

Salona Park Task Force

MEETING MINUTES

Nov 17, 2011

Task Force Members in Attendance: Ms. Chung, Mr. DuVal, Mr. Field, Ms. Herrick, Ms. Malone, Mr. Pickens, Mr. Stillman, Mr. Turner. Also present: Cheryl Patten, representing Supervisor John Foust and Andrew Galusha, representing the Fairfax County Park Authority.

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 pm.

Aimee Wells, Archaeologist with the FCPA, presented an overview of the Park Authority's Archeology branch's responsibilities and processes, with the aim of sharing information that may be useful to the Task Force. It appears as Attachment 1 to the minutes. A level 2 archaeological survey of the property will be done prior to any development of the site. That process is estimated to take approximately a year, once funded and initiated by either FCPA staff or a contractor.

Points highlighted by Ms. Wells included that the FCPA adheres to the Virginia Dept of Historic Resources guidelines, and seeks to balance protection of natural and cultural resources with appropriate community uses, such as passive and active recreation. She recommends a historic preservation plan for the Salona site. It is now standard practice in the historic preservation field that when a house (such as Salona) is on the National Historic Register, that its site and grounds also merit strong protection. Salona as a whole meets (likely all four criteria of) the National Registry criteria for significance and integrity, two key factors in the designation.

Several questions from the Task Force were answered by the presenter and the FCPA representative. In response to a question regarding why the archaeological study was not done after the easement was acquired 5 years ago. Mr. Galusha responded that archaeological studies are typically done just prior to development, partly because of funding limitations and for practical policy reasons. Master plans can be amended in response to archaeologically significant findings. Mr. Galusha clarified, in response to a question, that Salona is a perfect example of why the FCPA does not do level 2 studies before conceptual planning. Because of the presence of a Resource Protection Area on the site, no study could be done prior to now. The Draft Master Plan has not been approved by the Park Authority Board. Ms. Wells added that often archaeological studies are done with funds made available from the development process, a situation which presents its own challenges.

In response to a question about archaeological investigations and about grave sites in particular, Ms. Wells noted that there is a set of regulations concerning graves, and that the FCPA would not disturb such sites. A question was asked about technologies other than digging that are typically used in their investigations. Metal detectors and ground penetrating radar are used, which are effective in identifying below ground disturbances and large objects, as well as small artifacts.

Mr. Stillman introduced three speakers on behalf of the McLean Youth Association. The presentation appears as Attachment 2 to the minutes. Mary Cull addressed the Task Force regarding the need for field facilities and the benefits of youth athletics for the children of McLean. She expressed the view that there is a field shortage and we need to address it as a community for the underserved youth sports community in McLean, and that the community can have it all at Salona. Bill Grey presented a preliminary plan design which represented the initial vision of some representatives of MYA for the site. The layout that he presented revised the Park Authority's conceptual plan that had two fields and a parking lot, and included in addition a nature center in the SE corner of the fields complex. He noted that the athletic community appreciates the natural and rural character of the property and wants to collaborate with the Task Force and the community to address challenges and make the park work. Mr. Freire discussed the shared responsibility the community has to create a park that meets the need for rectangular fields and conserves the unique natural resources of the site. He noted that the goals are not incompatible. He quoted several members of the community regarding the intent of the easement that included playing fields at Salona.

Task force members asked various questions about traffic concerns, field status, drainage and environmental/stream protection, fertilizer runoff, schedule of usage, enforcement of reservations for field use, and lighted fields being the top priority in McLean. MYA representatives responded to the question with their proposals and ideas. Members of the task force noted that the loss of fields figures presented were somewhat misleading, as several of the losses were temporary due to school renovations and expansion, Longfellow and Spring Hill Recreation Center for example. It was noted that in some cases McLean based sports teams elect to rent fields in other parts of the County (e.g. Herndon) because they prefer using them to grass fields closer to home (such as the MYS Field). The Task Force asked for more information about actual field usage, hours, and enforcement, as well as the turf management program employed by the FCPA. It was agreed that full factual information regarding field resources was needed by the Task Force.

Task Force presenters for future meetings may include experts in stormwater management and this site's drainage in particular, and a speaker from VDOT who can address what is allowed that would affect the planning of the site.

The minutes of the October meeting were amended to reflect a correction that Mr. Stillman was in attendance while Mr. Pickens was not. There was a discussion following up on the proper scope of the minutes, which are a permanent record of the Task Force proceedings. Various ideas were offered, including taping of the meetings, keeping them simple (two pages), and using a format that would record the decisions and actions of the Task Force as well as brief summary of what was discussed.

There was a motion to approve the minutes of the October meeting with two changes to the attendance list. There was consensus to add a sentence noting that the way in which the Task Force would conduct its activities to carry out its mission was raised at the October meeting. Mr. Turner noted that issue should be discussed further.

There followed a discussion about whether petitions from MYS members were actually delivered to the Task Force at the October meeting. It was agreed that they were shown to the Task Force, but that copies were not submitted to the Chairman until the November meeting. The Task Force's operating procedures, schedule and process will be discussed at the next meeting.

It was noted that taking minutes is a great deal of work, and that perhaps the taking of minutes ought to be a rotating position. Ms Chung made a motion to make the Secretary position a rotating responsibility, it was seconded and voted upon, but the motion failed. Several Task Force members felt that the Secretary's opinion on the matter should be sought before making such a change.

The Task Force discussed whether it was appropriate to hold a closed meeting for the business of how to proceed with establishing objectives and a time line for its work. It was observed that many boards, both elected and appointed, meet in executive session when board members need to consider operational business so that members can speak freely. A motion was made to hold an executive session to discuss the Task Force's process and procedures. It was seconded and voted upon but did not pass.

Task Force members were reminded to attend the Nov. 19 9:30 am walkthrough of Salona's back acreage with Charles Smith from the Fairfax County Park Authority.

There was a question as to whether the minutes should be posted on the Park Authority web site, which was commented on by several members and effectively tabled to be considered as part of a fuller discussion at the next meeting about what the Task Force might post on the FCPA web site.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 pm.