

**Department of Parks
Director's Report
Thursday, February 12, 2009**

Highlights:

- **Smart Growth Initiative –Shady Grove relocation**
 - **OLO Report 2009-7: Recreation programs**
 - **Montgomery Parks Foundation**
 - **Deer Management**
 - **FY 10 budget discussions**
 - **Wheaton Indoor Tennis**
 - **National Cross Country Championships at Agricultural History Farm Park**
 - **Real property removal updates**
 - **Events calendar items**
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- On February 6, a supplemental funding request for relocation planning for Parks' Central Maintenance Facility at Shady Grove was forwarded to County Council staff for inclusion in the overall county relocation funding request. The item is scheduled on the Council's PS & TE committee agenda this afternoon, February 12. Deputy Director Mike Riley is covering the hearing.
- The County Council's PHED Committee held a worksession on February 9 to review the findings of the OLO report on recreation programs across the departments of parks and recreation. The OLO staff recommended the Council endorse a consolidation of all recreation programs under one department. The PHED Committee agreed to look at the option of a merger of recreation programs and also merging both departments as a whole. Yesterday, we were asked in a letter from Council President Knapp to provide information on how such a merger, of either programs or the departments, would work and to cost it out. It would include a timetable, among other directives. This information is due to Council by February 24. The PHED Committee will hold another worksession to review again on March 2. Central Administrative Services is pulling together information on issues such as legal challenges, retirement impact, unionized positions and impact on Park and Planning bonds. Department of Parks staff is pulling together information on programs, number of employees potentially affected, efficiencies or costs, and consequences for customers and park resources.
- After a resolution on December 29, and further discussion and resolution on January 26, trustees of the Montgomery Parks Foundation resolved to suspend operations and convey control of the foundation to a new board consisting of the five Planning Board commissioners plus two existing trustees, Scott Ritter and Jody Kline. The new board will focus on auditing the foundation's finances and exploring new models for organizing fundraising for parks. In response to trustee resolutions passed at the Montgomery Parks Foundation board meeting on January 26 and February 9, the Commission will be asked to seek an independent audit to review the foundation's finances as part of a transition to its

present status. Friends groups associated with the foundation have been notified of the foundation's status and the impending audit.

- Parks natural resources staff will participate in the County Council's upcoming Public Safety Committee meeting on Thursday, February 19, at 9:30 am to discuss the Deer Management Workgroup annual report released last summer. We will provide updated information on the numbers of deer vehicle collisions and the results of this year's deer management operations on parkland. We anticipate the bulk of the committee discussion will focus on changes made last year to the county's weapons regulations. These changes were made in response to recommendations from the Deer Management Workgroup a couple years ago. We continue to field a number of inquiries about the new regulations. We also anticipate possible changes to the county's urban zone as recommended by the Firearm Safety Committee coming up during the discussion. The urban zone is the designated area of the county in which firearm use is prohibited except under certain exemptions. Any changes should have no impact on our deer management program since part of the new regulations included an exemption specifically for deer management on park property.
- Parks top staff joined Planning staff at a meeting with OMB yesterday to review questions on the fiscal year 2010 proposed budget. Each department was given the opportunity to give an overview of the FY 10 budget process including steps taken to reduce costs and gain efficiencies. Most of the questions addressed compensation adjustments, retirement costs, status of collective bargaining agreements and adjustments included in those agreements. Our Enterprise Fund and the need for a Park Fund transfer are under careful review.
- Hundreds joined us for our Wheaton Indoor Tennis "Love" Fest on Sunday, February 8 to celebrate the reopening of the facility after the 18-month long renovation project. The newly renovated facility features central air and heating, a new insulated fabric "skin," high-power, energy-efficient fluorescent lighting and six color-coated tennis courts. Chairman Hanson and I were joined by County Executive Isiah Leggett and Founder and Chairman of the Friends of Wheaton Tennis, Charles "Coach" Carter, to share remarks, give away some great prizes and to thank the tennis community for their support and patience during this project. We've offered a shortened tennis season, January 8 through April 23 to previous tennis contract customers, which has resulted in 158 contracts, \$97,266 in total revenue.
- The Department of Parks partnered with the Montgomery County Road Runners Club, Inc. to host the United States Track and Field (USTAF) National Cross Country Championships at the Agricultural History Farm Park on Saturday February 7, 2009. It was an extraordinary, high-visibility event that really showed off our major sports capabilities. Over 700 runners participated in 7 races throughout the day, including elite runners competing for the United States team who will compete in the world championships this spring in Amman, Jordan. Over 5,000 spectators were on hand to watch the races. Vendors and food concessionaires were on site, and the historic Bussard Farmhouse was open for guided tours throughout the day. Ride-On buses shuttled the runners and the spectators to the farm from the Shady Grove Metro station, and the Washingtonian Marriott. Director of Parks Mary Bradford held the finish line tape for several of the races, and County Executive Ike Leggett also participated as an honored guest. ESPN crews were on site and recorded the races, to be televised this

Sunday, February 15. ESPN staff noted that the park course was the most spectator friendly course they had ever seen. Runners expressed their gratitude and many stated that the course was beautiful, as well as extremely challenging. USTAF officials and Montgomery County Road Runners Club officials were ecstatic over the event and gave high praise to Department of Parks staff and Park Police for their efforts.

- The Hillmead house is undergoing full demolition. Weather permitting, it is expected to be down within one week. In addition, the Westmoreland building is also proposed for demolition, pending permits. The Westmoreland community was given 30 days from the Planning Board's January 15 demolition approval to provide compelling evidence that the building was not in poor condition and could be repaired. The 30-day period expires on February 17. Finally, a house located in Chevy Chase Open Space Park, formerly owned by Wohlfarth, is also being prepared for demolition. Park staff is working with the Town of Chevy Chase and the Chevy Chase Village Board to prepare the property for demolition and secure the required permits. Both the Westmoreland building and Wohlfarth property are scheduled for demolition this spring.

Events

- FEBRUARY 27—Green Matters Symposium: Water Wise Landscapes, 8:30 am – 4:00 pm, Brookside Gardens, www.BrooksideGardens.org.
- APRIL 4—Season opens for Oakley Cabin Guided Tours, 12:00 noon – 4:00 pm and Underground Railroad Guided Hikes, 10:00 am.
- APRIL 18—Rachel Carson Greenway Hikes, 10:00 am, Rachel Carson Conservation Park, Underground Railroad Experience Trail and Burnt Mills Dam, www.MontgomeryTrails.org.
- April 26—Arbor Day Celebration, 11:00 am – 4:00 pm, Agricultural History Farm Park, www.AgHistoryFarm.org.
- MAY 2 & 3—2009 Avon Walk for Breast Cancer, Washington DC at Meadowbrook Local Park; the Department of Parks is a local sponsor.
- MAY 9—Archaeology Day, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm, Needwood Mansion, www.ParksArchaeology.org.

Mary R. Bradford

Director

Montgomery County Department of Parks