

# **HERNDON-MONROE COMMITTEE**

***07/06/10***

## ***Attendees***

Trisha Beasley, VA Department of Environmental Quality  
Nick Bauer, TF  
Diane Blust  
John Bowman, TF  
John Carter, TF  
Dell Cheatham, VA Department of Environmental Quality  
Fred Costello, TF  
Freya De Cola  
Dave Edwards  
Rick Hamilton  
Arthur Hill, TF  
Kathy Kaplan  
Richard A. Lambert, Jr., Fairfax County Department of Planning & Zoning  
Stewart Rauch  
Greg Riegle, TF  
Mike Rolband, Wetland Studies and Solutions, Inc.  
Claudia Thompson-Deahl, Reston Association  
Gerald Volloy, TF

## ***Meeting Notes***

### **Open Forum**

Rick Hamilton—The committee needs to determine the practical limitations relating to access roads from Fairfax County Parkway and from Monroe Street to the new station. If this information is not available, studies/research should be conducted.

Jerry Volloy—The Committee needs to assess what is the best use of the wetlands site. Some of the visions stated in the past identify the wetlands as a focus/theme for redevelopment in this area. What impacts would commercial and residential development around the wetlands have on its ecological and other value? Access to the station is a problem. Can we gain access by to the station by going through or around the wetlands site? At what point does development impact the value of the wetlands site?

Fred Costello—Sprint wants to maximize its land value, so their comments should be heard with that in mind. Value of land around the stations could be as much as \$55/ft<sup>2</sup>. The sales price of the wetlands site could fund substantial mitigation elsewhere. Could a developer buy out the permit?

John Bowman—There is an inherent conflict between the public good that would be realized by preserving the wetland area and that which would result from developing the site. While this is a legitimate policy debate, if the area is developed, Reston will lose a unique habitat area—the wetlands should be preserved. The wetlands would be

a prominent feature at this station and several have mentioned that development around this station should have an environmental focus. However, development around all of the stations should be environmentally sensitive, not just at this station.

## **Sunrise Valley Wetlands Q&A**

### **Mike Rolband (Wetland Studies and Solutions, Inc.)**

- Reston was developed prior to the Clean Water Act. The SV wetland project was designed in 1993. Seventeen parcels to be developed were surveyed, and 3.25 acres of wetland impacts were identified. These impacts were mitigated at the SV site. The location was selected in part because of low land value at the time.
- Sunrise Valley Nature Park (SVNP) comprises ~15.75 acres, and includes upland buffer areas, an old farm pond with a restored dam (as part of the mitigation project), pre-existing wetlands, and ~3.25 acres of created wetlands.
- It is an oasis wetland (not part of a stream valley corridor system, though it does contribute flow to a receiving stream intermittently). The system had insufficient water inputs to sustain a wetland, so a Claymax® liner was installed to reduce infiltration. Water flow to the wetland has since increased initial construction as expected because of the development of the adjacent office buildings as well as the residential units on the west side of Monroe Street. Wetlands probably also exist in the parcel to the north of the SVNP on the County-owned parcel, but a wetlands survey has not yet been completed.
- The wetland in a developed area, and was constructed with the expectation that the surrounding land would be developed. Trails/boardwalks bordering and through the site were intended to provide pedestrian linkage from Monroe St. to the parking & ride facility. A boardwalk that would have provided that connection was not built, nor were the trails paved, because of budget constraints.
- The owner at the time, the Reston Land Corp., orally promised to transfer the property to Reston Association; however, that was not completed and the property has subsequently been sold several times.
- The restrictive covenant on the site runs to the Army Corps of Engineers.
- It would most likely be possible to get a permit to impact the site. An individual permit would probably be required due to public interest that would be expected, even for an access road that only affected the buffer area.
- Corps recommendations range from 25 – 50 ft buffer area. Impacts to the buffer on the west side of the wetland would have the least impact on the wetland area.
- The CWA requires a three-fold process to impact a wetland area:
  - Can the impact be avoided? That is, the developer must show that there is no other alternative in the marketplace.
  - Unavoidable impacts must be minimized.
  - Resulting impacts must be compensated.
- If the SVNP were developed, there are no opportunities for a similar-sized mitigation project in the Reston area. The mitigation must be completed in the watershed, but it would NOT likely be located in the Reston community.

- On the Herndon side, Quadrangle Development holds an individual permit to impact wetlands near Sugarland Run.

### **Claudia Thompson-Deahl (Reston Association)**

- Migratory songbird populations have been declining at a rate of ~1 – 5% per year, depending on species, based on a recent 29-year study, and one of the principle causes is habitat loss (article from Bay Journal).
- The Sunrise Valley Nature Park offers wetland habitat that is important for many of these species and unique in Reston. Over 120 bird species have been documented at the Park, as well as numerous insects and other wildlife.
- Species diversity at the Park has declined with increasing adjacent development (e.g., Harriers left after the building were constructed along Monroe Street), but the Park sill offers high-value wildlife habitat. Additional development in the area is not inconsistent with maintaining that high-value habitat.
- The typical suburban yard, planted with lawn and exotic ornamental plants, offers little benefit to native wildlife.
- The Park offers educational opportunities for children and adults, including camps, field trips, bird walks, and outings for seniors. Nature Deficit Disorder, which refers to behavioral problems in children that spend little time outdoors, was documented in a Richard Louv’s 2005 book *Last Child in the Woods*.
- Improved maintenance of the Sunrise Valley Nature Park would enhance the wildlife habitat (e.g., removing the excessive growth of water lilies to restore open water habitat) and improve access to the Park. Reston Associate is prepared to perform that maintenance if the Park is donated to Reston Association.

### **Trisha Beasley, Dell Cheatham (VA Department of Environmental Quality)**

- As a mitigated wetland, the site has all of the protections afforded to any wetlands area.
- The state permitting process for disturbing wetlands requires completion of a function and value assessment and alternatives analysis. Among the questions to be answered would be the impacts on the overall watershed.
- The permitting process considers public benefit (benefit as a wetland vs. benefit of development).
- County involvement would be a significant factor—can either promote or restrict development.
- Regulatory authority covers protection only of species listed as threatened or endangered, although impacts on other species are considered in the permitting process.

### **Committee Discussion**

- Supervisor Hudgins is unlikely to approve plans for development of the SVNP.
- However, the political landscape can change, and if we want to ensure long-term protection of the SVNP, additional measures would be needed.
- Ideally, the SVNP should be transferred to public, or quasi-public, ownership (e.g., Reston Association).

- Need to look at all three stations together to evaluate how best to achieve the desired goals (e.g., ridership).
- The County has little opportunity to affect the outcome of plans for redevelopment in Herndon. However, continued communication between the County and Herndon should be encouraged.