

# **Turner Farm Master Plan Revision Public Information Meeting**

Held at 7:00 p.m., Tuesday, June 27, 2017 in the Great Falls Grange

## **Meeting Summary**

A Public Information Meeting was held to kick off the public process to update the master plan for Turner Farm Park. Introductions were made by Gayle Hooper, Park Planning Supervisor for Fairfax County Park Authority, followed by opening remarks by Dranesville District Supervisor John Foust and Park Authority Board member Tim Hackman, representative for the Dranesville District.

Gayle Hooper provided a brief background on the Park Authority including the Park Authority mission, fast facts, Park Authority Board structure, the master plan process, and the project timeline. Andy Galusha, project manager for the Turner Farm Park Master Plan Revision, provided a brief history of the site, current site conditions, surrounding context, and an overview of the 2000 master plan.

Following the presentation, Gayle Hooper moderated an open public discussion for the approximately 63 attendees. The following is a summary of the comments shared regarding the parks existing conditions and thoughts for future improvements to incorporate into a new master plan:

Speaker #1 (equestrian user):

- Happy with the park in general;
- Asked that equestrian uses be separated from other uses;
- Concerned about the compatibility of the different activities in the park, such as kids running around in close proximity to horses;
- Questioned the demand for croquet (as noted on the approved master plan) and claims the court is under-used.

Speaker #2 (equestrian user):

- Supports preserving the farm-focused character of the park. There are only two farm parks left in the county.
- Reiterated Speaker #1's comments about the incompatibility of equestrian uses with other uses, and noted that other uses can be placed elsewhere.

Speaker #3:

- Raised questions about the running track shown on the 2000 Master Plan, suggested people should use adjacent facilities and school tracks for running.

Response by Gayle Hooper:

- The running tracks included in the 2000 Master Plan was requested by the community during public involvement at that time;
- High school tracks are heavily used and not often available to the general public.

Speaker #4 (equestrian user):

- Trainer from Laurel Hill, with \$1m insurance allowing her to be able to work with girl scouts;

- Supports equestrian activities;
- Suggested to have more footings and more novice-level jumps.

Speaker #5:

- Raised questions about the old barn being preserved as part of the Resident Curator Program (RCP).
  - It was clarified that the barn will not be part of the RCP.
  - It is currently used to store materials for Turner Farm Events and for Park Authority operations and maintenance.

Speaker #6 (runs the roll-top observatory programs):

- Raised questions about the administrative protocol of the observatory and how to run classes with park service / resource management;
- Asked that the observatory and the equestrian uses be managed by different Park Authority departments;
- Would prefer for the park to be split into two distinct areas, such as recreation area and conservation area;
- Asked for more support for natural resource management.

Speaker #7 (equestrian user):

- Supports promotion of equestrian activities in the park and in the Fairfax County;
- Suggested the new park master plan give priorities to equestrian activities;
- Would like to see more riding lessons, especially those for young children.

Speaker #8 (Great Falls Citizen Association):

- Raised questions about the process for new master plan related decisions, what the process is to decide on uses that could conflict, the programs, etc.

Response by Gayle Hooper:

- The process is based on balancing public comment with park network needs and the ability to sustainably adapt a use to a specific park;
- After evaluating initial public comments, a draft plan will be prepared and shared with the community (providing an opportunity for the community to comment), followed by adjustment to respond to community input.
- Questioned the inclusion of croquet.
- Questioned how the master plan will align with future investment for development as well as for maintenance.

Answered by Gayle Hooper & Dave Bowden (Director, Park Planning & Development Division):

- The first step is to define what uses are appropriate
- Appropriate funding can then be aligned after master plan completion;
- Funding for equestrian facilities at Turner Farm Park will not necessarily compete for funding from equestrian facilities at other parks.

Speaker #9:

- Concerned about pedestrian circulation within the park and would like to improve the ability to walk around the park;
- Proposed a walking trail between the road and treed buffer on the north and west perimeter of the park, separate from the equestrian uses.

Speaker #10:

- Concerned about resource competition;
- Suggested all aspects, cultural / natural, be taken into consideration by the Board (the 4-year Park Bond).

Speaker #11 (equestrian user):

- Supports equestrian activities in the park, sees more coming;
- Suggested the current activities work well with each other;
- Noted that Turner Farm Events raises funds to maintain the park;
- Noted that the area is a semi-rural community and fitting for equestrian uses;
- Suggested the equestrian users and the Analemma Society are compatible.

Speaker #12:

- Suggested creating a “spectator area” so that non-equestrian users can observe and enjoy the park, and to raise the awareness of what this park has to offer.

Speaker #13 (Lift Me Up):

- Supports equestrian use, which has a therapeutic value.

Speaker #14 (equestrian user / Lift Me Up program user):

- Supports equestrian use, and supports the *Lift Me Up* program.

Speaker #15 (Observatory):

- Supports more observatory activities in the park;
- Suggested the observatory feature is unique and important to the park;
- Believes that the observatory and equestrian uses work well together.

Speaker #16 (involved in the 2000 master planning process):

- Suggested that all current use and programs are there because of extensive community fund raising efforts;
- Believes the activities are compatible naturally;
- Mentioned the local croquet club meets at least once or twice a year for formal tournaments;
- Concerned about the barn usage. It’s an iconic symbol that should be preserved and considered for a use other than storage;
- Mentioned that the Franklin Farm Park barn was a good example of how a barn was used as a performing arts theatre. It may be more expensive, however, to rehab barn than to construct a building new;
- Plan should address a new equestrian parking area.

Speaker #17:

- Mentioned the efforts of community fund raising, stating that many of the features in the park were built using privately-raised funds.

Speaker #18:

- Raised questions related to resources in the park.

Speaker #19:

- Likes the park the way it is;
- Walks dog in the park at least three times per week;
- Suggested to let things prevail.

Response by Gayle Hooper:

- The process to update the master plan was initiated primarily to incorporate the property acquired subsequent to the 2000 Master Plan approval as well as address Resident Curator Program (RCP);
- The master plan process, however, also allows the Park Authority to gauge how well the park is serving the communities as well as to consider opportunities to improve on the current service;
- Engaging in the master plan process does not necessarily indicate that the Park Authority envisions a wholesale change to the park.

Speaker #20 (Observatory):

- Supports the observatory activities in the park, including Friday night educational activities;
- Mentioned limited resources for the programs – noted a need for grants, donations, and volunteers;
- Mentioned advanced functions of the observatory such as data sharing with local schools and NASA;
- Mentioned that people love the sundials in the park;
- Mentioned that they would like to get a radio telescope to listen to the universe.

Speaker #21 (equestrian user):

- Supports equestrian activities in the park.

Speaker #22 (equestrian user):

- Supports equestrian activities;
- Mentioned the ability of programs such as horse-shows to raise funds, and building of handicap ramps;
- Likes to work with the Park Authority for park activities;
- Noted that Turner Farm Events gives \$4,000 per year to the Park Authority for maintenance.

Speaker #22 (equestrian user):

- Asked about timing of the Master Plan Process;

Response by Gayle Hooper:

- Staff will work on the plan with a goal of presenting the draft plan for public input in the fall;
- Please visit the Turner Farm Park Master Plan Revision project webpage for updates throughout the process at:  
<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/plandev/turnerfarm.htm>.