

-TASK FORCE ON THE FUTURE OF LAKE ACCOTINK

Monday, September 11, 2023
7:00 p.m.

Government Center
Conference Room 11

Meeting Minutes

Members Present:

Sharon Bulova, Individual (Chair)
Vicki Arnold, Individual
Ken Balbuena, North Springfield Civic Association
Anne Ball, Sierra Club – Great Falls
Bryan Campbell, Friends of Long Branch Stream Valley
Sandy Collins, Friends of Accotink Creek
John Cook, Individual
Michael Deloose, West Springfield Civic Association
Charlotte Hannagan, Kings Park Civic Association
James Heo, Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber of Commerce
Diane Hoffman, Braddock District Land Use and Environment Committee
Mary Keeser, Friends of Lake Accotink Park (FLAP)
Chris Jones, GMU – Potomac Environmental Research and Education Center
Chris Landgraf, Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC)
Marta Morrissey, Franconia District Land Use Committee
Gail Nittle, Springfield Civic Association
Allan Robertson, Save Lake Accotink
Martin Shepherd, Ravensworth Farm Civic Association
Evelyn Spain, Planning Commission
Kiel Stone, Park Authority Board
Supervisor James Walkinshaw, Braddock District
Delegate Vivian Watts, Virginia House of Delegates
Steve Yannucci, Individual

County Representatives Present:

John Burke, Fairfax County Park Authority
Aaron Campbell, Staff Aide, Franconia District Office
Brendon Hannafin, Director, Planning and Development Division, Fairfax County Park Authority
Christopher Herrington, Director, Public Works and Environmental Services
Laura Grape, Director, Resource Management Division, Fairfax County Park Authority
Christopher King, Manager, Huntley Meadows Park Natural Resources, Fairfax County Park Authority
Dave Lawlor, Ecologist III, Fairfax County Park Authority
Andrea Lewis, Staff Aide, Braddock District Office
Marcia Pape, Senior Legislative Assistant, Braddock District Office
Justin Pistore, Project Manager II, Public Works and Environmental Services
Charles Smith, Project Coordinator & Branch Chief, Public Works and Environmental Services
Adam Wynn, Senior Planner, Planning and Development Branch, Fairfax County Park Authority

LimnoTech Representatives Present:

Lynne Mowery, PE, CFM, Project Manager, WSP
Tim Schmitt, Senior Environmental Scientist/Principal
Craig Taylor, PE, Hydraulics and River Rehabilitation Specialist

Members Absent:

Matt Bright, Earth Sangha
Karen Campblin, Fairfax NAACP
Mary Cortina, Planning Commission
Cathy Field, North Springfield Civic Association
David Kepley, Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions
Stella Koch, Environmental Quality Advisory Council
Jakelin Lake, Individual
Ernest Rodriguez, Mid-Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts (MORE)
Hasan Shah, Individual

Public Members in Attendance:

Laidler Campbell
Sandra Frieswyk
Eileen Vaughan
Patrick Read
Phil Shimar

Call to Order and Introductory Remarks

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Sharon Bulova at 7:00 p.m. Attendance was taken, and a quorum was present.

Chairman Bulova recognized the anniversary of September 11th and urged everyone to keep the families and friends impacted by the tragic events of that day in their thoughts and prayers.

Chairman Bulova reminded members that subcommittee meetings are open to the public and are, therefore, open for input from the public. She thanked everyone for attending the subcommittee meetings and stated that she invited three regular attendees to become full members of the Task Force: Vicki Arnold, Delegate Vivian Watts, and Steve Yannucci. The subcommittee chairs may recommend others who are regular attendees to join their subcommittee, subject to prior consultation with Chairman Bulova.

Under VFOIA rules, all Task Force and subcommittee meetings must be advertised in advance and basic meeting minutes must be produced for each meeting and be available to the public.

Approval of Minutes from August 14, 2023 Meeting

Martin Shepard made a motion to approve the minutes. Marta Morrissey seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by a unanimous vote.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Presentation on Managed Wetlands

A presentation on managed wetlands was given by Adam Wynn and Dave Lawlor of the Fairfax County Park Authority. Mr. Wynn presented information about different managed wetlands across the country, highlighting FDR Park in Philadelphia, Magnuson Park in Seattle, and Dyke Marsh in Fairfax County (which is managed by the National Park Service).

Mr. Lawlor, who managed the restoration of Huntley Meadows, described the process involved with creating Huntley Meadows Park. The wetland needed restoration because it silted in from development and construction in the area. When the Park Authority met with the community, one of the goals they set was to re-establish breeding birds. The park was split into two sides with different types of recreation areas. The northern section focuses on active recreation, such as hiking, biking, and jobbing, while the southern section focuses on passive recreation, like observing wildlife.

The cost for maintaining Huntley Meadows is only \$50,000 per year because the berm to maintain the meadow is very small, as is the watershed. All dredged material was left onsite during construction and used to build islands and a hill to separate the two observation areas in the park. In response to a question, Mr. Lawlor responded that the cost of construction in 2013 was \$3 million.

Mr. Jones thanked the Park Authority for their presentation, but clarified that the examples are quite different from Lake Accotink. Dyke Marsh is tidal, whereas Accotink Creek is flashy. Huntley Meadows was previously a wetland. For Lake Accotink, an existing body of water would be turned into a wetland. Mr. Wynn noted that the example of FDR Park in Philadelphia may share more similarities.

Introduction of WSP/LimnoTech

Chairman Bulova introduced the team from WSP/LimnoTech: Lynne Mowery, Project Manager with WSP; Tim Schmitt, Senior Environmental Scientist with LimnoTech; and Craig Taylor, Hydraulics and River Rehabilitation Specialist with LimnoTech.

Mr. Taylor discussed LimnoTech's philosophy and approach. He stated that they are here to present options, not tell the Task Force or County what to do. Mr. Taylor then offered some initial responses to the wetland management option questions and areas of discovery developed based on input from the community and Task Force. A brief discussion and question-and-answer period followed. LimnoTech will develop various models/concepts for what Lake Accotink could look like under different scenarios.

County staff is working with WSP/LimnoTech to develop a timeline for deliverables, which will be distributed to the Task Force.

Reports/Updates from Subcommittees

Each of the subcommittee chairs reported on the progress of their subcommittees.

Subcommittee on the Value of Lake Accotink to Lake Accotink Park and to the County – Chairman Bulova noted that the name of this subcommittee was modified at the behest of the subcommittee. Allan Robertson reported that the subcommittee split into three teams: value to the environment; recreational value; and equity issues. He stated that they hope to create a new survey focusing on questions such as whether people would continue to use the trail/park if the lake did not exist. Gail Nittle stated that Lake Accotink is the only lake in Fairfax in an underserved area and that it is a destination, as well as being ADA accessible.

Subcommittee on Impacts of and Issues with Staff Recommendation to Not Dredge – Sandy Collins reported that they are combing through the studies and staff recommendations to evaluate the process and determine the impacts of the recommendation to not dredge, including ecological and cost impacts. They would like to ensure that downstream costs were taken into account.

Subcommittee on Options to Consider Other than Full Dredging – John Cook stated that the group had an excellent discussion during which they talked about: criteria for measuring ideas; looking at a smaller lake, wetlands, savannah or open grass area; talked about kayak streams; and discussed dredge spoils.

Closing Comments

Chairman Bulova said the next meeting of the full Task Force will be held on October 2. WSP/LimnoTech will provide a progress report and the subcommittees will provide updates. Chairman Bulova named Bryan Campbell to chair the Findings Working Group; he will identify members to assist in drafting the report. Subcommittees should present their preliminary findings on November 6 and their final reports on November 27. WSP/LimnoTech will also present their deliverables to the Task Force on November 27. The findings document will be finalized by the Task Force on December 4. That document will be presented to the Board of Supervisors at its December 5 meeting and discussion will be held at the Board's Environmental Committee meeting on December 12. The Task Force may want to present their findings to the newly constituted Board of Supervisors in January 2024. Supervisor Walkinshaw stated that the Task Force should take the time it needs to develop their findings, as December 12 will not be the end of the discussion.

Questions/comments for Chairman Bulova and/or the Task Force may be submitted to BOSLakeAccotinkTaskForce@fairfaxcounty.gov or LATF@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:33 p.m.