

## **Salona Park Master Plan**

Public Comment Meeting November 17, 2010

Franklin Sherman Elementary School

6630 Brawner Street, McLean, VA 22101

### **Meeting Summary**

A Public Comment Meeting was held on the evening of November 17, 2010 for the purpose of presenting the draft Salona Park Master Plan to the community and accepting public comment toward the park's future design. Approximately 132 attendees signed into the meeting.

Public comment on the draft Salona Park Master Plan was accepted by the Park Authority for the record through December 17, 2010.

### **Introductions and Opening Remarks**

Park Authority Public Information Officer Judy Pedersen provided some welcoming remarks and introduced several people in attendance that evening including:

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Kevin Fay       | Park Authority Board, Dranesville District Representative                   |
| John Foust      | Supervisor, Dranesville District  |
| Marie Reinsdorf | Park Authority Board, At-Large Representative                               |
| Harry Glasgow   | Park Authority Board, At-Large Representative                               |
| John Dargle     | Director, Fairfax County Park Authority                                     |
| Dave Bowden     | Director, Park Authority Planning & Development Division                    |
| Sandy Stallman  | Manager, Park Planning Branch   |
| Andy Galusha    | Project Manager, Park Planning Branch                                       |
| Gayle Hooper    | Landscape Architect, Park Planning Branch                                   |
| Ed Busenlehner  | Area 1 Manager, Park Operations   |
| Matthew Kaiser  | Deputy Public Information Officer   |
| Aimee Wells     | Historical Archaeologist, Cultural Resource Management & Protection Section |

### **Opening Remarks – Key Points**

KEVIN FAY                      PARK AUTHORITY BOARD, DRANESVILLE DISTRICT

- Welcome
- Glad to see so many interested in preserving this fabulous historic property
- The Park Authority has received dozens of comments since starting the master planning process in February
- The Park Authority looks forward to hearing the community's thoughts
- Proud of progress made in his seven years as a Park Board Member with Clemyjontri, Turner Farm Observatory, Colvin Run Mill, McLean Central Park, Spring Hill RECenter, and the Pimmit Run trail system
- 2005 agreement to preserve Salona is a legacy moment for us all
- Planning process for future use is critical to ultimate success
- Acknowledged hearing a variety of complaints regarding the process

- The Park Authority is not trying to rush the process
- No set deadlines for Salona
- Assured that staff is open to additional input and is willing to consider other proposals and hopefully more will come forward
- Draft master plan provides possibility of multiple, alternative interpretations
- The \$16 million spent to acquire Salona represents the largest real-estate investment ever made by Fairfax County
- In 2005, the negotiation to acquire Salona anticipated and specifically contemplated the use of up to 10 acres for active recreation with the expectation that the park would go through the normal planning process we are currently engaged in which could result in a change of use
- Changes have been made to the proposed master plan, to expand the preservation opportunities, while reducing the area used for active recreation
- The master plan is just a concept
- At the February 2010 meeting, we expressed doubts whether athletic fields would be developed at Salona due to expense and current focus on synthetic fields (not allowed by the Salona conservation easement)
- Responsibility is to identify options and weave them together into plan that is faithful to conservation easement
- Your constructive input is critical and welcome
- After the 30 day comment period, staff will consult with the Park Authority Board, the Board of Supervisors, Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, and the DuVal family on the next steps, including the possibility of a task force
- No deadline, but the county does not have infinite staff, especially with the current economic situation, so process must be efficient and effective
- Currently no funds for any facilities at Salona
- No bond referendums scheduled for the foreseeable future
- Park Authority was awarded third Gold Medal for the best large park system in the nation by the National Parks and Recreation Association
- That is a profound statement and testament to the hard work of the staff that fulfill our mission to preserve our natural and cultural resources while providing active recreation for the citizens of Fairfax County
- In the face of extraordinary budget pressures, this staff produces remarkable results every day
- Hopefully you can appreciate the hard work and dedication of Park Authority staff in the context of your constructive comments tonight

JOHN FOUST

SUPERVISOR, DRANESVILLE DISTRICT

- Good evening, thank you for coming out
- This is a reflection of our community and interests that we all have in ensuring that it is the best it can possibly be
- Appreciated all Park Authority members who came out to hear the discussion tonight
- Received several letters and emails
- As Supervisor I know the Park Authority is not rushing to a decision

- I believe the Park Authority is interested in hearing our input and will take the time necessary to get this right
- The first public meeting was held over nine months ago
- Tonight's meeting was postponed from September to November because of community requests for more time to work on alternative proposals
- It will be many more months before the Park Authority Board adopts a master plan for Salona
- We all recognize Salona is a very unique and special property
- All of us in this room are privileged to be part of this process that will determine how Salona is used
- The opportunity to deliver two playing fields to McLean was a key factor in the Board of Supervisors agreeing to purchase this very, very expensive property
- When a deal was reached, most members of the McLean community, including myself, were thrilled that the Park Authority and Board of Supervisors were able to protect Salona from becoming just another subdivision
- The Park Authority in essence felt that was the deal it had with the Board of Supervisors and the DuVals
- Everyone knew that there would be a formal public planning process that we are now participating in
- It is very clear to me that there are other uses that need to be and will be considered
- I am confident that the Park Authority will take the time necessary to get this right, and they will fully involve everyone in the community that has an interest in the process

DAN DUVAL

OWNER OF SALONA

- My parents bought Salona in 1952, and our family still lives there
- My parents restored the house and lived there until they passed away
- Salona is special to our family, and I believe it is a special place for all of McLean
- Salona was a refuge for James Madison in the War of 1812, and part of Camp Griffin in the Civil War
- Salona also represents one of the last remaining examples of 19th and 20th century farms in this part of Fairfax
- Salona represents an earlier era when Virginia was sustained by an agrarian economy
- My parents were equally devoted to environmental and conservation causes
- They both loved Salona, placing a historic easement on the house and about eight of the surrounding acres in 1971
- We resisted developers and sought to preserve the property for future generations which we believe my parents would have wanted
- Thanks to the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust and Kevin Fay, we eventually worked out a plan that we hoped would achieve that goal
- The conservation easement that protects 41 acres, 10 of which can be used for active and passive recreation

- There is also a provision to the county of the right to purchase the property, including the house, if it passes out of our family
- Our goals in granting the conservation easement are summed up as “to preserve the open, scenic, natural, and historic character and values of the Property”
- We also intend to minimize any adverse impacts to our neighbors
- We agreed and understood that two natural turf rectangular athletic fields were among the permitted uses under the conservation easement
- Understood that the athletic fields were a significant factor in the county’s agreement to the conservation easement
- We also understood that the park plan would be developed in collaboration with the community and the public would have a meaningful opportunity to help shape the plan
- We didn’t think fields would be imposed on the community if that’s not what they wanted
- We believed that the property represents a significant natural and heritage resource that should be carefully and thoughtfully protected as part of the master planning process
- Salona offers an unparalleled opportunity as a place where children and adults can learn about and experience the cultural and natural resources of the site where people can interact and build community
- Community members have identified some very creative and thoughtful concepts and I hope that we will hear more tonight
- These can provide a truly remarkable asset for our community while respecting its heritage
- It is our sincere hope and desire that through a cooperative effort among our community members and the Park Authority, we can create a remarkable park that will serve as a venue for natural resource, history, sustainability education, and enjoyment for all

### **Staff Presentation**

Andy Galusha, project manager for the Salona Park Master Plan, provided a brief history of the property, site conditions, surrounding context and an overview of the major elements of the draft master plan. To access the PowerPoint presentation please go online at:  
<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/plandev/salona.htm>.

### **Public Comments**

Following the staff presentation, an open comment period was provided to permit those in attendance to share their impressions of the draft master plan. The following is a summary of each speaker’s comments expressed during this session.

**BETH CHUNG**

**MCLEAN LAND CONSERVANCY**

- Characterized herself as a “Soccer Mom”
- Soccer fields do not belong here

- Natural resources are not inventoried
- Suggested the plan contains inappropriate uses because of streams
- No archaeology study done
- Community consultation has been insufficient
- Opportunity for students and citizens to study nature
- Use is subservient to conservation
- 20% participate in sports - other activities need to be considered
- Urged the Park Authority to pursue excellence

TRISH BUTLER

MCLEAN RESIDENT

- To use Salona for fields and parking lot is inappropriate
- Devastates one of the most perfect pieces of undisturbed land
- Let nature of the place guide the plans
- Salona presents a rare opportunity and the need for a suitable vision
- Deliver features that most park users will actually use based on Needs Assessment
- Community park, biking trails, nature centers, historic site can be accomplished all in one plan
- No action should be taken until meaningful input has been received

GHASSAN ABUKARAH

GREEN MCLEAN/GREEN SPUR

- Worked with groups to present alternative vision for park
- Displayed professionally rendered visuals/graphics to illustrate concepts
- Need better vision/alternative
- Speak to the history, ecology and McLean itself
- Create sense of identity for the community
- Proposed fully sustainable (net zero) nature center and community gardens
- System of trails connecting to hedgerows
- Proposed public/private partnership

BARI LEVINGSTON

FRIENDS OF MCLEAN CENTRAL PARK

- Don't want to see soccer fields at Salona
- Misses special places that she grew up with
- Can't access the natural resources in the county
- Salona provides opportunity for special natural area
- Have resources but don't maximize their use
- Can have duck pond, garden plots, farm to table program to bring community together

SYBIL CALDWELL

MCLEAN RESIDENT

- Represents neighbors directly affected
- Personal and property safety are basic priority, safety issues exist in the current plan
- Park entrance close to intersection, neighbors wait long periods to get out of neighborhood
- Proposed fields and parking lot will increase waiting

- Turnover times in parking lot will create shortage of parking with overflow in the neighborhood
- Requests place at the table for final decisions regarding the park

MARGARET VANDERHYDE

PARK NEIGHBOR

- Last original meadow habitat in Fairfax county
- Cultural landscape report states primary goal to preserve, interpret and make acceptable the historical and environmental features of the site including the conservation easement
- Promote public/private partnership, promote science & technology studies, restoration of Chesapeake Bay and a learning place
- Process has been flawed. FCPA informed the residents without public dialogue what they plan for the park
- Active use is permitted NOT prescribed

CHRISTY JOBE CARTER

MCLEAN RESIDENT

- 50 year resident
- Desires a dog park at Salona
- Group prepared to have non-profit dog park organization that will work with Park Authority
- No direct impact on any one neighborhood
- Venue for public service activities like rabies clinic, adoption events & licensing
- No need for lighting
- Creates a sense of community especially for seniors

LYNN WHITE

MCLEAN RESIDENT

- Not all land needs to be developed to be useful, prefer it to undeveloped
- Desire to change location of a portion of the hiking trail at the southern tail that runs near her property line and swimming pool located within 20 feet

AMY GOULD

ANNANDALE RESIDENT

- Would like an alternative that protects the integrity of Salona
- Site deserves great consideration
- Would like open public planning process, opportunities for alternatives to preserve Salona

KRIS UNGER

LANDS & WATERS

- Works with school children to learn about preservation and connect kids with nature
- Urges FCPA to consider alternatives
- Undeveloped areas like Salona are rare and special and need to be preserved and protected
- Important opportunity to give outdoor experience to our children and future generations

SILVIJA STRIKIS

MCLEAN RESIDENT

- Believe that Salona needs to be preserved
- Bad concept should not be adopted
- Traffic will become worse from Tysons development that is also generating need for new fields at Salona
- Citizens should not have to pay for a lack of planning from developers in Tysons
- List of priorities needs to be flipped and developers should be paying for services necessary
- No asphalt, lime or dog waste

BARBARA CHAMBERS

VIRGINIA BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

- 53-year resident of Fairfax County
- FCPA is a good organization
- Virginia Bluebird Society has bluebird boxes in most County parks
- Encourage McLean residents to keep property as natural as possible
- Adds benefits for environment and education
- Cooperative sanctuary program could be used at Salona
- Meadows are important for birds
- Suggests cavity nester bluebird trail, which would be a first for McLean

SUSAN NOTLANS

MCLEAN RESIDENT

- Member of Architectural Review Board
- Salona has amazing meadow and view shed
- Only property left on Rt. 123
- Easement is not a mandate to act, list of things that may happen

MIGUEL BROWNE

MCLEAN RESIDENT

- Development at Tysons is profiting greatly from citizens at the expense of free space
- Scotts Run exists due to involvement of citizens
- Would like to vote to leave the land as it is for now

JOHN DUKOVICH

MCLEAN RESIDENT

- Three areas impacted by what happens at Salona – education, water quality and cost
- Increased impervious surfaces in county diminishes water quality
- Encourage minimal development from a water quality aspect
- Runoff will drain into Pimmit Run and the Potomac
- Education – Green McLean had good ideas, also butterfly gardens, rain gardens, plant more trees, encourage wildlife
- Cost – initial cost of fields, then ongoing maintenance over time adds up
- Gardens can use volunteers

MARK TURNER

PARK NEIGHBOR

- Characterized himself as a builder from Wyoming who plays soccer

- Built carbon-neutral demonstration house through public-private partnership
- There is an appetite to form partnerships in McLean
- Great opportunity to do a good thing, something special
- Economic viability for public-private partnership
- Engage children in nature center allow them to experience Salona

JEANNETTE STEWART

LANDS & WATERS

- Raised three children that played soccer
- Athletic fields have value and limitations
- Visits to stream valley parks, patches of meadow and forest, as well as historic places. These places allowed children to grow, understand great events, agricultural past, and long history of land
- These visits were most valuable time spent with children
- Enabled them to grow in ways no book or athletic endeavor could
- Worked with students for eight years and found that most have been on athletic fields, but almost none had spent a day exploring a forest or historical farm; missing valuable central experiences
- When we lose these places, we lose our greatest teachers

FRANK CRANDALL

EQAC & MCA

- Resident of Mclean for 30 years, 15 with EQAC & MCA
- Asked how many had seen Park Authority Board Room with no wall space left for national awards, noting that FCPA did something right
- Dranesville owes Kevin Fay a great debt for ensuring we preserved lots of great parkland
- Athletics is well-organized in asking for more fields, which is fine, but other groups are less organized
- Nature center is a top priority
- Salona hedge rows and meadows are more diverse than at current county nature centers
- In England hedge rows would be protected as important natural and cultural resources. Suggest that they should be protected at Salona
- McLean is not poorly blessed with athletic fields
- 2003 Park Authority survey of user needs noted that athletic fields ranked 17th in importance while trails and natural environmental preservations ranked one, two or three

JOE WETZEL

MCLEAN RESIDENT

- Thanks to Board, Park Authority, for your willingness to listen
- Soccer fields are poor reflection of uniqueness this land offers to local and national history
- Proposed fields and parking lot would be a really trashy way to welcome people to Fairfax County and McLean with the notion of how we think of history

ROBERT THOMPSON

MCLEAN RESIDENT

- How many other historic sites in McLean date back to 1717 and are small versions of Mt Vernon?
- What are we going to do with this asset, this historical site?
- Are we really going to think about it?
- People who know the Park Authority Board will know that they are well meaning individuals but we need to ask all the right questions
- Not that we have all the answers
- Also happy that this didn't devolve into a blue state/red state sort of debate
- How many other historical properties in McLean that we would want to put a major development on?
- The soccer fields are a conundrum, but my big concern is this parking lot
- Have you really thought about this issue of transportation at this very busy intersection?
- Talking about 123 which is a major transportation artery
- How many other historic sites on that type of artery that would be proposed to have concentrated activity, not just people coming and going casually to the park, but people coming to specific games at specific times?
- Have we asked and considered all the questions before we make the final decision?

BARB MALES

MCLEAN RESIDENT

- Soccer parent and dog owner
- I don't support plans for soccer fields or a dog park at Salona
- Fully aware of need for athletic fields to support youth
- Not just any parcel should be used; the purpose needs to fit the land itself. Use land that does not have such a historical significance
- Has major opportunity to preserve not only local but national history
- Salona is a unique property
- Properties such as Salona should be preserved for use by all, not just special interest groups or benefit of Tysons developers
- Preserving a few acres around the house while carving up land for active use fields would destroy a piece of our heritage that can never be reclaimed
- As a private property Salona was not accessible, but now as a protected park we have the opportunity to provide a wonderful natural park, steps from downtown McLean
- Hear that at least one soccer parent and dog owner does not want another soccer field or dog park on this land
- Park Authority it is up to you to protect our heritage, let Salona stand as a testament to good, well thought out landuse planning, not outdated concepts leading to more suburban sprawl

CAROL HERRICK

MCLEAN RESIDENT

- Member of History Commission
- Concerned that historic significance of property has not been addressed
- I think we can incorporate a historic walking trail or historic park,
- These historic signs should be on historic walking trail

- Could be incorporated together and put at front, so everyone could see
- Bluebird houses could be incorporated with historic names
- Heritage trees, such as crepe myrtle
- How about canons; one pointing north another pointing south
- McLean only community in Virginia that does not have anything to signify that it was part of civil war, which it was very much of
- Showed old picture of cannon at Salona with house in background
- All this could be done through private funds and donations
- This is cost-effective, not a lot of maintenance, and is educational
- Could show demonstration with cast concrete animals representing farm life during Smoot period
- Could have tablet with display of Declaration of Independence that was hidden at Chain Bridge when British burned Washington

#### ED PICKINS

#### FAIRFAX TRAILS & STREAMS

- Started by thanking DuVals
- Support green concept, keeping the meadows, adding bluebirds
- Make master plan as specific as possible so we can put trails on the ground quickly
- If we come up with alternative plan the people from Kurtz Road, and the school need to be able to get onto the property
- We do need access from Kurtz Road for trails and education
- This can be done without significant impact to DuVals
- Natural surface trails, how wide, the narrower the better as not to disturb nature
- Plan shows trail going down a 40-foot bank please revise
- It took five years to get to this point, I hope it doesn't take five more to get something built
- Fairfax Trails & Streams is ready to help with the trails and bluebirds

#### UNIDENTIFIED INDIVIDUAL

#### MCLEAN

- I was around when Duvals bought Salona
- I know that they would care about it remaining as natural as possible
- Senator Duval was best environmentalist Virginia ever had

#### WES CALLENDER

#### GREAT FALLS CITIZEN ASSOCIATIONS

- This is a national treasure
- Part of common cultural heritage
- We are the county with currently the best Park Authority in the country
- Current plan with soccer fields and parking lot displays disappointing lack of vision
- Last night the Great Falls COA board voted to endorse the MCA resolution on Salona
- Urge Park Authority to go back rework plan
- Take more time to discuss with community

QUAZI ZAMAN

MCLEAN CRICKET CLUB

- Thank you for this opportunity to talk
- Focus on youth cricket.
- Second most popular sport in the world
- US 17th ranked in cricket in world
- Not proposed rectangular field, cricket is oval shaped
- Pitch in middle 10x80 only flat space, rest can be meadow
- No synthetic turf just green grass with yellow flowers
- Only high part is white screen
- Example can fit exactly in park
- Presidents, Clinton, Bush, and Obama have played cricket
- Prior to 1891, US was second in world for cricket
- Historical for Salona, even George Washington played cricket
- Only one cricket field in Fairfax County having another would be great

### **Final Comments**

Kevin Fay

PARK BOARD MEMBER

- Thank you all for coming
- We have heard a lot of very interesting and thought-provoking comments tonight
- Obviously I know that staff will take these to heart and go back and look at them
- Reminded that written comment period ends on December 20, 2010
- Staff, Park Board, Board of Supervisors will discuss direction we want to take with the process
- We have no timetable
- If you have a funding opportunity, I encourage that you bring that forward as well
- You have been very polite, helpful, and considerate, we appreciate that very much, and look forward to working with you in creating a master plan that we can be proud of for generations

This concluded the meeting.