Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan Public Meeting

The November 9, 2005 Public Meeting on the Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan update was attended by over 60 people. Those attending circulated among six "stations". Staff members at each station answered questions and recorded people's comments and thoughts on each topic. After an hour, the group reconvened, and the comments were read aloud. The comments are summarized below by topic.

Summary of Public Meeting Input

Natural Resources
- Keep natural trails, providing a place for wildlife.
- Provide a visitor center/gardens like at Brookside Gardens
- Provide an interpretive trail for native plants/trees Educate public about danger of non-native invasive plants
- Keep park as natural and undeveloped as possible
- Provide more trail heads with small parking lots and maps
- Soper Branch is eroding badly and needs restoration. Little Bennett was repaired, but not Soper Branch

History/Archeology
- Use/restore historic buildings as part of a new history trail
- Provide more descriptive interpretive signage on trails
- Use Kingsley School for programs, museum, and oral histories; sponsor a reunion of those who attended the school
- Consider sponsoring a winter festival
- Provide day rides on horseback, wagon rides with mules
- Provide benches, passive areas at historic sites Consider following at Montgomery Chapel: reunion, oral histories, and archeological survey of cemetery with ground penetrating radar.
- Attract more people to historic sites; use transit, winterize campground, provide sleigh rides
- Provide more interpretation of pre-history
- Include Wims Field, the old baseball field, as an historic interpretive area.

Park and Recreation Facilities
- Oppose pool
- Consider Learning Center for golf
- Modify lighting at Golf parking lot; clubhouse okay
- Any plans for golf expansion should not affect trails
- Consider astronomy center at golf course
- Continue hatchery and stocking
- Maintain stream as a catch and release stream
- Improve stream from Clarksburg Road to MD 355
- Better water supply needed for Fire and Rescue
- Provide picnic areas that are equestrian friendly
- Maintain the passive atmosphere that exists now
- Provide pavilion at Prescott Road parking
- Provide senior softball fields; bocce courts
- Sponsor winter festival in campground area
• Do not pave existing equestrian trails
• More park police for law enforcement
• Provide open area for festival space
• The park needs a focal point and an identity to draw people, whether at a visitors’ center or elsewhere

**Camping and Trails**

• Provide more access for equestrians, especially south of Little Bennett Creek
• Provide equestrian campsites
• Link trails in a more systematic way-too many dead ends
• Mow around open fields to provide trail access
• Expand Froggy Hollow Trail
• Balance expansion of trails with maintaining natural setting
• Pipeline easement could be trail
• Existing trail system not built with recreation in mind, just follows old roads, need new environmentally sound trail system made for fun and enjoyment
• All trails should be shared use
• Consider opening trails near streams
• Consider camping with horses and connecting horse trails from the campground to the larger park network
• Keep and even expand horse trailer parking
• Keep portable toilet at horse trailer lot
• Realign Froggy Hollow trail to make it less steep
• Improve creek crossings
• Need circumferential trail around park
• Need uninterrupted trail along Little Bennett Creek
• Need bridge at Browning Run
• Horse access would be nice to archeological sites, with hitching post
• Provide pavilion at horse parking lot with water pump Realign trails so they don’t get muddy
• Need better signage with simple map
• Consider color-coding trails-shouldn’t get lost on trails Consider surface like C&O Canal towpath
• Cyclists like climbing/descent of trails offered at Little Bennett
• Timber Ridge trail needs to be redone
• Need to remember ALL users
• Oppose cabins-keep primitive camping for Scout troops
• Park should have access from public transportation-show bus stops
• Provide interpretive trails oriented to natural landscape (trees, flowers, shrubs)
• More trailhead access would increase trail use
• Need bridge across Little Bennett at Hyattstown
• Extend Clarksburg greenway trail all the way to Hyattstown
• Add bike path to Hyattstown Mill Road
• Provide bike trail connection from Prescott Road to Hyattstown along the north boundary of golf course.
• Provide trail along Prescott Road from trailer parking past golf course to Lewisdale Road.
• All traditional points of horse access should be continued
• Should be some access for horse owners in the community across park from MD 355
• Signs confusing about horses near golf course
How do we make sure people stay on the trails?
Campground expansion should be sensitive to trout population
Wherever trail crosses stream, use stabilized crossing or bridge
Connect the Damascus trails to the trails in Clarksburg.

Access and Transportation
Concerned about safety at proposed intersection of MD 355 and Snowden Farm Parkway.
Major safety issues when crossing Clarksburg Road, weekdays in particular
Expand existing parking lot on Clarksburg Road and formalize additional lots
Provide stepping stone bridge (like the one at Seneca Greenway) to access Earls picnic area
Need formal signage for parking and location maps in parking areas.
Keep and maintain existing equestrian parking and provide additional horse trailer parking areas
Consider following related to Clarksburg Road: Slower speed limits and other traffic calming measures should be used and Provide better, safer bike/pedestrian/equestrian access to park from Clarksburg Road Should consider closing Clarksburg Road because of safety concerns and for improved park experience
Improve shoulders on Clarksburg Road, Stringtown Road and Burnt Mill Road for cyclists.
Clarksburg Greenway should go north all the way to the Frederick county line.
Bike access from Lewisdale Drive (Class 1): possible connect to the greenway to the north.
Provide bike access to Hyattstown Mill Rd. from Clarksburg Rd. to proposed greenway to the north.
No trolley or motorized vehicular service within the park
Piedmont Road’s extention to Rt. 355 should go on top of the hill, near the Maintenance Facility, instead of in the valley for improved sight distance.

Implementation Priorities
Better access. Where will all the people and cars go as development occurs? Small parking lots near activities is one approach.
Bike trails/bike access
A “swimming hole” for children
Nature museum; trails that explore natural history
Provide for older elementary/teens who now have nothing to do
Improve trails
Provide trails for everyone
Group picnic areas with tables/grills.
Visitors center, using Brookside Gardens as model
Improve access to fire department: roadways too narrow, wooden bridges, need ponds for water, no water supply in some areas of park
First Tee or similar golf learning facility with intermediate 9-hole golf course

General Comments from Audience or by Correspondence
How often do park police patrol park? Patrols should be increased.
Need to address future of park houses.
Volume of traffic on Clarksburg Road is a very big deal.
Now is time for money to be prioritized for park maintenance by staff; should not rely solely on volunteers.
Consider having meetings elsewhere in upcounty, too.
Trails should be widened to allow equestrians and bikers to travel abreast.
• Implement a policy of selected, one-year closures of sections of the park that become stressed or heavily eroded due to overuse.
• Park needs a permanent, well-funded maintenance crew.
• A History Trail should be established linking all the historic sites in the park.
• Frisbee golf should be provided for campers or day visitors in the camping area.
• The 80 plus acres of open field have a lot of erosion, so some fill could be obtained from the housing developers. It percs at 20 g/m.
• Little Bennett is a diamond in the rough: leave it that way!