

CEQ Meeting Minutes 2/16/2022

Forest Conservation Challenges and Opportunities

A Two-Part Virtual Symposium, Part II

In response to County Council resolution No. 135-21, passed unanimously 11/1/21

Dr. Brian Fath, Chair, welcomed Councilman Kach, Councilman Patoka, Doris Franz Polling, who attended on behalf of Councilwoman Cathy Bevins, Cathy Engers, who attended on behalf of Councilman Tom Quirk, and Bradley Lang, who attended on behalf of Councilman Marks.

The meeting began at 7:00 pm with Dr. Fath noting that this meeting was part II of a special symposium- to provide feedback on the County Council's resolution on forest conservation. Dr. Fath thanked Dr. Carol Newill for organizing the symposium and Brian Lindley for taking care of the logistics. At issue is that our current practices may not be yielding the best outcomes, particularly when it comes to maintaining tree plantings and to the survival of the trees to create healthy forest.

Tonight's meeting was to find out what other jurisdictions are doing regarding Forest Conservation (other than Baltimore County), and to get input from experienced contractors with the Maryland Building Industry Association. The format is 15 minutes for each speaker block with 25 minutes of discussion, both live and through the chat box.

Note: Dr. Fath acknowledged that Councilman Julian Jones joined the meeting.

Speaker Dr. Don Callihan, Gunpowder Valley Conservancy

Forest Conservation: Challenges and Opportunities

Dr. Callihan stated that his presentation would be in line with Part I's presenter, Don Outen. Dr. Callihan compared jurisdictions with shared borders as well as eco-regions to see how the jurisdictions were interpreting and complying with the State mandate. Photographs depicted a healthy forest with an understory and a forested area with serious deer browse (no understory). His opinion is that "without changes in land use and planning at the local level, thousands of acres could be lost to development."

The Maryland Forest Action Plan Strategy

Forest loss is not just from development but other contributors, such as climate change. We must expand tree planting, forest reforestation and post-planting care to meet or exceed no-net-loss-of forest goal.

The various jurisdictions have manuals and guidelines which haven't been updated in years, but we have the information and know what needs to be done.

The length of time for required maintenance varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

Baltimore County policy is that projects must be inspected and maintained for three years: reporting, summarizing issues and the maintenance tasks at each project site. In Pennsylvania,

it's four to five years. Montgomery and Prince George's counties Departments of Parks & Recreation and Planning have independent programs but are also part of the Maryland National Capital Parks & Planning Commission.

Howard County provides the most specific guidelines, and they hold the developers accountable until the trees have a high probability of survival before releasing the surety bond. Planning and Zoning handles submittal and review while the Natural Resources Division of Parks & Recreation handles inspections and enforcement.

Due to technical difficulties, the third presentation was presented before the second presentation.

Maryland Building Industries Association provided two speakers, each from a contractor firm with experience in multiple counties across Maryland: Ecotone plants and maintains tree planting sites, and Bohler Engineering consults with developers on a broad range of services including civil engineering and design and permitting aspects.

Bryan Seipp, Senior Project Manager for Business Development and Special Projects, with a background in Forestry and Ecological Restoration; Ecotone

Deer are one of the greatest threats to forest health. There is a very large population in Baltimore County and the State. It's more than planting trees, it's controlling the deer population. Invasive species of weeds and climate change are the other top two issues. Planting design, such as angled fencing is a viable, possibly preferable alternative to tree tubes. On most sites, a combination of the two is best. Natural regeneration also makes an important contribution in properly managed sites.

Eric McWilliams, Project Manager with Landscape Architecture background; Bohler Engineering

There should be standardized language for the developers, and they should all be held to the same standard. They would then know what they're aiming for. Should the bond period be increased? Is the policy sufficient, is it being enforced or are the developers being relieved of responsibility before standards have been met? The entire development process should be evaluated: Could density be increased, allowing for the removal of fewer mature trees, thus decreasing the need for reforestation? Is there a way to decrease the need for roads, sidewalks and other impervious surfaces, allowing for the removal of fewer mature trees also? Is development with a smaller foot viable?

Katie Lauter, Executive Director, Baltimore Green Space (a nonprofit environmental land trust organization)

Approaching forests as an endangered species, communities in Baltimore City requested Baltimore Green Space to conduct an analysis of the alliances of forest patches for the urban land trust, education and policy. How many forest patches are there? Forests are desirable over street trees and trees over grass. Many of the forest patches are privately owned and therefore vulnerable to development. The State defines forest patches as 40,000 square feet, localities as 20,000 square feet and they would like to see the threshold on size of development area decreased to 10,000. They are well distributed throughout all socio-economic areas, e.g., they are not confined to just wealthier neighborhoods.

Amy Gilder-Busatti, Environmental Planner, Balt City, Dept Planning, Office of Sustainability Environmental Planner, looked at all of the laws and they have created partnerships with government agencies because sometimes non-profits can advocate when government partners cannot. For example, Baltimore Green Space has assisted in:

1. Updating government departments when forest conservation triggers are activated.
2. Advocating for decreasing the definition of size of development area from 20,000 to 5,000 square feet because 5,000 is in line with other regulations at the Planning Department's suggestion.
3. Increase the number of trees per acre for replanting from 400 to 600
4. Cleaning up the inconsistencies and ambiguity in the regulations.

U.S. Forest Service helped update the Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) replanting goals and are updating the technical manual.

Brian Lindley provided an update on Baltimore County's initiatives.

The County is:

1. Looking to increase the maintenance contract requirement from 3 year possibly up to 10 years
2. Updating the 1993 Forest Manual
3. Increasing the capital budget to conduct more visits of "completed" sites.
4. Additional funding for staff, maintenance and "operation re-tree."

Q & A

Dr. Newill noted that Katie Lauter reported on what's going on in Baltimore City, a jurisdiction that in many ways has similarities to the section of Baltimore County which is inside the URDL. Steve Lafferty (former Director of Sustainability, current Director of Planning) has mentioned that the URDL is up for renegotiation. Dr. Fath stated that it was important to hold the line, the URDL has been very successful, and that what's inside is very different than what's outside (the URDL line).

Jen Aiosa, Chief Sustainability Officer for Baltimore County noted that Katie Lauter's presentation highlighted cooperation. What can Baltimore County do to build partnerships?

Raymond Heil, Landscape Architect and member of Green Towson Alliance Executive Committee asked: / Bryan, Brian and Jennifer

Is increasing maintenance to ten years just a longer band-aid?

Marsha McLaughlin & John Alexander of Baltimore County Green Alliance, Green Towson Alliance and NeighborSpace of Baltimore County, noted that the tree tubes used in the stream restoration at Roland Run are wood or some type of natural fiber, not plastic, so they disintegrate and don't become plastic pollution.

Last word from Carol who thanked the moderator, the speakers, the note takers, the chat monitors for their contributions and Brian Lindley for setting up webex meeting. She noted the reminder from Don Outen at the 1/26/22 symposium evening "to stay on task" with the specifics of the County Council resolution, but at the same time we must keep in mind that this is such a multi-faceted problem and other aspects are very pertinent to the goal of creating healthy forest stands to replace those lost in the process of development.

Zipline

There has been no additional information from Roslyn Johnson, Baltimore County Director of Recreation and Parks, regarding the request to evaluate it within the scope of the Oregon Ridge Park Master Plan which we assume would ensure there will be community input.

Go Ape! has a facility in Rock Creek Regional Park. Supposedly, Go Ape did site visits to parks in Baltimore County and prefers Oregon Ridge over Fort Howard Park. It is unclear what part of Oregon Ridge Park would be used in the installation, and other facts about the plan. There is need for further information. A request has been made to Director Johnson that the CEQ and the Board of Rec & Parks be invited to a presentation about the Go Ape plan for further information.

Joan Plisko noted that Pearlstone has high ropes on poles and wood in ways that don't use or hurt the trees and are congruent with the existing forest. It was noted that Pearlstone is private property, and also that the public parks must keep in mind social and economic equity and be accessible to everyone who wants to go to the park and participate in the uses of the park.

In 2018 the County Council changed the County Code on what is prohibited to be done in a county park, so there couldn't be a repeat of the "Painted Trees." Therefore, how can there be an agreement with an adventure park firm in 2022

The Oregon Ridge Park Master Plan is being reviewed now. (This master plan is different from the County's 2030 Master Plan). The Go Ape! proposal should be part of it, not a sideshow or contracted for before the Oregon Ridge Park Master Plan process is carried out. The Oregon Ridge Nature Council's concerns include social equity in the public parks, which is not (yet) part of the County Code.

Bill Skibinski noted it's a zoning issue.

Justin Gallardo noted that there has been increasing attention to zoning with respect to having "commercial" enterprises such as wineries, breweries and creameries in "rural" areas. These are on private property.

A motion was made to adjourn at 8:47, seconded by Lois Jacobs and the meeting was adjourned.

Attendees:

Bryan Lindley	Brian Fath	David? O'dell	Anita Kraemer
Anne Hairston-Strange	Barbara Hopkins	Benjamin Porter	Brian Bernstein
Bryan Seipp	Cathy Engers	Chris Overcash	
Deborah Spice Kleinmann	Don Callihan	Don Outen	
Doris Franz Polling	Carol Newill	Eric McWilliams	Isaac Ambruso, Esq
Izzy Patoka	Jennifer Aiosa	Jim Himel	Joan Plisko
John Alexander	Julian Jones	Karen Wynn	Katie Lauter
Katie Peach	Larry Fogelson	Linda Davis	Lindsay Delmarzo
Mahnaz Mazaheri Assadi	Marian Honeczy	Marisa Olszewski	Marsha Mclaughlin
Matt Johnson	Michael Ruby	Nancy Horst	Neville Jacobs
Lois Jacobs	Radu Zamfirach	Ralph Brown	Raymond Heil
Shannon McDonald	Taylor Smith-Hams	Thomas Krispin	Tim Faircloth
Valerie Androutsopoulos	Wade Kach	William Skibinski	