

SALONA PARK TASK FORCE

MEETING MINUTES

February 15, 2012

The meeting convened at 7:40 PM.

Members attending meeting: Margaret Malone, Whit Field, Mark Turner, Carole Herrick, Ed Pickens, Sybil Caldwell, Beth Chung, Joel Stillman, and Dan Duval. County staff attending: Andy Galusha, representing the Fairfax County Park Authority, and Cheryl Patten representing Supervisor John Foust.

Change to minutes of January 10, 2012 offered by Andy Galusha: Page 2, paragraph, sentence 5, and change “*would*” to “*may*”.

The first presenter was Elaine Tholen, Environmental Educator with Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), who discussed the potential educational benefits for county students that could be provided by Salona Park. “Get to Green” is the FCPS interdisciplinary curriculum program for grades Pre-K – 12th that incorporates the dual goals of environmental literacy and environmental stewardship. The FCPS program includes various public and private partnerships, one of which is with the National Federation of Ecological Schools USA. Ms. Tholen stated that Salona would be a good site for FCPS to use for their program since it is near to a number of public schools (Clusters 1 & 2, totaling 49 schools) and offers diverse learning opportunities. Salona could be used by teachers for in-service educational requirements as well as for FCPS student learning. The science and math curriculums would be enriched by students’ hands-on study of the woodlands, the wildlife, the hydrology and the ecological systems existing on the property.

Ms. Tholen explained that because of Salona’s historic significance it would be an ideal site for students to explore the full range of Virginia history which is part of the 4th grade curriculum. Q&A followed the presentation during which the following statements were made:

- A lot of infrastructure would not be needed, although restrooms will be required on site
- Riverbend Park in Great Falls and Lake Fairfax in Reston are currently used by nearby schools but the distance of these parks from the McLean schools limits students experience to very occasional use
- There is no nature center within the McLean/Langley pyramid
- Students have been responding enthusiastically to existing programs
- Virginia has signed up to participate in the US Department of Education program, Green Ribbon Schools

Representatives from George Mason University (GMU) made the second presentation. Lena Storm and Danielle Wyman from the Office of Sustainability explained that, in addition to the higher education courses offered to George Mason students, the program works with K-12 education and community

focused offerings. The higher education courses are cross curriculum among the School of Engineering, the College of Health and Human Services, the College of Science and the New Century College. Ms. Wyman stated that many organizations and groups, such as the Potomac Educational Research and Environmental Research Center would be interested in offering education programs at Salona. Community workshops and extension classes for Fairfax County residents could be offered through partnership with GMU. Suggested uses for the site would be: native plants gardens; rain gardens; a children's garden; a senior's garden; vineyard with native grapes; bee hives; and indoor meeting space.

Development of the site would be phased and would include: parking areas; nature trails and walkways; an outdoor amphitheater; picnic area; and a net zero impact or similar building for individuals or group activities. GMU could work in association with the US Green Building Association. The Walker Nature and Educational Center in Reston, Meadowlark Botanical Gardens and the Airlie Conference Center were given as local examples of sites that offer the kinds of programs that could be implemented at Salona.

Q&A followed the presentation during which the following statements were made:

- Because Salona is a unique property and is in a great location GMU would be able to fund construction of a building and/or gardens but it would depend upon the nature of the relationship between GMU and the Park Authority;
- The programming needs would drive the development of the site
- Restrooms would be required
- A sustainable garden similar to the one on the GMU campus could grow produce for sale at local Farmers Markets.
- GMU students would be a source of significant volunteer labor since students in the New Century College must do 25 hours per week of supervised field work.

Ms. Wyman closed by stating that Salona provided the opportunity to meet the needs of the present generation without sacrificing the needs of future generations.

Task force members were reminded that the task force was planning a second visit to Green Spring Gardens on February 16. It was agreed that the task force would arrange a visit to Hidden Oaks Nature Center in the near future.

The next task force meeting is Tuesday, February 28 at 7:30 PM at the McLean Government Center.