

Dear Mayor Compton and esteemed Councilors,

I wanted to follow up my previous letter with some additional information. I didn't monitor the meadow maintenance as carefully as I should have while I was still Mayor in 2013 and the Parks department mowing began. The Operation & Use (O&U) plan called for leaving cedars which were already over 4-5 feet tall for wildlife habitat, but when the mowing started the mowers really left all red cedars regardless of size. The original vision of the WG Meadow Committee was for more discrete "islands" of native trees, like the cedars, which would have left far more open space to preserve the meadow vista and the light and space for herbaceous meadow plants. The Operation & Use Plan includes the following visions (page 6):

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

By May 2014 I was back on the TC and was the liaison between the Town and the Parks Department. At this time, I asked the Montgomery Parks manager for our Meadow Park why there were still so many red cedars. The answer I got over the next 4 years while I was the liaison was that 1) he didn't know why the smaller red cedars hadn't been mowed and 2) they were very short-staffed and couldn't do anything about it right now. That answer never changed. The only additional assistance we ever got was when we complained about NNIs which they agreed they have a legal obligation to deal with. They did nothing to address the unintended large number of red cedars, and they did nothing related to the objective on page 10: Create native meadow habitat by replacing/adding appropriate herbaceous species over time.

The fact that a Parks Department Meadow Restoration Group now exists has finally given us a chance to do something about this situation. The proposal by Ryan Colliton (Principal Natural Resources Specialist – Vegetation Ecologist) is carefully calibrated and would remove only 38% of the red cedars on the Meadow in two phases. This frees up space for the open, sunny areas needed for adding the herbaceous meadow species we were originally promised. The benefit of doing two phases is that the addition of herbaceous plant "plugs" from Pope Farm can be added and evaluated more accurately.

As I said in my first letter, Washington Grove has 112 acres of residential forest and 89 acres of forest reserve. This 12-acre meadow is the only area which can be used to support the herbaceous meadow species that feed our native pollinators which are losing habitat at an alarming rate in Montgomery County. I am concerned that postponing the meadow restoration as suggested by Tom Land until we "revisit the *2013 Draft Operation and Use Plan* to get the Town and the Parks Service to develop and agree on a more updated and focused document for management of the 12 acres" will postpone all action far enough into the future that the meadow will not actually be preserved. Since establishing a native herbaceous meadow environment will take time, I am strongly in favor of proceeding with this part of the process now.

Many thanks for your consideration of these issues.

Sincerely,

Georgette Cole