

# **Salona Park Task Force**

## **Meeting Minutes**

**February 28, 2012**

The meeting convened at 7:35 pm.

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

The minutes of February 15, 2012 were approved.

The first presentation was by representatives of the Potomac School: Bern Hoffmann, Environmental Sustainability Coordinator, and Cort Morgan, Art Department Chair. Mr. Hoffmann stated that the objective of the Potomac project with respect to Salona Park is to enable students to have a hands-on environmental stewardship and to have a positive impact on the McLean community and the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. He observed that Salona offers a great opportunity for people in the community to become connected.

The Potomac School envisions a phased-in approach to the development of Salona Park:

Phase 1: A 6-8 acre parcel that would consist of a permeable surface parking area and a garden that would provide 30-40 garden beds in the field nearest the church on Buchanan Street. In addition to serving as an educational tool for students and adults, such a garden could be used as a resource for supplying local restaurants with herbs and produce. A pole barn-like structure or other covered structure could be constructed for use as a classroom, shelter, or market stand. The center field would be protected as a Piedmont meadow. The gardens proposed for this phase would be low/raised beds and would not be expensive. They would be an easily reversible footprint, which when taken out would allow the field to readily revert to its original condition. One hundred Potomac students could be involved the first year.

Phase 2: Since Potomac School is already involved in a wood milling project, the School's experience demonstrates that the downed and dying trees on the Salona property could be recovered and milled, with the wood used in Fairfax County parks or sold to wood workers like the D.C. Woodworkers Guild. There is the potential to demonstrate modern vs. historical methods of recovery. It is a direct way to teach the impact of the steam engine/industrialization vs. the hand method of processing wood. It is sustainable since saplings would be planted to provide future trees.

Phase 3: An Environmental Learning Center, which would provide a place for students and others to learn lessons from history and ecology. Old, current, and future building techniques and design could be taught. Gray water redistribution and composting toilets could be used in the building.

Synopsis of presentation: Salona can become whatever you can imagine. It could provide a positive focal point for potential local partnerships with the community, including public and private high schools, universities, local restaurants, church groups, the retirement community and even the Smithsonian and the Audubon Society. Salona could become part of the sustainable food movement and the gardens could be an opportunity for shared generational learning experiences. Bee keeping and monarch butterfly weigh stations are also options. The historical significance of the land provides a window to the Civil War and provides significant educational opportunities. Salona Park could provide a positive statement about the values of the McLean community: education, an interactive community, and stewardship for future generations.

## Q&A

1.) **Who will pay for the building?** Once the garden starts the community will get on board with fund raising efforts.

2.) **The cost of Phase 1 gardens?** It is likely that there would be no cost for the early phase, which would be provided through donations - for example, labor provided by Eagle Scouts and other sweat equity from the community.

The next presentation was by Julie Clemente, Co-Chair, Board of Directors of the Friends of Clemyjontri. Her presentation focused on how the Friends of Clemyjontri have organized and worked to promote the development and operation of Clemyjontri Park. Ms. Clemente described the vision of the donor of the land for Clemyjontri, which was to create an environment where everyone, including children with special needs, could come and share the enjoyment of the park. She observed that the vision for a park where the land is part of an agreement between public and private interests must involve the donor's vision for the mission of the park.

The formation of a Friends of Salona organization should include creating a mission for Salona Park. Ms. Clemente suggested, as an example, that the mission for Salona Park should recognize the historical significance of Salona. Once a mission is determined a Friends organization can be formed with a Board of Directors composed of "doers" - local politicians and community members. Fund raising is key to supporting the park and it is important to determine annual fund raising needs and target fund raising to different levels of donors.

Ms. Clemente said that Clemyjontri Park is planned in three phases. Phase 1 is the existing playground. Phase 2 is the house and barn, which are still under the control of the donor, and Phase 3, which will include trails and walking paths. Over 250 thousand people visit the park annually and the greatest cost to the Park Authority is for repairs and replacement of equipment in the playground. The Friends supplement the funds allocated by the Park Authority for the maintenance of the park.

Some suggestions, based on the experience at Clemyjontri, include:

- Use social media to raise awareness – create a web site, with a link to the Friends through the Fairfax County Park Authority web site.
- Examples of tactics used by Friends of Clemyjontri include selling and recycling water bottles that have a park label; and selling T-shirts with the name of the park. They are popular items with children and good advertising.

All monies raised through the Friends and rental income from any facilities should go directly to the park and not into a general fund. Dan Clemente, Co-Chair of the Clemyjontri Board of Directors, was among the lawyers who worked out the Memorandum of Understanding with the Park Authority.

## **Q&A**

- 1.) **What about issues with neighbors?** Ms Clemente recommended working closely with neighbors regarding lighting, noise and hours of operation. The Friends organization has and continues to work closely with neighbors and there have not been any serious problems with noise and disturbances that have not been worked out. A task force member pointed out that the situation at Clemyjontri is different from that at Salona. The only entrance to Clemyjontri is directly from Georgetown Pike, while the closest neighbors are on Dolley Madison Boulevard.
- 2.) **What about governance?** The Park Authority runs/manages the park. The Friends organization supplies additional funding for the park to meet needs/desires that are not covered by Fairfax County.
- 3.) **How large is the Friends group?** About 100 core members.

Julie and Dan Clemente completed the presentation by noting that Salona needs a theme, i.e. the history of the property, as a theme is needed to draw visitors to the park. Ms. Clemente stated that the hook for Salona is its history, Madison and the Civil War, which you cannot get anywhere else.

Other task force business:

- Plan a visit to Hidden Oaks Nature Center in order to see students engaged in a park program.
- The agenda for the March 13 task force meeting will be by Mark Turner on the topic of “green” construction
- The Chairman of the Friends of the National Arboretum, Linda Dooley, will make a presentation at the March 27 meeting
- The Master Naturalist Program, Virginia chapter, may also make a presentation at a future date

**The next task force meeting is Tuesday, March 13, 2012 at 7:30 pm at the McLean Government Center.**