

Draft Meeting Minutes
CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR WHITE CLAY CREEK STATE PARK
JULY 24, 2018, JUDGE MORRIS ESTATE

Persons Present:

Council Representatives:

- AFL/CIO – Delaware – not represented
- Coalition for Natural Stream Valleys – Bill Walsh
- Delaware Audubon Society – not represented
- Delaware Equine Council – Mary Everhart
- Delaware State Sportsmen’s Association – not represented
- Delmarva Ornithological Society – Andy Urquhart
- Friends of White Clay Creek State Park – David Koppeser
- Mason-Dixon Trail System – Mike Ott
- Omnia Humanitas – Cindy Kranz Greene
- Silent Knights Soaring Society – Terry Lisansky
- Trail Dawgs – Pete McLaughlin
- Trail Spinners – Jim Ireland
- UAW CAP Council – not represented
- White Clay Flyfishers – not represented
- White Clay Watershed Association – Kristen Travos
- Wilmington Trail Club – Gary Kirk

Division Representatives:

- Vincent Porcellini – Superintendent, WCCSP
- Bill Miller – Delaware State Parks
- Matt Ritter – Delaware State Parks

Members of the Public:

- State Representative Michael Ramone
- State Representative Paul Baumbach
- Terri Tipping -- Friends of White Clay Creek State Park and Wilmington Trail Club
- Peter Saenger

- I. Call to Order by the chair and Introductions. The meeting was called to order at 7:06 pm by Chair Terry Lisansky.
- II. Review of minutes of previous Council meeting. The minutes were presented and reviewed in summary form by Secretary Pete McLaughlin. One change was noted. Terry Lisansky moved to accept the minutes; the motion was seconded by Mary Everhart.
- III. Old Business

1. Update on Park activities and questions from Council Representatives (V. Porcellini).

- Vinny Porcellini noted that the Carpenter recreation area bath station fix is in progress, expect early August completion. The facility was basically gutted and refurbished; faucets, dividers, sinks, and commodes are new.
- Vinny Porcellini said that the J Cloud barn off Bryan's Field Trail is in need of repair. They will be putting new footer under foundation that had collapsed using original stone. Andy Urquhart asked why is it a priority? Vinny Porcellini replied that this repair only will cost \$22,000, which is cheaper to do instead of Niven barn by Nine-foot Road which is beyond repair and would need to be rebuilt at a cost around \$1 million.
- The Robinson House deck is being torn down and rebuilt starting in mid August.
- The Chambers House Nature Center will soon have new exterior paint and repairs; the work will also remove rotted wood window sills, fix access panel for porch, and remove paint from the stone in the front of the building. The budget is \$13,000.
- Floating T-shaped docks will be installed on Smith Mill Pond, providing mobility fishing opportunities. In the next two weeks, he expects to have an approved plan. The funding is from a grant that the Friends of White Clay requested from the Delaware Welfare Foundation. Of the \$49,000 budget, \$44,000 is from the foundation, \$5000 from State Parks.
- Sheep barn on Pleasant Hill Road will have roofing fixed after 4-H finishes with livestock program.
- Wells Barn off Wells Lane is coming off of the foundation from weight and needs to be fixed before it gets worse. First, the staff needs to clean out 30 to 40 years of materials that have been stored there. Then they will assess the structure, get a wall back on its foundation, and fix the roof. Vinny Porcellini hopes for prices by the end of the week.
- LED lighting is being installed at the Carpenter Recreation Area band shell. The work is halfway done.
- New entrances will be installed do farmers can access fields without going on asphalt trail sections. An opening and new gates has been put in by the flying field. Terry Lisansky asked about one of Silent Knights Flying Society gate posts that won't stay up. Vinny Porcellini said they will cement it. Vinny Porcellini noted that the park was short staffed on maintenance personnel for the last year but the new mechanic starts full-time on August 6.

2. Update on in-progress and planned construction projects (Division)

- a. Tri-Valley Trail Phase I work status (Division). For the new bathroom facility, Vinny Porcellini said the park is finishing negotiations on a change order for the concrete work, putting cement all the way around the bathhouse. They are also waiting for the required public well inspection. The connecting walkway to the trail is being rerouted to the other side of bathroom.

- b. Tri-Valley Trail Phase II plan status (Division). Vinny Porcellini reported that the pre-bid meeting was this morning. Nineteen contractors came and bids are due August 18. After reviewing bids, they hope work starts in fall. The Phase II construction will be faster because only an asphalt trail and one bridge are being built. Dave Koppeser asked about permits; Vinny Porcellini says they should all be done.
 - c. Group campground status (Division). The new primitive youth group campground has been under construction but work stopped due to rain on 31 July. Vinny Porcellini noted that the park was down one ranger, two versus the normal three, leaving him worried about coverage if they have campers. Vinny Porcellini notes (and Matt Ritter clarifies) that there is some possibility this campground could be open to other groups from the public at a lower priority, not just youth groups. They would use the same set fee structure as a youth group and the rental would be for the entire camp area. Cindy Kranz Greene asked for a clarification of location. Vinny Porcellini added that the site will include an elevated tent platform, a handicapped-accessible table, a fire ring, and a solid walkway. The site will be built on landscape fabric with a water-permeable surface of bond rubberized mulch held together with poured adhesive to enhance accessibility. Campers would bring their own water as this is the primitive campsite. The toilet and firewood shed will be locked when the site is not being used.
 - d. Other trail improvements (Division). Vinny Porcellini reported that the Charles Bailey Trail is still under construction. The second bridge span was being built with only two top rails and a center handrail left to do. The park has been forced to close the mountain bike skills trail recently due to erosion at two bridges. David Bartoo is working on a plan to move it after the Charles Bailey work is done; or, it could become a volunteer project and get done sooner. Jim Ireland said he would let people know.
 - e. Update on status of the former Richard DuPont property (Council request) Matt Ritter reported that Richard Dupont's occupancy of the house is almost at an end. Division of Parks are not sure of the next use for the house. They will put out a broad request for proposals and think about options from the submissions. Andy Urquhart asked about the plans for the barns and sheds. Vinny Porcellini replied that there are 13 buildings, which gives them much more to maintain. The main house costs approximately \$2000 per month to heat in the winter so they do not currently plan to heat it. The house also has a roof leak, siding issues, and skylight issues which will cost money to repair, a need to improve the driveway bridge, and ongoing mowing needs. Matt Ritter noted that this is a costly acquisition as far as ongoing expenses; the cumulative costs of continuing maintenance will add up the longer the state does not have income from a future user.
3. Update on White Clay Creek State Park master plan development (W. Miller). State Parks planner William Miller provided the report. At the May kickoff event, they announced the planning process and drew attention to their open houses. The first open house was held on June 25 on natural resources and interpretation. Another was held on July 10 about buildings and structures. Two more are scheduled in August, one for trails and roads and another for programs and activities. All were held 4 to 7 pm at the Deerfield Country Club property. They have no draft plan; at this stage, the emphasis is to use the open houses to get input and put the comments into a set of options. This would be followed in late

summer or early fall by an open house to discuss options, with the goal to have a draft plan for the Secretary of DNREC by the end of the year. The open house comments are provided online at their website. Approximately 700 online surveys were completed; it was a fairly open ended survey and comments could be e-mailed. The open houses were well attended and verbal feedback was good. The first open house had 70 to 80 attendees and the second open house had 50; they expect that the roads and trails open house will be bigger. Miller would appreciate Council members getting the word out to each of our groups.

4. Update on DelDOT project plans impacting park: four-way stop, tunnel (Division). Vinny Porcellini reported that the Thompson Station-Hopkins Road intersection improvement project will probably not be done in the summer. Bids will be considered in August or September because the project has been rolled in with the repaving project from Paper Mill Road to Hopkins Road. Vinny Porcellini reported that the tunnel under Paper Mill Road connecting to Middle Run County Park is still planned for April 2019. However, the stream restoration project that was being considered will not be done because of Army Corps of Engineers objections. William Miller added that these construction plans are on the DelDOT website. There are plans to monitor erosion and water quality downstream of this bridge and the possibility that stream restoration may be re-proposed if data supports a need.

IV. New Business

1. Legislative Update. Rep. Mike Ramone provided the first part of the update. He noted that he is involved with budgeting, having been on the Bond Bill committee for six years and now on the joint Finance Committee. He says that the Legislature is trying to spend differently. Where DEFAC projections show extra funds, the Legislature targets spending on one-time items with no residual expenses. Some of the excess was put in the rainy day fund; additionally they put \$10 million of funding into open space and \$10 million into farmland preservation, expenditures that allow the state to tap into matching federal money. Matt Ritter said that State Parks is receiving \$5 million to share with Division of Fish and Wildlife for smaller capital projects. Matt Ritter also said that the Bond Bill provides funds that help for certain line items; in the future, items identified in the master plan could be funded this way, especially if our organizations express support. Rep. Paul Baumbach added a few additional notes. He noted that a bill for Sunday hunting was considered by the legislature that allowed for State Parks to decide whether to participate or not (he later added clarification: Senate Bill 198 was passed and allow for deer hunting on five Sundays on private property and on public property if the owner permits; State Parks does not plan to do permit this and it also will not be permitted on Fish and Wildlife lands also with horse trails; Mary Everhart added that there are now thirteen Sundays open). Matt Ritter mentioned the concept of a "resident curatorship" where a person or party can have lifetime rights to a facility if they keep up and/or restore and/or preserve it; this is usually an option only for less attractive buildings that might not otherwise be of interest. Rep. Baumbach added that Aetna Fire Company purchased an ATV with community transportation funds that could be useful for emergencies in the park.
2. Properties to consider for future additions to the Park through the Open Space Program (A. Urquhart). Andy Urquhart noted that funds could be available from the open space program to add to the park and suggested that Parks have properties targeted and "have the ask ready." He reviews the history of White Clay Creek State Park's growth from a 25 acre park in the Carpenter area, adding land that the Dupont Company acquired for a

reservoir in the creek valley, then the Judge Morris Estate and Possum Hill, some with open space bond funds. He said that the acquisitions stopped when there was no longer money for open space purchases. He wants State Parks to have a plan for this again and would like our organizations to advocate for this with state officials and the Open Space Council. He feels this is justified by the benefit of expanding the park's property and user base. There would be limit on what to share publicly because it could drive up prices. Pete McLaughlin asked if there is a process for this in the strategic plan? Bill Miller replied that State Parks will not address this in the master plan but that Elaine Stewart and State Parks do keep track of these possibilities. Matt Ritter said that the Open Space Council works on this; he adds that the problem with making this process public is that park neighbors may not like seeing their property on a map as a potential acquisition. State Parks also tries to get owners to agree to conservation easements which sometimes lead to purchases down the road. They are conservative with use of open space money in case do not get more funds in the next budget year. Andy Urquhart commented that he thought a lot of properties acquired for the park in the past were Bond Committee-funded purchases "blessed" by the open space counsel.

Peter Saenger congratulated State Parks for the addition of fourteen acres total to the park, four acres of open space just north of the Paper Mill Road bridge along both banks of the creek and slopes and ten additional acres nearer the road frontage. He believes that the lands will be annexed by Newark and preserved as part of the state park.

- V. Public comments. Cindy Kranz Greene thanked DNREC for the master plan process and open houses. She also commented on an idea raised at a workshop of placing an RV park in White Clay Creek State Park. During this discussion, she noted that the Kranz Farm is one of the places that had been identified for acquisition years ago and had a conservation easement – now it is in the park. She commented that an RV park was not what her parents would have envisioned for the property. She encourages specific comments on the idea. Bill Miller noted that Parks is open to discussing campgrounds as part of the park planning in the recreation open house but states that they have no plan to add camping at this stage. Matt Ritter asked Council members to please share information about the park workshops with our groups.
- VI. Items for future consideration by the Council. None were noted.
- VII. Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 23, 7 pm, at the Judge Morris House.
- VIII. Adjournment. Gary Kirk moved for adjournment. The motion was seconded by Jim Ireland. The meeting was adjourned at 8:29 pm.