



# AGENDA

## Watkins Regional Park Master Planning Issues and Opportunities Discussion

May 24, 2016

6:30 PM – 8:30 PM

Formal Presentation at 7:00 PM

Watkins Regional Park Nature Center

- |                |   |                  |
|----------------|---|------------------|
| <b>6:30 PM</b> | <b>Display Review</b><br><i>Large maps with sticky notes available for annotating (staffed)</i> |                  |
| <b>7:00 PM</b> | <b>Welcome and Introductions</b>  | <i>Carol</i>     |
| <b>7:10 PM</b> | <b>Presentation on Issues and Opportunities</b>   | <i>Elisabeth</i> |
| <b>7:45 PM</b> | <b>Discussion</b>   | <i>Carol</i>     |
| <b>8:15 PM</b> | <b>Display Review</b><br><i>Large maps with sticky notes available for annotating (staffed)</i> |                  |
| <b>8:30 PM</b> | <b>Adjourn</b>  |                  |



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## Memorandum

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To: Carol Binns  
From: Elisabeth Lardner  
Date: May 31, 2016  
Subject: Summary of Discussion, Public Meeting #1 for Watkins Regional Park Master – Issues and Opportunities Discussion, May 24, 2016

# COMMUNITY MEETING #1 – MAY 24, 2016

## Agenda

- **Welcome and Introductions – Carol Binns**
- **Presentation – Elisabeth Lardner**
- **Discussion**
  - Vehicle Circulation
    - Why was the traffic-calming circle built in conjunction with the new entrance? It seems that traffic gets slowed down there on busy park days.  
*It was a way to handle the intersection of the existing primary park road and the new entrance road. Needs better signage.*
    - Will circulation be considered in the Master Plan?  
*Yes.*
    - Consider traffic problems entering and exiting the park.  
*This will be addressed in the Master Plan – one idea is to recommend a traffic circle on Watkins Park Drive.*
  - Accessibility
    - What is being done to make the park accessible?  
*The agency is working to make the park more accessible, some improvements have been made to the miniature golf course although more improvements are needed; some restrooms are accessible.*
    - Is the new Wizard of Oz playground accessible?  
*Yes.*
    - Can a wheelchair user access the train and the carousel?  
*The carousel has a new ramp and the train is accessible.*
    - Will the Commission build a completely accessible (universal) playground at Watkins Park, similar to Fairfax County's Clemyjontri?  
*There is a completely accessible playground at Mitchellville South Park in Prince George's County.*
    - The Park's basic, everyday accommodations need to be accessible.  
*Agreed.*
    - How many paved accessible trails are there connecting to the existing neighborhood?  
*There is a paved connection to the neighborhood on the north – Park Place – that connects Watkins Park to the Kettering neighborhood. There is a partial connection from the Community Center into the park – it needs to be extended. There is a trail connection between Watkins Place to the west of the new entry road but not to Perrywood*

*on the eastern side of the new entry road. There are no accessible connections to the neighborhoods on the west – topography is challenging due to the location of Western Branch. May require a bridge (model is the elevated boardwalk/bridge at MD SHA Headquarters).*

- There is Federal Aid available to improve accessibility/ADA resources – the county should make use of these funds.  
*Noted.*

- Trails

- Where are connections needed? Where are they missing? Where are the new entry points?

*The new paved loop trail crosses the street and connects the school and community center, meeting the sidewalk along Watkins Park Drive. The new entrance road will be connected to the townhouses by a trail.*

- Are there pedestrian/bike trail connections to the surrounding neighborhoods?

*Most entry points are along Watkins Park Drive; the northern, western, and eastern park edges need more connections.*

- Where are the targeted places to make trail connections with adjacent neighborhoods?

*The Master Plan will identify trail connections and opportunities such as tie-in points. The plan will identify priorities to establish the queue for funding and implementation.*

- How can the park and adjacent neighborhoods be made more walkable for kids and the community?
- Is there a need for a lighted trail?
- Is there a grant for a bike trail to make the county more bike-able?
- Is the draft trails plan online?

*The Commission is in the midst of developing a Trails Master Plan for the county. Information on this plan is available on the web – [www.pgparcs.com](http://www.pgparcs.com).*

- Has the Commission considered building a Disney World-type tram to cross the Western Branch?

- Parking

- Has the Commission looked at developing parking lots on the perimeter of the park, or employing a shuttle?
- Need to think big enough to address the problem.
- Is there another way to get to the Community Center on MD193 from within Watkins Park?

- The Core of the Park

- Where is the central area or core of the park? What is it? What is going to help to create the core?
- There is a need for multipurpose open spaces (Central Green-type areas).
- There are opportunities to look at the natural areas/passive areas as unique spaces.
- One of the things with Watkins is that it is a big park, but it feels small.

- The journey through the park is a series of dead ends, instead of a flow of experiences. Central Park has a flow; how do you create connections to improve the flow at Watkins?
  - There is an open space opportunity at the entry of the park on Watkins Park Drive/MD193.
  - The entry experiences from MD202 and MD214 need to be reviewed.
  - There is confusion when entering the park in trying to find an information center. The Central Area Office houses much more than Watkins Regional Park staff, but it is located in a place that is a natural point to stop and ask for directions. Weekends and holidays there are Park Rangers at the park entry and at the Train Station.
  - Consider moving the storage area at the park entry, now used for Festival of Lights materials and other park equipment.
- Wayfinding
    - The wayfinding signage is not always placed intuitively -- it is still a challenge for a newcomer to find their way within the park.
    - Community may not be aware of certain sites, such as the Nature Center for example. (One meeting attendee had been coming to the park weekly for over 30 years and did not know the Nature Center existed).
    - Need to get County and M-NCPPC branding across in addition to that for the park itself; current Wayfinding signs do not include Prince George's County or M-NCPPC branding.
  - Park Needs
    - Need for additional rooms for rentals for events such as birthday parties, to bring in additional revenue.
    - Establish better transit and connections to the District – there is an opportunity to connect with the young people in the region.
    - Challenge with planning the park is the piecemeal fashion of the existing features – things have been adapted and built over time.
    - There is a need to better connect the park with the community – the boundary is not clear.
    - Look at the traffic drawn to First Baptist Church of Glenarden as an opportunity to inform more about the park and its offerings.
    - Need to go out into the community and connect.
  - Online Survey on the Master Planning effort for Watkins Regional Park
    - There was a countywide survey completed in 2010 and a more recent survey completed in 2013.  
*L/KLA will ensure the survey writers are aware of both surveys.*
    - Online survey (interactive mapping and user-friendly), easy way for people who cannot come to the meetings to contribute their thoughts and ideas.
    - Bring a laptop for survey input at various events within the park, such as Concerts on the Green and Third Fridays Movie.

**Drawing Notes from May 24, 2016 Public Meeting***Places I love in Watkins Park*

- Desire for connecting trails between western and northern neighborhoods and parkland (Kettering/Manor Knolls communities where sticker is located)
- Connect private park in Kettering community with trail to Watkins Park

*Places I hate in Watkins Park*

- Private lot on east side – acquire it?
- No barrier at campground between facility and roads
- Central Green/Nature Center feels like you have reached the end of the park
- Issue of safety (and perception of) when on trails on western edge of park

*Suggestions included on hate/love sheets*

- Put picnic shelters where existing campground is located today
- Put campground where existing loop picnic area is (Watkins Downs/Shelters #0, #4-6)
- Add trail easements and permanent parking through the PEPCO Easement  
*Not allowed.*
- Show the roads on the map (specific roads desired to be shown not noted in comment)
- Connect northwestern corner of the park with Central Avenue

## Current Uses in Watkins Park

- Green Dot (#), KEEP AS IS
  - Indoor Tennis Court - 1
  - Outdoor Tennis Court, Lighted - 1
  - Antique Carousel (note – building updated) - 2
  - Paved Walking Loop and Exercise System - 1
  - Wizard of Oz Playground – 4
  - Farm land in the southern portion of the park (currently leased for farming beans and corn) – 2
- Yellow Dot (#), IMPROVE
  - Watkins Nature Center – 5
  - Old Maryland Farm – 6
  - Basketball, Full Court – 2
  - Horseshoes at Picnic Shelters – 2
  - Miniature Train – 2
  - 18-hole Mini Golf Course – 3
  - Natural Surface Trail – 2
  - Paved Walking Loop and Exercise System – 1
  - Family, unreserved, Picnic Areas – 3
  - Picnic Shelters
    - Reserved Shelters #0, #1-7 on loop near Watkins Downs Playground – 1
    - Reserved Shelters #10-14 near Wizard of Oz Playground – 1
    - Reserved Shelters #8 and #9 – 1
    - Reserved Shelter #15 at Ball fields – 2
  - Watkins Downs Playground – 2 (around it)

- Snack Bar Refreshment Depot with Vending Machines – 1
- Red Dot (#), REMOVE
  - Basketball, Half Court in parking lot near Picnic Shelters #8 and #9 – 2
  - Camping Sites (31 single use; 2 group use) – 3
  - Softball/Baseball Fields, Lighted – 1
  - Picnic Shelters
    - Reserved Shelters #0, #1-7 on loop near Watkins Downs Playground – 1

*Proposed or Desired Uses TO ADD TO Watkins Park*

- Green Dot – ADD
  - Concerts, Plays, Performances – 1
  - Food and Wine Festivals – 1
  - Kids programs and day camps – 1
  - Seniors programs – 1
  - Health, fitness and wellness programs and classes – 1
  - Improved trail network; add more walking and running routes – 1
  - Mountain biking course – 1
  - Bicycle pump track – 1
  - Skateboard park – 1
  - Disc golf course – 1
  - Outdoor courts (pickle ball, tennis, basketball) – 2
  - Expand ecological restoration efforts – 1
  - Expand archaeological research – 1
  - Add gardens and botanical features – 2
  - Add more small community events – 1
  - Better birthday party spaces – 1
  - More food and drink vendors – 2
  - Urban agriculture, demonstration gardens – 1
  - Off-leash dog area – 1
  - Casual picnic spaces – 3
  - Expand parking – 4
  - Add restrooms – 2
  - Welcome and information center – 3
  - Other
    - Amphitheater
- Yellow Dot – IMPROVE
  - Concerts, Plays, Performances – 1
  - Health, fitness and wellness programs and classes – 1
  - Add more small community events – 1
  - More food and drink vendors – 1
  - Welcome and information center – 1
- Red Dot – NO
  - Indoor or outdoor pool
  - More rentable wedding and event venues

*Park Libs Completed*

Five years from now, when I visit Watkins Regional Park, I am most excited about **inclusion of playground area with equipment for persons of all disabilities (physical development, etc.)**. Veronica Davila [veronicatwin1@yahoo.com](mailto:veronicatwin1@yahoo.com) 240-601-8761.

## Other Requests

Flyer/poster with the [www.pgparks.com](http://www.pgparks.com) website, survey and park info to post at the Old Maryland Farm and other locations within the park. (Question on including QR code on flyers).