

**SALONA PARK TASK FORCE
MEETING MINUTES
MAY 29, 2013**

Chair Margaret Malone called the meeting to order at 7:38 p.m.

Members Present: Beth Chung, Carole Herrick, Dan DuVal, Ed Pickens, Mark Turner, Richard Bliss, Joel Stillman, and Margaret Malone. Also present: Andrew Galusha representing the Fairfax County Park Authority and Jane Edmondson representing Supervisor John Foust.

The minutes of the March 19 meeting were approved, as amended.

Margaret asked if task force members had a desire for additional presentations and/or visits to parks. Dan stated that the Chestnut Foundation is looking for a 3-5 acre site to grow blight-resistant chestnuts. Based on soil conditions, the northwest corner of the Salona site is a possibility. Beth would like a presentation from the Park Authority's fields and soils staff. She is concerned about drainage; the useful life of a turf field is 7 years.

Presentations

- **Mark Turner** gave a presentation outlining his 10 recommendations for the site (handout of the recommendations was distributed to the members). Mark described that the recommendations take into account: the desires of the community and the unique historic and natural aspects of the property. Highlights of the recommendations:
 - One athletic field
 - Community Center, 4000 sq. ft. on piers
 - Limit of 50 parking spaces
 - Majority of the middle field left open
 - Educational curriculum
 - Planning for short and long-term uses on the property
 - Multi-generational
 - Be creative and “risky” in planning for space. “It can’t be just another park.”
- There was a brief discussion following his presentation. A member of the Task Force advised that any building on the site not be called a community center given that McLean already has such a facility.
- **Joel Stillman** then gave a presentation. He indicated that it reflected the report with recommendations that he submitted to Margaret at the time that Task Force members were asked to write up their recommendations. Most of the report outlines what the Task Force has done, places visited, presentations made.
- Joel expressed the view that the Task Force report needs to recommend what the community wants and not prescribe what it thinks will fit on the site. Members of the Task Force are not experts, and therefore, the Park Authority staff should decide what goes where based on their expertise.

- Andy advised that the Task Force not get into weeds but rather provide a wish list - the big picture. Margaret commented that the wish list should be workable.
- Joel mentioned that the majority of people who filled out comment cards (527) want athletic field(s). He cited the following data:
 - 63% athletic field or fields
 - 21% other uses, but didn't mention that they didn't want fields
 - 11% other uses, but do not want fields
 - 4% leave the site as it is
- It was noted that these statistics include comments that were submitted that were in addition to the comments submitted on the official comment sheets provided by the Task Force.
- Joel's proposal includes:
 - 5000 sq. ft. building for educational/historical purposes
 - Adult exercise stations along network of trails
 - Elimination of the dog park, picnic area and playground
 - Two athletic fields, but no permanent goals or stands
- The RPA will affect placement of the features and the Park Authority should decide where things go.
- In a response to a question, Andy stated that 100 parking spaces are the maximum allowed on the site and that creative solutions to parking would be required.
- Joel responded that the fields would be used very little during the year and not used at all in the summer.

General Discussion Following the Two Presentations

- Concern was expressed about what the "community center" would be used for; there has to be a reason; the Park Authority owns many buildings that are never used.
- It was observed that the Task Force has heard from a number of presenters who made a strong case for a building that can be used for educational/historical/cultural activities.
- Another Task Force member commented that a nature center is really needed; there are 12 schools close to the Salona site that would make use of it.
- It was also commented that programming is important. The plan for Salona Park should retain the character of the property and draw folks to it. This could be a challenge if two fields were built.
- The view was expressed that it is difficult to get people excited about fields and trails. There are companies/groups eager to put money into a building. The building could be very exciting and different from anything we have in the area. The building could be constructed on piers; it could be modular and easily changed to accommodate different storylines.
- It was noted that the Task Force should report back to the Park Authority what the community wants.
- It was also observed that the job of the Task Force is to recommend what it thinks should be done with the site.
- The comment was made that the Task Force needs to make some specific recommendations. The commenter is not comfortable letting the Park Authority decide.

Additional comments:

- We shouldn't just say "build a building." The Task Force needs to provide some specifics and speak to governance. The Park Authority could own and maintain the facility or the Park Authority could own it and a group, such as Friends of Salona Park, would maintain it.
- What about farming on the site?
- The sustainable farming group made a concerted effort to get folks out to the public meeting. Because of fertilizer use, Salona may not be a good site for farming. Community garden plots are difficult to manage.
- Any farming would need to be part of the overall programming.
- Agriculture is part of the site's history.
- The two presentations are not that far apart....one field versus two.

Archeological Study

- The Park Authority's crew has surveyed the land by the old barn foundation. Some colonial-era artifacts have been found; no Indian artifacts have been discovered as yet. The study is supposed to be done by September.

Future Meetings

- Ed and Carole agreed to make presentations at the next meeting
- Dan and Beth agreed to make presentations at the following meeting.
- A Task Force member asked whether there was a time frame for finishing the work of the Task Force, observing that it is time to "fish or cut bait."
- It was noted that Supervisor Foust intended for the archeological survey to be completed before a report is issued.
- The Chair commented, and others agreed, that the Task Force will complete its work before the end of the year.
- Dates were suggested for future meetings in June and July; members were asked to inform the Chair about their availability.