



Natural Resources Department
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Public Meeting Notes

Project: Commonwealth Lake/Foothills Restoration & Trails

Location: Cedar Hills Rec Center Gym

Date & Time: July 15, 2010 6:30 pm to 8:15 pm

Staff present: Bruce Barbarasch, Supt. of Natural Resources & Trails Management
Julie Reilly, Natural Resources Specialist
Allan Wells, Park Maintenance Coordinator
Melissa Marcum, Natural Resources Volunteer Coordinator

Introduction:

Thirty-two neighbors and interested park patrons attended this public meeting for Commonwealth Lake and Foothills parks. Bruce Barbarasch thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He presented general information on the bond measure that is funding this project and other projects throughout the park district. Bruce introduced the topic of preservation of natural areas for water quality, wildlife habitat, and benefits to neighbors and other park patrons. He also described the assessment methods used to quantify and qualify natural area amenities before planning restoration projects, and the approval process that a restoration plan goes through before being presented to the public. Bruce presented the plan for the evening's discussion and then introduced Julie Reilly, Project Manager.

General Information:

Julie discussed the restoration plans and issues associated with the two park sites, including the vegetation and habitats in the parks as related to the project map. Specifics included which areas of the parks will be included in restoration efforts, the areas for trail relocation and trail widening, and temporary and permanent fencing.

Since Commonwealth Lake is mostly a developed park site, restoration will be focused on the natural feature areas. All of the forested areas and stream buffer of Foothills Park, and a small area of wet turf, will be included in restoration at that site. Vegetation restoration includes non-native plant removal and replanting with native trees and shrubs, and temporary fencing in some areas to protect the new plants until they become established. Staff offered a discussion of the basketball pad in Foothills, and asked whether or not it was used by park patrons to play basketball, or only for inappropriate late night gatherings.

Improvements planned for these two parks include:

- Removal and on-going control of non-native plants within the project areas. Removal of weeds will continue for several years to allow establishment of newly planted shrubs and trees.
- Replanting is scheduled for February of 2012. The plan calls for an 80% survival of native plants. THPRD plans a large palette of native shrubs and trees for both sites.
- Rerouting of a portion of the trail on the north side of Commonwealth Lake to move it to a drier site away from the lakeshore.
- Widening, leveling, and installing drains on the Huntington to Alcott trail in Foothills Park.

A major project goal is to inform neighbors and park patrons of the plan, and enlist public support of the project. Many aerial photos were set up around the perimeter walls of the gym for attendees to view, and to attach comments via yellow sticky notes. After the major presentation, attendees were asked to view the aerials, to submit written comments, and to ask questions of staff. Questions regarding habitat restoration were directed to Julie Reilly; questions regarding the trail improvements were directed to Melissa Marcum; questions regarding park maintenance and security issues were directed to Allan Wells; Bruce Barbarasch was available to answer any questions.

Concerns & Responses:

Q: What will be done with the old path at Commonwealth Lake?

A: The old asphalt will be removed from the park, and the path will be replanted with native shrubs and some trees. There will no longer be a path directly adjacent to the lake in this area.

Q: Could the basketball pad near Lanewood be moved to the turf area near to the playground? Where else would you put the basketball court if it were moved from its current location?

A: The turf area on the southwest side of Foothills Park is mostly wetland outside of the playground site. It would not be appropriate to move the basketball pad to this spot. The basketball pad would not be relocated to another place in Foothills if it were removed from its current location.

Q: Are you planning on removing the Himalayan blackberries from along Lanewood? This has been done several times, but the blackberries keep coming back. The Himalayan blackberries along Lanewood have been cut low several times, but they have never been "removed."

A: This project is able to focus on removal and control of the blackberries, followed by replanting of the area with native vegetation.

Q: What will you do about erosion on the slopes in Foothills? After you take out the blackberries, won't the rain wash away the soil?

A: We intend to place erosion control wattles along the slope to help control erosion during rain events, until the new vegetation is established. We will also use

temporary fencing to keep park visitors from using the area during the establishment period.

Q: Why don't you put in a loop trail through Foothills, with a bridge over the creek?

A: A loop trail and a bridge over the creek would be a lovely improvement, but the costs are beyond what funding for this project would allow. This suggestion will be passed along to the Planning Department.

Q: How long will the temporary fencing be left in place?

A: Temporary fencing will remain in place for two to four years, or until the new plants have become established and started to fill in the spaces.

Q: A few weeks ago, there was a young man stomping down the big-leaved vegetation around the spring area at Commonwealth. Why was he doing this?

A: He was crushing the invasive plant, *Petasites japonicus*, so as to be more effective with herbicide application.

Q: Will you be removing the blackberries from the area around the spring?

A: Himalayan blackberries are a major focus for invasive removal under this project's funding, both at Commonwealth Lake and at Foothills Park.

Q: Will the trail at Foothills have gravel on it?

A: We are planning to keep the trail at Foothills a soft-surface dirt trail, without gravel.

Additional Comments:

A number of other comments from attendees were written down or attached to aerial photos for further consideration and discussion among staff.

Comments for Foothills included:

1. Requests for sign at basketball court noting that park closes at dusk.
2. Requests for signs on park side of Lanewood that state "No Parking 10 Pm to 5 AM".
3. A couple of comments asked to relocate or remove the basketball court, but many more comments asked to retain the basketball court, even to install stairs down to the court, but also to make it more visible from Lanewood.
4. Need more security checks on Lanewood.
5. One comment concerned higher use of Foothills trail after improvements, and the same person expressed several concerns with ADA access to Foothills and high water.
6. Many comments regarding the crossing between Commonwealth and Foothills at Huntington, including: repaint crosswalk; construct a "real" path down to the lake from Huntington; need a "SLOW – Children at Play" sign on Huntington; move the crosswalk to corner of Huntington; narrow Huntington between intersections & add street trees.
7. Could the HOA add street lighting to improve Foothills park lighting at night?

8. Concerns expressed about location of Port-a-Pot when Foothills park floods; erosion on steep slopes in Foothills with new trail building.

Comments for Commonwealth Lake included:

1. Requests to re-pave paths around Commonwealth (it is horrible for strollers, scooters, and bikes – too rocky), and to prune vegetation at eye level around the lake.
2. Several comments about the blackberries and tall willows on the corner of Butner & Huntington. Also comments about why the south side residents are allowed to cut down trees that would stabilize the shore in order to enhance their view, and folks at this corner have their views obscured by trees.
3. Requests for more signs at park entrance about NOT feeding ducks & geese.
4. Concern for the loss of more trail adjacent to the lake through erosion.
5. Requests to paint the curb in the no parking zone by the Dellwood & Foothill entrance to stop parking in the intersection.
6. A request to screen the porta pot.
7. Comment about the sprinkler making a strange noise when it hits the play equipment.
8. A comment that fishing is an enjoyable activity for kids and parents, please do not eliminate.
9. Observed a person taking a large number of bullfrogs (in about a 2 gallon container) from the lake, early June 2010. Spoke with a walker just today, who said she saw the same thing the morning of 7-15-2010.
10. A question about when the trail connection between Peppertree and Commonwealth be completed.
11. Several comments stated overall folks were happy with management of the lake.
12. Two patrons have seen people removing large numbers of bullfrogs from the lake this year.

Conclusions re: comments:

Many more comments were received in regard to retention of the basketball court as a neighborhood resource than thought it was a nuisance. However, most of the positive comments had corollaries asking for park rules signage, pruning of vegetation, elimination of tall vegetation along Lanewood, and stairs down to the court for neighborhood accessibility. At this time it appears advisable to drop the suggestion for removal of the basketball court, and move forward with restoration as planned. Since the addition of stairs was not presented at the neighborhood meeting, this improvement should not be pursued at this time.

All of the habitat restoration comments were positive, expressing concern over details such as type of vegetation to be planted, extent of weed removal, and erosion control. Very few comments were received that expressed dismay over any aspect of the project as outlined in the Project Summary and Project Plan.