

2024 0810 Restoration of a Meadow environment in our Conservation Meadow Park

To: Mayor Compton and Town Councilors Rob Gilmore, Kriss Grisham, Peter Nagrod, Eva Patrone, Barbara Raimondo, and Mary Warfield

CC: Town Clerk, Kathy Lahman and Town Web Manager, Christine Dibble

Dear Mayor Compton and Town Councilors

It is exciting to finally have a plan for restoring a functional meadow environment in our Washington Grove Conservation Meadow Park. I still have treasured memories of the open meadow which was in existence when I moved to Washington Grove in 2003.

I was the Mayor of Washington Grove from May 2011-May 2014 when the Meadow Committee of that time worked with Brenda Sandburg from the Montgomery Parks Department to develop the Operation and Use (O & U) Plan for the Conservation Meadow Park. The Committee was assembled by Mayor Darrell Anderson in early 2011. It was comprised of eight residents of which five lived in houses around the meadow and three lived in other areas of town. The Operation and Use Plan was hammered out by the committee over many months, both before and after Brenda Sandberg's involvement. The final plan, formally presented to the Parks Department Management on 22 October 2013, specifies goals shared by the Town and the Parks Department. From The Vision section on page 6:

The operation and use of Washington Grove Conservation Park will be implemented to achieve the following visions:

- Preservation of the rural, open vistas of the agricultural fields that formed the setting for the historically-significant Town of Washington Grove
- Creation of a native meadow habitat to support native meadow species
- Provision for resource-based recreational opportunities and interpretive opportunities of the natural and cultural significance of the park

The Plan includes a photograph of the historic meadow vista circa 2003.



It is unfortunate that two of the important agreed upon goals have not been met. If meadow restoration is not done now, the “rural, open vistas of the agricultural fields that formed the setting for the historically-significant Town of Washington Grove” will not be preserved. And “a native meadow habitat to support native meadow species” will no longer exist.

In 2017 I was appointed to the Planning Commission, which I currently Chair. From 2018-2020 we completely revised the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Washington Grove. I, and many others in Town, have hoped for greater preservation of the meadow environment in this park. The 2020 Comprehensive Plan includes a section which says: “Today, the 12-acre Washington Grove Meadow Conservation Park, which is located on part of the land that once comprised the Casey farm, is a key component of the setting of Washington Grove. The park helps contextualize the Grove within Montgomery County’s agricultural heritage, which influenced the region’s settlement and land use patterns well into the twentieth century.”

I have loved our “A Town Within a Forest” from the first moment I saw it. In an increasingly developed area of Montgomery County, we are truly unusual. In addition to 112 acres of “Urban Forest” in the residential parts of town, we also have two beautiful forest preserves comprising 89 acres. However, the 12-acre Washington Grove Conservation Meadow Park is our only meadow habitat. I feel strongly that we should follow the original vision of the Operation and Use Plan and of the 2020 Comprehensive Plan to preserve it as an open meadow.

I am tremendously grateful to The Washington Grove Meadow Committee for taking the lead on this project. That they have been able to enlist the Montgomery Parks Meadow Management and Restoration team is tremendously encouraging. This Restoration team has been doing beautiful work in other County parks. I hope the Town Council will support this long overdue and worthwhile project.

Georgette E. Cole

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