

TASK FORCE ON THE FUTURE OF LAKE ACCOTINK

Monday, October 2, 2023
7:00 p.m.

Government Center
Conference Room 11

Meeting Minutes

Members Present:

Sharon Bulova, Individual (Chair)
Vicki Arnold, North Springfield Civic Association & Save Lake Accotink
Ken Balbuena, North Springfield Civic Association
Matt Bright, Earth Sangha
Bryan Campbell, Friends of Long Branch Stream Valley
Karen Campblin, Fairfax NAACP
Sandy Collins, Friends of Accotink Creek
John Cook, Individual
Mary Cortina, Planning Commission
Michael Deloose, West Springfield Civic Association
Charlotte Hannagan, Kings Park Civic Association
James Heo, Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber of Commerce
Chris Jones, GMU – Potomac Environmental Research and Education Center
Mary Keeser, Friends of Lake Accotink Park (FLAP)
David Kepley, Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions
Chris Landgraf, Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC)
Marta Morrissey, Franconia District Land Use Committee
Gail Nittle, Springfield Civic Association
Allan Robertson, Save Lake Accotink
Ernest Rodriguez, Mid-Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts (MORE)
Martin Shepherd, Ravensworth Farm Civic Association
Evelyn Spain, Planning Commission
Delegate Vivian Watts, Virginia House of Delegates
Steve Yannucci, Individual

County Representatives Present:

James Melvin, Staff Aide, Franconia District Office
Laura Grape, Director, Resource Management Division, Fairfax County Park Authority
Christopher Herrington, Director, Public Works and Environmental Services
Andrea Lewis, Staff Aide, Braddock District Office
Marcia Pape, Senior Legislative Assistant, Braddock District Office
Justin Pistore, Project Manager II, Public Works and Environmental Services
Charles Smith, Project Coordinator & Branch Chief, Public Works and Environmental Services

LimnoTech Representatives Present:

Lynne Mowery, PE, CFM, Project Manager, WSP
Tim Schmitt, Senior Environmental Scientist/Principal
Craig Taylor, PE, Hydraulics and River Rehabilitation Specialist (Virtual)

Members Absent:

Anne Ball, Sierra Club – Great Falls
Cathy Field, North Springfield Civic Association
Diane Hoffman, Braddock District Land Use and Environment Committee
Stella Koch, Environmental Quality Advisory Council
Jakelin Lake, Individual
Hasan Shah, Individual
Kiel Stone, Park Authority Board
Meghan Walker, Danbury Forest Civic Association

Public Members in Attendance:

Larry Gavan
Richard Hildebrand
Phil Shiman

Call to Order and Introductory Remarks

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Sharon Bulova at 7:00 p.m. Attendance was taken, and a quorum was present.

Chairman Bulova recognized Marcia Pape to make a statement about the absence of Diane Hoffman due to a serious health condition. Ms. Hoffman is receiving treatment at Duke University Hospital in North Carolina and is in good spirits. Ms. Pape asked Task Force members to keep Ms. Hoffman in their thoughts and prayers.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Approval of September 11, 2023 Minutes

Chris Jones made a motion to approve the minutes. Charlotte Hannagan and Martin Shepherd jointly seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

Presentation by WSP/LimnoTech

Chairman Bulova re-introduced the team from WSP/LimnoTech: Lynne Mowery, Project Manager with WSP; Tim Schmitt, Senior Environmental Scientist with LimnoTech; and Craig Taylor, Hydraulics and River Rehabilitation Specialist with LimnoTech, who participated virtually.

Mr. Taylor informed the Task Force that he would present virtually at this and the next Task Force meeting on November 6. He will be attending the November 27 meeting in person.

He explained that the findings in his deliverables will be organized according to the questions that were submitted by the Task Force and the community. The answers to each question will be presented as their own section of their report. He also stated that he will have a deliverable for each meeting, and an interim final deliverable will be provided in November.

As the community considers what Lake Accotink could be, Mr. Taylor asked Task Force members to visualize what experiences visitors might have in different areas of the park. Mr. Taylor shared a satellite image showing the current condition of Lake Accotink. He noted that there has been significant island formation in the delta zone of the lake in just five years. If left unchecked, the delta zone is expected to grow significantly and change the nature of the lake. Mr. Taylor shared a bathymetric map showing a range of depths in different zones of the lake, with a four-foot depth near the marina being the deepest, and estimates of the amount of time it would take for each zone to fill with sediment. Because LimnoTech has a very short amount of time for this project, full modeling cannot be done. Mr. Taylor said he can only estimate that the lake would fill within 15 to 50 years.

Mr. Taylor then presented a series of potential scenarios regarding the future configuration of Lake Accotink, ranging from a full dredge concept to infilling with no interventions. All included some type of open water feature, given that Accotink Creek flows through the site. He also presented examples of a range of features and amenities that could be included, including bird habitat, recreational fishing, recreational boating, and elevated walkways.

Reports/Updates from Subcommittees

Subcommittee to Draft the Final Lake Accotink Task Force Findings Report – Bryan Campbell, Chairman of the subcommittee, stated that he requested a representative from each subcommittee to ensure their findings are appropriately included in the final report. The members are: Anne Ball, Vicki Arnold, Charlotte Hannagan and Mary Cortina. Their first task is to develop a rough template for the final report, which will be finalized in early December.

Subcommittee on the Value of Lake Accotink to Lake Accotink Park and to the County – Allan Robertson reported that the subcommittee would like to create a new community survey focusing on questions such as whether people would continue to use the trails and park if the lake did not exist. They have begun to draft some survey questions and are trying to figure out how to distribute it. Chairman Bulova stated that she would like to meet with the members of this subcommittee to discuss how an additional survey would fit with possible future outreach efforts by the County. She stated that it is likely that another survey will be conducted after the Board of Supervisors receives the Findings Report from the Task Force. Gail Nittle said the members of the subcommittee are concerned that the survey be widely disseminated so that it reaches a broad and diverse audience, and that it be easily accessible in a variety of formats. Ms. Nittle also asked other Task Force members to share stories and photos from Lake Accotink which demonstrate the value of Lake Accotink to the residents.

Subcommittee on Impacts of and Issues with Staff Recommendation to Not Dredge – Sandy Collins reported that her subcommittee has been meeting weekly and

split into two groups to explore staff recommendations. One group is looking at the process for evaluating alternatives that led to the recommendation to not dredge the lake, including the approving authorities and the financial impacts. The second group is looking at the basis for the decision, such as cost and environmental impact. They are exploring if other options were considered that were not the preferred alternative. They have also been investigating whether measures that are underway and planned for controlling sediment in the stormwater system will reduce the need for future dredging activities. Another topic of exploration is downstream TMDL impacts.

Subcommittee on Options to Consider Other than Full Dredging – John Cook explained that this group is charged with looking at alternatives to the County staff’s recommendation. Although the subcommittee will be outlining alternatives, they will not be making an endorsement. They are establishing criteria for evaluating and analyzing options, including sustainability, environmental impacts, impacts on vegetation and habitat, climate change impacts, flooding potential, aesthetic value, and equity. The subcommittee is considering the cost and feasibility of retaining a smaller lake (of approximately 22 or 41 acres), with the dredge spoils remaining onsite. They have also discussed a managed wetland, a savannah or grassland, and a lake with islands. The group anticipates that dredging would be a permanent function with these options.

Mr. Cook stated that their report will include a menu of options with an analysis for each one. Their last subcommittee meeting will be on October 23. The committee is on track to deliver the subcommittee report on November 6.

Closing Comments

Chairman Bulova said the next meeting of the full Task Force will be held on November 6. At that time, LimnoTech will be presenting information in response to the questions highlighted in orange in the document “Lake Accotink Task Force: Wetland Management Option Questions and Areas of Discovery.” The subcommittees are expected to report their preliminary findings to the Task Force and to Bryan Campbell on November 6. The Task Force will vote on the findings document on December 4. That document will be presented to the Board of Supervisors at its December 5 meeting.

Chairman Bulova noted that a question was raised as to whether Channel 16 could create a video to introduce the Task Force’s work to the Board of Supervisors. The Chairman said that Channel 16 is considering putting together a short piece describing the creation of the Task Force and the work involved in developing its findings.

Questions/comments for Chairman Bulova and/or the Task Force may be submitted to BOSLakeAccotinkTaskForce@fairfaxcounty.gov or LATF@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.