

**RECREATION AND PARKS BOARD
OF ST. MARY'S COUNTY
Meeting of Thursday, May 7, 2009**

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Patrick Dugan, Chairperson, Richard Buckler, Al Harrison, Sabrina Hecht, Robert Hicks, Thomas Nelson, David Phalen and Lisa Wainger-Rush.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Robert Richardson, Vice-Chairperson.

RECREATION AND PARKS STAFF AND OTHERS PRESENT: Phil Rollins, Director, Recreation and Parks (R&P); Arthur Shepherd, Recreation Division Manager; and Kathy Bailey, Recorder. Chris Bologna, CSBI, Inc.; and Sam Crozier and Viola Posthuma, of Crozier and Associates, were in attendance to present the concept plans for the Carver Heights Community Park and the Lancaster Park south parcel. Commissioner President Francis Jack Russell; Bob Schaller, Director, Economic & Community Development; Karen Everett and Amy Carter, Public Information Office; and approximately 30 citizens attended the meeting. Dr. Janice Walthour, Nat Scroggins and others were present to represent the UCAC; Pop Rothwell and others were present to represent the Save the Village group.

CALL TO ORDER

The Board meeting was called to order by Patrick Dugan, Chairperson, at 6:00 p.m., at the Carver Recreation Center in Lexington Park.

CARVER HEIGHTS COMMUNITY PARK CONCEPT PLAN

Director Phil Rollins provided a brief overview of the project and noted that the County Commissioners have allocated funding in the FY09 Capital Budget to develop two concept plans - one for the Carver Heights Community Park and the other for Lancaster Park south parcel (formerly part of Lexington Manor). The R&P Board decided to hold its May meeting at the Carver Recreation Center to gather community input and view preliminary concept drawings for the sites. Mr. Rollins displayed a map that showed the locations of both properties.

Mr. Rollins introduced Chris Bologna, CSBI, Inc, and Sam Crozier and Viola Posthuma, of Crozier Associates, the concept plan design team. County staff and the design team have been working with two separate organizations regarding the memorials proposed for the site. One is the Save the Village group which led efforts to preserve the former African American USO building that was located on the site. The County determined that the USO building would be demolished as it was cost prohibitive to renovate the badly deteriorated building. The County decided that a community park would be established on the property and a memorial constructed to commemorate the significance of the USO building and the contributions of the African American community during the WWII era. The other group, the Unified Committee on African

American Contributions (UCAC), has proposed a military memorial to honor African Americans from St. Mary's County, particularly the contributions of two Civil War Medal of Honor recipients.

Some of the other amenities discussed to date for the Carver Heights Park include a children's playground; picnic areas; nature trails; a multi-purpose athletic field; fitness track with fields in the middle; pedestrian walkways; basketball court; parking; and restroom facilities. A children's garden, tree lined pathways, a footbridge and a more natural type of playground as opposed to metal and plastic were discussed as options.

Mr. Crozier stated the team reviewed the existing site conditions which included the topography of the site, stream and drainage areas and existing structures. They looked at opportunities for placing the two memorials and enhancing recreational amenities at the site. The design team presented several illustrative idea boards which included similar and related types of sites: the footprint of George Washington's Birthplace National Park, foundation ruins at historic St. Mary's City and a newly enhanced church ruin.

Two concepts for the Carver Heights Community Park were presented that included all the amenities previously discussed, but showed some items in different locations. The first concept (labeled as option number 2 on the handouts) shows the USO memorial to the right of the original location of the USO building with a footbridge and path connecting to the UCAC memorial. Signage would be provided at the corner of MD 235 and Lincoln Avenue. The UCAC memorial could be glimpsed through the trees by passing motorists. The second concept (labeled as option number 4) shows the UCAC memorial near the community center and the USO memorial near the site of the original USO building.

Mr. Crozier and Ms. Posthuma visited the site to review the site conditions, particularly the corner of Lincoln Avenue and MD 235. They noted that traffic noise from MD 235 should be a consideration in placing the memorials. Significant noise could have an impact on the dignity of the memorials. There is also a 2' – 4' drop from the road into the wooded glen and from the scale of the monuments proposed, the view from the road could be diminished. As a result, Mr. Crozier recommended another option that showed the UCAC memorial as a centerpiece to a plaza at the recreation/community center. He suggested placing the USO memorial west of the tree grove as it relates directly to the USO site. A walkway could link the two memorials, picnic/play area and community building. The only signage would be located at Lincoln Avenue/MD 235. The team thought this option would create proper visibility for the memorials and park and make this a linear style park along Lincoln Avenue.

Comments From Citizens

- Pop Rothwell expressed concern about the location of the basketball court. He was concerned about poor visibility and the undesirable activity that could promote.
- Valentino Johnson asked if the basketball courts could stay in the present location, behind the Recreation Center building. Mr. Rollins stated that they

- would be refurbished in the short term; however, visibility and undesirable activity is a problem with the current location. Mr. Johnson also asked if there would be a formal committee to work on this process. Mr. Rollins stated that committees usually aren't formed for park master planning projects; however, the County is working with the memorial groups and community meetings, such as this one tonight, will take the place of having a formal committee.
- Nathaniel Scroggins stated that the Sons of the Union Veterans have partnered with the UCAC to develop the Civil War memorial. The group estimates the memorial will cost about \$200,000. He noted the cost and time invested in creating such a memorial and the group wants to see it respected and not vandalized. He suggested looking at the area near the parking, by the current ball fields, as a location for the UCAC memorial.
 - Dr. Janice Walthour was asked if the basketball court was behind the Carver school when she was principal. She stated that it was. She stated the basketball court needs to be visible, since it's not monitored.
 - Douglas Frederick stated that he works for the Board of Education and this was one of the sites that experienced excessive vandalism, especially with issues related to the basketball court. He expressed support for locating it in a highly visible area.
 - Elmer Brown supported putting the basketball court in a visible location; "you can't have basketball near cultural type activities such as memorials."
 - Mike Brown, the Vice-President of UCAC, stated that he supported putting the monuments near MD 235; putting it down into the community is a bad idea.
 - An unidentified lady stated that she thinks the most appropriate space for the UCAC memorial is near MD 235 not into the community area; she said "just because it's an African American memorial doesn't mean it has to be in an African American community."
 - Elmer Brown suggested that the State Tourism Office or other sources might have funding available to assist with the projects.

The major issues of concern from citizens were where to site the basketball court and the location of the memorials.

Chris Bologna stated we need to select a location that will provide a desirable setting for the monuments. There would need to be some separation between MD 235 and the memorials. Having the two memorials close to one another would also save on site work costs.

Some expressed interest in seeing the UCAC memorial near the future athletic fields, along MD 235. Mr. Bologna stated that would require working with the State Highway Administration on the entrance and a significant cost for the site work. Mr. Rollins stated that, depending on where the memorials are located, site work could be a very costly portion of the project.

Ms. Elfreda Mathis suggested the UCAC memorial be located at John G. Lancaster Park at Willows Road. The UCAC memorial is a national memorial, as the USO memorial is a community specific memorial. She suggested locating the memorial on a small area of open space not far from restrooms and parking. This would save on site

work as the area is already cleared. Mr. Rollins stated that staff is open to the proposal and will pursue this further.

Mr. Rollins stated that the design team will take all these comments and suggestions into consideration when they meet again to refine the concept plan. It is anticipated the revised concept will be presented at the June or July R&P Board meeting. The community will be notified when the next meeting is scheduled.

The Board took a short break from 7:30 – 7:40 p.m.

LANCASTER PARK SOUTH PARCEL CONCEPT PLAN

Mr. Rollins provided some background information on the concept planning process for the Lancaster Park South Parcel. Planning will take into consideration the significance of the former Lexington Manor Navy housing area. There is an easement with the Maryland Historic Trust that requires preservation and interpretation of two of the historic homes in the neighborhood. Two homes on the corner of S. Coral and Rennell drive were slated for preservation. One of the homes was stabilized and the exterior restored; it will be used for park purposes such as storage and will be renovated to serve as a restroom facility. The other home collapsed when County staff tried to stabilize the structure; a picnic pavilion will be installed on the site of the house that collapsed.

Mr. Crozier provided an illustrative drawing of the site analysis. This is the site of the new disc golf course. Other amenities that can be considered for the property include: pedestrian and bicycle pathways that make use of the former streets on the property; a picnic pavilion and picnic areas; gardens and areas for relaxation; and other passive recreational uses. Other possible activities might include community gardens, new tree plantings (more cherry trees), natural sculpture gardens and environmental interpretation (bird watching, etc.).

The consultants displayed a concept that mapped the new disc golf course. The disc golf course will make use of and follow the existing road system. The roads will also connect to the new pathway being built around the perimeter of Lancaster Park. Only passive and open space type of activities will be allowed on the site; no permanent structures can be permitted due to ACUIZ and other restrictions. No cars or motorized vehicles will be allowed on the pathways/former streets.

Mr. Scroggins asked if there was a time limit on the federal and state development restrictions on the south parcel. Mr. Rollins will check into that.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

David Phalen moved, seconded by Al Harrison, to approve the minutes of April 6, 2009; motion carried 7-0.

R&P FY2010 BUDGET UPDATES

Mr. Rollins provided a summary of the FY2010 R&P Recommended Budget that was taken to public hearing on April 21st. The month of May will be used to finalize the budget and part of that process will include looking at the capital projects to see if any revisions can be made to help reduce the amount the County will need to borrow over the next few years. Mr. Rollins has recommended deferring the Recreation Facilities improvement project by one year and changing the phasing for the Chaptico Park phased development project. The design and engineering is scheduled for FY11 and the construction had been scheduled for FY12; staff has proposed to split the construction between FY12 and FY13. The changes will not have a significant impact on these projects.

OTHER BUSINESS

Elms Beach Park Management Changes and Entrance Fee - Mr. Rollins informed the Board that the BOCC recently took under advisement the recommendation from staff and the R&P Board regarding management changes and charging an entrance fee at Elms Beach Park. The BOCC did not support charging an entrance fee for County residents; however, they did support staff exploring the idea of charging a non-resident fee in the future. They concurred with making the pavilion alcohol free and not to rent the pavilion on holiday weekends. A gate attendant will be on duty on most weekends and holidays to monitor vehicle traffic and the parking area. If the maximum parking capacity is reached, the park will be considered full and no further people or vehicles will be allowed into the park. As vehicles leave the park, other people/vehicles will be allowed into the park.

Chairman Dugan recommended having staff count the number of out-of-state/county weekend cars entering the park. This information could be helpful when doing research on charging a fee for out-of-state/county patrons.

SCHEDULING OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Recreation and Parks Board is scheduled for Thursday, June 4, 2009, at 5:30 p.m., in the Chesapeake Building in Leonardtown.

Sabrina Hecht asked if the July 2, 2009 meeting could be rescheduled due to the July 4th holiday weekend. Staff will look into rescheduling the meeting, possibly for July 9th.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Kathy Bailey, Recorder

Minutes approved by the Recreation and Parks Board on _____.