

Salona Park Task Force

Meeting Minutes

March 27, 2012

The meeting convened at 7:35 pm.

Members attending the meeting: Margaret Malone, Ed Pickens, Beth Chung, Whit Field, Joel Stillman, Dan DuVal, Carole Herrick. Fairfax County staff attending the meeting: Cheryl Patten, representing Supervisor John Foust, and Andy Galusha, representing the Fairfax County Park Authority.

The minutes of March 13, 2012 were approved as written.

Linda Dooley of the Friends of the National Arboretum (FONA) made a presentation about the public/private partnership of FONA with the federally administered Arboretum. She observed that the main focus of FONA is fundraising, in order to enhance the support for the National Arboretum programs. FONA interacts with the staff researchers, in order to ensure that their work provides benefits to the public. Ms. Dooley explained that the Arboretum is going through a strategic planning process and FONA is part of that process.

Philanthropic monies (funds raised) are essential for the Arboretum to thrive. FONA gives approximately \$100 thousand a year to support internships and targeted research and to implement public relations efforts to raise public awareness of the work of the Arboretum.

She cited Glen Echo Park as an example of a property that is owned by the National Park Service that is in partnership with Montgomery County, MD. Wolf Trap and the National Zoo were other examples of federal properties that have very involved Friends groups. Ms. Dooley explained that the FONA Board members represent diverse interests, among them horticultural, public relations, and fund raising.

A question and answer discussion followed the presentation:

1. Who owns/manages the land?
United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
2. With limited funds, how does the Arboretum manage staffing?
There are career staffers and significant work is done by volunteers and outside sources. A special example is the newly planned *China Garden* where the nation of China will supply all the materials and the National Arboretum will construct and manage the building.

3. Does the *China Garden* model allow FONA to do work on the ground?
The *China Garden* MOU will be used as a model for future efforts since FONA is looking to step up and do more than just fund raise.
4. What about recruiting new Board members?
There is a nominating committee. A change in FONA policy will institute term limits since none currently exist.
5. Who are your donors?
Individuals give bigger dollars while corporations buy a table for specific events. FONA is working on an agreement to recognize donor gifts.
6. Does FONA sponsor programs and did they start the *Washington Youth Garden*?
When a gift is given for a specific purpose then FONA administers the gift. The *Youth Garden* began as classroom and field work with the intention of getting the community involved. The aim is to educate on how food grows and getting the community involved in the production of food.

The presentation concluded.

New Business: THE PUBLIC MEETINGS

Two public meetings were discussed:

- 1st meeting – what the task force has learned
- 2nd meeting- recommendation of the task force

Discussion about the logistics and scheduling for the first public meeting began. Ms. Malone told the task force that she had been informed that the Park Authority would not be able to supply staff to help with a public meeting. The view was expressed that to have an effective meeting outside experts and note takers would be essential. Members discussed the merits of a week night vs. a Saturday morning meeting and there was general agreement to hold the meeting on a week night.

The public meeting would entail a power point presentation which would be an overview of the work of the task force. There would be various stations aimed at providing information regarding potential uses of the Salona park land. The power point presentation would include information about the mission and the process of the task force, the unique qualities of Salona (history, significant natural resource areas, and location), a summary of suggestions that the task force has heard regarding the

development of Salona Park, and information that the task force needs to make informed recommendations. The stations would include history, active and passive recreation, educational opportunities, the environment, green building, parking and traffic issues, and conditions of the easement. Each station would have one or more handouts to provide background information and there would be note takers to record questions and comments.

It was agreed that task force members should not be note takers but a task force member would be at each station. The public's opportunity to ask questions and express opinions would be through the note takers and comment cards. These would be collated into a summery presentation for the task force.

The rationale for the stations would be to maintain focus and get clarification of public opinions and concerns regarding each of the potential uses. The stations would provide information and elicit public opinion in an environment conducive to people who are not necessarily comfortable in speaking in a public meeting.

Concern was expressed that the task force might be rushing toward a meeting date and that it would be difficult to be prepared for a careful and informative presentation. The archaeology and storm water studies that the task force has requested are just beginning and the lead archaeologist for Salona, Aimee Wells, is out with an injury. As a result the ground penetrating radar study is delayed and there is risk of further delay for the more comprehensive archaeological survey because of a potential staff reduction within the Park Authority. The storm water management assessment of the three front fields is under way, with two visits completed and a third planned. It was also noted that not much change is expected, although an increase in storm water on the Buchannan Street side of the property has been observed. It was noted that DPWES has used the older mapped soil maps and it was recommended that DPWES use the updated soil maps for the rest of the studies. It was expressed that without the significant information gathered from the archaeological and stormwater studies there would be significant gaps in the information available for task force and public review.

A suggestion was made to consider moving the first public meeting from late May or early June to early fall, making sure that the fall meeting does not conflict with back to school nights. The rationale for delaying the first meeting was that there would be too long a time gap between the first and second meetings, and holding the two meetings more closely together in time would help to engage the public in the decision process. Another advantage of two fall meetings would be that the task force would have the summer months to prepare the stations more completely and to organize staff assistance

by the Park Authority and perhaps find professional facilitators/note takers to gather the information and put it in clear, digestible format.

Other observations:

- The proposed power point presentation would have full task force review.
- Multiple stations – task force members were asked to choose two-three stations that they might like to man and to notify Ms. Malone of their choices.
- Aimee Wells, Charles Smith, GMU/Potomac School were suggested to assist at stations to answer questions.
- There would be note takers at each station.
- Comment cards would be used to allow attendees to record their questions and their views.

Future Business

- A task force visit to Hidden Oaks will occur in early May
- Fairfax County Master Naturalist will make a presentation on April 24, 2012

**THE NEXT MEETING FOR THE TASK FORCE IS SCHEDULED FOR TUESDAY,
April 10, 2012**