

Kings Park Park Master Plan Revision
Summary of Public Information Meeting
March 13, 2008

County Staff Attendees:

Supervisor Sharon Bulova, Braddock District and staff member Christina Fullmer
Park Authority Board Member Winnie Shapiro, Braddock District
FCPA Staff: Diane Probus, Project Leader; Sandy Stallman, Manager, Park Planning Branch (PPB); Andi Dorlester, Senior Planner, PPB; Meghan Fellows, Naturalist, Natural Resource Management and Protection Section; Mark Rogers, Manager, Area 4; and Bob Stevenson, Area 4

Citizens in Attendance:

John Cook, President, Kings Park Civic Association and association members
Total Attendees = 63 (see sign-in sheets)

Meeting Summary

After the conclusion of the regular monthly Kings Park Civic Association meeting Andi Dorlester introduced Braddock District Supervisor Sharon Bulova and Braddock Park Authority Board representative Winnie Shapiro, who both gave opening remarks. Both Andi Dorlester and Diane Probus then gave a presentation on the master planning process, the park's background and the current park site conditions of Kings Park Park. After this presentation the meeting was opened to questions and comments from the audience. Shown below are the questions and comments that were recorded at the meeting and the Park Authority responses to those questions which were added after the meeting.

Questions from the Meeting:

Q1: I took my team to practice at the Kings Park Park ball field recently and there was a sign at the pitcher's mound that said the field is closed. Why is the field closed and how can I change the policy on when it is opened?

A: The field officially opens on March 29th. It is Park Authority policy to keep Level 2 fields (fields without irrigation or lights) closed from November to late March to allow seed to germinate and dormant grass to grow.

Q2: Could the ball field be upgraded to a synthetic field?

A: No, this field is not appropriate for conversion to a synthetic field. It was originally designed as an unscheduled practice field which allows teams and individuals to use it on a first come, first served basis. Kings Park Park has one of the few practice fields still available in the parks. In addition, the sloping topography and location of Resource Protection Area adjacent to the stream are natural park features which limit the field size.

Q3: Would it be possible to change the orientation of the field so that a full-sized field could fit in the space where the current diamond field is now?

A: The field is designated as a 60' field for youth baseball and fast pitch softball. To convert the field to a full-sized ball field would require extending the current field by 150 to 200 feet. The field's surrounding topography and proximity to the Resource Protection Area prevents an expansion of the field even if it is oriented in another direction.

Q4: Why is the field muddy on the left side of the ball field and why does the former pool site have wet ground?

A: A spring near the southwest corner of the ball field discharges in that area causing the wet ground. Also, the ball field is within the stream's floodplain which is another reason the field may be unusually wet. The former pool site does not appear to drain well and needs further examination.

Q5: Does the county have options that are appropriate for this size park with the park's existing constraints? Examples of what types of recreational facilities could be considered for a park of this size and type would make it easier to come up with ideas.

A: The initial meeting is to introduce the existing park features and begin a community discussion. We will schedule a public planning workshop this summer where we will present alternative concepts for potential changes and facilities that would be appropriate for this size park. Each of these concepts will incorporate ideas we received from citizens and staff during this meeting and communications received between now and the public workshop.

Q6: Can the Park Authority tell us what uses would not fit or be appropriate in the open space?

A: The size of the open area in the former pool site is approximately 90 x 120 feet. Although rectangular in shape, this area is not large enough for full-sized rectangle athletic fields. Smaller-scale facilities and activities will fit best in this space, such as a picnic area with or without a pavilion, a micro soccer field, playground, or leave it as an open, grassy area that could be used for a variety of activities, or a dog park. We could also look at trying to reforest the area to expand the natural area in the park.

Q7: What is the duration for the planning process?

A: We anticipate having the master plan revision approved by the Park Authority Board in March 2009. We have added a public planning workshop to the original schedule which will extend the length of the planning process.

Q8: Is there a specific amount of money available for park improvements?

A: At this time there is no money designated for improvements to Kings Park Park. It is possible that funding may be included in the 2008 Park Bond Referendum that will be on the ballot in

November. Once facilities are planned, it may be easier to attract funding for the various options.

Q9: Based on the Park Authority's design experience what should be incorporated in the park to discourage vandalism and illegal activity? How can a park be designed to minimize illegal activity?

There are design strategies that can be used in the park to discourage vandalism and improve park safety. Some of these strategies are already used in the park such as having two entrances into the park so police can drive in to monitor activity, the provision of facilities that attract a variety of park users to keep the park busy, weekly park maintenance and prompt repair of vandalized property. Throughout the planning process we will look for additional methods to incorporate in the master plan to promote visitor safety. A good source of information that the Park Authority utilizes is the publication, *Safety by Design: Creating a Safer Environment in Virginia* prepared by the Virginia Crime Prevention Association.

Q10: Will we be brought into the process? KPCA would like to develop a concept to show the Park Authority.

A: The KPCA or any individual citizen is welcome to submit suggestions to the Park Authority at any time between now and the public planning workshop to be held in early summer. At this workshop, the community will have the opportunity to see and comment on several plan options that could incorporate suggestions received from the public. At the workshop, there will be opportunities to ask questions and comment on these options as well as to propose alternate options.

Q11: Is there any room for a dog park in Kings Park Park?

A: The open space at the former pool site is large enough for a small dog park although the site is not ideal for this use because of its close proximity to residences. Off-leash Dog Areas at parks are required to have a sponsoring group that operates and monitors the site, coordinates the maintenance and management of the area and responds to neighborhood complaints and also promotes the standards of Off-leash Dog Areas.

Comments from the Meeting:

- The master plan should recommend that the former pool site be graded to improve its drainage
- Would like a picnic pavilion.
- There are too many mosquitoes in the park and we would like the drainage improved to reduce them.
- Would enjoy having an open, grassy area.
- Would like a band shelter.
- Concerned about expanding the ball field since it would lead to more cars parking on the streets similar to what happened when the pool was open.
- There is a lot of trash in the park.
- Open up park more by removing trees, especially playground area for more sun.
- Do not feel safe in the park because of trees. The playground should be relocated to open area.
- Need forest area pruned and cleaned out.
- How about putting chains across entrances to keep vandals out at night?
- Would like either an indoor racquetball court with 4 walls or an outdoor court with 3 walls in the park.
- To prevent crime at night the parking lots should be lit and no restrooms built in the park because they can be a problem for criminal activity also.
- The current playground needs to have trees and underbrush cleared to open the area around it. The vegetation harbors insects, creates a dark and foreboding environment (not pleasantly shaded) and presents an unsafe environment for the parents and children using it. Children can run into the “woods” which are full of trash. The heavy vegetation blocks the sight lines making it hard for parents to watch multiple children, see the playing field from the playground, and it makes an easy hiding place for predators. .

- The best use of the park would be to enhance the natural environment and reclaim previously developed portions for natural habitat projects. Many comments at today's meeting revolve around development opportunities but this would greatly detract from the natural beauty of the Kings Park area.
- Replacement of the playground equipment geared toward older children 6-12 would be a good idea to provide additional opportunities for park utilization.

Other Comments

The Kings Park Community Association Infrastructure and Beautification Committee developed recommendations that they would like to see included in the master plan revision. The meeting minutes from the January 2, 2008 KPCA Infrastructure and Beautification Committee regarding Kings Park Park are shown below:

“We spent much of the meeting discussing plans for Kings Park Park and developed some suggestions from our committee for the Jan. 17 meeting with FCPA. Our ideas all focus on creating a more active and welcoming park, and one that is still in keeping with its location in the middle of a residential neighborhood. To that end, our suggestions are:

- a. Design a playground with a broad range of play equipment, located in one condensed area, and appealing to children from younger to older. Provide comfortable parent seating and visibility nearby.
- b. Open up the playground area by removing some trees – to allow more sun to enter and to move past the current sense that the area can be “dark and creepy.”
- c. Add picnic table to the playground area and elsewhere in the park.
- d. Provide some additional lighting around parking areas and entrances – a good safety measure even if the park is not open during nighttime hours.
- e. Create a bathroom facility near the playground and baseball field.
- f. Enlarge the baseball field to make it more usable by a broad range of play levels.
- g. Create a tennis hitting wall (half court with wall for individual practice).

- h. Create a walking path around the entire park, near the outer perimeter. This would build on some existing sections of trail, some of which need repair.
- i. Create a Frisbee golf course.
- j. On the open field (Royal Pool site), create two micro soccer fields (These fields are in demand by youth leagues in our area, and two could fit on that site).”