

SALONA PARK TASK FORCE

MEETING MINUTES

February 26, 2013

The meeting convened at 7:40 p.m.

Members present: Margaret Malone, Carole Herrick, Ed Pickens, Richard Bliss, Joel Stillman, Sybil Caldwell, Mark Turner and Dan DuVal. Also present, Andy Galusha, representing the Fairfax County Park Authority and Cheryl Patten, representing Supervisor John Foust. Guests: Jay Donahue, Dranesville District Planning Commissioner and Charles Smith, Fairfax County Park Authority.

The minutes for the January 29 meeting were approved.

Presentation by Charles Smith

Charles Smith, Manager, Natural Resource Management and Protection Branch, Fairfax County Park Authority, answered questions from task force members regarding the natural resource features of the Salona property. A schematic of the hydrology for Salona was distributed.

The questions and answers included the following:

What are the limitations regarding what can be located within the RPA?

The following are not permitted: impervious surfaces, i.e. parking lots; clearing of vegetation within 100 feet of the stream bank on either side of the water feature or flood plain (whichever is greater); athletic fields, or farming. Trails are permitted within the RPA. A road cannot be located within the RPA without a special exception. Generally, facilities to control storm water must be located outside the RPA.

What about uses outside of the RPA – how is run-off handled?

Any use outside of the RPA must have stormwater improvements designed to handle run-off as required by the Fairfax County Public Facilities Manual. A waiver is potentially available. All stormwater facilities, related grading, etc., must happen outside the boundaries of the RPA except that outfalls from stormwater facilities often occur within the RPA.

How will athletic fields impact the area?

Underdrains do not work on natural turf fields and the soil gets compacted so there will be stormwater run-off. Fields are constructed so that they peak in the middle to allow drainage off the playing area so stormwater would run down down both sides of the field.

How does the Park Authority handle stormwater being dumped onto its property? Is it feasible to slow down the water?

Salona is a very flat site so engineers designing potential facilities would likely have to employ multiple methods for stormwater control that could take up a lot of room. One area in the western field has hydric soil which has high clay content and is often found in areas with a high water table. Given the type of soil coupled with the presence of water within a certain level of surface, more water could be diverted to the area to create a wetland.

Where on the property is the best place to site a building?

The middle meadow is the most ecologically significant for a number of reasons and the natural resource management staff has recommended that it be preserved. However, structures or facilities can be built outside the RPA, so where they can be built is an engineering question. Impacts on grass systems can be restored within 10-15 years. However, there are limited funds to do this.

Will using the land for an athletic field change the soil?

Yes, but if the field is built right the first time it makes it easier to address problems as they arise.

What about rain gardens?

You need to build a drain system below the soil level. Such systems must be built correctly and maintained.

What are worthwhile educational programs for this site? How could educational facilities and programs be designed to minimize impact on the site?

Any educational center needs to cater to participants' desires or be perceived as a destination facility that is unique. To be successful it is necessary to make people want to come to the center. Programs and facilities must be fitted to the landscape so that sensitive areas will not be damaged. It is important to preserve what makes the site special and identify areas that are "off limits" to preserve the resources to include the plants and animals. Look at the site and structure programs appropriately. One method is to schedule groups so that you can have smaller numbers on a site at a given time to reduce both the infrastructure needs and the impact by individual groups.

Mr. Smith said that Park Authority staff is working with the Fairfax Master Naturalists to do an inventory of the plants and vegetation in the front meadows and hedgerows before anything is removed. A survey of animals, amphibians and birds will also be done.

Other subjects of discussion

A handout was distributed that described the archaeological study of the Salona property that will be overseen by Aimee Wells, archaeologist with the Fairfax County Park Authority, beginning in March. The results of the study will be released upon completion of the report.

There was discussion regarding the process for the production of the final task force report regarding recommendations for Salona Park. There was a suggestion that the task force begin to write the report based upon what in the member's opinion was "what the community wants" and then let the experts decide where/if suggested uses can be situated. Another member suggested that the process should begin to move toward closure with the expectation that adjustments can be made as the task force acquires more/new information.

Other task force members expressed a desire to wait until the completion of the County's archaeological report since the history of the Salona property is one of the most significant features of the site. The comment was made that the results of the archaeological study and what the study reveals about the property could impact the decisions of the task force. Another member stated that while details about the history and natural features of the property are important, the task force should move forward with its recommendations.

There was discussion about the mission that the task force was given. One member urged the task force to begin working towards a consensus report. It was suggested that there should be general discussion about the uses recommended by task force members and about the concerns associated with those uses for the Salona property. There was agreement that members could distribute their written recommendations to be used as a basis for discussion. It was further agreed that the reports would be kept confidential and made available only to task force members.

The next meeting is scheduled for 7:30 pm, Tuesday, March 19, 2013 at the office of Supervisor Foust.