

SALONA PARK TASK FORCE

Meeting Minutes

APRIL 24, 2012

The meeting convened at 7:40 p.m.

Members present: Whit Field, Margaret Malone, Carole Herrick, Sybil Caldwell, Mark Turner, and Dan DuVal. Fairfax County staff present: Cheryl Patten, representing Supervisor Foust, and Andy Galusha, representing the Fairfax County Park Authority. Guests present: Judi Booker, Stacey Ever, Alan Ford, Laura Anderko, and Bob Bense, representing the Fairfax County Master Naturalist program.

Approval of the minutes was postponed until after the presentation by the Master Naturalists.

PRESENTATION

The presentation began with a description of the role of the Master Naturalist program. It is a volunteer organization that is sponsored in part by the Virginia Cooperative Extension which comprises the following agencies:

1. Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Services
2. Virginia Museum of Natural History
3. Virginia Tech Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation
4. Virginia Department of Game and Fisheries
5. Virginia Forestry

The goal of the Master Naturalist program is stewardship of natural resources and teaching citizen science. The speaker expressed the view that the program would be a natural fit for the Salona property because Fairfax County does not have a site anywhere in the county that joins the cultural and natural history of the area in one property. "As we increase our technology we have a need for balance."

It was noted that the Fairfax County Park Authority *Great Parks and Great Communities* state that:

- No nature center is located within the planning district where the Salona property is located
- The natural habitat and wildlife is fragmented
- Natural areas and streams are degraded
- There is no inventory of natural spaces
- Invasive species are prevalent

The second part of the presentation began with a description of the aim of the Master Naturalists citizen science program. Regarding Salona, it would involve:

- Conducting wildlife surveys which would provide data and statistics to the state and county for their biological databases. The surveys would be conducted four times a year.
- Stream monitoring which would provide critical information on stream health by recording the presence/abundance of aquatic insects as well as habitat assessment. This data would provide an assessment of the health of the waterways.
- Early detection/rapid response to the presence of invasive species. Park land would be monitored for the presence of invasive species. By maintaining a record for the presence and spread of invasive species treatment for infestation can be done more expeditiously.

The third part of the presentation focused on the educational and outreach opportunities that the Master Naturalist program could offer through use of the Salona property. It was expressed that Salona provides a unique opportunity in Fairfax County to study natural and human history together. Salona combines Virginia history from the colonial period forward with the chance to study the natural environment particularly with the hands on learning opportunities with the existing meadow.

The Master Naturalist program has outreach to the schools and scout troops. The study opportunities are directly related to the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL). Third graders can study the life cycle of the monarch butterfly and fourth graders can learn about the cultural and agricultural history of Virginia.

Adult educational opportunities are available through demonstration gardens, stormwater management, the historical uses of plants, wildlife habitats and interpretive hikes.

Stewardship at Salona would involve the removal of invasive species and the planting of native plants. The work would help to create a good balance for plants and the animals that depend upon them as a food source.

Since it is a volunteer organization their work at Salona would be free of charge. The master naturalists would work with staff from the Park Authority and with native plant groups.

A question and answer schedule followed:

Q: Are you doing work with the SOLs now?

Yes. Local elementary schools could use Salona and the benefit would be that not much travel would be involved. Currently schools must travel a greater distance to get the educational opportunities that would be available at Salona.

Q: Can Salona be used to train new Master Naturalists?

Yes, it is a good site for that. There are two training sessions annually comprised of 40 students each session. Salona could be used for destination training. Following the guidelines of the Fairfax County Park Authority, the Master Naturalist program sees Salona as meeting many of their training criteria.

Q: How would the invasive species be managed?

Salona needs to be identified and Master Naturalists would be appointed to Salona as a coordinator. Volunteers would come out and work under the direction of the coordinator. School groups could work on the site and older school age children could earn community service by pulling plants. Children learn about the negative impact of invasives on native plants and native insects. They get hands on learning to make the connections between plants brought to the country by Colonists for decoration and food and their negative impact on native species.

Q: How would a green building fit into your plan?

It could provide a learning opportunity for teaching building technology and stormwater management. It could house classrooms but the placement of the building is key. The meadow is a priceless natural resource and there is no other place like it in the entire region. The meadow is the most important because of its uniqueness. The newer woodlands are the least historical or native. The best plan would be to leave the meadow intact. No trails should traverse the meadow but a well- designed trail network could include docent led trails to the meadow.

Q: Would the Master Naturalists want to work on developing a natural forest?

Yes. We would work with other organizations to develop the forest. Since deer eat the native plants deer fencing or other measures would need to be taken.

Q: Would the Master Naturalists be interested in beginning their work at Salona before a plan for the park has been developed?

Yes. We could begin soon, working with volunteers.

This concluded the presentation.

NEW BUSINESS

Approval of minutes: A change was made to the minutes of April 10, 2012. Mark Turner proposed adding the following sentence to the discussion regarding outreach by the task force: "The task force should be sensitive, transparent and timely with our public outreach so that we can properly defend our process once we make our recommendations." The change passed unanimously.

TENTATIVE PLANS FOR THE PUBLIC MEETING

For the October 4, 2012 meeting the entire McLean Community Center large community room has been reserved. Persons who attend will be invited to visit the six stations that will be focused on specific topics and will be manned by task force members and outside experts to listen to comments and answer questions. There will also be note takers.

The task force discussed how the stations would be used. It was suggested that aspects of the numerous power point presentations that the task force has seen will be incorporated into power point presentations used at the stations. Whit Field volunteered to assemble the power point presentations and make them available to the task force members.

The document entitled "The Future of Salona" will be one of the documents available as a handout at the public meeting. The members agreed to staffing assignments for the stations and discussed the kind of presentation that task force members would want for their stations. It was agreed that there would be a limited number of handouts at the station tables. It was also agreed that there would be a central screen for the Park Authority's and the chair's presentations and that there would be a screen/computer/monitor at each station.

1. Active & Passive Recreation Station - should have a map of the Park Authority's Draft Master Plan proposal at the station. There was a brief discussion regarding the kind of paths or trails that would be appropriate for Salona. The surrounding neighbors would likely be comfortable with guided tours in the wooded area as opposed to an open trail system.

2. Education Station- Dan DuVal stated that the station's presentation will run on a continuous loop on the station's computer and information will be contained in a handout available at the station as well.
3. Environmental Station – Beth Chung has developed a strategy for the station which she has sent in an email to the chair.
4. Green Building – Mark Turner observed that examples of structures that might be appropriate for Salona will be part of the display and he will also have an outside expert at the station with him.

It was suggested that the task force have a trial run of the public meeting presentations sometime over the summer, perhaps in August, in order to be ready for the October meeting. Margaret Malone will contact GMU Office of Sustainability regarding the possibility of their providing technical and other assistance.

FUTURE MEETINGS

Discussion was held regarding task force members availability if the meeting day was changed from Tuesday to another weekday. The decision was made to leave the meeting day as Tuesday since the majority of the task force members had designated that day on their extended calendars and several would be unable to change their schedules. It was suggested and unanimously agreed that the task force reduce the frequency of meetings to once a month.

Proposed summer meetings: Tuesday, June 5, 2012 and Tuesday, July, 10, 2012

All future meetings will be at the Dolley Madison Library, 1244 Oak Ridge Ave. (Ingleside Ave.)

Next meeting: Tuesday, May 8, 2012 - Dolley Madison Library