

**PUBLIC HEARING: July 24, 2006  
South Railroad Street Park Master Plan  
DRAFT  
MEETING SUMMARY**

**Attendance:**

**VIRGINIA HOUSE OF DELEGATES:**

Mary Dotson, representing 35<sup>TH</sup> District Delegate Steve Shannon.

**BOARD OF SUPERVISOR MEMBERS:**

Linda Smyth, Providence District.

**PARK AUTHORITY BOARD MEMBERS:**

Joanne Malone, Vice Chairman, Providence District; Winifred Shapiro, Braddock District; Frank Vajda, Mason District; George Lovelace, At-Large; Georgette Kohler, At-Large.

**FCPA STAFF:** Tim White, Chief Operating Officer; Judy Pedersen, Public Information Officer; Matthew Kaiser, Assistant to the Public Information Officer; Sandy Stallman, Manager, Planning Branch; Irish Grandfield, Senior Planner, Planning Branch; Pat Rosend, Planning Branch; Sarah Ridgely, Project Manager, FCPA Merit Intern; John Hopkins, Area 7 Manager, Park Operations; Mina Petrova, FCPA Summer Intern.

**CITIZENS:** Approximately 30 citizens in attendance

The meeting started at 7:00 p.m. and was facilitated by Judy Pedersen. Following introductions of Park Authority Board Members and Staff, she introduced Project Manager Sarah Ridgely who provided an overview of the history, planning timeline, and the cooperative development of plans for this park. He then presented the General Management Plan and Conceptual Development Plan for the park.

Ms. Pedersen then opened the floor for speakers to comment. The following citizens spoke:

1. John Day, 2301 Sandburg Court, Dunn Loring; President of the King's Glen Homeowners' Association
  - Mr. Day has lived in the neighborhood for 24 years, in King's Glen for 8
  - He supports the park and planned amenities.
  - There are 2 main concerns with basketball court: increase in traffic and parking issues.

- The park is for local residents, and there is a fear that a basketball court may bring people from outside the neighborhood into the area.
  - There have been incidents in the past Mr. Day would like to avoid in the future, namely drug dealing. They include a neighborhood watch sign at the western end of the park bent to indicate where to buy/deal drugs, as well as shoes on power lines along Gallows Road. There has also been drug dealing on 4<sup>th</sup> Place in the past.
  - Cars were vandalized about six months ago, which included smashed windows.
  - Along Sandburg Street, near proposed Section B of the park, the police and fire inspector had to be called because kids were throwing petrol bombs.
  - Overall, the park is a great idea. However, Mr. Day is concerned the basketball court will bring negative parking and non-resident issues along with it.
2. Laura Lane, 7995 Sandburg Ridge Court, Dunn Loring; President of the Sandburg Ridge Homeowners' Association
- Ms. Lane has been a resident of the neighborhood since 2000, and is speaking on behalf of 200 neighbors who signed a petition to make this park a reality.
  - The push for the park began back in 2000; Supervisor Smyth was thanked for her help throughout this process, and is excited about the realization of this park as a place for the community and kids to have a safe place to play.
  - The community is happy with the plan, and wants to make sure the park brings the community together, is safe for kids, and is a place people can enjoy without extra traffic.
  - The jungle gym is an especially important part of the plan, along with the park benches; the basketball court is not as important, and many share the same concerns about it.
  - 3 neighbors contributed land in Section B for the park with the intention of having a playground there, not lights from a basketball court in their window. The basketball court would draw people into this area. Dunn Loring Park has basketball courts, and people can go there to play instead.
  - A smaller, multi-purpose court for games like hopscotch would be more appropriate.
  - This process to have a park began in 2000, and Ms. Lane understands this is a long process. If there are any ways to expedite this, possibly by moving on Section B first, the community would be very happy. Plans and costs for that section could be developed quickly in order to work on community funding for this. The community is committed to seeing the park sooner rather than later. Funding could come from in-kind, neighborhood children fundraising for the park, and other sources that have not been allocated to other projects.
  - Ms. Lane would like to thank the Board and staff for their consideration.
3. Neeraj Bhagat, 7992 Sandburg Ridge Court

- Mr. Bhagat moved to the area in 2000.
  - He has 2 small children and wants a park for them to play in, but it is too dangerous to cross Idylwood to get to the other park.
  - As a Fairfax County resident, he is very impressed with this expedited process for the park, and is excited by the notion of the preservation of the trolley line.
  - The priority is around the play area. Some sort of a priority mechanism should be put in place, with the playground being the primary goal, and preservation of the trolley line/interpretive trail second.
  - This park will bring around all the communities in the area, not just the newer infill developments, which Mr. Bhagat is happy about. It creates connections through what was dead space and creates a transparency in the neighborhood.
  - Mr. Bhagat is for a basketball court, even a half-court.
  - The children in this community are mainly older than 5, so the playground should at least accommodate the 5-12 year-olds, or even both the 0-5 year-olds and 5-12 year-olds.
4. Kathleen Dixon, 2300 Arden Street, Dunn Loring
- Ms. Dixon has a driveway that crosses park land in Section A, and is happy to hear that her driveway can remain.
  - Arden Street does not go all the way through to Railroad Street.
  - Section A shows a trail going through a heavily-treed area. It is hard for Ms. Dixon to visualize this trail without cutting down large oak trees. She questions how the trail will be expedited along what is left of the trolley line.
5. Mike Fraser, 2234 Journet Drive, Dunn Loring
- Mr. Fraser's neighborhood is the Regal Oaks community, near Section A of the plan.
  - The park is currently used as an access for running/biking trail, and is looking forward to improvements.
  - There are some safety aspects that need to be addressed, namely standing pools of water that breed mosquitoes, and a high amount of poison ivy that needs to be cleaned up.
  - Mr. Fraser is happy to see the cultural side of the park, as his mother-in-law used to ride the trolley through this community to work and back.
  - Mr. Fraser would like to thank the Park Authority for listening to him and his community, and as a county taxpayer.

6. Jack O'Neil, 7976 Foxmoor Drive, Dunn Loring

- Mr. O'Neil moved to King's Glen in 1991, and dedicated some of his land near the stream.
- There is some concern about having the roads as shown on the plan actually go through the park land. They currently do not go through. This might create more traffic if they do.
- If there will be a bridge provided over the stream, there should be signage there to prevent people from throwing things in. Mr. O'Neil does not want people dumping trash behind his house.
- With 11- and 13-year-old daughters, they would like to use the park as well. They enjoy activities such as inline skating, scooters, and biking. Mr. O'Neil is a tennis player, and thought the court area was multi-purpose.
- Fencing with keyed entry could provide access to neighbors only, which limits the number of people showing up.

7. Frank Blackstone, 7956 Robarge Court, Dunn Loring

- Mr. Blackstone is involved in the North Gallows Homeowners' Association, which tries to put together other HOA's with community concerns and interests. This initiative began with the SAIC development, where they found that the more members they have in the HOA's, the more the government and developers will listen. This includes concessions from developers if there is a larger group of neighbors.
- Mr. Blackstone currently uses the park land for walking his dog. He also sees kids walking and running around the area, which is a great use.
- The Park Authority has done a good job of addressing community concerns, and wants to see more about the types of maintenance that will be provided, as well as how often it will occur, particularly with the court and playground. Picking up trash and repair work schedules should be included in the Master Plan.
- There are not many people able to use a full-court basketball in the neighborhood. Instead, shuffleboard could be placed at one end, allowing many age groups to play.
- The playground could have 2 different sections to allow both younger kids and older kids to use it.
- Generally, Mr. Blackstone is very impressed and congratulates the Park Authority. Linda Smyth will listen to the community, and Joanne Malone will help as well.

8. Kathy Alsegaf, 2248 Journet Drive, Dunn Loring

- Ms. Alsegaf is excited about the park, and could not make it to the first meeting.
- The court element in the plan is cause for some concern, as a gazebo nearby has had unsavory behavior. There needs to be some clarification on lighting,

because the police department has said that lighting actually creates more of a problem with crime.

- On the actual and as-planned designs, a breakthrough of Arden Road is shown. This needs to be clarified.
- Ms. Alesgaf would like to know if Railroad Street will be widened.

9. Bill Tomson, 2245 Journet Drive, Dunn Loring

- It would be nice to know if Arden Street will actually go through the park. If so, will Gallows Road be improved? If that is not what will happen to Arden Street – this needs to be clarified.
- People will park their cars around for the court whether there is a parking lot or not, as long as they do not get towed. There may be the potential to set up a towing or fining regimen for non-neighbors.

Ms. Pedersen invited Supervisor Linda Smyth to speak on the issue of street right-of-ways in the neighborhood. Supervisor Smyth noted that the Park Authority is not in the business of building roads. This Conceptual Development Plan shows the Virginia Department of Transportation-owned right-of-ways, which do not belong to the Park Authority. There are no plans to make these through-streets in the future.

10. Bobby Pontzer, 2250 Journet Drive, Dunn Loring

- Along Railroad Street, a lot of cars drive quickly. There needs to be signage installed to alert drivers of children playing in the area.
- This park may bring in behavior the community might not want.
- Mr. Pontzer has lived in the neighborhood for 12 years, and seen plenty of pockets of teens or young adults in the area. He wants to discourage any negative use of the park. There needs to be clarification on what the Park Authority will do to prevent bad activities from happening, such as police activity or signage.

Ms. Pedersen then opened the floor to written questions. The following questions and responses were presented:

*What type of maintenance is planned for each section (A-C)? What would be the frequency of maintenance?*

- John Hopkins, Area 7 Manager, Park Operations, responded to the question.
- At a local park, there is a maintenance crew out a minimum of once a week. They inspect the site for trash, vandalism, safety issues and repairs. At that time, citizens may stop by to notify Park Operations of any issues dealing with the park.
- The playground fall zone will be honored on site, and checked a minimum of once a year. The playground equipment will be inspected monthly.

- If basketball is to occur on site, the nets are inspected weekly, and if damaged or lost, replaced monthly.
- Trails are checked seasonally and after major storms for erosion and safety issues.

*Could the court area, if not feasible to be an actual tennis court, at least include a backboard where tennis players could practice? Also could a tetherball court be included in the court or open play area?*

- These uses will be taken into consideration for the final conceptual design plan.

*Has this project been fully funded? If so, when is the projected start and finish date?*

*What is the timeline?*

*Based on this design, how much (approximately) will the park cost? Will there be any fences? Will the trails continue along the road right-of-ways (e.g. Arden Street, Sandburg Street)? If not, what will be there instead?*

- Irish Grandfield, Senior Park Planner, responded to the questions.
- There are no firm costs until the Master Plan is passed and the project goes into the site development process. A playground typically costs between \$40,000 and \$80,000. A basketball court typically costs around \$40,000. The overall costs depend upon the phasing of the project – i.e., if everything is done at once, or if it is broken down into smaller priorities.
- As far as the trails go, we can only control our land, but ideally we would like a full through-trail system. We could connect to existing sidewalks around cul-de-sacs. The Supervisor and VDOT can look at connections near Gallows Road.
- Generally, the Park Authority does not fence the parks, as they are for public use. The Park Authority does fence in instances of a hazard in order to protect people.
- The project is not funded, and there is no timeline at this point. These issues typically are dealt with after the Master Planning and 2232 phases have been completed, during the site development process.

*There has been much discussion tonight about teenagers and the mischief they cause. What are the plans for use of the park for children over the age of ten, say 10-18 years old?*

*Will the park include any elements that are likely to attract skateboarders or will the design discourage this? Also, will it be possible to ride bikes through the park?*

- Irish Grandfield, Senior Park Planner, responded to the questions.
- What is shown on the playground is generally for children 12 and under. The basketball/multi-purpose court could be used for older children as well as adults. Trail use could also be considered something all ages could enjoy.
- The trail is recommended to be a natural surface, unless erosion or safety issues dictate otherwise. This surface tends to discourage skateboarders. Bicyclists could use the trail.

*Will there be park crosswalks (brick or other material) on Arden, 4<sup>th</sup> and Sandburg Streets?*

*The sidewalk in Section B does not go all the way through. Does the plan contemplate finishing off the last 1/8 of the sidewalk section?*

*Is there a way to request VDOT to allow the use of the portion of street connecting Sections B and C so as to create a seamless connection between the two areas? Currently that section is covered with vegetation and does not have roadway going through.*

- Irish Grandfield, Senior Park Planner, responded to the questions.
- The request for additional use along the right-of-ways is outside the scope of the Park Authority. VDOT could work with the Supervisor's office with that issue, as well as any signage issues the community deems necessary.
- The right-of-way is recorded only. The Park Authority is not implying the roads will ever go through or will be used in that manner.

Questions collected at the public hearing after adjournment:

*Under the current land development, Parcel A is not a constant 30' in width. By Arden Road, it is presently as little as 8-10 feet wide. How does the current master plan take this actual geography into account?*

*Will we need a community volunteer program to monitor the park? Will there be grills or a barbeque pit? This is a fire hazard.*

End of Public Hearing; No other Speakers.