



Planning & Development
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Public Meeting Notes

Project: Lowami Hart Woods Park
Location: Beaverton Seventh Day Adventist Church, Fellowship Room
Date & Time: June 29, 2011, 6:30-9:00 PM

Staff Present: Matt Kilmartin, Park Planner
Hal Bergsma, Director of Planning
Kristin Atman, Interpretive Programs Supervisor
John Gaddis, Natural Resources and Trails Specialist
Mike Janin, Superintendent of Security Operations
Steve Regner, Office Tech

1. Welcome & Introductions

Hal Bergsma opened the meeting, welcoming the approximately 85 park neighbors and interested patrons. Hal gave a brief background of the property, explaining that some of the approximately 27-acre Lowami Hart Woods site used to be a Campfire property, used for outdoor youth activities. This property was acquired by THPRD in 1996 in a partnership with Metro and the City of Beaverton. The adjacent Dent property was acquired in 1997. Total cost of land acquisition for both properties was \$2.6 Million. The properties were, and still are, zoned for residential development.

After acquisition, THPRD developed a master plan to improve Lowami Hart Woods. After an extensive community outreach process, the THPRD Board of Directors provided final direction regarding the Master Plan proposed in 2001. However, THPRD staff failed to reconfirm that final revisions made to the Master Plan were what the Board had directed. Furthermore, while the Board stated that environmental education should be provided at Lowami Hart Woods, the level and intensity of such educational programming was never decided.

Based on this need for follow-up, THPRD has conducted more community outreach which included hosting two prior neighborhood meetings in November 2010 and May 2011, as well as working closely with its Trails Advisory Committee, Natural Resources Advisory Committee, Parks Advisory Committee and the Friends of Beaverton's Johnson Creek to collect input on key planning issues. Following input received from advocacy groups and meeting attendees, THPRD has developed a revised master plan that staff believes is a good compromise.

2. Trail Improvement Project Overview & Update

Proposed Trail Alignment

Matt Kilmartin, Project Manager, gave a brief review of the proposed trail alignment, noting that the alignment has not changed since the May 11th neighborhood meeting. No major issues have been identified regarding the alignment.

Key Planning Issues

Site Programming – Kristin Atman described that the goal of environmental education, as prescribed in the Comprehensive Plan, is to connect people with nature. For this reason, THPRD has expanded its environmental education program outside of the Nature Park and Cooper Mountain to parks throughout the District to provide varied and accessible opportunities for patrons.

THPRD is proposing to implement a two-year environmental education pilot program at Lowami Hart Woods once the site improvements are completed. This pilot program will be at a much smaller scale than the programs that operate at the Nature Park. By implementing pre-registration, groups will be kept at a size of 6-20 people, although a school group could be as high as 35. In the case of a school group of that size, the class would be split into three small groups when on trails to minimize site impacts and improve the quality of the environmental education. The child to adult ratio is usually kept below 10 to 1, but in the case of young children, it's often 5 to 1, and sometimes 1 to 1. Expected behavior is always reviewed before visiting parks.

Q: Why can't you continue to use the Nature Park for education?

A: Kristin explained that the District wants to be able to serve patrons throughout the District, and Lowami Hart Woods is just one of many smaller parks that THPRD is using to expose kids to nature close to home.

Q: What's the expected frequency? Will it be year-round, or just during the summer?

A: Kristin explained that it's hard to predict now, but will work with the demand. The programs that THPRD currently operates fill up quickly. Lowami Hart Woods could maybe see 2-4 weeks of programs every summer. School groups are hard to predict as well, but the nearby proximity of 6 schools makes Lowami Hart Woods a good location for environmental education.

Site Center – Matt Kilmartin described the proposed Site Center design, with interpretive signage, gravel surfacing and an informal layout including perimeter log seating for up to 20 kids. The surrounding, previously impacted area will be restored with native plantings. The Site Center is located where the historic Camp Fire Girls site used to be.

Parking – Since the May 11th meeting, the parking area has been relocated to the southeast corner of the property. The proposed design reduces the number of parking spaces to ten; one of the ten spaces will be handicap-accessible. The standard spaces can also accommodate parking for District-operated 15-passenger vans used to transfer kids for environmental education programs. The parking lot surface will be asphalt or porous paving, depending on feasibility based on future engineer's analysis. The parking lot will accommodate bus loading and unloading, but no bus parking will be provided for. A traffic analysis completed for this project assesses that park improvements will generate up to 10 trips per day by the general public during peak summer months. The parking lot has been sized to accommodate the anticipated parking needs generated by the public and educational programming, to alleviate overflow parking into adjacent neighborhoods, and to balance these parking needs with site impacts.

The parking area will include a small entry plaza with three picnic tables, an information kiosk, bike parking, two screened portable restrooms, and storm water quality planters. The

plaza surfacing will be concrete or porous paving, depending on feasibility based on future engineer's analysis.

Native landscape buffers will also be provided to screen the parking lot from Hart Road and adjacent residential properties.

An ADA accessible loop trail has been added to the master plan directly north of the parking area, providing a paved, accessible (less than 5% slope) trail from the parking area to a forest viewing area inside the park.

A paved trail connection has also been added to connect the parking area to the main Wahoo trail near the Site Center. This trail segment will be less than 8.3% slope. The trail width and surfacing will match that of the main Wahoo trail.

Q: What is the rationale behind moving the parking from the southwest to the southeast?

A: Matt explained that there was less net impact created by relocating the parking to the southeast portion of the site, including reducing tree impacts from 29 to 15 trees, eliminating impacts to the large Oak tree at the previous southwest location, reducing overall grading impacts, and eliminating the need for retaining walls..

Q: What will happen to the current parking area?

A: Matt explained that the current parking area would be restored with native plantings.

Q: Will security include this park on its route once it's developed, and when do they operate?

A: Mike Janin answered that Lowami Hart Woods is already part of Park Patrol's route. Park Patrol operates 7 days a week, 8:00am to midnight in the summertime, and 8:30 am to 10:30 pm in the off-season.

Main Wahoo Trail – Hal Bergsma explained that the main trail will retain its 'Community Trail' classification. The Park District's trail standards call for community trails to be 8 to 12-foot wide hard surface with minimum 1-foot gravel shoulders. However, the District is proposing a 6-foot wide hard surface main trail with no shoulders for this improvement project, with occasional wide spots, or turnouts, for resting, passing and viewing opportunities. Trail connectivity through park land to the north and south are anticipated to occur in the future, and widening of the main trail through Lowami Hart Woods to meet the District's Trails Plan standards would be considered at that time.

Asphalt surfacing is proposed for the main trail to accommodate the greatest level of accessibility and maintenance within the park. Compacted gravel was considered, but would pose an ongoing maintenance issue. Pervious asphalt was also considered; however, site conditions including debris from the forest canopy, heavy shade, moist soils and steep slopes would impede the porous surface from functioning properly. Additionally, maintenance of porous paving includes routine cleaning of the pores by a vacuum which would be noisy.

The path and bridges are not proposed to be vehicle rated. This would limit motorized access into the park to park maintenance ATV's or Gator-style vehicles only.

Bicycles will be allowed on the main trail. Signage will be installed that encourages cyclists to go slow through Lowami Hart Woods.

Dogs will be allowed, but leash and scoop rules will be in effect.

Madrone Loop Trail – The loop trail has not changed. It will follow the existing dirt trail alignment and be 3-feet wide with soft surface; either wood chips over a gravel base, or compacted gravel, depending on site conditions such as slope and drainage.

C: There is an unnecessary ‘jog’ in the loop trail that should be eliminated.

A: Staff will consider this adjustment.

3. Natural Area Preservation Project Overview

John Gaddis explained that invasive species included English Ivy and Himalayan Blackberry are found throughout the site. The focus of the natural area restoration will focus on the creek corridor, but will also work on restoring the two upland areas in the park. This process will also close the illegal trails in the park. Keeping people on the ‘legal’ trails will reduce human impacts to the natural habitat, allow restoration plantings to establish, and promote the presence of wildlife within the park.

4. Discussion: Questions(Q)/Comments(C)/Answers(A)

Before opening up the meeting to questions, Hal offered any people representing groups the opportunity to speak.

Priscilla Christenson – Friends of Beaverton’s Johnson Creek

Priscilla felt that a 6-foot wide trail is a good compromise, but that wide turnouts aren’t necessary. The trail doesn’t need to be asphalt either; the petroleum in the asphalt will pollute the creek. The trail surfaces implemented at Cooper Mountain would be more appropriate. The Community Trail classification is not suitable for Lowami Hart Woods; the main trail should be classified as a Neighborhood Trail instead. 10 parking spaces in the parking lot is excessive; 5-8 spaces would be all that is needed. Groups of 35 are too large; the environmental education groups should be capped at 12 people. Bike riding should be banned from the park.

Tom Hjort – THPRD Trails Advisory Committee

The TAC believes that an 8-foot wide trail is the sufficient width for a safe, multi-modal trail. The TAC also supports emergency vehicle access into the park.

Joe Barcott – THPRD Trails Advisory Committee

Felt that this proposed master plan is a rational, reasonable, modest compromise. Despite the TAC’s desire to see a wider trail, they fully support the proposed master plan.

Sue Price – West Beaverton NAC Chair

She is encouraged by the responsiveness of THPRD. She supports the efforts by neighbors to have their voices heard. The effort in Lowami Hart Woods should be to preserve the natural beauty. She sees compromise in the proposed master plan.

Greg Cody – THPRD Parks Advisory Committee

The most important thing is to attempt to find the balance between accessibility and preservation, where everyone can benefit. The park is seeing degradation from ‘volunteer trails’, and focusing the park users to a few designated trails will help restore the natural area. Feels that we should be planning for the next 50years of the park’s life, and the master plan does a good job of doing that. He recommends that the neighbors look at what has

been done at other parks. He also notes that the paved trail at Brookhaven is 8-10 feet, and nobody seems to think that trail is bad.

General Questions & Comments

Q: Who will service the port-a-potties?

A: THPRD contracts with a maintenance company that will service the units.

C: Lowami Hart Woods is a phenomenal rough park, and would be better if the trails were fixed up, and the degradation was reversed, but this plan is going overboard. You don't need to replicate the Nature Park here.

Q: Is this park rich enough, ecologically, to warrant the programming?

A: John noted that the site is unique in that it contains two separate and distinct groves of trees and a creek corridor surrounded on all sides by a built urban environment.

C: Times are tough, budgets are being cut everywhere. The money for this project could do a lot more good if spent elsewhere.

C: This plan is overkill. The trails should be better, but rock or dirt would be sufficient. The cost vs. benefit isn't there.

C: Would love to see something happen at Lowami. This isn't the ultimate plan, but it's a good plan.

C: Over the last 10 years, this park has significantly degraded, with things like paintball wars going on all the time. The trail does need to be improved, as it's tough to get up to Barcelona when the trail is muddy. The park has serious problems, but my daughter still calls it her 'secret forest' and was surprised to hear that a wide paved path would be put in her secret forest. Thinks something should be done to make the park safer.

C: Schools cutting their budgets is the exact reason why parks and natural areas like these are needed for our kids. It would be a good idea to see if visiting classes could walk to the park.

Q: Do you charge a fee for classes visiting the park?

A: The District does charge; but, scholarships also exist to cover some costs.

C: I would like to see the bond money go towards improving water quality of the creek.

A: Most of the water quality issues are caused upstream, but moving the trail away from the creek will reduce the park's impact on water degradation. THPRD is working with CWS, but the problems won't be fixed overnight.

C: Used to go to Camp Lowami as a Girl Scout, and have lived next to the park for 20 years. Shocked that there aren't more demand trails than there already are. Thinks it's a good idea to consolidate the trails and restore degraded areas. Loves the proposed educational opportunities.

C: Used to go to Hyland Park as a kid and explored the park. Hyland has deteriorated because of the damage done by people going off trail; the damage has been done because there is no structure. Likes the plan for Lowami because it will keep people on well-defined trails, and will give the natural area a chance to recover.

C: The park has a real natural feel; an asphalt trail would change that. Would like to see the trail money go towards the natural restoration efforts in the park. The site center shouldn't have a gravel surface.

C: The trail should be more stable and accessible for better use in wet conditions. Packed gravel may work, but bike access and steep topography might make gravel tricky.

C: Is a big supporter of environmental education.

Q: Will security add Lowami to its patrols?

A: Lowami is already patrolled regularly.

Q: What will you do to keep motorcycles out?

A: THPRD has never had much problem with unauthorized motorized vehicles using trails.

Q: What will you do to keep out the drug dealers?

A: THPRD regularly patrols the park, but park neighbors are the best security system. Neighbors should call Park Patrol [971/216-0169] for any problems that occur, but the best strategy is to organize a neighborhood park watch patrol.

C: Likes the idea of environmental education. The area is relatively wild; likes seeing the wildlife. A gravel path would be more suitable.

Q: Does THPRD have any demand forecasts for environmental education?

A: THPRD is very intentional in programming, but programming is done in direct response to demand by patrons, which is very difficult to forecast.

Q: Can the trail corridor be re-designated as a Neighborhood Trail?

A: This would require an amendment to the Trails Master Plan. This issue would need to go before the Trails Advisory Committee and the Board of Directors.

Q: Is the site center ADA accessible?

A: The trail is under 8.3% to the site center. The steep topography of the site makes it very difficult to provide full ADA compliance on the trails.

C: Concerned with security at the park; there have been issues with drugs and illegal activities. There is much less wildlife and there are fire issues.

Q: The site center is in a flood plain. Would it be cheaper to relocate the site center instead of repairing it every year?

A: Staff will look into the suggestion.

C: In favor of the improvements; the trail is too muddy most of the year to enjoy.

C: Thank you for acquiring the property, but worried about the area becoming too sterile and clean. Part of the joy of the park is the adventure; this plan would sanitize the park. Wants kids to have the opportunity to explore and get their feet dirty.

C: Wants the impacts of construction to be disclosed. Wants more documents like traffic studies made available online.

A: Some documents are too large to post online; these documents are available upon request.

C: The pilot program should be done with smaller groups. Appreciates the taxpayers voting for the bond, but they did not vote for these specific changes at Lowami.

A: The public outreach outlined the projects to be funded. Implementing the 2001 Master Plan was included in the list of projects to be funded.

Next Steps

Hal Bergsma described the anticipated upcoming process. Following this neighborhood meeting, staff will present the modified Master Plan to the Board of Directors at their August meeting, which is scheduled for August 8th, 2011. It is a public meeting, and the public will have an opportunity to speak, limited to three minutes per person. The Board may choose to delay making a decision until their September meeting. After the Board of Directors provides direction, staff will return to the Board to confirm that the final Master Plan properly reflects the Board's direction.

After that, the next opportunity for public comment will come during the Land Use process with the City of Beaverton, which is anticipated to begin in the fall of 2011. A conditional use hearing before the City Planning Commission will follow, likely in spring 2012. Construction is anticipated to begin in spring 2013, and be completed by the end of that calendar year.

Comments provided tonight will be included in the meeting minutes to be posted online. Any additional comments received will be incorporated into staff's recommendation packet that goes before the Board of Directors in August.