




MCPB Item #__7_
Date: 4 / 15 / 2021

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 8, 2021

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Michael F. Riley, Director of Parks *mr*
Miti Figueredo, Deputy Director, Administration *mf*
John Nissel, Deputy Director, Operations
Andrew Frank, Division Chief, Park Development Division (PDD) 

FROM: Brenda Sandberg, Real Estate Management Supervisor, PDD
Henry Coppola, Real Estate Specialist, PDD

SUBJECT: Land Acquisition Recommendation: Upper Hawlings River Stream Valley Park
Fairhill Estates Property
Riggs Road
Gaithersburg, MD 20882
69.79 acres, more or less, unimproved

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff requests the following action by the Montgomery County Planning Board:

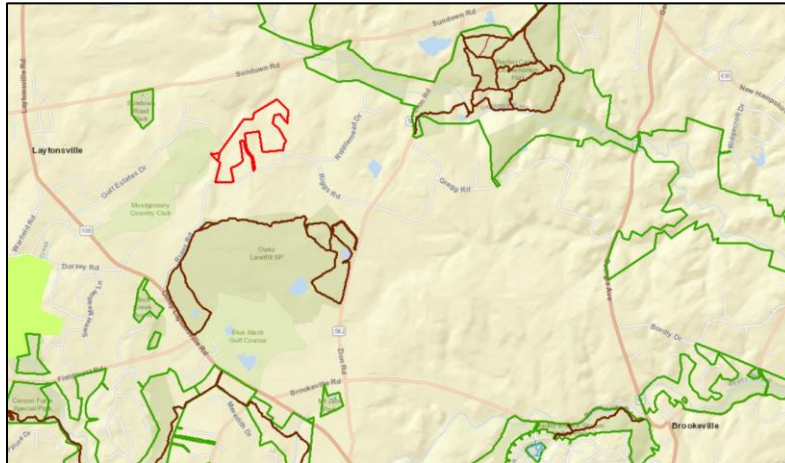
Approve the acquisition of the Fairhill Estates property to create the Upper Hawlings River Stream Valley Park for a negotiated purchase price of \$677,750 to be funded with grant money from Maryland's Program Open Space (POS).

The Fairhill Estates property is outlined in red in Figure 2 and Resolution No. 21-034 is attached to this memo.

SUMMARY

The Fairhill Estates Property is situated between the northern end of Rock Creek Stream Valley Park and Rachel Carson Conservation Park near the former Oaks Landfill. Acquisition of this property will provide land for a key section of a planned trail between the Rock Creek SVP trail and the Patuxent River State Park trails via the Oaks Landfill Blue Mash trails and Rachel Carson Conservation Park, a priority trail connection for Montgomery Parks' trail network. Additionally, the property will provide a trailhead parking area for the future trail and resource protection opportunities along a small tributary of the Hawlings River.

Figure 1: Vicinity Map, Parkland and Trails in the Laytonsville area, Fairhill Estates Property in red



PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The Fairhill Estates Property consists of two parcels of land containing a total of 69.79 Acres, more or less, unimproved. The subject property, zoned Agricultural Reserve, is located on the northern side of Riggs Road northwest of Olney-Laytonsville Road (see Figure 1). The property is legally described as Parcel P800, Tax Map HV12 and Parcel P035, Tax Map GV61 in Gaithersburg, Maryland. The property is unimproved apart from the remains of a shed or storage structure.

Most of the property is heavily wooded and lightly rolling with a cleared area at the main access point to the property from Riggs Road (see Figure 2). Portions of a small tributary of the Hawlings River run through the property and the adjacent riparian areas contain wetlands. The owner is a willing seller and the property is being acquired through negotiation in fee simple.

Figure 2: Fairhill Estates Property



POLICY RATIONALE AND PARK BENEFIT

The Fairhill Estates property is situated between the northern end of Rock Creek SVP and Rachel Carson CP near the former Oaks Landfill (see Figure 1). Providing a natural surface trail connection between the Rock Creek SVP trail and the Patuxent River State Park (SP) trails via the Oaks Landfill Blue Mash trails was identified in the 2016 Countywide Park Trails Plan as one of Montgomery Parks' priority trail connections and continues to be a top priority for the Trail Planning Section (see Figure 3).

The connection between the Rock Creek trail and the Blue Mash trails is expected to be implemented over the next few years via the Fieldcrest Solar project that will provide a trail connection across new parkland to Fieldcrest Road. An analysis of potential trail connection routes from the Blue Mash trails to Patuxent River SP via Rachel Carson CP by Real Estate Management and Trail Planning sections identified the route through the Fairhill Estates property as the most feasible option and as the only option with a strong likelihood for successful completion. The only other options would be a route entirely along roads without shoulders, which is not a safe or desirable route for this natural surface trail, or along a route requiring significantly more (and more costly) property acquisitions.

After acquisition of the subject property, gaps in the trail corridor will remain on each side of the new park property. To the south, Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection staff who oversee the former Oaks Landfill site have agreed to allow Parks to construct and maintain a trail extension from the existing Blue Mash trails towards the Fairhill Estates Property. An additional gap of less than 400 feet will remain which will require crossing a single property or utilizing the Riggs Road ROW, either of which appear to be feasible options. To the north, the property which covers the most direct route to Rachel Carson CP is currently used as a tree nursery, and the owner has expressed interest in working with Parks to achieve the trail connection. The acquisition of the Fairhill Estates property will provide Parks with the best opportunity to create this priority trail link between two major trail systems – Rock Creek and Patuxent River State Park.

Figure 3: Potential trail connections between Rock Creek SVP and Patuxent River State Park

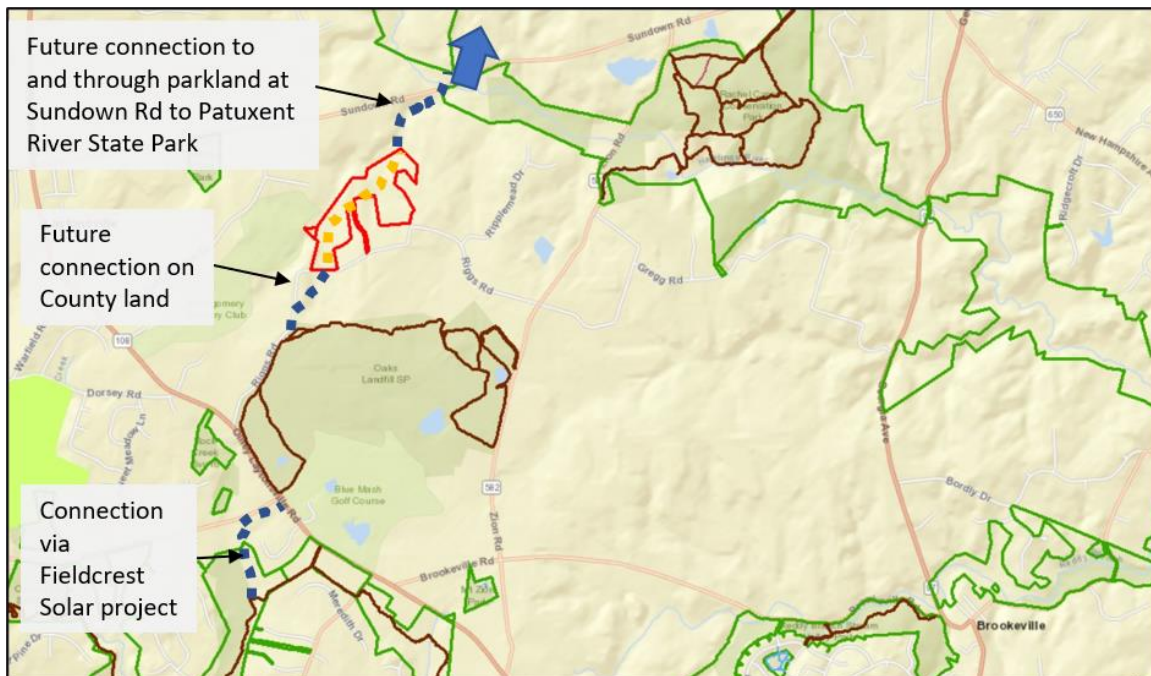
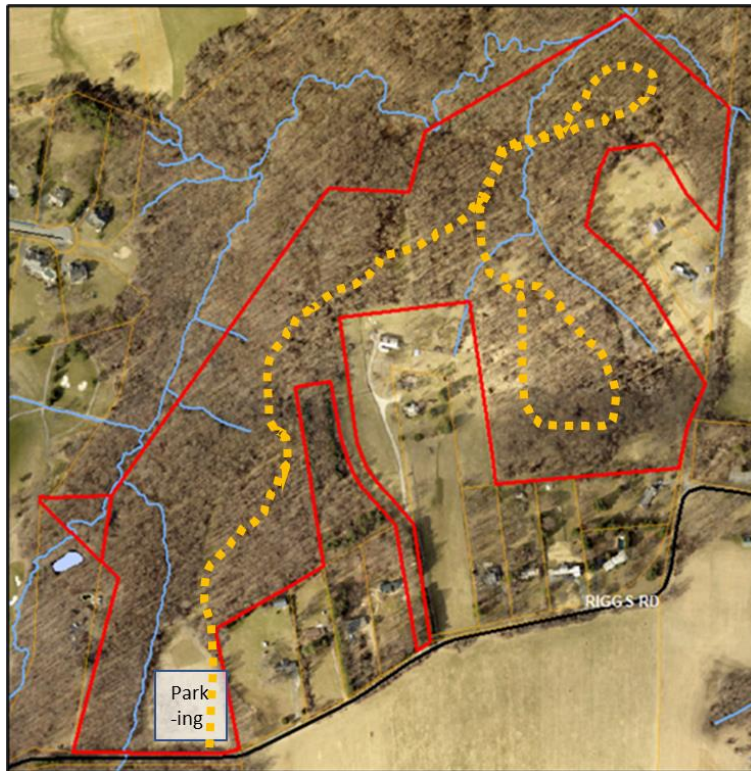


Figure 4: Conceptual illustration of preliminarily proposed trails within the property – before the connection to the greater network is complete



Site visits to the property have been performed and Trail Planning staff have determined that the property is suitable for natural surface trail construction. At nearly 70 acres, the property is large enough to provide useful trails even before the final connections between the Blue Mash and Patuxent River SP trails are completed (see Figure 4). Additionally, the property contains a mowed area at the access point from Riggs Road which is suitable for a trailhead parking area and additional trail related amenities (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Fairhill Estates Property potential trailhead parking area site seen from Riggs Road



START UP COSTS & OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (OBI)

After the property is turned over to the Parks Department, improvements to create a new trailhead and other amenities associated with future trails will be prioritized and implemented by the Trail Planning Section within the Park Planning & Stewardship Division. The costs of those projects are estimated at \$60,000. There are no other anticipated start-up costs for this property.

After management responsibility is turned over to the Parks Department, Operating Budget Impact (OBI) is expected to be approximately \$8,000 per year. Tasks to keep the property maintained include occasional mowing and bush hogging, non-native invasive plant control, and trail and other general maintenance duties after installation of natural surface trails.

Conclusion

Acquisition of the Fairhill Estates property is the best opportunity to achieve Montgomery Parks' priority trail connection between the Rock Creek SVP trail and the Patuxent River SP trails via the Oaks Landfill Blue Mash trails and Rachel Carson CP. After completion of this acquisition, Real Estate Management staff will pursue the few additional properties necessary to complete the envisioned trail connection.

CC: Doug Ludwig
Mike Little
Jai Cole
Darryl McSwain
Jim Poore
Kristi Williams
Shuchi Vera
David Vismara
Megan Chung



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MCPB No. 21-034

Acquisition of the Fairhill Estates Property to Create Upper Hawlings River Stream Valley Park

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission ("Commission") is authorized by Md. Code Ann., Land Use §17-101 (formerly Article 28, Section 5-101), to acquire, develop, maintain and operate a public park system within the Maryland-Washington Metropolitan District; and

WHEREAS, the Montgomery County Planning Board received and considered a recommendation from staff of the Commission, in closed session on April 8, 2021, that it approve the acquisition of 69.79 acres of land, more or less, improved, from FAIRHILL ESTATES PARTNERSHIP, a Maryland partnership ("Seller"), identified as Maryland Department of Assessment and Taxation's Tax Account Numbers 01-00008494 and 01-00008483 (the "Property"), to create Upper Hawlings River Stream Valley Park; and

WHEREAS, the Property meets parkland acquisition criteria to create Upper Hawlings River Stream Valley Park; and


WHEREAS, there are sufficient Program Open Space grants available in the Commission's FY21 Acquisition: Local CIP to pay the \$677,750 negotiated purchase price for the Property; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the acquisition of the Property from the Seller as described above, for a purchase price of \$677,750, in accordance with a proposed Land Purchase Agreement between the Commission and Seller, is hereby approved by the Montgomery County Planning Board on this 15th day of April, 2021 and the Executive Director is authorized to execute said Agreement on behalf of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

* * * * *

This is to certify the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted by the Montgomery County Planning Board of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission on motion of Commissioner _____, seconded by Commissioner _____, with Commissioners _____ voting in favor of the motion, at its regular meeting held on Thursday, April 15, 2021 in Wheaton, Maryland.


Casey Anderson, Chair
Montgomery County Planning Board

Signature: 

Email: andrew.frank@montgomeryparks.org

Signature: 

Email: mike.riley@montgomeryparks.org

Signature: 

Email: miti.figueredo@montgomeryparks.org











MCPB_Upper Hawlings River SVP_Fairhill Estates_OPEN Session_04-15-21 with PB Res

Final Audit Report

2021-04-13

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