**Woods Committee Minutes**

**Monday, December 6, 2021 - 7:30 PM**

Approved: January 3, 2022

**Attendance:** Pat Klein, Joan Mahaffey, Dave Cosson, Joli McCathran, Deb Mehlferber, and Virginia Quesada. Tom Land and Krista Zanetti were excused. A quorum was present.

**Call to order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:30.

**Approval of Draft December 6th Agenda:** The Draft Agenda was unanimously approved with the addition of a discussion of the Five Million Tree Program (Virginia 1st/Deb 2nd).

**Approval of Draft Meeting Minutes:** The November 1, 2021, minutes were unanimously approved (Virginia 1st/Deb 2nd).

**Public Appearances:** There were no public appearances.

**Update - WG Deer Management Program – Fall 2021/Winter 2022 Bow Hunt:** With one additional doe harvested, the total for the season so far is five does, no bucks. Two were from the West Woods, three from the East Woods. Hunting season continues through January 31.

**Draft Comprehensive Plan Review:** The Committee reviewed a redraft of Section 6, Sensitive Areas and Environmental Concerns, intended to reflect comments received from Montgomery County Parks and Planning. The revision notes that, to date, no comments have been received from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. The Committee intends to coordinate with the Forestry and Beautification Committee as the document is further revised.

**Woods Trail Maintenance Projects**

* **November Workday**: The November 11 workday volunteers focused on improving the trail in the area of the new Bradfield Crossing, including clearing blockages in the stream, closing off the entrances on each side of the old crossing, and clearing greenbrier away from the new trail crossing. Volunteers Virginia Quesada, Bruce Rothrock, Joan Mahaffey, and Pat Klein were recognized in the December Bulletin and will be recognized by the Mayor at the December Town Council meeting. Town Maintenance Supervisor, Steve Werts, also assisted on this project. On a separate occasion, several town volunteers - Bruce Rothrock, Joey Fones, Jay Everhart, and Tom Land - cleared the new Ironwood Trail in the West Woods.
* **Improved Trail Mapping:** Specific methods for using GPS-based mobile apps to improve the accuracy of trail maps have not yet been determined, but the Committee expects additional input in the near future. Krista and Dave will continue working on trail mapping. The objective is to ensure that new maps accurately describe the trails in the East and West Woods. Ideally, the maps should reflect trail names and delineate wetlands. The maps could be posted on the Woods Committee page on the Town Website and at trail entrances to the East and West Woods.
* **Rerouting to Avoid Wetlands:** The Committee continued to discuss the protective benefit of closing the chronically wet sections of Maple Avenue Extended to prevent further deterioration and soil erosion. It may be advantageous to reroute the Maple Avenue Trail between Dorsey and McCauley to higher ground to intersect with the McCauley and Pine trails.

Some Montgomery County trails have been designed for multi-purpose use, but the County also closes trails when conditions are too wet for safe use and to avoid trail damage. A committee member commented that our Woods’ trails are too narrow for multi-purpose use. Most Woods Committee members think that biking in the woods is not recommended. There was a brief discussion of the meaning of “Walkway Only” signs along the Avenues and East Woods trail entrances. Further discussion was postponed pending input from Forestry and Beautification.

**West Woods Stormwater Management:** American Rescue Plan Funding is available for Storm Water Management Projects. The Committee began to review files and documents from the Storm Water Management Committee related to controlling erosion in the West Woods as it considers application for American Rescue Plan Funds. Further information is expected to be available for the next meeting.

Several historic issues previously identified include:

* drainage from Town Crest and deterioration of the catchment basin
* the effect of new paved roads on the volume of water draining into the Woods
* the effect of Town drainage culverts under Washington Grove Lane
* the effect of drainage off Washington Grove Lane directly into the West Woods
* erosion and undercutting of tree root systems in several areas of the West Woods
* and better understanding where the water goes when it leaves the West Woods

**Five Million Tree Program:** Joli presented information on the “Five Million Tree Program” through the Maryland Department of Natural Resources “Healthy Forests and Healthy Waters” which is seeking people to apply for grants. Joli will meet informally with a State Forester to see how Washington Grove might benefit from the program. There is a webinar on December 13 at 1:00 sponsored by the Maryland Forestry Foundation, "The New State Five Million Tree Goal: Implications for Urban Communities.”

**West Woods -WGL perimeter vegetation**: There has been a request from the Border Committee to cut non-native invasive plants, specifically Japanese honeysuckle, which proliferate along the west side easement of Washington Grove Lane (WGL). The WC approves of the trimming, but questions were raised about who is responsible to do it safely and cover the work expense. Joli will contact Brett Linkletter with Montgomery County DOT to clarify areas of responsibility with the project. There was also discussion about a tree leaning on the cable line across from Center Street. Town residents and the Town clerk have notified the County, but no action has been taken. WC will investigate who should be contacted or the police non-emergency number.

**Final Updates, Announcements, Comments, and Action Items**

* Continue to investigate apps to format trail maps in the East and West Woods.
* Review items in the Woods Committee Google Drive and the SWM Drop Box for background information on storm water management in the West Woods.
* Investigate Five Million Trees grants.
* Investigate trimming non-native invasive plants on the west side easement on WGL.
* Investigate the tree supported by the phone line across from Center Street.

**Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 9:02 (Virginia 1st/Deb 2nd).

Next Meeting: Monday, January 3rd, 7:30 pm

Respectfully Submitted: Joan Mahaffey and Pat Klein, Woods Committee Co-chairs