

Ballston Pond Community Meeting – January 30, 2019

Meeting Summary

Staff provided a presentation reviewing the history of the pond, the public process to date, and the current 90% plans for the pond. The staff presentation is available on the project web site. Questions from the meeting attendees and answers are summarized below.

Questions and Answers

How big is the drainage area for the pond?

- *The pond drains a large area, about 450 acres.*

How far down does the water goat go down under the water?

- *The water goat litter collection device is a net that floats at the inflow to the pond. It does not go all the way to bottom of the pond. It is designed to collect the floating trash within 1-2' of the surface. There will be another litter collection device, a trash rack, at the outflow that does extent all the way to the pond bottom.*

Sometimes homeless people sleep on the existing platform. Try to discourage homeless people from sleeping on the deck.

- *The benches that will be installed will have dividers to discourage sleeping on the benches.*

What will happen to the wooden platform?

- *The existing platform is not in good condition, so it will be removed. The new platform that will be installed on the east side of the pond is about seven times larger than the existing platform.*

Will there still be an opening there to view the pond from that side?

- *Yes, the design will include lower growing plants in the area where there is currently a view of the pond.*

How are you changing the land under the water? How deep will underwater channels be?

- *The pond design includes channels for water to flow through the pond, which helps to filter and clean the water. The channels are generally about 4 feet deep. There will also be some islands, shallow water wetland areas, and one deep water area that is about nine feet deep.*

If Beavers return to the pond, what will happen?

- *Beaver levelers, which prevent the sound of flowing water, will be installed and they should discourage beavers from taking up residence in the wetland.*

Are there plans to monitor insects and birds that might show up to the wetland?

- *There is no formal plan to monitor birds and insects at this time. If there is interest among the Master Naturalists volunteer group, we could develop a monitoring program. The County also conducts periodic BioBlitz events, in which volunteers make biological observations throughout the County on certain days of the year.*

Bird watchers would like more platforms in the wetland to observe birds. Additional access would provide opportunity for volunteers to take water quality samples and conduct other educational projects. It seems like a consensus on the plan was achieved a number of years ago, but there is a lost opportunity for adding platforms. People in area would like more space to observe wildlife.

- *There was an extensive public process for this project in 2011-2012, including a Citizen Advisory Group and several public meetings. The design that was selected from the public process featured a platform on one side of the pond, as opposed to boardwalks through the pond. Participants were concerned that boardwalks through the pond might make the extensive litter problem in the pond even worse. Following the public process, work has progressed to move the selected design forward to the current 90% plans. There is not funding available to revise the design, nor is funding available to pay for additional boardwalks at this time. Additional delays in the project schedule could also jeopardize grant funding for the project.*

What is the status of the fences on the south? Are they staying?

- *Yes, the fences along the south of the pond will remain.*

There is a lot of trash on the ground. How will that be removed?

- *During the project construction, much of the sediment (and associated litter) in the pond will be removed.*

Much of the trash is recyclables. Hope they would be recycled after collecting.

- *The County will make an effort to recycle items that are recyclable.*

What is the plan for tree removal along the Custis trail? There are Bradford pear trees along the trail.

- *The Bradford pears along the Custis trail are nearing the end of their life and they are an invasive tree. As Bradford pears get older, they tend to break and spilt apart. The County is planning to remove them and replant trees along the Custis trail, to remove the danger from the trees splitting and to remove the source of invasive seeds.*

Have you been able to project the amounts of certain pollutants will be removed by the treatment? Have you quantified the amounts?

Yes, the pollutant removal amounts are listed below:

N – 891.66 lbs/yr

P – 135.04 lbs/yr

TSS – 123,911 lbs/yr

Multiple jurisdictions/entities holding MS4 permits manage land within the drainage area. For this reason, the pollutant removal Arlington County TMDL reporting credits are less than the total removal credits.

Arlington County TMDL credit:

N – 767.03 lbs/yr

P – 116.16 lbs/yr

TSS – 106,592 lbs/yr

August is the worst time to visit the pond because that is when a certain invasive plant blooms and creates a bad smell. Is there a long term plan to keep new invasive plants under control?

- *The County has prepared for the project by doing some preliminary invasive control around the pond. During and after the project construction, there will be additional invasive treatment. The County and the construction contractor will be doing monitoring for invasive plants as well to ensure they are controlled and treated following construction.*

Please add interpretive signs on the platform. Very interesting history of how the pond has transformed over the years.

- *The County is planning to install three interpretive signs on the new platform.*

Any changes to the bike trail? Are you adding any permeable areas to the trail?

- *Part of the trail on the east side of Ballston Pond will be used for construction and maintenance access, so it will be re-paved following the project construction. Portions of the Custis trail may also be re-surfaced if they are damaged by the contractor during tree removal and replanting. An area of permeable Grasspave (grass with some support structure underneath) will be installed near the north east corner for maintenance access.*

There is little traffic on the park trail so it should not be widened to 10'. Not in bicycle plan to widen it.

- *The upper portion of the east side trail will be widened for maintenance access, but the majority of the trail will remain at 8' wide.*

Any additional lighting planned for the platform or trail?

- *No, DPR does not recommend adding lighting to the park. Like many other parks, this park will be closed from dusk until dawn.*