

Bren Mar Park Master Plan Revision

Public Comment Meeting

October 18, 2012

Bren Mar Elementary School

Meeting Summary

A Public Comment Meeting was held on the evening of October 18, 2012 for the purpose of presenting the draft Bren Mar Park Master Plan revision to the community and accepting public comment toward the park's future design. Approximately 25 attendees signed into the meeting.

Introductions and Opening Remarks

Frank Vajda, Mason District, Park Authority Board, opened the meeting with a greeting and a reminder to look at the park bond on the ballot. He introduced Penny Gross, Mason District Supervisor, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. After thanks and acknowledgement of the attendees, he spoke briefly on the process for the Master Plan and the public input which will be taken into consideration. Public Information Officer Judy Pedersen then provided some welcoming remarks and introduced several people in attendance including:

Board Members & Staff

Frank Vajda, Mason District, Park Authority Board

Penny Gross, Mason District Supervisor, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

Dave Bowden, Manager Planning and Development Division

Sandy Stallman, Manager Planning Branch

Pat Rosend, Project Manager, Bren Mar Park Master Plan Revision

Kristin Sinclair, Senior Naturalist

Joe Nilson, Manager, Area 3 Operations

Diana Fuentes, Public Information Office assistant

Opening Remarks

Judy Pedersen began the meeting with a brief background of the Park Authority mission, land facts and board of directors. There was also a presentation on the master plan process and the project timeline.

Staff Presentation

Pat Rosend, project manager for the Bren Mar Park Master Plan revision, provided a brief history of the property, site conditions, surrounding context and an overview of the major elements of the draft master plan. This presentation included some audience discussion on proposed parking locations, off leash dog area (OLDA) location and unleashed dogs in the park.

Public Comments

Following the staff presentation, an open comment period was provided to permit those in attendance to share their impressions of the draft master plan. The following is a summary of each speaker's comments expressed during this session.

Joe Allison-Park Neighbor

- He supports the proposed dog park.
- Likes the proposed revisions to the plan.
- He was concerned about lack of parking and glad to see more proposed especially with the dog park.
- A 2nd picnic shelter is a good idea. Sometimes overflow crowds in the picnic area.
- The location of the parking next to the dog area is good.
- New trails are welcome for the residents. Site does need more parking.
- Good job of adding the things that were requested.

George Madill

- No objections to a dog park in the park but objects to using the diamond field for it. \$50,000 was spent on the field to make it useable and is the only field left in the area. No fields left at the school. No other place in the park that kids can kick a ball around and play.
- Suggests using the meadow area for the dog park. Doesn't need to be flat for the dogs like you need for the ball fields.
- Feels that ball fields are a much higher need than the dog park. Worried that the money was thrown away.

Steven Smith

- Thank you for the meeting. A neighbor to the park with two small kids.
- Feels the dog park will take a lot away from the community. Kids won't have a place to play. Tee ball, Frisbee, soccer etc. Concerned about safety in the park due to the prevalence of dogs off leash in the park.
- He has been charged by dogs off leash in the park. Concerned that the dog park will add to the off-leash dogs in the other areas of the park.
- Concerned about the pollution created in the watershed next to Turkeycock Run.
- The ball fields are used all the times by kids. Wants to expand the paly areas, picnic area, and add a basketball court.
- Wants to use the meadow area to transition as an ADA access point to Turkeycock Run.

Ron Debnam

- Wants to know where the (dog) park was supposed to be before Bren Mar. (FCPA response: Dog parks are evaluated in response to specific community requests. The PA was contacted with a request for the Bren Mar location.)
- In charge of neighborhood watch for the Overlook Community. Concerned about having extra parking and that it would encourage illicit uses. Not in favor of the OLDA.

Michelle Bryce

- A lot of people are concerned about the future of the park.
- Walks the park everyday twice a day. Has a dog always on leash. Is concerned about all the off leash dogs in the park and concerned that more would come for the OLDA.
- Concerned about the wildlife areas. People like to come to the park to de-stress. Wants to see the naturalness of this park preserved. People depend on the nature and do not want to see it lost.

Andre Newman

- Longtime area resident. Used to play little league baseball on the field.
- Concerned about safety if the dog park is built on the ball field site. Concerned that existing fences are too low and the dogs may jump out. (FCPA response: OLDA would have to meet the standards for a new facility. Existing fence would be upgraded. Would have a double gate for safe entry.)

Sara Agan

- Was opposed to the dog park at the April 18, 2012 Public Information meeting.
- She does take her dogs off leash in the park and will try to be more considerate about that in light of the concerns by other park users.
- Feels like the PA has heard what the people said about the park.
- Wants to preserve the special feeling of the park.
- Concerned that there will be winners and losers. Should be considering areas for all users.
- Doesn't want more people to come to the park to use the dog park. Doesn't want parking because it will encourage more people to use the park.
- Glad that Joe Allison, the closest park neighbor, is happy with the proposed plans.

Ann Stowe-Overlook resident.

- Staff has given a lot of consideration to community concerns.
- Where is the closest field after this one? (FCPA response: Franconia or Trailside Parks)
- To echo the concerns of others about safety and additional parking. Can there be lighting in the parking areas. Should also consider security cameras esp. with the off-leash dog problem. More signage would be good to enforce the park regulations.
- Can a baseball field be located in other developments being built.
- Objects to Joe Nilson (FCPA Area Manager) retiring. He is not allowed. (Overall agreement that Joe Nilson is a great asset to the Park Authority)

Joe Allison-

- Follow up on activities in cars - Franconia police do a great job patrolling the park and ticketing illegal behavior. They are very thorough and keep incidences down to a minimum. Suggests that

if the plan is approved, the police be encouraged to do additional checks. The police are on top of issues and would continue to do so.

Barrett Nixon-local resident.

- Organized the Bren Mar Dogs group and submitted the request to look at Bren Mar Park for an OLDA.
- Loves the idea of having some lighting. Would Joe Allison be ok with low impact lighting? (Joe would like to reserve comment until he saw a plan)
- The more responsible people you have in a park, the less crime that occurs. Concerned about more parking spaces in the center of the park. Could lead to more crime.
- Also concerned with off leash dogs in the parks. It is primarily because they have no other place to play.
- Community of more than 140 dog owners who are looking for a place. Looking for a community centered use for the dog owners to get together and have the dogs and owners socialize.
- OLDAs reinforce the laws by providing a place for off leash play. Would shift the dogs running around in the park to the OLDA improving the park experience for everyone.

Rodney Richardson- longtime resident dog owner and little league coach.

- The existing ballfield is a place where families can play. Open/free play is not allowed at schools or scheduled fields.
- Doesn't feel the fields should be removed to put in the dog park.
- Suggests the dog park go in at the end of Bren Mar Drive, not at the park.

Closing remarks were made and the meeting adjourned at approximately 8:30 p.m.