Deputy Director of the Park Authority
Charles Smith, Branch Chief of Stormwater Planning Division, DPWES
Judy Pedersen, Park Authority Public Information Officer
Dave Bowden, Director of Park Planning and Development
Ryan Stewart, Park Planning Supervisor
Adam Wynn, Project Manager & Planner
Doug Tipsword, Park Planner
Ed Richardson, Park Authority Area 4 Manager
Chris Goldbecker, Lakefront Parks Manager
Tony Bulmer, Lake Accotink Park Manager

The meeting included welcoming remarks by Supervisor Cook and Supervisor McKay, a presentation by the Park Authority to provide further information on the proposed direction of lake management and the next steps for the park master plan. The presentation was followed by questions and comments from members of the community.

The following is a summary of the comments/questions expressed and the responses to those comments, when a response was provided.

Question: Seeking more information about the specifics and location of the proposed dredging pipeline.

Response: (Dave B.) At this point we don't we have not done any in-depth design, but it will run through the stream valley, it will have to cross under Braddock road which we are looking an under the bridge crossing and into the park. During the design of the plans we will be back plenty of times to talk to you all about the details.

Question: Will the General Assembly assist in the county's efforts to get a lower loan rate for the project and how long with the loan be for?

Response: (Supervisor McKay) Our staff has been leaning over a long time period with state DEQ staff to meet all the criteria they have, and they feel very confident in our ability to get this loan. Part of that reason is the state wants to work with Fairfax County we have a triple A bond rating ourselves and they see us as the perfect partner. Not every county

has the capacity to pull something like this off, but we do. We have been in depth conversations with them, our budget office, this is not politically discretionary in the sense that the general assembly doesn't act on it. This is a decision that the DEQ makes based on whether we meet their criteria or not and I will tell you this we will not be shy about enlisting our general assembly colleagues when we get to that point. But we feel very confident standing here today, about as confident as we can be without an agreement in hand. The Virginia DEQ is more than interested and eager to work with Fairfax County on this and so when we get more information, we information we will come back to tell you. But the simple answer is we won't be shy to ask the general assembly for a way in if we need to. The speaker suggested that if it is not possible to pump the sediment to Wakefield Park, the county should consider having trucks drive along the CCT to avoid impacting the neighborhoods.

Response: *(Dave B.) If I could add one more thing. One of the reasons they are telling us that they will give us such a good loan rate is we already have fast storm water management program, so they know the funding is already there to pay back the loan. The other thing they will do for us is they will phase the loan so during our design process which it may take two years that we don't need all the money upfront, they will phase the loan that will allow us to finish the design and permitting which is a much lower amount of money so we aren't paying as much interest back.*

Question: Can you share any insight how the existing park facility and usage may or may not be constrained during the time of the four-year dredging process. How intrusive will that be to around the lake.

Response: *(Dave B.) We have done this twice. Anyone that was here in the 80's and 2000's has seen that. Other than the dredging being setup in the lake and the pipeline to take it to Wakefield park the rest of the park will be unaffected by the dredging.*

Question: What is Storm Water Management going to do with the ongoing silt issue?

Response: *(Charles S.) The process of trying to restore the stream has been underway for several years, and we have worked very closely with the park authority. We have got a project plan and a construction plan for flag run which enters the lake around the dam. We have projects underway to move on construction in the next year or so on the main steam of Accotink Creek. We are working closely with the Danbury forest community, up on Long Branch North and off Route 50 Providence district. We are also kicking off right now the process of planning the restoration of Long Branch central watershed drainage area. We have at least five major initiatives underway. A lot of outfall, we will be addressing outfalls where we can. We are also addressing the main source; it starts at the outfall and of course all that exposed bank area.*

Response: *(Dave B.) I just want to reiterate that this has been a partnership with DPWS from the day we started talking about the opportunity to dredge the lake again. So, it's not like they are working in a line and we are working in a line. They are going to manage the dredging project for the Park Authority moving forward. AS Charles said over time looking at opportunities where we know there is a big sediment load coming in Accotink*

and maybe a small reach we can address quicker than looking at the entire reach. That is the one of the goals here is hopefully over time with maintenance dredging and as get streams restored, we extend the time that we have to maintenance dredge.

Question: I live in Danbury Forest. Just a big Thank you, and now that we know that we are going to save Lake Accotink, can we build the bridge over the dam?

Response: (Dave B.) Yes, we already have that project designed and permitted.

Reply: (Speaker) What time frame is that?

Response: (Dave B.) Once we get far enough in the design and permitting process for the dredging and we know we are not going to be affected, we will move forward with putting the Bridge in. We have the funding, design, and the permit.

Question: What happens to the material? I understand that it is going to be dried out. What is that process going to do to that part of Wakefield Park?

Response: (Dave B.) The dredge material is going to be restricted to the power line areas of Wakefield Park, so it really will not affect the park itself.

Reply: (Speaker) What about the trails?

Response: (Dave B.) We will make sure that trail stays open, we will reroute if needed, so we don't have an issue. We know that is a highly used trail.

Reply: (Attendee) To follow up on that, what about the recreation trail that is around the powerline area?

Response: (Dave B.) Again, until we get further in the design and see how all this lays out, I can't guarantee that, but we will certainly take that in account. One of thing things since we know we can store some of the sediment at Wakefield Park maybe we can build sculptures some of the trail ends.

Reply: (Attendee) During the several years of the dredging, will you be doing this year around?

Response: (Dave B.) Every day is a dollar once the dredge goes in the lake.

Reply: (Attendee) Will that be during the day or night?

Response: (Dave B.) It will be during the day.

Reply: (Attendee) Are there noise issues?

Response: (Dave B.) There hasn't been during the last dredges, but we will take that in account.

Question/Comment :I am sorry not to join in the celebrating mood. All the people that advocated for the full size like, none of them voted for the addition of a pipeline from the head of the lake to Braddock Road. This pipeline as I understand it will be 18 to 24 inches, permanently installed, and it must be above ground because the sediment does so much

damage it will require constant maintenance. A swath of trees about the equal width of the cross-county trail will need to be sacrificed to put in this pipeline. It raises the question whether the esthetic value of the full lake is worth the loss of all these trees and this hideous eyesore that the pipeline will be, not to mention the loss of the carbon sequestration of these trees and their habitat value.

I know it is quite inconvenient that this might not be worth the cost or we might want to reconsider putting up with the trucks in our neighborhoods or take another look at the smaller lake option. Which would be a pretty good lake, if not as pretty as the full lake.

Response: (Judy) Thank You.

Question/Comment: So, first I want to thank everyone for coming out. This has been a great experience for me and seeing the community coming together. I appreciate all the praise received. I would be remised if I didn't thank everyone involved with Save Lake Accotink and in support of the Park, Lake and the community. This has been such a wonderful and uplifting experience, seeing the community respond to an issue and seeing the government responding to the community in turn.

I don't exactly want to echo Phil's comments, but personally I am concerned about the pipeline. The reason we wanted to keep the lake in the first place was to maintain the nature of the park and maintain it as an asset and maintain the nature as it is. My question again is moving forward, not a question, but a voice and concern. That extra partial attention is given to maintain the natural esthetic value of the park with the pipeline and mitigating any outfall of all the work that is done with the pipeline and the dewatering area. That is a lot of trees and lot of damage done to the local environment. We need to make sure something is done to mitigate the impact moving forward. Again, thank you so much for all the work you put into it and listening. Thank you for taking the time to hold this meeting and taking the time to speak to us.

Response: (Judy) We are going back to the questions again before we get back to the speakers.

Question/Comment: I am the Springfield Representative for sidewalks, trails and bikeways committee. My question is, does utilizing that loan prevent the removal of the dam later? Does that lock the lake in as a sediment management facility? That is one of the reasons it was an option to remove the dam before, it was a recreation facility and not a pay sediment management facility.

Response: (Judy) Do we have an answer or is it something we need to research? The question is a little complex, but if we utilized these dollars does that set limits as far as that being a sediment lake vs recreation lake. Did I capture that?

Reply: (Speaker) Right, the reason the removal of the lake was an option is it was a recreation lake and was built with recreation in mind. That made removing the dam an option. If had been a sediment management lake, then we would have gone through a lot more process to justify the removal of the dam. I am not advocating the removal of the dam; I am just asking the question does that lock us in and keep the dam there?

Response: (Judy) *I don't think we have the answer, but we will note that, and it will be one of Adam's assignments.*

Reply: (Attendee) *Just curious, where was this plan a year ago? What happened to make this possible now.*

Response: (Dave B.) *It was budget reason, we had to go through a budgeting cycle to make sure that everyone was in line with securing funding and the amount of funding needed. This needed to occur before we made any promise that we were going to move forward with a management plan. Again, that started in the February/March timeframe with the CIP, which got approved in May, and then the board of supervisors asked us to come back with a better dollar figure. We will be meeting in October with our budget office folks and we will be coming back to the Board of Supervisors at the end of October with the actual final budgeting schema to fund the project.*

Response: (Judy) *I would like to add there has been a lot community input and people were listening. That is how the system is supposed to work.*

Question/Comment: **I am with the Friends of Lake Accotink Creek and I will say it is amazing to be here. Save Lake Accotink and this whole community engagement has been the most energetic engagement I have seen for the Accotink Watershed. Thank you for stepping up. One of my main principles of advocacy was if you want to get something done, take good hostages. What we have heard over the last few years is that Lake Accotink is a good hostage. When people found out that Lake Accotink was threatened thousands of you stood up and spoke up. You fought for what you love. Even with the solution here, Lake Accotink and Accotink Creek are still hostages. Hostage to human impacts, like pollution, storm water runoff, habitat loss, sedimentation and climate change. We fully appreciate the County's work to preserve, protect and restore Lake Accotink, but it is up to us as community members to back them up. We need to get involved and stay involved. One of the main gauges to Accotink's health right now is the TMDL. Which means total maximum daily loads. I argue the more important essential measures are the MCEL, the minimum community engagement level. Save Lake Accotink is community engagement made of thousands of people talking and working together to save what they love. Congratulations, the work continues. As the Friends of Accotink Creek we protect the watershed through school programs, community outreach, stream cleanups and advocacy. Land Use decisions have had significant impacts on the health of the watershed and getting involved at the decision-making process is the best ways to influence outcomes for the next 50. We appreciate the good support of the county leaders and agencies to protect the environment and welcome and encourage your help as community members, we are stronger together.**

Response: (Judy) *I have been doing this a long time and that is a first.*

Question/Comment: **I would like to ask for your consideration as you go forward to making the lake more inclusive for everyone in Fairfax county including people with disabilities. In Fairfax county there is limited open spaces for people with disabilities to enjoy exercise and outdoor recreation safely. Walking down the street is dangerous for**

people with disabilities and people without disabilities. There so many cars and other types of impediments all over this county. So, these open spaces are important for our recreation. Lake Accotink is one of these places. While there is still much that can be improved by way of accessibility, disability can be temporary or life long, but it doesn't diminish the need for exercise or the need to enjoy outdoor recreation. One example of an improvement, I am no expert, but something that can be done is to complete a continuous accessible stretch of trail from the parking area to the trail that surrounds the perimeter of the lake. My husband has been a resident of the county for over 40 years. He has gone from being a road racer on a bicycle, he now walks with a cane. He still enjoys Lake Accotink, while there are parts of pavement that are paved on the trail you must go through gravel to get to those parts. Loose gravel and tree roots are an obstacle for people with disabilities, but they are a barrier to someone that depends on wheels for their mobility. I urge you as you move forward to find room in the budget to expand access for people with disabilities.

Response: (Judy) Thank You.

Comment/Question: I represent the Cardinal Forest Condominium Association, next door to the lake. They are doing their meeting right now, but they asked me to come and reiterate our support to maintain the lake. I just sent a text for braking news and the announcement made. So, I am not going to say thank you yet because they have said to do that. We have been a long-time supporter since the beginning of the access way from Parkway to the lake that was the land that was decided by the association many years ago. So, Thank you for your support.

Comment/Question: I understand the value and desire to maintain the lake. But one of the problems that I see is that this moved the problem from Lake Accotink up into Wakefield Park. I agree and support concern relative to the maintenance of the trails within the park that has been addressed. My other concern is about having trucks going in and out of the park and not knowing what time and how that will happen. This will have the potential of having a big impact on the ballfields and the rec center within Wakefield Park. So, I would request that in the future that there will be another reach out to the communities once the plan is established as how this will be accommodated within the park with continued community input.

Response: (Judy) Thank You.

Comment/Question: We have heard a lot about maintaining the lake as a great recreational asset. What would repeated dredging do to the wildlife?

Response: (Judy) I think another one we are going to have to put on the list. It is a great question and we will put it on the list, and we will address it.

Comment/Question: I am a bird watcher; I have been bird watching around Accotink lake for 50 years. One thing that I have noticed is every time you dredge that amount of mud, shallow areas that are used by migrating shore birds, Great Egrets, and Blue Herons and

other varieties is diminished. I don't think many people look at them, like figures or government people so I am very much a minority view. However, every time you dredge the sandbanks, mudbanks disappear and so does the birds. So, if you do what you did in Lake Royal which I think is a disaster because of a constructed island in the middle with steep banks and with stones around them. I have yet to figure out what on the earth they are for other than encouraging Canadian Geese from procreating and creating even more mess. So, I plead when we get back to the deep end can you arrange some areas which will at certain times of the year will expose mud banks, particularly during the spring and fall migration season?

Question/Comment: I am with Trails for youth, we are a Springfield based non-profit and we work with members of the community that are primarily at risk to get them outdoors and active; biking, hiking, kayaking, fishing. We call Lake Accotink our home and we love you guys by the way. My point here is to talk about access, you have brought up some excellent points about access. One access issue that has not been addressed is how the eastern communities get into the park. Frequently kids on bikes, people walking in have to jump off the road to avoid the two-way traffic, I know there is speed bumps and I know they [inaudible] all the time. The eastern side of the park needs a safe way to access the park for walking and biking. People shouldn't have to drive all the time to access the park and a connection would allow these communities to enjoy the park more.

Question/Comment: If the park dredging pipe is a permanent feature, is it possible to put it all underground for aesthetics?

Response: (Dave B.) We are not at this point of detail in the design/engineering process. There will likely be multiple options as we move forward.

Question/Comment: I asked earlier about the noise that might be happening. How is all that silt going through the pipeline not going to make noise.

Response: (Dave B.) Again, yes it will take pumps like a sewer line does. But those can be baffled so the noise can be reduced.

Attendee: Will those run 24hrs.

Response: (Dave B.) No, probably during construction hours

Response: (Attendee) I am a lifetime resident and to answer your question about the noise. My house is the closest one to the lake. I can tell you that the noise from those pumps are much less than the lawn mowers and leaf blowers