

DRAFT

SALONA PARK TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES JULY 10, 2013

Chair Margaret Malone called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m.

Members Present: Richard Bliss, Sybil Caldwell, Beth Chung, Dan DuVal, Carole Herrick, Ed Pickens, Mark Turner, and Margaret Malone. Guests included: Eileen Hopkins representing McLean Youth Soccer, and Peggy Stevens from the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust. Also present, Andrew Galusha representing the Fairfax County Park Authority and Jane Edmondson representing Supervisor John Foust.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the May 29th meeting were approved, as corrected.

Salona Archaeology Update: An update dated July 9 by Aimee Wells, Fairfax County archaeologist, on the first stage of archaeology at Salona Park was distributed to members at the meeting. This stage was limited to the area noted in the Master Plan as the Resource Protection Zone. She described the work in this zone as “very rewarding.” The vast majority of artifacts found date from the late Colonial-Early Revolutionary period to the present, although some evidence of stone tool manufacture was also found throughout the site. No Civil War artifacts have yet been found. She reported that she has recommended that the site be listed in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D, for having yielded, or being likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

The next stage, which will be an examination of the front meadow area, will be contracted to an archaeological firm. This may not be finished until October or November. She also informed the Task Force that no matter what development is planned, if any, further archaeological work will be required to mitigate any potential impacts to the site.

Presentations

- **Carole Herrick** gave a presentation outlining her vision for Salona. She looks at the site from a historic standpoint. Highlights of her presentation:
 - Salona is a significant piece of property; it dates back to 1719.
 - It represents 65% of McLean’s history.
 - McLean has been negligent in not promoting its history, which is as important as any place in the State.
 - The site is very significant to McLean and Fairfax County.
 - People don’t realize the treasure they have.
 - McLean is “on the map, but not really on the map.”
 - McLean has an agricultural history; Salona was a working farm. The front fields used to be covered with corn.
 - How can we tie Salona into McLean’s agricultural history?
 - Playing fields and a dog park don’t fit with Salona’s history.

- Fields for produce or flowers would be good; there could be sales to the public; any leftovers could be given to the needy. Have something on the site that is always blooming.
 - Organizations involved in revitalization of downtown McLean are doing a good job. Because of the proximity of Salona to downtown McLean, we have the opportunity to tie the past into the present.
 - What we do on the site should be educational. We could have a small museum located in the front of the site. There could be a place for re-enactments - for example, to show what it was like to be a soldier in Camp Griffin.
 - Salona could serve as the entrance to McLean. It is our “Mount Vernon.”
- **Ed Pickens** then gave a presentation. Ed thinks that there needs to be a compromise. If the Task Force doesn't reach a compromise, he is concerned that it will have wasted two years. He distributed his paper entitled: What a Compromise Position Is. He also distributed a rendering of how the site could be developed.
 - Major elements of his suggested compromise address: (1) the interests of the athletic community, (2) concerns of the neighbors regarding traffic and safety, and (3) the desires of farming advocates.
 - Athletic community. Ed doesn't see how the site can accommodate two large fields even if there is a traffic light. He suggests one field 150' x 270' (which would accommodate youths under age 11) in the northeast corner of the property.
 - Neighbors: Their concerns are very important. A traffic light will be required even with just one field. Locating a single field in the NE corner minimizes the impact on residents on Kurtz Road.
 - Farming advocates: Farming is appropriate for 3-4 acres in the west field. There could be a sustainable farm or a 2nd generation chestnut nursery. Either activity minimizes impact of west field activity on residents on Kurtz Road. The idea of a farmers' market should be incorporated into planning discussions for the McLean Central Park Master Plan Revision which is underway.
 - Other Issues:
 - Environmental considerations: his plan maintains 80% of the central field as a native preservation area. 75% of hedgerows would be preserved.
 - There could be an educational/cultural/historic center in the north end of the center field for multi-purpose usage. Minimum size: 4000 sq. feet
 - Access to Site:
 - FCPS [JANE – IS THIS FAIRFAX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS OR SHOULD IT BE FCPA – FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY?] should acquire the vacant lot on Kurtz/Rt. 123 to allow direct access to the site from downtown McLean and for buses.
 - There should be access to the park from Kurtz Road, if possible.
 - Parking lot has to have pavers and a rain garden.
 - Buses need a place to park. He mentioned three possible options.

General Discussion Following the Presentations

- Task Force members then commented on the presentations.
- A Task Force member asked why there is a need for any playing field.

- The response was made that the Task Force needs to be able to say that it listened to the inputs of the community that included recommendations for ball fields. The community includes McLean Youth Athletics.
- A question was raised about the size of the field. If, according to MYS, it would be used for just practice, could it be made smaller in order not to destroy part of the hedgerow?
- The response was made that it is the width not the length of the field that affects the hedgerow. It was noted that under age 9 and under age 10 teams have a minimum field size of 120x180; under age 8 teams have a field size of 69x120.
- It was stated that runoff from a field in the northeast corner would go into the RPA; we would have to find a work around for this problem. Also the conservation easement prohibits cutting of the hedgerow. Hydric soils would be impacted by some of the activities suggested.
- The view was expressed that Ed's plan proposes a very heavy and intense use for the land given its historic significance.
- A question was raised about vehicular access for the building.
- Ed noted that he assumed there would be a walkway along Rt. 123. It was also remarked that trails could be made wider.
- The subject of neighborhood concerns was raised:
 - Heavy traffic at Rt. 123 and Buchanan
 - Through traffic on West Landing Road
 - Safety of people crossing Rt. 123
 - Preservation
- It was stated that the desire to find a compromise is appreciated, but Ed's suggestions do not address any of the concerns of the neighbors. The field would need to be eliminated in order to sell the community on a compromise. Given VDOT's refusal so far to install a light at Rt. 123 and Buchanan, there would be reluctance to endorse a plan that includes a field on the condition that there is a light.
- A Task Force member stated that he really liked what Carole said about the history of the site. While he, too, appreciates the desire to compromise, he is concerned that a compromise will strongly dilute the core value of the property. We need to look at the "whole" and examine what is available to people throughout McLean and not just deal on a site by site basis. There is hope that Langley Fork will help with fields.
- Another member noted that Salona is a unique resource. The entire site has historical importance. It needs to be protected as a whole.
- Another member stated that it would be a mistake to adopt a "kitchen sink" approach to the site. Additional development can always be added but it is very rare to take it away once it is built.
- The comment was made that the Task Force was given a charter. One directive was to reach out to the community. Perhaps a field could be located at the site on a temporary basis.
- A Task Force member stated that she was not sure that the community really spoke. There were groups at the public meeting that were told how to vote. History groups will not be happy if a field is installed.

Future Meetings

- The Chair expressed the view that the Task Force needs to begin to wrap up its work. It may be necessary to meet as often as every 2-3 weeks.
- Task Force members were asked to provide information on the dates they can and cannot meet.

Other Items

- It was observed that it would be helpful to know the impact of various activities on the Salona soils.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.