



MEETING NOTES

Project:	Randolph Woods Nature Preserve – Master Site Plan	Project No.:	19065
Location:	Malvern Borough Hall 1 East First Ave. Malvern PA 19355	Meeting Date/ Time:	1.22.2020 7:00pm
Re:	Public Meeting #1	Issue Date:	1.29.20

ATTENDEES:

See Sign-in Sheet

GENERAL NOTES:

INTRODUCTION

- Marc Niemiec started the meeting with an introduction to the Randolph Woods Committee, and a general introduction to the Randolph Woods Nature Preserve Master Site Plan.
 - Marc N. stated that purpose and goal of this process is to create a master plan for Randolph Woods. The process began four years ago as a recommendation from borough resident Joe Bones, who is now a member of the committee. A report was prepared by this committee in 2017, and the Simone Collins consultant team has been hired to expand on this work.
- Marc N. asked each member of the committee to introduce themselves:
 - Joe Bones – member of Malvern Borough Council and Shade Tree Commission
 - Bryan Hamilton –focused on protecting and improving Randolph Woods
 - Brendan Phillips – member of Malvern Borough Council, parks and rec committee
 - Barbara Rutz – member of the Historical Commission – particularly interested in the old spring house
 - Helise Bichesky-Reilly- member of the Parks and Recreation Committee and the Environmental Sustainability Council, interested in the health of the forest
 - Zoe Warner – member of the Planning Commission and Environmental Sustainability Committee – interested in the ecology of Randolph Woods
 - Andrew Kirkpatrick – Associate Director of Stewardship Willistown Trust

- Marc N. introduced Peter Simone and the Simone Collins team. Pete S. noted that when members of the public reach out to the SC team, it is important to copy all members of the team on all correspondence to ensure a timely response.
- The Simone Collins team includes forest Patrick Fasano of Comprehensive Land Services, as well Michael McGraw, wildlife biologist from Applied Ecological Services. The Applied Ecological Services contract must be approved by Malvern Borough Council in early February.
- Pete S. read the Randolph Woods Master Plan Vision Statement, as crafted by the committee:
 - “The Randolph Woods Nature Preserve aspires to be a vital part of Malvern’s park system, providing nature-based passive recreation and community activity, while promoting natural resource conservation, land stewardship, and related education.”
- Pete S. reviewed the project schedule and explained that at the next public meeting (March 25th, 2020) the SC team will present initial concepts. The draft plan will be presented at the May 6th, 2020 public meeting and the final plan will be presented at the final public meeting on June 24th, 2020.
- Pete S. explained that any proposed improvements in Randolph Woods will take time to implement, and that improvements are a long-term process.
- Sarah Leeper explained the project scope of work as well as the masterplan process.

NATURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

- Willistown Conservation Trust Easement:
 - Sarah L. explained Willistown Conservation Trust Easement. The total project area is 43 acres, and the conservation easement area is 38 acres. She explained the permitted recreation and open space activities in the conservation easement:
 - “Those recreational and open space activities which can be carried out with little or no alteration or disruption to the natural features of the land on which they take place ("Passive Recreation"). Examples of such activities include walking, jogging, picnicking, birdwatching, horseback riding, overnight camping when organized by an educational organization, and nature study.”
 - “Activities serving to preserve, restore, enhance or maintain habitat areas for native flora and fauna.”
 - Permitted improvements are repairs to existing features: one access drive, utility poles and lines, one concrete pad, one gravel parking area
 - New facilities can include: fencing, gazebo or picnic shelter (400 SF), birdwatching platform, bridges, unpaved trails
- Sarah L. reviewed a historic timeline of the Randolph Woods Nature Preserve through historic aerials:
 - 1931: Pump house exists by this time, and much of the site is farmland / pasture.
 - 1958: Residential development begins around the perimeter of Randolph Woods. The evergreen forest in the center of the site is developing while the western portion of the site is predominantly open.
 - 1971: The evergreen forest in the center of the site continues to develop and while the northeastern forest continues to mature. The eastern portion of the site is still predominantly open at this time.

- 2017: The water tower is gone by this time and the majority of the site has tree coverage.
- Sarah L. reviewed the existing Randolph Woods site conditions through a photographic tour of the site:
 - Ruthland Ave: This is the main access to Randolph Woods. It is important to consider safe access to Randolph Woods. The Malvern Public Works Department is currently located on Ruthland Ave. at the entrance to Randolph Woods.
 - Headwaters: The headwaters feed Ruth Run, and in this area there are many phragmites and other invasive plants.
 - Entry drive and parking: This is the only parking area in Randolph Woods
 - Ruth Run: This stream runs through the middle of the site. Watercress is currently growing in stream - this is a sign of a good cold-water stream.
 - Pump house: The Simone Collins team will consider how to integrate and adaptively reuse this structure with proposed improvements.
 - Picnic area: This area includes younger trees that were planted 20 years ago
 - Site trailhead: This area includes important information & signage, as well as a pedestrian bridge near the parking area.
 - Duffryn Trail: This trail crosses the site from east to west and connects Randolph Woods to the adjacent neighborhoods in Willistown Township.
 - Site Trails: Comprised of single-track earthen trails. Some trails are water drainageways – the SC team will consider rerouting some of these trails so they are not as impacted by erosion. Pete S. noted that it is important to make as many trails ADA as possible (Americans with Disabilities Act).
 - Canopy gap / Invasive understory: There are gaps in the forest canopy where invasive plants have proliferated.
 - Eastern stream crossing: There is potential to reuse the old bridge abutment at this location.
- Sarah L. reviewed existing STRAVA data. STRAVA is a mobile application that is used by runners and cyclists to track their routes through GPS. STRAVA compiles ‘heat maps’ which indicate areas of high and low use by these user groups. The run/walk data suggests that the Duffryn Trail is an important connection between Malvern and Willistown. The cyclist data, while less concentrated than running/walking, suggests that the Duffryn Trail and the various site trails are used currently by cyclists.

BRAINSTORMING & DISCUSSION

- Pete S. led the public through a brainstorming activity to establish Goals, Facts, Concepts, and Partners as they relate to the Randolph Woods Nature Preserve. He explained that all ideas are accepted during brainstorming, noting that it is important that ideas and concepts benefit the largest group of people. Simone Collins will be transparent and scientific in recommendations. It is the Simone Collins team’s job to inform decision making for the Malvern Borough Council.

GOALS

- Create preserve master plan

- Protect and enhance natural resources
- Improve water quality
- Make Randolph Woods a night sky preserve
- Consider how preserve uses affect natural resources
- Preserve open space across Borough
- Get more kids to play in the woods
 - Pete S. noted that an important book to read is, "Last Child in the Woods" by Richard Louv. This book focusses on the importance of spending time in nature.

FACTS

- There are benches near the parking area / bridges currently
- The forest / canopy is not healthy and in decline
- Stream starts at King Street
- Malvern is walkable
- Existing car / bike conflicts in the Borough
- "Walk When the Moon is Full" program by Malvern Arts.
- There are deer on site
- Deer are not good or bad
- 'No Biking' signs have been installed
- Randolph Woods is a regional park
- Second bridge trail has steep slope
- Current parking confusing
- Springs on site
- Steep Topography
- Deer eating understory
- Past hunting on site
- 43 Acres
- Close to downtown Malvern
- Dogs must be leashed
- Existing Chester Valley Crum Creek cleanups
- Many people are moving to Malvern.
- Randolph Woods is a large open space and there are a lot of kids in the surrounding area
- Mountain bikers currently ride at Harmony Hill, Valley forge, White Clay.
- Entry to Randolph Woods by public works is not attractive
- Current trail locations are unclear
- Northern part of the Randolph Woods across First Avenue is unused
- Many invasives in forest

CONCEPTS

- Address stormwater runoff from parking area
- Make biking as safe as possible
- Avoid blanket 'no biking' policy

- Fix forest health
- Make Randolph Woods accessible to kids for running, biking, hiking, fishing.
- No longer dismiss mountain biking in Randolph Woods
- Celebrate water of Ruth Run
- Encourage borough-wide biking
- Educate the broader biking community
- Focus funding on 38 acres in easement
- Trails to have minimal ecological impact
- More trash cans
- Need better signage for walkers / bikers
- Walking trails
- Biking trails
- Trails bring communities together
- Biking is good for public health and the community
- Restrooms
- Pavilions with educational elements
- Section of the woods / trails just for biking
- Remove invasives
- More benches in general
- No lighting in Randolph Woods
- More benches at the two bridges
- Bat boxes
- Unpaved trail into park
- Community to help with trail maintenance
- Dog park
- Nighttime park activities
- Butterfly garden
- Wetland boardwalk
- Deer fence
 - Pete S. noted that deer are eating understory and that forest is not healthy as a result. Work must be done to stop deer from eating understory. he explained that Tyler Arboretum has a deer fence around the entire arboretum and the understory is doing well as a result.
- Perimeter loop trail to discourage encroachment by property owners
- Community garden
- Better quality trails
- More locations for dog waste pickup bags
- Stormwater management BMPs (best management practices)
- Safe entry to Randolph Woods (sidewalks / trails)
 - Pete S. noted that Malvern is dense and walkable, and sidewalk and pedestrian connections are important.
- Better defined parking (don't increase number of spaces)
- Extend road to bypass Public Works altogether

- Bridge side garden concept
- Dog on-leash policy
- Balance active and passive uses
- Fishing in Ruth Run
- Better use for unused area in north of site, potentially:
 - First Avenue Pump track
 - Play area / playground or sensory play for children with special needs (look at Jenkins Arboretum)
 - Skate park (look at existing park in Downingtown and West Goshen)
 - Nature center / nature area
 - Nature-based play area
- Improve Randolph Woods entry
 - An audience member noted that given limited funding, they would prefer beautification come later, and that the health of the forest should be primary.
- Water fountains for water bottle filling
- Integrate pump house for water bottle filling station
- Develop sprinkler or irrigation system for plants not doing well
- Trail markers for bikers and walkers
- Bird house / bluebird houses
- Use ADA laws to improve site access
- Fix steep trail currently in drainageway
- Better park surveillance

PARTNERS

- Great Valley Mountain Bike Club
- Willistown Conservation Trust
- Crum Creek Watershed Association
- Local Schools
- Malvern Arts
- Bluebird Society

GENERAL DISCUSSION

- A member of the audience from the Great Valley Mountain Bike Club (GVMTB) noted that people from the area love Randolph Woods, especially children. These woods are an important resource to be protected and cultivated. This audience member asked the SC team to consider the use of bikes in Randolph Woods and noted the benefits of partnering with bike organizations. Pete S. asked the audience member to submit her written statement to the Simone Collins team so that it may be reviewed thoughtfully.
- An audience member asked for Malvern Borough to reconsider the prohibition on mountain biking in Randolph Woods. Mountain bikers want to help support Malvern borough. This audience member noted mental health is important and biking and open space are important factors.

- The EPA has an expanded definition of passive recreation that includes biking
- A member of the audience noted that he learned to ride a bike in Randolph Woods. He noted that trails made in the past that have damaged trees and apologized for this. This member of the audience noted that the GVMTB wants to be good stewards for the trails in Randolph Woods and would be a good partner.
- Pete S. noted that it is important for communities to partner with the Malvern Borough to care for Randolph Woods.
- A member of the audience asked the Simone Collins team how to best engage school students. Pete S. and Sarah L. asked that meeting attendees help to spread the word and share the survey link.
- Marc N. asked the audience to think critically about watershed management and water quality. He noted that the stream starts at King Street and that a live spring is beneath the pump house.
- A member of the audience noted that the GVMTB will be stewards for trails in Randolph Woods
- An audience member asked how the Simone Collins team will gauge public sentiment. Pete S. explained that the public opinion survey will help gauge this, and that the public should attend future public meetings and speak to the committee members.
- Marc N. thanked all audience members for their thoughtful comments and attendance. He reiterated the importance of Randolph Woods as a special community resource.

NEXT STEPS

- The next public meeting will take place March 25th, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. at the Malvern Borough Hall (1 East First Ave. Malvern PA 19355)
- The Simone Collins team will return in March with concepts for forest management, trails, and ideas for the area near 1st Avenue.
- Pete S. asked that all interested members of the public complete the online public opinion survey. The survey will be active until May 1st, 2020 at is available online at :
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/randolphwoods>

This report represents the Professional's summation of the proceedings and is not a transcript. Unless written notice of any correction or clarification is received by the Professional within ten days of issue, the report shall be considered factually correct and shall become part of the official project record.

Sincerely,
SIMONE COLLINS, INC.
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE



Joseph P. Wallace