

Still Creek Friends Meeting Summary

Wednesday, June 13, 2006

7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Greenbelt Park

Greenbelt, MD 20770

Meeting attendees:

Shobha Duncan

Bill Duncan

Harriette Phelps

Fred Gasper

Alan Turnbull

Alex Culver (National Park Service)

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. Still Creek Tour Report and Slideshow

Mr. Alan Turnbull reported that Walking/Driving Tour of Still Creek on June 11th was a very successful, educational event. He said that a five car convoy of Still Creek Friends, including the Mayor of Greenbelt, visited a variety of sites around the watershed. Mr. Turnbull showed the meeting attendees a slideshow of pictures taken during the tour. The following are some of the tour stops.

- ♦ Stormwater management pond at the new Greenbelt Post Office
- ♦ Greenbelt dog park near where the headwaters of Still Creek begin
- ♦ Stormwater management ponds in Greenbelt Lake Village
- ♦ Kingswood community where Still Creek enters Greenbelt Park
- ♦ The confluence of Still Creek with Briar Ditch
- ♦ The site of the April 8th cleanup of Greenbelt Park along Kenilworth Avenue where SHA recently installed “no-dumping” signs.

III. Illegal Dumping / Kenilworth Ave. Recap

Mr. John Galli reported that he met with a MD State Highway Administration representative and National Park Service employees on June 6th to talk about illegal dumping problems along Kenilworth Avenue adjacent to Greenbelt Park. Mr. Galli said that it was a very positive meeting and by the end of the day SHA had already posted 3 signs along Kenilworth Avenue. The SHA representative was also receptive to the proposal to block off the grassy area that was used as a staging area for the April 8th cleanup, where it is currently very easy for people to back up and dump trash down the hill to Still Creek. SHA plans to install a guard rail in the area. Mr. Galli commented that he told the SHA representative about the Still Creek Friends and their involvement in the April 8th cleanup. Mr. Galli said that SHA is interested in working with Still Creek Friends and the National Park Service on future cleanup events.

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

- Mr. Alex Culver commented that already it looks like the dumping problem has shifted to the area north of where the new signs are posted.
- Mr. Fred Gasper suggested that the county purchase a digital, portable camera system to record people in the act of illegal dumping, catch some illegal dumpers and then advertise it widely. Mr. Gasper said that since the unit would be portable, perhaps the idea that one could actually get caught in the act of illegal dumping would be a deterrent.
- Mr. Alan Turnbull said that he has talked with someone in Greenbelt who has a set of closed circuit, motion-activated cameras and perhaps it would be possible to do a demo project in Still Creek.

IV. Upcoming Events / 2006 Calendar Year Planning

Trash Survey Training (6/17/06)

Mr. John Galli reported that the Trash Survey Training on June 17th from 9:00 – 11:00am in Greenbelt Park is all set to go. 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 each subwatershed group.

Electrofishing Demonstration

Mr. Galli reported that the COG will host an Electrofishing Demonstration in Greenbelt Park on Saturday, July 29th from 10:00 a.m. – noon. The event will take place where Still Creek intersects Park Central Road.

Schrom Hills Park Clean-up

Mr. Fred Gasper agreed to ask Ms. Michelle Touchet whether she would be interested in coordinating the Schrom Hills Park Clean-up. Mr. Alan Turnbull suggested that October might be a good time to hold that event.

Greenbelt Labor Day Festival

Mr. Alan Turnbull suggested that if Still Creek Friends partnered with the other watershed organizations in Greenbelt (CCRIC and BCWWG), perhaps the groups could coordinate having a booth at the four day Greenbelt Labor Day Festival. Mr. Turnbull volunteered to talk to the other watershed groups about the Labor Day Festival and try to recruit someone to coordinate that event. He said that if CCRIC and BCWWG are not interested in participating in the whole festival, Still Creek Friends could at least participate in the Sunday information session.

Summer Meetings

The following is a summary of the discussion about scheduling summer meetings.

- ♦ Mr. Alan Turnbull suggested that the group could hold an informal business meeting in July and then host a lecture/learning focused meeting in August.
- ♦ Mr. Bill Duncan said that he understands the difficulty of holding meetings in the summer, but said that the group doesn't want to lose momentum on the following three things.
 - 1.) Incorporation
 - 2.) Planning Events
 - 3.) Membership/Outreach
- ♦ Mr. Turnbull responded that the group could stay on top of those things via the listserv and phone calls.
- ♦ Mr. John Galli said that he likes the idea of inviting guest speakers to the group's meetings, saying that many other subwatershed groups regularly include guest speakers in their meeting agendas as a good way to draw in members that may not normally be interested in attending meetings.
- ♦ Mr. Bill Duncan suggested that it would be great to invite the other local subwatershed groups to hear guest speakers.
- ♦ Ms. Harriette Phelps said that the group should consider delaying the lecture event until September.
- ♦ Mr. Fred Gasper agreed, saying that the group could focus more on outreach and planning during the summer before reconvening in September.
- ♦ The group agreed to poll the other members via the listserv in order to determine which of the following July meeting dates is preferred.
 - 1.) Monday, July 10th
 - 2.) Thursday, July 13th
 - 3.) Monday, July 17th

V. Incorporation Discussion

Mr. Galli suggested to the members that the group should make a decision about whether or not to incorporate. He said that incorporating would give Still Creek Friends many more options and cited the example of the Beaverdam Creek Watershed Watch Group, which incorporated about a month ago and has already raised about \$1100 by raffling off maps at the Green Man Festival and by receiving the Jim Cassels Award for Community Service from the Greenbelt Co-op.

The following is a summary of the discussion about incorporation.

- Mr. Bill Duncan said that there are really two issues to consider. 1.) Obtaining non-profit status in the State of Maryland. 2.) Gaining 501(c)3 status from the IRS. He said that once the group incorporates with the state, it can begin to act like a non-profit organization.
- Mr. Alan Turnbull commented that SCF is in a unique position to pursue grants and donations for charities and foundations that are interested in helping Greenbelt Park. Also, he suggested that SCF could help the park do things that the NPS is not able to do. If the group organizes formally, Mr. Turnbull said that Still Creek Friends could ask for assistance from NPS. Currently, Mr. Turnbull, as a National Park Service employee, is working about four hours a month to support the formation of the Still Creek Friends, but he said that that assistance could be ratcheted up if the group officially incorporates.
- Mr. Galli agreed, saying that Still Creek Friends also has the opportunity to partner with MD SHA, Prince George's County, and the City of Greenbelt, citing the Mayor of Greenbelt's participation in the watershed tour on June 11th as a sign of her support for the group. He said that if the group acts promptly, it has the potential to do a lot for the watershed.
- Mr. Turnbull suggested that an important first step would be to get started by officially incorporating. He said that the initial incorporators would not be entering into a full time commitment and that their first act as board members could be to find their successors. However, it is important to have a few people who are willing to be incorporating board members.
- Mr. Galli agreed, saying that COG will continue to be available to help the group and the board members.
- The following members volunteered to be on the Incorporating Board of the Still Creek Friends:
 - * Bill Duncan
 - * Shobha Duncan
 - * Fred Gasper
 - * Harriette Phelps
- Mr. Galli suggested that COG staff could post a message to the listserv inviting other members not present at the meeting to join the board.
- Mr. Bill Duncan agreed that it is only fair to invite the other members to join the Board of Directors. He volunteered to review the sample Articles of Incorporation from other subwatershed groups and create a draft set of articles for the Still Creek Friends. He said that he will do that within 2 weeks so that the other

- members will have 2 weeks to review the draft. He said that he would welcome input from other members about what to include.
- Mr. Galli said that the group will also need a post office box eventually. He suggested that since the Beaverdam Creek Watershed Watch Group reported that the new Greenbelt Post Office is already running out of the small P.O. boxes, perhaps SCF should take care of that sooner rather than later.
 - Mr. Fred Gasper volunteered to get a P.O. box for the group.

VII. Communication and Networking

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

- Mr. Fred Gasper said that he would like to contact the Trinity Church and the Lanham Boys Club to tell them about Still Creek Friends and to invite them to partner with the group. He also volunteered to distribute fliers about SCF to houses in the New Carrollton section of the watershed.
- Mr. Alan Turnbull suggested that at this point it is important for SCF to let people know that the group is forming. He said that Still Creek Friends is in a position to get feedback from other groups.
- Ms. Levendosky suggested that the group could brainstorm a list of potential outreach jobs and post them to the listserv and encourage people to pick something that they would be interested in doing (e.g., making 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. Fred Gasper volunteered to contact the Greenbelt Gazette, Greenbelt News Review, and the local newspaper in New Carrollton to post a message about the next Still Creek Friends meeting. He also volunteered to get the meeting advertised on the local cable channels in Greenbelt and New Carrollton. Mr. Gasper said that he will talk to a contact that he has at Anacostia Trails Heritage Area (ATHA) to see ways for SCF to cooperate with ATHA on publicity, etc.

VIII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at about 9:00 p.m. The next meeting will be held from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Greenbelt Park Ranger Station on either July 10th, 13th or 17th. Ms. Levendosky will create a poll on the listserv to find out which date the members prefer for the July meeting and will let the group know the results of the poll.