



November 17, 2010

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Mary Bradford, Director, Department of Parks *M Bradford*

Mike Riley, Deputy Director, Administration *MR*

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FROM: Rachel Newhouse, Project Coordinator, PPSD *R Newhouse*

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**SUBJECT: Worksession #1 - Josiah Henson Special Park (also called "Uncle Tom's Cabin") Master Plan**

**Staff Recommendations**

1. **APPROVE** park name change from "Uncle Tom's Cabin" Special Park to "Josiah Henson" Special Park;
2. **APPROVE** park master plan with moderate development option (Attachments A and B).

**Background**

***The Existing Site and Interpretive Programs***

The property is a 1.52-acre park on Old Georgetown Road in the Luxmanor subdivision of North Bethesda in the Southern Maintenance Region.

Existing features in the 1.52-acre park include:

- Isaac Riley House (built ca. 1800-1815)
- Attached log wing/kitchen (built 1850-1851)
- Henson Site Detached Garage (built ca. 1970)
- Rozier House (built 1961)
- Rozier Detached Garage (1961 or later)
- Historic landscape and site features associated with the former plantation (may include historic trees, historic spring, etc.)
- Archaeological potential (may yield evidence of location of slave quarters and other outbuildings).

### **Existing Programming and Operations**

The Department of Parks has made a concerted effort since 2008 to open the site to the public despite the lack of an on-site facility manager. Parks promotes the recognition of the site as the Josiah Henson Special Park, honoring the life of Reverend Josiah Henson, while it continues to keep the vital connection to the internationally-known Harriet Beecher Stowe novel through multi-faceted themes.

Specific to interpretive programming, the site is currently open four times a year during: the Maryland House and Garden Pilgrimage (April/May), the Luxmanor Citizens Association Annual Art Show (April), Heritage Days (June), and Emancipation Day (November). During all but the art show, staff and volunteers of the Department give guided 25-minute tours of the house and grounds. Visitors also can view a 30-minute video on the life of Reverend Josiah Henson. There also is an ongoing archaeological dig on the site undertaken by Parks staff and volunteers. Occasional special events and tours, including school tours, are given by appointment. At present, large public events are free of charge, while special events are subject to reasonable fees. Visitors park their vehicles at Wall Local Park as there is no adequate on-site parking.

Regarding operations, the Park Planning and Stewardship Division is charged with interpretive programmatic responsibility of the site and its stewardship. The Southern Region provides routine maintenance of the site and grounds. Park Police provides security through regular patrols and has recently completed a Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) Study. Central

Maintenance provides building preservation (putting new cedar shake roofs on the house and garage and painting the main house at 11420 Old Georgetown). The Horticulture, Forestry and Environmental Education Division provides landscape management and tree care.

**Figure 1 – Site Map**



## Response to Public Testimony

On October 28, 2010, the Planning Board held a Public Hearing on the draft master plan for the Josiah Henson (currently “Uncle Tom’s Cabin”) Special Park. The public spoke in response to the staff recommendation to change the name of the park and to the staff recommendation to approve the moderate development option.

### **Park Name Change**

Of the thirteen (13) people who verbally testified and four (4) that sent in written testimony, seven (7) supported the name change; the other ten (10) did not specifically address this issue. One (1) person wanted to add The Isaac Riley Farm to the name of the park (see **Attachment C** - Summary of Public Hearing Testimony).

Accordingly, staff is recommending the name change from “**Uncle Tom’s Cabin**” Special Park to **Josiah Henson Special Park** in order to recognize the man who inspired the internationally known novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, that lit a fuse on the Civil War.

### **The Development Options and Cost Estimates**

At the October 28, 2010 Planning Board Public Hearing, the public spoke passionately about the remarkable life of Reverend Josiah Henson and the responsibility of telling his story through the development of the interpretive programs and park.

Six people were in support of the moderate development option detailed in the master plan (one citizen urged frugality and another recommended the Maximum Option). At the end of the public testimony, the Planning Board asked staff to provide programming options and related costs for the three master plan scenarios thereby permitting a better comparison of each.

Attached is a chart (**Table 1**) showing a summary of the Minimum, Moderate and Maximum Options. Staff has provided operating and capital cost estimates of the Minimum and Moderate Options. The minimum option represents the current status-quo with enhancements to reflect minimum programming requirements recommended by staff for a public museum-type park. More detailed breakdowns of capitol and operating costs are given in **Table 2**.

### **Preferred Option**

The Moderate Option is what is being proposed and represents a project that concentrates more fully on providing interpretive exhibits that more fully describes Reverend Josiah Henson’s life on the Riley Farm and slavery in Montgomery County, Maryland. Staff believes the Moderate Option is both implementable on the existing site and affordable. The Moderate Option also develops the bus drop off and small parking area from Old Georgetown Road needed to provide accessible parking on-site. The Moderate Option gives more attention to providing historic landscape interpretation, screening neighbors and additional park amenities.

The Maximum Option reflects a full-scale museum of the type one would find more typically in the private sector and assumes larger visitor orientation spaces, extensive interpretive exhibits, more space for on-site parking and more space for historic landscape interpretation. Staff does not believe the Maximum Option fits well with the surrounding neighborhood; nor does Staff believe this option to be affordable.

Staff has not provided costs for the Maximum Option as it is not currently feasible.

Facility Planning is due to start by January 2011. A significant fundraising effort, both within the county and beyond, will be required to fully fund the conversion of the site from a vacant set of buildings to a public museum.

The Moderate Option will be further explored during the Facility Planning process, which is expected to begin shortly after the approval of the master plan. The Facility Plan will develop phasing and cost estimates that are more detailed.

**Table 1 - Plan Development Options**

Minimum Option: Status Quo with Enhancements	Moderate Option	Maximum Option
<p><b>Interpretive Programming that currently occurs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open the site to the public (4) days per year for the annual special programs – Luxmanor Art show, Maryland House and Garden Pilgrimage, Montgomery County Heritage Day, and Maryland Emancipation Day and conduct limited special request tours for private groups.</li> <li>• No new staff.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Interpretive programming:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open the site to the public on weekends February through November.</li> <li>• Open for four (4) annual special programs: Luxmanor Art show, Maryland House and Garden Pilgrimage, Montgomery County Heritage Day, and Maryland Emancipation Day.</li> <li>• Conduct tours for private groups and school groups by appointment.</li> <li>• Hire 1 full-time employee to manage the museum on-site.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Interpretive programming:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open the site to the public February through November (5) days per week (3) weekdays, Saturday and Sunday.</li> <li>• Conduct special request tours for private groups and school groups (primarily for 4th + 8th grade levels.)</li> <li>• Hire (2+) full-time employees to manage the museum and develop programming, with offices on the site.</li> </ul>
<p><b>House and site:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Establish an archival collection on-site focused primarily on Rev. Josiah Henson and slavery in Montgomery County.</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>Creation of a temporary panel exhibit on Rev. Josiah Henson and slavery inside the farmhouse and log kitchen. The exhibit would only include stationary didactic panels and minimal archaeological displays.</i></b></li> <li>• Continuation of the existing 30 minute Rev. Josiah Henson video produced by Ontario site.</li> <li>• Pursue ongoing archaeological investigation and make archaeological artifacts a vibrant component of exhibit.</li> <li>• Keep house as is. Paint the interior. Add security lighting at rear.</li> <li>• Complete demolition of Rozier house. Keep Rozier garage and parking areas.</li> <li>• Continue to utilize the existing garage on the Riley grounds as a visitor orientation site.</li> <li>• Installation of standard park signage including the brown and white park identity sign, <b><i>3 outdoor interpretive panels</i></b>, a property marker and a Parks information kiosk.</li> <li>• <b><i>Installation of an accessible ramp and walkway to the house.</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>Installation of minimal landscape screening.</i></b></li> <li>• Utilize (2) port-a-johns (ADA and regular) during special events.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Bold italics = facility enhancements</i></b></p>	<p><b>House and site:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand the archival and library collections.</li> <li>• Design and develop interpretive exhibits that tell the story of Rev. Josiah Henson, slavery in Montgomery County and Maryland to include permanent didactic panels, interactive exhibits, artifact displays, and interactive web presence.</li> <li>• Produce a 5-10 minute orientation film similar to that of the Parks Show as part of museum exhibition, and continue to offer the 30-minute film from Ontario site as well at visitor station.</li> <li>• Make archaeological artifacts a vibrant component of exhibit.</li> <li>• Remove the circular driveway, restore the exterior of house, completely re-build the screened in porch for research library and small museum shop, convert modern kitchen at rear for museum, and repair second story.</li> <li>• Demolition of Rozier house.</li> <li>• Use the existing garage on the Rozier property grounds as a visitor orientation site with moderate design changes.</li> <li>• Create (5) parking spaces: (3) staff spaces and (2) ADA public spaces.</li> <li>• Create a bus pull-off for 55-passenger coach buses and school buses.</li> <li>• If Rozier garage is used for visitors, remove Riley grounds garage to restore more of landscape.</li> <li>• Identify ADA compliant access points.</li> <li>• Use landscape screening where appropriate and label old trees. Alter landscape to re-create historic feel where appropriate.</li> <li>• Install (2) permanent public restrooms on the existing non-historic site.</li> </ul>	<p><b>House and site:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand the archival and library collections.</li> <li>• <b><i>Riley House:</i></b> Increase the level of technology for the exhibit interactives such as touch screen computer stations.</li> <li>• <b><i>1850s Log Kitchen:</i></b> Restore and furnish the log kitchen to a functional 1850s kitchen with working hearth.</li> <li>• <b><i>Grounds:</i></b> Expand on the gardens to included samplings of historic crop plantings.</li> <li>• Reconstruct outbuilding(s) such as the smokehouse.</li> <li>• Make archaeological artifacts a vibrant component of exhibit.</li> <li>• Produce a full-length documentary on the life of Rev. Josiah Henson (focused on his Maryland years), the Riley family and plantation history, and an overview of slavery in Montgomery County. Documentary will be available for sale to the public.</li> <li>• Generally, extensive changes to each part the House, for the most accurate or useful design of each of the house's components as facilities for a museum focused on Rev. Josiah Henson's story, plantation life, and slavery, with interpretation of the Riley family as well.</li> <li>• Complete demolition of Rozier house and garage.</li> <li>• Build a visitor center on site or off site (if additional land becomes available). Include state of the art LEED building techniques, sustainable sites initiative landscape solutions, and create multiple restrooms and accessible features.</li> <li>• Create parking areas and spaces for buses to load, unload and park.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Estimated FY2012 Operating Costs = \$60,000</b>  <b>Estimated Capital Costs = \$100,000 - \$200,000</b></p>	<p><b>Estimated FY2016 Operating Costs - \$185,500</b>  <b>Estimated Capital Costs = \$3,000,000 – \$5,000,000</b></p>	

**Table 2- Cost Estimates for Minimum and Moderate Options**

Item	Minimum Option	Moderate Option	Notes
Anticipated Capital Cost for Structures/Improvements	\$100,000- \$200,000	\$3,000,000 - \$5,000,000	<p><b>Minimum cost estimate</b> based on status quo plus enhancements needed to make site and house accessible, remove non-historic Rozier House, add basic museum displays, screen neighbors and make site safety improvements.</p> <p><b>Moderate cost estimate</b> based on development of identified objectives, and depends on design work to take place this fiscal year as part of “facility planning.” Costs assume project coming online in FY2016.</p>
Expected Annual FY2012 and FY2016 Operating Costs including additional staff including off-setting Revenues	\$60,000	\$185,500	<p>FY2012 – costs to currently manage site and run programs.</p> <p>FY2016 - Using programming model for the Moderate Option developed during master plan and facility planning phases. Contract 1 full time person for facility management of museum.</p>
Future Acquisition			As opportunities, willing sellers and budgets allow.

**Project Costs to Date**

In response to a public request staff prepared a table that summarizes the current costs of the project that have been spent or approved:

**Table 3 - Current Project Costs**

	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Acquisition for Current Park Acreage	\$1.72 million	Two parcels in Luxmanor – 1.5 acres.
Current Average Annual Maintenance And Operational Costs	\$14,029.34	Average annual routine maintenance and standard operations for 2008 and 2009.
Historic Structure Report	\$107,660	John Milner and Associates plus multiple subcontractors.
Master planning effort	\$49,700	Being prepared in house.
Facility Planning Phase	<b>\$640,000</b>	Appropriated budget for Facility Plan and Interpretive Plan: Planning and design work for site, building, exhibits ... to convert from vacant dwelling into accessible public museum. Includes staff chargeback.

**Funding Sources to Date**

In addition, the site has been the recipient of a \$50,000 state bond bill that went towards the publication of the Historic Structure Report. The site is now the recipient of a \$100,000 Save America’s Treasures Grant from the National Park Service that will go towards the preservation of the structure in the Facility Planning phase.

**Table 4 - Grants and Revenues**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Grant</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Save America’s Treasures Grant Recipient	\$100,000	Requires Matching fund – Grant to go towards Facility Plan and preservation of building
State Bond Bill Recipient	\$50,000	Required Matching fund went towards Historic Structures Report

**Off Site Issues**

At the first public meeting on June 15, 2010, area residents raised concerns about existing pedestrian safety at nearby intersections. At the request of the meeting attendees, staff met with Montgomery County Department of Transportation and State Highway Administration staff to convey the concerns.

These concerns revolve around existing conditions that are outside the scope of this Master Plan; however, staff agreed to draft letters for the Vice Chairman’s signature to each of these agencies conveying the neighborhood’s concerns and requesting that the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) and the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) respond directly to the citizens. A draft of the letter is included (see **Attachment D**).

CC:

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Glenn Kreger  
David Vismara  
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## **List of Attachments**

***Attachment A - Josiah Henson Special Park Master Plan – December 2010***

***Attachment B - Josiah Henson Special Park Master Plan – Appendices***

***Attachment C - Staff Response to Public Hearing Testimony - October 28, 2010***