

COMMUNITY CORRESPONDENCE

From: ACJANSEN@aol.com [mailto:ACJANSEN@aol.com]

Sent: March 22, 2005 6:53 PM

To: Masciocchi, Ellen

Cc: dan@sligowebworks.com

Subject: Takoma-Piney Branch Local Park

Ellen

I appreciate receiving in the mail today the plans for the Takoma-Piney branch park.

Generally, I find the plans to be modest and doable. however I do have some concerns and questions.

Dan, you are the only person I know on the green team. So, I am ccing you.

My main concerns are that (1) there be a net decrease in paved areas and (2) there be a commitmenta (i.e., budget) from the county to maintain the area, including garbage pick up.

specific thoughts.....

IMPROVED GRADING

on the "improved grading" can you be more exact on what that means. If you

are talking about creating a roller blading loop around the park then I would

suspect that "improved grading" means leveling the hill and putting the

playground and pavillion on the same level as the soccer field. Because, otherwise i

don't really see it possible to roller blade up the hill behind the playground.

that would mean killing several large trees.

So does improved grading mean leveling certain areas?

IMPROVED GRADING RELATES TO THE ACCESS FROM GRANT AVENUE AND IMPROVING DRAINAGE IN AREAS WHERE PONDING OCCURS AND WHERE EROSION IS EVIDENT. THE OVERALL TOPOGRAPHY OF THE PARK WILL REMAIN AS IS.

LOOP PATH

in addition to the grading issue above, what materials are being discussed

for this path? Is it the plan of M-NCPPC to replace grass with a non-permeable

surface?

THE LOOP PATH IS INTENDED TO PROVIDE HANDICAP ACCESSIBILITY TO THE ENTIRE PARK. IT IS MADE OF ASPHALT TO ALLOW ACCESS FOR WHEELCHAIRS, STROLLERS AND ROLLER BLADERS. PAVING IS REDUCED IN OTHER PARTS OF THE PARK. ANY INCREASE WILL BE MINIMAL (LESS THAN 250 SQUARE YARDS)

PARKING

there seem to be a lot of thoughts in this one section, but the facts are

obscured. The section begins by saying that the "sizing does not meet current standards".

Are you, or are you not, saying the parking lot space will be increased? If

so, exactly what dimensions are you talking about?

Are you or are you not saying the parking lot surface will be made more

permeable? If so, exactly what dimensions are you talking about?

THE PLAN IS TO REMOVE EXCESS PAVEMENT AROUND THE ENTRANCE TO THE PARKING LOT. SEVERAL SPACES WILL BE REMOVED AND REPLACED WITH PERMEABLE ISLANDS. THE PARKING LOT WAS REPLACED IN THE LAST TWO YEARS, THEREFORE IT WOULD NOT BE PRACTICAL TO REDUCE IT AT THIS TIME.

SHELTER

what is the rationale for making the shelter smaller? the actual picnic space

is not that big as it is now.

what is the rationale for removing the bathrooms?

is there a written commitment / budget to clean and maintain the proposed portable bathrooms?

THE BATHROOMS ARE DIFFICULT TO SECURE AND MAINTAIN AND THEY BLOCK THE VISIBILITY INTO THE SHELTER. REMOVING THE SHELTER WILL PROVIDE BETTER VISIBILITY FOR THE POLICE. A CONTRACTOR WILL MAINTAIN THE PORTATOILETS ON A REGULAR BASIS UNDER A COMMISSIONWIDE CONTRACT.

PLAYGROUND

what surface is being discussed for the playground areas?

AN ADA ACCESSIBLE WOOD FIBER SURFACE

ASPHALT PLAY AREA

this section begins by saying "reduce hard surface play area" what are the

dimensions of paved area now and what are they proposed to be? and what surface?

THE ASPHALT SURFACE WILL BE REDUCED BY ABOUT ONE-THIRD. MOST OF THE AREA IS ALONG THE CHAIN LINK FENCE AND ADJACENT TO THE BACKSTOP ON THE WESTERN SIDE OF THE PARK.

GARBAGE

are you aware that there are no garbage cans at the park? and that garbage

gets strewn about the park? What is the M-NCPPC commitment to pick up the

garbage now and the increased garbage likely to occur with increased usage?

WE ARE PROPOSING TO INISTALL GARBAGE CANS WHERE APPROPRIATE.

Pete needs to answer

thanks

Anicca Jansen

Darwin Avenue

Masciocchi, Ellen

From: Wayne Sherwood [WayneSherwood@compuserve.com]
Sent: Tuesday, April 05, 2005 11:16 AM
To: Masciocchi, Ellen
Subject: Comments on park plan (re-sent 4/5/2005)

April 1, 2005

Ms. Ellen Masciocchi
Project Manager
Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning
The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
9500 Brunett Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20902

By e-mail

Dear Ms. Masciocchi,

This letter is a response by the undersigned to your letter of March 18 concerning a facility plan for Takoma - Piney Branch Local Park. Your letter said, "The purpose of this mailing is to provide you with an opportunity to comment on the final plan". Your letter also said that comments were due by April 1st.

These comments are signed by neighborhood residents who live in five houses on lower Grant Ave., Takoma Park, near the Takoma Park municipal complex and the entrance to Ed Wilhelm Field off of Grant Ave. We met to discuss your 'final plan' on Wednesday evening March 30, and we have all contributed to the preparation of these remarks.

As Wayne Sherwood mentioned to you in an e-mail to you (and to Suzanne Ludlow of the City of Takoma Park) earlier this week, the first thing that caught our attention was that your "final plan" seems to show the wrong location and size for the proposed future turnaround at the lower end of Grant Avenue. This in turn means that most of the design in the turnaround area and immediately adjoining areas seems wrong to us. The most apparent error seems to be that your 'final plan' shows a semi-circular ramp which at one time had been proposed to be a part of a multi-level parking garage at the rear of the new community center. The city of Takoma Park has decided not to build that multi-level parking structure (or the attached ramp), and therefore that part of your plan is obsolete.

We asked both the city and the county if we could be given a more detailed county plan for that area (at the lower end of Grant Ave.) at a larger scale, i.e. so that we could see more clearly what is being proposed for this area, but this has not been made available to us by today, and we wanted to submit our comments by the announced deadline of April 1.

As part of our discussions with the City concerning the community center, the city of Takoma Park has made a commitment to our neighborhood that the

turnaround will remain in approximately the same location as it is now, with approximately the same radius, although: (a) it may be pushed slightly in the direction of the field (which might require cutting away the hillside slightly); and (b) there will be a narrow berm between the turnaround and the municipal building parking area on which vegetation will be planted. There may also be a concrete or brick wall and planters there.

Since this area on your map is incorrect, the comments in our letter reflect what we would like to see happen in this area when the county develops a corrected plan. We trust that the county will revise and correct the design of this area quickly and put a revised plan out for further review and comment by ourselves and others soon.

A. Recreational improvements and previous process.

This local park is a very important part of our neighborhood and community and is heavily used whenever the weather permits. Many people use it and enjoy it greatly. The park contributes enormously to the quality of life in this area and is a pleasure and delight for children and adults.

We are very grateful to Parks and Planning Commission, and to the Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning, for spending so much time in developing a new plan for this area and for being willing to invest additional resources here. We are glad that this is going to remain a major recreational asset in this highly built-up community.

We support the idea of a skatepark in this area and think it will be a valuable addition to the park and a resource for the kids. We want to make sure, however, that the skatepark is properly supervised and maintained, and we recommend that the job of supervision be included as part of a new MOU between the city and county (further described below).

We also appreciate the thorough and professional meetings that your office has held with our community in the past regarding this project. We have been very impressed with the quality of your staff, and with the amount of forethought that has gone into responding to the concerns which people in our neighborhood have brought to your attention at previous meetings. Thank you for your commitment to including this neighborhood in the planning process and for being open to hearing our responses and ideas regarding this local park.

B. Turn-around, access, handicapped accessibility and parking.

Our principal concern with the 'final plan' mailed to us is the area at the lower end of Grant Ave., including the turnaround, parking, and access to the field. Grant Ave. is a narrow street. It is used a great deal by parents who drive down the street to drop off their children in the turnaround so that they can go to school, or go to the field. In addition, Grant Ave. is a dead end street. People from outside this area often do not know that, and come down the street mistakenly thinking they can get through. There needs to be a turnaround at the end of the street with at least as big a radius as the one that is there now. Large trucks, delivery trucks, school buses, and other large vehicles often come down the

street and need to use the turnaround. Having a smaller turnaround there would require these large vehicles to back up the street. The street is heavily traveled by children walking to and from school. Having a smaller turnaround would therefore make walking in this area more dangerous for the children.

As mentioned in the introductory remarks above, the city has committed to maintaining a turnaround at the end of Grant Ave. no smaller than the one that is there now, in a location not much different from where it is now. This will mean that the county will have to revise its plan for this area and for access from the street to the field.

The plan needs to provide for strictly controlled vehicular access to field in this area, e.g. by gates or chain with lock. If this is not done, recreational users will drive up onto the field, and into the picnic area, playgrounds etc., paying no concern to any signs that may be posted there advising people that no vehicles are allowed. This happens now whenever the chain is down for a few days. Only a locked access will prevent this from happening in the future.

We would encourage the county to consider the possibility of locating handicapped access parking in a small newly-paved area that would be located near the maintenance access road (on the side of the maintenance road furthest away from the houses) rather than on the street or on the turnaround. In this way, handicapped parking would be provided close to the field and park but would not block the street or turnaround.

Increased parking enforcement will be necessary. We have seen little enforcement of the currently posted 'no parking' signs.

We need to see more detail as well concerning how the residents' driveways will relate to the revised street plan and turnaround.

Specifically, we request a detailed plan for that area so that the neighborhood can comment.

We prefer a plan that leaves the turn around approximately where it is now, with a landscaped berm, plantings, wall and/or planters.

There also need to be wide enough openings between the planters (if any) at the end of the street to allow strollers through. Currently, when there are cars parked there, one can't get through without going up over the sidewalk and back down, a bumpy experience at best and not easy with a load of groceries as well as a sleeping child in the stroller.

C. Other concerns

1. Approaching the park from the corner of Holly and Darwin Avenues.

We would like the county to make it very clear to people approaching the park from the corner of Holly and Darwin Avenues that the major entrance to the park is via the parking lot off Darwin Ave.

The county should design the Darwin entrance as THE main entrance with a

large sign identifying the park, widening the opening, possibly adding an archway, definitely a wide stairway with rails on each side, and adding an ADA-accessible path. Clearing enough of the trees for such a path would also increase visibility and address security concerns.

Appropriate signage should be placed at this corner directing traffic to Darwin. There should be a sign indicating that Grant is a dead end with a limited turnaround.

Create a more inviting entrance to the park/field from Darwin Ave. and the parking lot there.

Create a more 'accessible' route from the parking lot there to the recreational facilities and field. At least show an alternative plan (and costs) that would do this, so people could evaluate it in comparison with trying to achieve full handicapped accessibility from lower Grant Ave.

A sloping trail or ramp leading down from the parking area could be used not just for 'handicapped access' but for all people with sports equipment and picnic/party cartage.

2. Slope leading up from Grant Ave. to the field.

We would like to see a more detailed plan for the design and landscaping of the slope leading from Grant Ave. up to the field, once a new basemap is available showing the correct location of the turnaround. The design and landscaping should help channel water run-off to minimize erosion there. Specifically, plant trees and bushes (and locate other fixtures in this area) to prevent erosion and to discourage cars from driving around the gated entrance.

3. Portable toilets

The portable toilets should be located further from homes, preferably between the playground and the pavilion, so that the odors will be less bothersome to the people living in the homes and so that the toilets will be less visible from the homes.

4. Increased monitoring and supervision of activities on the field, in the park, and at the end of Grant Ave., and MOU between city and county.

We recommend that as soon as possible the city and county draw up a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) under which the city will exercise responsibility for monitoring and supervising activities on the field and park, including security and police supervision.

We would like to see increased city police monitoring and enforcement of the no parking zones along lower Grant Ave. It is not only illegal but dangerous when people park in the no parking zones and obstruct the turnaround.

If handicapped parking spaces are provided in this area, there will be a

need to strictly enforce the 'handicapped only' rules. Otherwise other users will tend to preempt these parking spaces.

Make sure that the skateboard area is visible from the parking lot on Darwin so that police can monitor it easily from the parking lot.

5. Playground equipment.

The plan does not explicitly say that the playground equipment will be replaced with new, safe equipment. Please clarify. If this has not yet been determined, we would like to request that the county seek additional community input when these plans are under consideration.

6. Location of pavilion.

We could not determine from the plan whether the new pavilion will be in exactly the same location as the existing one, but we recommend that the county put the new pavilion on the same concrete pad where it is now, so that a new pad does not have to be built (at additional cost).

7. Improved grading behind houses.

We are pleased to see that plans are still in place to improve the grading between the park and properties on Grant Avenue.

8. Split rail fences instead of cyclone

Residents of the properties on Grant Avenue strongly prefer the earlier plan to replace the broken chainlink fence with a split-rail fence. The split rail fence is aesthetically consistent with the split-rail fences the city has put up along Philadelphia and Holly. Rustic look of split rail is more inviting than chain link fence. If needed, split rail fence can have wire mesh added such as was done on Philadelphia near Holly. This improvement was specifically discussed with park maintenance personnel and agreed to in a community meeting.

9. Entrance from Maple Ave. to the field

The county needs to create a proper entrance to the field/park for the residents who live in the apartment buildings along Maple Avenue. The current passageway is uninviting and unsafe.

10. Trash cans and pick-up

Restore trash cans to the park immediately to prevent further litter accumulation. Ensure an adequate number of containers and frequency of collection for the heavy use this park receives.

11. Benches

This is not a top priority item, but it might be a good idea to install a couple of wooden benches near the soccer field. There are two locations where this might be workable. One would be along the side of the soccer field closest to Maple Ave.

There should NOT be benches on the side of the soccer field furthest from Maple Ave., to avoid obstructing children who want to sled on the hillside, and so they won't be along the right field line of the baseball/softball diamond.

Another area would be where the 4x4's are outlining the playground. (Often that's where people sit anyway, so they can keep an eye on the soccer games while still watching their children in the playground.)

12. Loop footpath.

On the side of the baseball diamond the furthest away from Grant Ave., the loop footpath goes through a very wet area that is often very waterlogged and squishy after a heavy rain, with water lying on the surface of the ground. A lot of water flows over and through the ground in this area after a rain. The county needs to make sure that putting a footpath here won't change the water runoff patterns, which might lead to increased flooding of the baseball and soccer fields.

Has the county considered routing one path around the field at the same level? Joggers are not necessarily going to want to go up and down the steep hill that the path follows in the current plan.

13. Limbing of mature trees

We recommend minimal limbing up of mature trees

14. Maintenance workers' access to the park and field.

We recognize that maintenance workers need access to the field and park to mow the grass, cut the bushes, pick up trash, and (in the future) empty the portable toilets. It appears that the county distributes these tasks among numerous different crews. Sometimes these jobs are done by county employees, other times by maintenance contractors. As long as there is a lock on the access on the maintenance road, people are going to need a key.

Yet past observation has shown that at least half the time, maintenance workers arrive and don't have a key. When that happens, large maintenance vehicles simply go around the currently existing chain and lock, by driving up over the hillside. This obviously ruins the grass there, and contributes to rapid erosion of the hillside.

Installation of a heavy gate with lock in this location won't solve the basic problem. Maintenance crews change frequently. Keys are lost or

forgotten.

We want this maintenance access road to continue to be locked, except when it needs to be open for maintenance. We recommend that extra keys always be kept in the recreation department in the municipal building, and that a small sign be put up next to the gate saying, "A key to this gate (or chain, or whatever) is available next door at the municipal building." This would save everyone a LOT of frustration, to say nothing of preventing this entrance and the slope and the grass and the bushes from being repeatedly ruined and the soil eroding.

D. Conclusion

We would like to thank you again for this opportunity to comment. We are very excited about these proposed improvements and we greatly appreciate all the good work that you and others at the county have done on this already. We feel that we are ALMOST there!

However, this cannot yet be considered to be a "final plan", since the base map used to show the lower end of Grant Ave. and turnaround is inaccurate and obsolete, and doesn't reflect the latest design of the community center and the agreement which the city has made with this neighborhood. We need to see revised, more accurate maps and plans for this area. We would be happy to meet with you to discuss this area further and to comment on future plans when they are ready.

Sincerely,

Jack McGrath 216 Grant Ave.
Wayne Sherwood 218 Grant Ave.
Pam Larson and Art Isaacs 220 Grant Ave.
Jane Welna and Robert Fox 221 Grant Ave.
Eva & Phillipe Cappelletti-Chao 224 Grant Ave.

Masciocchi, Ellen

From: Noluthando Crockett-Ntonga [profnolu@yahoo.com]
Sent: Tuesday, October 12, 2004 10:41 PM
To: Masciocchi, Ellen
Subject: Park

Hi, thanks for responding. There was an article in one of those community newspapers and your name and details were listed. We live in the Deauville on Maple Ave right next to the elementary school. I regularly take my three grandsons (age 2, 5, 8) to the playground as it is a short walk up the hill and through the trees behind the apartment building. I love the fact that the playground is shady which is wonderful on hot days. Also the boys love the see-saw. Please put me down to be notified of any community meetings. My full details are as follows:

Mrs. Noluthando Crockett-Ntonga
7520 Maple Ave. #615
TP, MD 20912
301 270-3064

Most people call me "Nolu"

Masciocchi, Ellen

From: Richard Payne [rpayne@umd.edu]
Sent: Friday, October 08, 2004 3:29 PM
To: Masciocchi, Ellen
Subject: RE: Takoma Park-Piney Branch Local Park

Dear Ellen,

I am President of the Ritchie Citizen's Association. We represent the families on Ritchie Avenue, East of Piney Branch Rd., Oswego Avenue and Geneva Avenue.

Our community backs up on the Woods (Takoma Woods) that lie between the Ed-Wilhem Park and Ritchie/Oswego Avenues. Members of our community use the steps and paths through Takoma Woods and then the paths across Ed Wilhelm Park to get to the three local schools - and have property that backs up onto Takoma Woods. Parties and events going on in Ed-Wilhelm Park are audible to us. Continued access for us to the woods, trash in the woods and the occasional paint-ball fight in the Woods are concerns to us (and yes, I know these are competing demands!).

I have a question right away - any other concerns/feedback can wait till the meeting - Is Takoma Woods part of the park that you are redeveloping. Do you have any plans for it - to integrate it into the park?

We are a very tolerant community with few axes to grind. The minority-majority nature of our community as well as that of the nearby high-rises might be useful to you in seeking grants or priority.

Also, since we have a child in Piney Branch Elem. School, the safety and hygiene of the park, which is used by them for recess, is important to us - so please contact the PTA's of the two local elementary schools.

I look forward to talking to you and learning when the meeting will be.

Richard Payne
Professor and Interim Chair
Department of Biology
1206 Biology/Psychology Bldg #144
University of Maryland
College Park
MD 20742
U.S.A.

Phone: 301-405-6884 (office)
301-314-6262 (fax)

From: Masciocchi, Ellen [mailto:Ellen.Masciocchi@mncppc-mc.org]
Sent: Friday, October 08, 2004 8:41 AM
To: Richard Payne (E-mail)
Subject: Takoma Park-Piney Branch Local Park

Richard, I am the Project Manager for Takoma Piney Branch Local Park's Facility Plan. I will be scheduling a community meeting sometime around November. I would be interested in hearing the issues that are important to you about the park. You can contact me by e-mail or by phone at 301-650-2867.

I look forward to hearing from you. Can you clarify the name of your community association?

6/27/2005

Introduced By: Councilmember Elrich

RESOLUTION 2005-49

**Resolution Endorsing Proposed Facility Plan For
Takoma-Piney Branch Park**

WHEREAS, Takoma-Piney Branch Park is a community park owned by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) and serves residents of Wards 1 and 4, school children at Takoma Park and Piney Branch Elementary Schools and Takoma Park Middle School, and players of soccer, basketball, football, volleyball and other sports; and

WHEREAS, the park also includes the forested area known as the Takoma Woods; and

WHEREAS, the park is in need of renovation, including new play equipment, infrastructure, security improvements, access improvements and stormwater facilities; and

WHEREAS, the community has worked with M-NCPPC, school, public safety and other staff in identifying the specific improvements needed for the park; and

WHEREAS, the community wishes to have M-NCPPC install a skate park, replacing existing tennis courts; keep facilities for baseball, soccer, basketball, and volleyball; improve the children's play areas; and improve accessibility for handicapped park users; and

WHEREAS, the facilities plan presented to the City Council on June 6, 2005 by the staff of M-NCPPC meets the needs of the many stakeholders of the Takoma-Piney Branch Park.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of the City of Takoma Park endorses the facilities plan for Takoma-Piney Branch Park, urges its adoption by the Montgomery County Planning Board and asks that funding for the renovation project, including the skate park facilities, be included in the FY07 Capital Improvement Program for Montgomery County.

ADOPTED THIS 20th DAY OF JUNE, 2005.

ATTEST:

Jessie Carpenter
City Clerk