

Olander and Margaret Banks Neighborhood Park

Public Information Meeting May 5, 2010

Lane Elementary School

Meeting Summary

A Public Information Meeting was held on the evening of May 5, 2010 for the purpose of increasing public awareness of the project and the park master planning process as well as to invite public comment and input toward the park's future design.

Introductions and Opening Remarks

In attendance:

Jeff McKay	Supervisor, Lee District
Ed Batten	Park Authority Board, Lee District
Harold Henderson	former Park Authority Board representative for Lee District
Harry Glasgow	Park Authority Board, Member-at-large
Bob McLaren	Environmental Quality Advisory Council, Lee District
Carrie Douglas	Kingstowne Residential Owners Corporation

Park Authority

John Dargle	Director, Fairfax County Park Authority
Dave Bowden	Director, Planning and Development Division (PDD)
Sandy Stallman	Manager, Park Planning Branch, PDD
Pat Rosend	Project Manager, Park Planning Branch, PDD
Joe Nilson	Manager, Area 3 Operations
Dave Fallert	Park Services, Lee District Park
Charles Smith	Senior Naturalist, Natural Resource Protection Branch

Staff Presentation

Overview

Sandy Stallman provided an outline of the evening's agenda as well as an overview of FCPA and the Park Master Plan process.

Site Conditions and Background

Pat Rosend, Project Manager for the Olander and Margaret Banks Neighborhood Park, provided a brief history of the property, some local context and description of the site.

Public Comments:

GENERAL COMMENTS

- o Various people in attendance commented on how they currently make use of the site to stroll, walk their dogs and, generally, enjoy the open space.

WATERSHED PLANNING / LOCAL FLOODING

- o Question was raised regarding coordination of park efforts with those of the County watershed planning efforts. The area already experiences periodic flooding. *The Park Authority is already coordinating with Stormwater Planning Division to enlist their expertise for how best to address the current conditions of the existing stream.*

FUTURE PARK USES / FEATURES

Off-leash Dog Park

- o Numerous people currently use the site as a place to walk their dog
- o Numerous comments indicated support of an off-leash dog area on this site.
- o Request was made for obtaining additional guidance on how to establish a user group that could support an off-leash dog area. *The Park Authority clarified that establishment of an off-leash dog area requires a sponsor group to enforce standards and help maintain the area. This and other guidelines regarding off leash dog areas can be found at the Park Authority [website](#).*
- o Comment was made by others in attendance voicing concerns about related impacts that might be generated from a dog park, such as noise, need for parking and waste removal.
- o In response to the previous concern, one attendee noted a nearby off leash dog areas, stating that he had never noticed a noise issue at that site.
- o Question was raised as to why there are not any off leash dog areas in Kingstowne already.
- o Question was raised as to the typical space required for an off leash dog area? *These areas can vary in size but typically range from ¼ acre to 1 acre.*
- o Comment was made that an off leash dog area would be preferable to some sort of paved facility such as a basketball court.
- o Question was raised as to why/how much parking would be required for an off leash dog area. *Park Authority staff responded that parking is generally recommended for an off leash dog area. The number of spaces would be determined by the size of the facility.*

- o Additional clarification was provided by Park Authority staff that leash laws are in effect throughout the County including all parks, unless within a specified off-leash area.

Playground facilities

- o Several of those in attendance voiced a request for the inclusion of playground facilities and trails that are traversable by those with strollers.

Open Space

- o Many in attendance spoke of a preference to maintain the existing character of the property.
- o Several mentioned that by its proximity to the surrounding residential properties, the Banks property serves as an adjunct addition to their front yard/back yards.
- o Mention was given the topography, the open area may provide for sledding use in the winter.
- o Mention was made of the aesthetic value of the land in and of itself.
- o Mention was made of preserving the park as an "oasis" as Mr. Banks had preserved this land from being developed.
- o Request was made that any additional landscaping to be installed would include only native plant species.

TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC

- o Question was raised regarding safety issues related to people seeking to cross Old Telegraph Road to enter the park in light of the problem with speeding vehicles along this road. *Supervisor McKay responded to this concern noting that he is very aware of the issue. He also noted that issues related to transportation on public streets are under the purview of the state. There are permissible methods to introduce traffic calming measures but that it is addressed through the state and that it is a lengthy petition process that is difficult to satisfy all the criteria. A previous analysis was done for Old Telegraph Road several years ago and the criteria could not be met at that time. Supervisor McKay stated a willingness to request additional study by the state; however, this is not an issue that can be addressed by the Park Authority.*
- o Several attendees stated they would prefer not to see an increase of traffic into the neighborhood.
- o Several expressed concern about people walking across private property to access the park.
- o Question was raised whether parking would be provided on the property and, if so, how much. *The Park Authority responded that the amount of parking provided is determined based upon the uses developed.*

MAINTENANCE

- o Question was raised regarding the ability of the Park Authority to maintain the site in its current condition, particularly the schedule for mowing. *Park Authority staff responded that the current standard is to mow grass in parks every two weeks.*

SECURITY

- Concern was expressed about the ability to maintain security on the property, indicating that some gang activity had been noted in the area. *Park Authority staff responded that the police help us to safeguard park property but added that the adjacent homeowners are often the "eyes and ears" of the area. Any illegal activities on parkland should be reported to the police who will respond. In working closely with the police, The Park Authority maintains more than 417 parks with very little crime.*
- Mention was made of nearby Hayfield Park which experienced some problem with illegal activity in the mid-1970's. A citizen watch group was formed in the area and there currently is no problem in that park.
- Mention was made with regard to the value of the existing fencing on the property and that perpetuation of the fence would enhance security.

HISTORIC VALUE OF PROPERTY / BUILDINGS

- A question was raised as to the historic value of the home and property by nature of what the Banks family has achieved in the community.
- Additional note was made that the Kingstowne area was formerly known as Carrolltown and had been an African American community.
- Preference was stated for preserving the existing home to serve for historic and civic purposes.
- Question was raised as to whether the Park Authority has the ability to preserve historical property. *Park Authority staff responded that we maintain many [historical properties](#) and act as the historic curator for the county. Funding for maintenance of these facilities is provided through tax dollars, rent from special events and support from friends groups. Capital improvements are generally funded through voter approved bonds.*
- The existing buildings need to be evaluated for public use. *This will typically be done when the Park Authority gains possession following the expiration of the life estate.*
- Mention was made of preserving the existing home as a tribute, similar to how the house is maintained at Green Spring Gardens, that might be used as a gathering place for the community. Although, it was noted that the Manor House at Green Spring has a longer historic legacy.