

Still Creek Friends Meeting Summary

Wednesday, May 17, 2006

7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Greenbelt Park

Greenbelt, MD 20770

Meeting attendees:

Tekla Cook

Steve Ayers

Jean Snyder

Michele Touchet

Janis Oppelt

Alan Turnbull

John Galli (Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments)

Kate Levendosky (Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments)

I. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. John Galli (COG) welcomed the meeting attendees and asked all present to introduce themselves.

II. Green Man Festival Report

Mr. Alan Turnbull reported that the turnout to the Green Man Festival was very high and that over the course of the two-day environmentally oriented festival, 10 people signed up for more information about the Still Creek Friends. About 100 people visited the Still Creek Friends booth at the festival and learned about the Still Creek watershed. All in all, Mr. Turnbull said that the event was a great opportunity to advertise the Still Creek Friends group and advance watershed thinking, with three local watershed groups participating in the festival.

III. Illegal Dumping / Kenilworth Ave. Recap

Mr. John Galli reported that, rather than writing a letter, he decided instead to call the local district office of the State Highway Administration about the problem of illegal dumping along Kenilworth Avenue, adjacent to Greenbelt Park. Mr. Galli said that he was impressed with the responsiveness of the SHA staff and has organized a meeting on June 6th with Mr. Charlie Griffin (SHA) and Ranger Kevin Barry. They plan to meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Greenbelt Park Headquarters and welcome other members of the Still Creek Friends group to join them for a discussion of the problem of trash in Greenbelt

Park and a visit to the Kenilworth Ave. right-of-way where the April 8th trash clean-up occurred. Mr. Galli reported that the SHA officials that he has spoken with seem receptive to the idea of putting up signs in the area and perhaps blocking off the site where the April 8th cleanup was held, in order to discourage illegal dumping. SHA representatives also suggested talking to the Prince George's County Police about the problem.

Mr. Galli also announced that there is a Kenilworth Avenue Gateway Project in the works (a partnership between SHA and Prince George's County Department of Environmental Resources) that will involve installing bioretention strips along Kenilworth Avenue between Good Luck Road and Greenbelt Road.

The following is a summary of the ensuing discussion about Kenilworth Avenue and trash.

- Mr. Alan Turnbull commented that the Still Creek Friends should make a lot of noise about the runoff problems along Kenilworth Avenue, so that when SHA and PG DER unveil the Kenilworth Ave. Gateway Project, the group can make a big show of thanking them.
- Mr. Galli agreed that the Gateway Project is a great opportunity for the group.
- Ms. Janis Oppelt commented that a SHA official, Wayne Mowdie, spoke at a CCRIC meeting that she attended. Mr. Mowdie told CCRIC that in 2003 SHA spent \$2.7 million to pick up trash, in 2004, they spent \$2.5 million and from January to February 2005, they spent \$1.8 million. Ms. Oppelt shared with the group some information about SHA's adopt-a-highway program, which involves private groups and individuals committing to pick up trash along 1-3 miles of a state road, four times per year. She said that SHA provides a safety video and takes care of the trash pick up. Ms. Oppelt also reported that groups can ask SHA to have an employee dress up as the "Litter Critter" and come to an event to pass out information about littering.
- Ms. Jean Snyder asked whether the adopt-a-highway program would take the place of inmates picking up trash along highways. Ms. Oppelt replied that it was a separate volunteer-based program and would not replace the inmate program.
- Mr. Steve Ayers said that his school, the Friends School, may be interested in being involved in an adopt-a-highway program.

IV. Upcoming Events / 2006 Calendar Year Planning

Trash Survey Training (6/17/06)

Mr. John Galli announced that COG will hold a Trash Survey Training on June 17th from 9:00 – 11:00 am in Greenbelt Park. He said that attendees will learn how to use the COG Anacostia Stream Trash Surveying Methodology and Indexing System to assess trash levels. The event is open to all subwatershed group members, so there will be an opportunity to network and learn at the same time. Survey forms and tally counters will be provided to all participants.

Mr. Galli said that this event is very timely, as currently there are a lot of trash reduction developments in the Anacostia, with the Maryland Department of the Environment recently listing the Maryland portion of the Anacostia as impaired for trash. As a result, the counties in the watershed are under pressure to demonstrate that they are making progress in reducing trash in the river and its tributaries. Mr. Galli said that there is an effort to identify trash 'hotspots' and subwatershed group members can certainly play an important role in collecting data on stream trash levels.

Electrofishing Demonstration

Mr. Galli reported that COG recently received a permit from NPS to do an electrofishing demonstration in Greenbelt Park. He asked the group when they should hold the event. The group decided Saturday, July 29th from 10:00 a.m. – noon would be a good date and time for the electrofishing demo. Mr. Galli said that he would confirm the date and get back to the group with more details about the event.

Other Events

The following is a summary of the discussion about other future events.

- Ms. Michele Touchet said that Mr. Doug Bolt, who recently led a bird walk for the Beaverdam Creek Watershed Watch Group, may be willing to lead a bird walk in the Still Creek watershed.
- Ms. Touchet also suggested that the group could sponsor a clean-up of the Schrom Hills Park Pond. She says that they could even bring some kayaks out and clean up some of the trash floating in the pond.
- Mr. Galli asked whether there may be liability issues with kayaking on the pond.
- Mr. Turnbull suggested that Ms. Touchet propose the idea to the Greenbelt Parks and Recreation Department. He said that he thought that it would likely be hard for the city to deny the offer to clean up the pond, though kayaking is not typically allowed on that pond.
- Ms. Michele Touchet asked whether she should present the cleanup as an official event of the Still Creek Friends.
- Mr. Alan Turnbull nominated Ms. Touchet to be the head of the event committee for the Schrom Hill Pond Cleanup. The group unanimously agreed.
- Mr. Steve Ayers suggested that Ms. Touchet take pictures of some of the trash in and around the pond, to help convince the city of the need for a clean-up.
- Ms. Kate Levendosky announced that Ranger Kevin Barry has planned some upcoming Still Creek walks. On May 21st, Ranger Barry will lead a Still Creek Discovery Walk at 1:00 pm, leaving from the Sweetgum Picnic Area. Ms. Levendosky also said that there is a walking/driving tour of the watershed planned for June 11th, leaving at 1:00 pm from the Sweetgum Picnic Area.
- Mr. Alan Turnbull asked whether the route has been planned and suggested that the group try to get back in touch with some of the members from the Lanham part of the watershed.
- Ms. Levendosky said that she would contact Ms. Jeannette Grotke and Ms. Evelyn Hirrel about planning the tour route.

- Ms. Jean Snyder suggested that the group post the announcements about upcoming events on the Greenbelt TV station.
- Mr. Alan Turnbull asked whether the group would like to plan on having a booth at the Greenbelt Labor Day Festival. He cautioned that it is a bigger investment of time and money, as it is a four day long event.
- Ms. Jean Snyder asked whether the group could share a booth with another watershed group.
- Mr. Alan Turnbull said that there is also an option to just participate in the Saturday morning event that is set aside for civic associations to recruit new members.
- Ms. Jean Snyder suggested that the group put together a brochure to distribute at that event.
- Ms. Levendosky asked whether anyone in the group is interested in designing a group logo. She said that they could potentially hold a logo development contest.
- Mr. Turnbull said that the group can wait to plan their involvement in the Labor Day Festival, if they only are interested in participating in the Saturday morning civic association event.

V. Group Mission Statement – Recap/Finalize

Mr. Galli asked whether the group would like to make any changes to the mission statement provisionally accepted at the last meeting. Ms. Levendosky mentioned that Mr. Marc Imlay sent a suggestion to the listserve to include the protection of the whole stream valley of Still Creek in the mission statement. The group agreed that they liked the mission statement the way it was originally accepted and voted unanimously to approve it as follows.

The mission of Still Creek Friends is to care for and protect the stream that flows through the heart of Greenbelt National Park. Still Creek, fed by waters beginning outside the park on the lands where we live and work, is affected by our every action. With this in mind, we seek to understand how people treat these lands and in turn, create ways to involve the broader community in restoring the ecological health of the watershed. We envision a stream system that is clean, attractive and teeming with life and we are committed to making this a reality.

VI. Incorporation Discussion

Mr. Galli told the group that the Beaverdam Creek Watershed Watch Group recently incorporated and reported that the process was remarkably easy. He said that there are a number of good reasons to incorporate, as it enables the group to raise money and apply for grants. The process of incorporating is not too onerous, but the group would need to decide on a board of directors. Mr. Galli said the group could likely talk to Mr. Bill Howard (a member of AWCAC and the Neighbors of the Northwest Branch) about the process of incorporating.

The following is a summary of the discussion about incorporation.

- Mr. Alan Turnbull asked what the implications of incorporation are.
- Mr. Galli replied that filing for incorporation allows a group to begin functioning as a 501(c)3, non-profit organization. For the 1st five years as a 501(c)3, the IRS will look closely at the group's tax forms, to make sure the group is properly functioning as a non-profit. Mr. Galli commented that the smaller an organization is, the simpler it is to operate. He said that Still Creek Friends could potentially partner with other groups on grants, rather than incorporate, but that incorporating allows the group to determine its own destiny.
- Mr. Turnbull commented that nobody seemed to be volunteering to do the paperwork for incorporation. He questioned whether the incorporation discussion was too soon and suggested that the group should concentrate on drawing in more members before incorporating.

VII. Communication and Networking

The following is a summary of the discussion about communication and networking.

- Mr. Alan Turnbull suggested that Still Creek Friends should make presentations to the Berwyn Heights, New Carrollton, College Park and Greenbelt City Councils in order to make them aware of the group's existence and mission.
- Mr. Steve Ayers commented that the Westchester Park community is having a picnic this weekend. He suggested that the picnic may be an opportunity to reach out to that community.
- Ms. Kate Levendosky announced that Mr. Dave Frederick will no longer be able to be very involved with the Still Creek Friends, but is willing to act as a liaison with the Westchester Park community until he finds a replacement.

VIII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at about 9:00 p.m. The next meeting was tentatively planned for Tuesday, June 13th from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Greenbelt Park Ranger Station. Ms. Levendosky agreed to check with Ranger Kevin Barry about the availability of the ranger station classroom on that night and get back to the group.