

**SALONA PARK TASK FORCE
MEETING MINUTES
October 1, 2013**

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

Members Present: Richard Bliss, Joe Caldwell representing Sybil Caldwell, Beth Chung, Dan DuVal, Carole Herrick, Joel Stillman, Mark Turner and Margaret Malone. Also present, Andrew Galusha representing the Fairfax County Park Authority and Jane Edmondson representing Supervisor John Foust. Guests included: Matt Richardson and Bryan Mitchell.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the September 10 meeting were approved unanimously.

Presentations

- **Sybil Caldwell** was unable to attend the meeting because of illness. Joe Caldwell read her report representing the views of the Ballantrae Citizens Association regarding the development of Salona Park. Copies of the report were distributed to the Task Force. Key features of the presentation were:
 - Because of historical, environmental and safety concerns, Salona is not the place for athletic fields.
 - The Park Authority should develop Salona as a site for a Sustainable Agricultural Center, which would include:
 - A meadow restoration and interpretation area
 - A sustainable agricultural field for farming
 - Educational facility for students to learn sustainability/farming
 - Picnic areas and outdoor activity areas for exercising on trails
 - Parking

An archeological and environmental study should be undertaken to reveal whether grave sites, tombstones or foundations from the Civil War period exist. The Easement states that a Phase 2 archeological study must be conducted prior to any development.

The integral purpose of the Conservation Easement and Covenant made between the two parties in 2005 was primarily to preserve the property for future learning and development.

The Salona neighborhood understands the need for additional athletic fields in McLean. However, Salona Park is not the place. Other locations, such as Langley Fork or Tyson's Corner, should be specifically designated by the County for the development of athletic fields.

Athletic fields at Salona would raise traffic and safety issues.

General Discussion Following the Presentation

- A Task Force member stated that Sybil had obviously put a lot of effort into the report.
- Another Task Force member took issue with a portion of the report that dealt with supporters of athletic fields, commenting that it did not reflect what the athletic community has said and that it reflected one person's opinion. He expressed the view that the report was an affront to the organization and its representative who are trying to explain to the Task Force what the public wants.
- Joe Caldwell commented that the report reflected the views of the Ballantrae community and that there had been four separate meetings among community members to discuss how Salona should be used.
- **Richard Bliss**, representing the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, then presented his report, copies of which were distributed to the group. He commented that as the holder of enforcement and monitoring responsibility under the easement, NVCT will work with the DuVal family as the easement grantor, and the Park Authority as the grantee, to ensure that the restrictions and permitted uses of the property are carefully observed.

Highlights of his comments were:

- NVTC's views on park development "are largely consistent with those presented by Beth Chung's summary of her September 10 presentation, excluding her recommendation relating to traffic.
- In addition, NVTC recommends public access trails. Development of Salona will take many years. NVTC suggests a Friends of Salona group that could work with the Park Authority "in clearing a modest system of simple footpaths around the property to provide public access while the broader plan is in progress".
- While recognizing that children need places for active recreation, NVTC does not believe that Salona is the place for the development of large or even small athletic fields in the meadowlands portion of the property that fronts Dolley Madison Boulevard. This is especially true since it appears that several new fields will be developed by the Park Authority at Langley Fork.
- The easement has at least twenty clauses that refer to conservation values of the property and only two that refer to active recreation.
- Athletic fields would change the character and public perception of the property as a natural and historical landmark.
- The traffic and parking issues associated with active sports would be substantially greater than with passive uses of the property.
- NVTC wishes there were a solution that would satisfy everyone, but doesn't think that is possible.

General Discussion Following the Presentation

- A Task Force member stated that, referring to the number of clauses in the easement, it should not be a numbers game, and that one clause could be more important than another. The easement for Salona was written with fields in mind.

- It was also stated that according to the Park Authority, athletic fields could attract visitors to other activities at Salona and that the field would have no bleachers, permanent goal posts or lines. It would be just a grass field for little kids to play 4x4 and he questions how that would be detrimental to the property.
- A Task Force member stated that even one grass field would change the ecosystem of the site.
- Richard gave the analogy of ball fields at Mt. Vernon as how the public views of a site could change if ball fields were added.
- One Task Force member noted there are fields by the Washington Monument.
- Richard said that it depends on the extent, and that how you develop the Rt. 123 frontage will define the property.
- One Task Force member stated that the mission of the Task Force is not to make individual recommendations but rather to reflect what the community wants.
- It was suggested that there should be a compromise.
- Richard responded that just because you can do something doesn't mean you should.
- Another member said that there are more appropriate uses than athletic fields for Salona that reflect the history of the property.
- There followed a discussion of the mission of the Task Force and what the community wants, and the need to be able to back up whatever conclusion the Task Force recommends.
 - One member asked how the group could ignore the desire in the community for athletic fields.
 - Another member stated that the athletic community is one group, reflecting about 20% of the population. There are other groups that aren't as well organized.
 - Richard stated that survey after survey shows that people want passive recreation.
- The chair asked the group to think hard about how to proceed. She will write a draft report that will be open for discussion and amendments. The goal is to finish before the end of the year.

Other:

- Jane Edmondson gave an update on the archeological study of the front fields. According to Liz Crowell of the Park Authority, the Notice to Proceed for the contractor should be prepared by October 4. The area needs to be mowed again. Dan DuVal is working with Park Authority archaeologist Aimee Wells to make arrangements.
- The field work for the front fields, which will be in the form of ground penetrating radar, should take 3-4 weeks. While a full archeological report of this study will be prepared, a management summary will be given to the Task Force sooner.
- A public meeting on the Park Authority's proposed draft plan for the development of Langley Fork Park will be held on October 17 from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Franklin Sherman Elementary School.

Next Meeting

- The next meeting is Tuesday, October 8, 7:30 p.m. at Supervisor Foust's office.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

