

Minutes

Advisory Commission on Environmental Quality (CEQ)

May 25, 2022, 7:00 pm Online Meeting on Webex

CEQ meeting dates, membership information, and reports are always available online here: www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/ceq/index.html Our thanks to Brian Lindley of EPS for coordinating Webex meetings.

Attendance: Brian Lindley, Dr. Brian Fath, Lois Jacobs, Valerie S. Androutsopoulos, Dr. Carol Newill, Justin Gallardo, Jennifer Langford, Steve Malan, Dr. Mahnaz Assadi, Lois Jacobs, Karen Wynn.

Absent: Dr. Andy Miller. Chris Overcash, Dr. Joan Plisko, Radu Zamfirache.

7 pm – Welcome – Carol Newill

Old Business:

Update on the Forest Conservation Report

The report has been sent to the County Council, DEPS Director Dave Lykens, and MD State Delegate Dana Stein (who requested it at the Sierra Club meeting at which it was being discussed), and the Baltimore County Green Alliance (25 environmental organizations).

Update on GoApe! Adventure Park and Oregon Ridge Park Master Plan

Ralph Brown, President of the Oregon Ridge Nature Council. Discussion of current situation vis-a-vis Oregon Ridge Park Master Plan, due 12/31/22 (possible extension of deadline into January 2023).

Go Ape:

According to the Open Meetings Act of 2021, item 3, meetings are supposed to be recorded and the video posted OR the minutes should be posted ASAP. Unless it is a closed meeting, it should be recorded and accessible to the public.

At the 5/12/22 public, online meeting about Go Ape at Oregon Ridge Park that was sponsored by the Department of Rec and Parks, the Director of that department announced that only the presentation by the Go Ape representatives would be recorded and posted, and the public comments afterwards would not be. As a service to the public, Andy Miller recorded the items in the Chat, including who entered the comments and questions, and provided a link to that document.

After the meeting, the items from the Chat were categorized by topic area as they were wide-ranging. Many were pertinent to the park itself and its mission and particular aspects of those, including the park's purpose and mission, the longstanding quiet enjoyment of the park by the public, and the importance of protecting the wildlife, the trees and forest, and the opportunities for Environmental Education and research in the park, while others were pertinent to Go Ape! specifically All this material was the organized in the CEQ report of 5/18/22, titled "Chat questions organized by topic area, asked by the public following a presentation on 5/12/22 by Go Ape at a virtual meeting nsted by the Department of Recreation and Parks, especially addressing Oregon Ridge Park". The report is attached to these minutes.

From a Facebook page post, according to MD State Delegate Michelle Guyton, the Go Ape project will not go forward, but nothing has been officially announced. Carol Newill will send an email to Delegate Guyton asking if there's an update.

Steven Malan asked if this is Go Ape's first attempt. Yes in Baltimore County, but there is one in Rock Creek, MD and a state park in Delaware. In Montgomery Co., MD it's in a County park, not a State park.

Jennifer Langford asked if they've looked into the impact on the park, e.g. bathrooms, streams? Has there been an impact analysis? Jennifer Langford asked if it's seasonal? Year round? What about traffic?

Carol Newill replied that the online presentation didn't address bathrooms, parking, etc. GoApe representative said they will use the existing bathrooms at the Nature Center, existing parking and existing trails for their equipment. They said they will use what's there, apparently plus constructing a building for their equipment, but plans are in a very preliminary stage. They need 5 acres but not sure where exactly to locate it.

RN – Go Ape will be open 7 days / week for 7 months each year, March – October.

Carol noted that as the park is outside the URDL no use of public water or sewer is allowed. However, Meadowood Park, on Falls Rd near Green Spring Station / Hopkins is also outside the URDL but a waiver was allowed for a small bathroom. On a related note, the Green Spring / Falls Rd. / Joppa Rd. traffic study failed but they are going to request waivers for a new development there.

Councilman Wayne Kach has stated publicly several times that the URDL will be maintained and no new facilities will be added that use public water or sewer, nor will new roads or additional impervious surfaces (as they would block storm water absorption that feeds the wells).

Director of Recreation and Parks, Roslyn Johnson, stated at the online meeting that GoApe will be addressed in the Master Plan.

Lois Jacobs suggested we speak with Steve Lafferty, Director of Planning.

Justin Gallardo has attended Boy Scout camps, Broad Creek, and is a camper and is seeing growth in vineyards & breweries expanding their amenities, ice cream sales at dairy farms, etc.

increasing their water usage, but camp grounds / sites aren't allowed to. The usage should be standardized.

Mahnaz M. Assadi questioned whether an environmental assessment was done according to NEPAA (National Environmental Park Policy Association). It usually applies but may not if this is county, not State. Nevertheless, they should follow the rules regardless.

What about the impact of noise on the wildlife?

The revenue the County will receive from Go Ape is around \$70,000 – a “paltry” amount.

Carol pointed out that the North Slope from Shawan up has a historical preservation designation, up to the Oregon Grill parking lot.

Brian Bernstein commented this is a great point, as it's federal law, and asked to follow up on this point with Carol.

Justin Gallardo mentioned again the changes in traditional rural uses since the URDL was established (wineries, breweries, etc.) and that Steve Lafferty may know if changes are pending.

Radu Zamfirache stated they must do a traffic impact study. He cannot imagine a commercial event / operation with such narrow roads, limited parking, etc. and an historical designation. It's surprising the discussion has gone on this long.

Jennifer stated that it is surprising that it's gone this far without due diligence that the County is required to do before being made public.

Oregon Ridge Park Master Plan:

On 6/6 at 6 pm Oregon Ridge is on the agenda for the Board of Recreations and Parks.

On 6/14 Rec & Parks is hosting a public meeting on the Master Plan with the report due December 2022 or January 2023.

CEQ Business

a. Minutes of 4/27/22 No corrections. Lois motioned to approve and Mahnaz seconded. None opposed and the minutes were approved.

b. CEQ supper was canceled due to weather and Carol suggested moving to the fall. Mahnaz will check the date and reserve.

c. Carol thanked Brian Fath for his service and wished him well on his sabbatical in Vienna, Austria.

d. Carol is to meet with the County Executive's Senior Assistant for the Boards & Commissions for CEQ appointments, Samantha O'Neil.

e. What should we focus on in 2022/2023 year?

Food waste? Sewers? Waste Water Treatment Plants? Climate change aspects for the County?

Jennifer inquired about the Baltimore Co. lawsuit re: Cromwell Bridge & Providence Rd– the 2021 deadline was missed and Covid should not be the excuse

Other possible topics – land use, revitalization impact on the environment

New development? Redevelopment? Infill? Macro not micro

Lois asked if there's been any feedback on the Forest Conservation Reports.

Councilman David Marks has sent it to Dave Lykens

Carol stated that she has been told the Council is now focused on the budget. She asked commissioners to think about what we should focus on for the next year over the summer.

Lois returned to the Forest Conservation Report and asked what happens after Dave looks at it?

Meeting was adjourned at 8:30.