



MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK AND PLANNING

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION9500 Brunett Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20901MCPB
Item: 4
Date: 2/12/04

February 4, 2004

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Lester L. Straw, Superintendent of Parks
Michael F. Riley, Chief, Park Development Division *MR*
Douglas Alexander, Design and Project Management Supervisor *DA*

FROM: Linda Komes, Project Manager (650-2860) *LK*

SUBJECT: Staff Draft of Proposed Amendments to the Woodstock Equestrian Park Master Plan

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL of Staff Draft amendments to the Woodstock Equestrian Park Master Plan as a Public Hearing Draft and set a public hearing for March 18, 2004.

BACKGROUND

Woodstock Equestrian Park is located on MD Route 28, north of the historic town of Beallsville, in the northwest corner of Montgomery County. The 765-acre site straddles MD Rt. 28 and consists of rolling agricultural fields, forests and streams. Approximately 315 acres of the property is currently leased to local farmers for crop farming.

The 411-acre parcel located on the west side of MD Rt. 28 consists of approximately 375 acres that were donated to the M-NCPPC by Mr. Hermen Greenberg, specifically to accommodate equestrian activities. An additional 36 acres were purchased from Mr. Greenberg by the M-NCPPC in 1999. The west side of the park is named the Moritz Greenberg Equestrian Center in honor of Mr. Greenberg's father.

The 354-acre Brewer Farm, located on the east side of MD 28, was purchased from Mr. William Rickman Sr. by the M-NCPPC with State Grant assistance in 2000. This portion of the park was part of a land grant owned by George Washington in the 1790's and was used for fox chasing and farming. The east side of the park will be dedicated to the memory of Mr. Rickman's great-great grandfather, Dr. William Rickman, a surgeon and physician for the English during the French and Indian War. Both Mr. Greenberg and Mr. Rickman recognized that a large amount of acreage was necessary for the equestrian park to become a reality.

On January 31, 2002, the Planning Board approved a Master Plan for Woodstock Equestrian Park. The Master Plan envisions the park as a "first-class equestrian center" whose goal is to preserve the site's

rich cultural resources and traditional agricultural setting while “strengthening the future vitality of the growing horse industry in Montgomery County”.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

The subject Staff Draft Master Plan Amendment for the Woodstock Equestrian Park embraces the goals and objectives set forth in the Master Plan approved by the Planning Board in January of 2002, which clearly established the future character of the park. The recommended revisions in the Staff Draft Plan include the following:

- **Recommends M-NCPPC purchase approximately 78.75 acres of undeveloped land contiguous to the park on the west side of MD 28**

In 1999 and 2000 when the land for the park was being assembled, Mr. Greenberg retained a parcel of land consisting of approximately 115 acres contiguous to what was then the northern property line of the park. The parcel was subsequently subdivided into four lots, each with an approved perc site. Three of the lots were conventional lots and the remaining lot was a flag lot located behind the three lots fronting on MD 28. Access to the flag lot was proposed via a long driveway with two stream crossings and the Planning Board felt that the lot impacted the functional use of the park. In December of 1999, M-NCPPC purchased the flag lot consisting of 36 acres, and the lot area was added to the park. Mr. Greenberg decided to retain ownership of the remaining three lots.

Mr. Greenberg has now decided to sell the three remaining lots. The three lots are each approximately 26 acres in size. A wooded stream valley runs through the center of the lots in a north-south direction effectively separating the front, buildable portion from the rear (western) portion of each lot. Staff recommends that M-NCPPC purchase the three lots with the intent of incorporating the rear portions of the lots into the park, consisting of approximately 50 additional acres. The front buildable portions of the lots would be available for resale. The assimilation of the area west of and including the stream valley into the park will be of great public benefit. Purchase of the land ensures that the stream and associated environmentally sensitive areas will be protected, and expands the area of the park available for recreational use.

- **Recommends flexibility in siting future facilities based on input from the *Friends of Woodstock*, M-NCPPC’s consultants, and preliminary engineering information.**

The approved Master Plan acknowledges that development of Woodstock will take many years to accomplish and makes recommendations for both Phase I and for Future Phases. Key among the first Phase I recommendations is that a public-private partnership be established, such as the *Friends of Woodstock*, “to begin developing a long-range implementation strategy for development of the park.” On October 27, 2003 the *Friends of Woodstock* officially formed in affiliation with the Montgomery Parks Foundation. At this time the Friends group, whose membership is steadily increasing, has over 50 contributing members.

The Friends have expressed a desire to fund the design and construction of several outdoor riding rings. The rings will be located on the eastern side of MD Route 28 but may not be located in the exact location shown in the Master Plan. In addition, staff is recommending that an alternate indoor arena location be identified on the Master Plan. The alternate location is proposed on the west side of MD 28 in the southwest corner of the land proposed for acquisition. (See Attachment B).

At this time there is no funding available for the design or construction of an indoor arena. The alternative arena location preserves the flexibility in the future to locate the arena near an area of the site with an approved residential perc site, and is centrally located in an area of the park with relatively level terrain, away from the noise associated with MD Route 28. M-NCPPC's equestrian consultant as well as Captain Mark Phillips, whose equestrian planning expertise was provided by Mr. Greenberg, feel strongly that the alternative location should be carefully considered and may ultimately be the best location. Both parties agree that the indoor arena is best located further from the impacts associated with MD Route 28, and note the opportunity to create a beautiful entry drive into the park to the indoor arena through the gently rolling terrain in this area of the park.

Staff proposes that this site be considered as an alternative, as opposed to replacing the present location in the approved Master Plan, noting that either arena location will require additional engineering feasibility analysis including septic and water suitability. The final location of the arena should also be based on an overall development plan with significant input from the *Friends of Woodstock*. In either case, at a later date, Planning Board approval of a Facility Plan will be required and community input will be solicited.

- **Recommends that vehicles without trailers be permitted to access the park from the existing Wasche Road entrance.**

Portions of the park west of MD Route 28 have frontage along Wasche and West Hunter Roads, both designated as Rustic Roads in the Rural and Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan. During the Woodstock Master Plan process, the community voiced a traffic safety concern of an increase in horse trailer traffic on these narrow, sometimes curving roads, if an entrance to the park was created at the existing entrance along Wasche Road. To address this concern, the Master Plan states that "all public vehicular access to the park should be from MD Route 28".

Staff proposes to amend the Master Plan to permit vehicles without trailers to access the site via the existing Wasche Road entrance in order to visit the important cultural resources located in this portion of the site. These include the Seneca Stone Barn, most likely built in the early 1800's, a house foundation most likely associated with the barn, and the foundations and ruins of the Mary Fischer (Jones) farm. Staff believes it is unreasonable to expect non-equestrians interested in these cultural resources to park in the parking lot located near MD Route 28 and hike the approximate two miles each way to visit the historic resources. In addition, a handicap accessible trail is proposed around these sites in order to provide access to these important cultural resources. Staff does not anticipate large numbers of people visiting this portion of the site and believes that parking can be easily accommodated along the existing farm road which runs through this portion of the site providing access to the Scott farm located to the north.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

A community meeting was held on February 3, 2004 at the recreation building in nearby Owens Local Park. During the meeting staff presented the proposed Master Plan amendments to the community, listened to community comments and concerns, and answered questions. Approximately 30 members of the nearby community attended.

The majority of the discussion centered on the status of the lots proposed to be purchased (e.g. whether the lots are recorded, the location of the perc sites, the source of funding, etc.) and on the proposed alternative site for the arena. Some questions were asked as to how and why the

alternative arena location was chosen and concerns were expressed regarding anticipated impacts to the residential community located along West Hunter Road, south of the park. A community member also expressed concerns over the impacts created by permitting any access to the park from Wasche Road stating that since the park is designated for recreational use, people interested in visiting the cultural resources should not be discouraged by the lengthy hike across the park to see the historic resources.

One person in the community who noted that she lives adjacent to the park and frequently rides in the park, stated that she was in favor of adding the stream valley portion of the lots to park noting that it is a natural divide and would provide an easily recognizable boundary between the private and publicly owned land.

Staff will provide a more detailed statement of the public input from the community meeting and any additional input we may receive between now and the public hearing.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A: Vicinity Map
- Attachment B: Proposed Amendments Plan
- Attachment C: Proposed Text Amendment Language
- Attachment D: The Approved Master Plan