



Bulletin of the Proceedings of the Friends of Accotink Creek

Our meeting notes serve as bulletins of our activities, interests, and discussions, supplemented by your submissions.

Friends of Accotink Creek Town Meeting – June 18, 2019

Next Meeting: July 16, 2019 (Third Tuesday of each month)
Audrey Moore Rec Center, Senior Center Lobby

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Present:

Sandy Collins, Dave Lincoln, Bryan Campbell, Philip Latasa, Julie Chang (via conference call), Kris Unger, Katie Lau

Upcoming events

· Stream Monitoring Lake Accotink Park September 14, 2019

FACC Subjects Discussed –

• Represent FACC:

○ Choose Clean Water Conference

Kris described the conference as pretty good. Most interesting was the concept of J.E.D.I. (justice, equity, diversity, and inclusiveness). Kris expressed his interest in bringing these elements into FACC.

• Community Foundation for Northern Virginia:

Kris described this group as having recently moved into environmental endeavors, He has set up a get-to-know-you meeting and will pitch Follow the Water there, along with a partner from Clean Water Action.

• Conservation Leadership Project:

Katie stated she would be submitting her written report to the Fairfax City Environmental Sustainability Committee. She has shared that report with us and Philip has linked it to our webpage, as well as here - [Report to Environmental Sustainability Committee](#) .

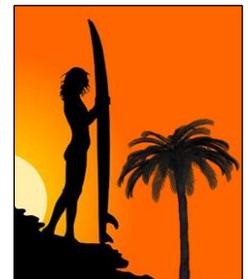
Katie is planning to organize her next workday this summer.

Katie received much “sympathy” for her upcoming “hardship” upon mentioning she will be attending University of California Santa Barbara.

• INOVA/Fairview Park:

○ Mason District Council meeting

The Mason District Council is meeting on June 26th to discuss the INOVA project. Kris received a slightly confused invitation to speak representing the not-yet-organized Friends of Holmes Run. He declared this to be the “first formal act of the Friends of Holmes Run”. County Planning and Zoning will also make a presentation on INOVA.



- *Friends of Holmes Run*
Kris will lead a Holmes Run interest meeting June 20th and a watershed walk the 22nd. He observed how Holmes Run, as part of the Cameron Run watershed, runs down through Fairfax, Arlington, and Alexandria, creating the space for a conversation spanning Northern Virginia.

- *Elections:*

- *350 Fairfax Forums*

Philip reported three of the primary candidates for Chairman of the Board of Supervisors participated in the June 9th environmental forum, while the fourth delivered a video message. Each of the three present had points in their favor. Philip described wanting to smooch them all together into one ideal composite candidate.

At the forum Supervisor McKay made a statement in unmistakable terms that the County would stand firm and defend its position against the [4104 Woodlark](#) lawsuit.

Philip presented a draft of a proposed post-election letter to the candidates to encourage continued awareness of our issues. The draft was approved with several suggested edits.

Kris mentioned he had attended a meeting of the Board of Supervisors Environmental Committee, just to observe. He lamented the proportion of time spent in small details, specifically the extended consideration of the proper disposal of bottle caps.

- *I-66 Tour:*

The Nutley Street cloverleaf was left unmolested until now, but Philip informed us it was cleared of every last tree a couple weeks ago. Recent clearing also took place outside the north sound wall along Platten Drive and Bushman Drive. These areas are within sight of Blake Lane Park and have three tributaries passing through, now cleared down to the banks.

Kris queried how we should proceed to renew our dialog with VDOT and elected officials. He suggested Audubon Naturalist Society might be invited, having participated in our recent 495 walk. Philip will send out a request for another meeting, plus tour. There was general discussion of what our goals and “asks” might be.

- *495 Express Lanes/Americana Drive:*

Philip noted VDOT has begun landscaping work along Americana Drive outside the sound wall. This is partly continuing follow-up after the 495 Express Lanes construction and partly a follow-up to the Presidents Day Americana Drive Cleanup. We are currently pending clarification from VDOT on the scope of work proposed.

- *Long Branch Project:*

Philip passed on the message from DPWES letting us know they are only at the stage of drafting a Request for Proposal, but have us on the contact list for later. There was general discussion of stream restoration designs and alternative watershed projects.

- *George Snyder Trail:*

Philip confirmed that the trail is proposed to be the usual 10'-wide asphalt design. Judy Fraser is now on the advisory committee and will inform us of developments. [The I-66 concession funds](#) used for the trail are a one-time list of projects. The only other project on the list in our

watershed is a shared use path along Nutley Street in Vienna, which is a paved sidewalk already. There was discussion of alternative designs and routes for the George Snyder Trail.



- American Legion Project:

A City resident contacted Philip to advise us the American Legion is proposing to develop its property on Oak Street into condominiums. As described, the plan would put up to about 600 feet of an unnamed perennial tributary into a culvert. This stream is the boundary between Pat Rodino Park and the American Legion. It seems to be only a vague idea at this point which is unlikely to be approved. The property also borders Paul VI High School, which will be redeveloped in the next few years, but which already lacks any tree cover.

- Follow the Water:

- Canterbury Woods Elementary

Kris reported the event went really well, with the standard team of Long Branch volunteers presenting a broad watershed picture to the 4th graders, backed up by an enthusiastic teacher. Bryan mentioned the great participation of DPWES. Kris is interested in reviving the former enthusiasm at Little Run Elementary. There was discussion of reaching other schools and beyond along Long Branch.

- Virginia Lakes and Watershed Association:

The contact initiated by the Virginia Lakes and Watershed Association has been fruitful, Kris advised, as a donation of \$2000 will be forthcoming in support of Follow the Water. Kris observed this will assure Follow the Water can go forward next school year and that the possible Fairfax Water grant would further enhance our reach. The focus will be on schools along Long Branch central, perhaps including the middle and high school. If it materializes, our National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant would also focus on Long Branch central.

- Friends of Parks:

- Insurance

Sandy relayed the news that Beverley is continuing her efforts to obtain insurance, but now the broker wants a new application.

Philip mentioned Friends of Lake Accotink Park has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Park Authority.

• Truro Restoration Planting:

Stormwater Planning and neighbors will be planting in wetland areas along the recent Turkey Run stream restoration in the Truro neighborhood. Extra hands and leaders are welcome. Work will be on Sunday, June 23rd from 10 am to about noon or 1:00.

• Fort Belvoir Restoration Advisory Board:

Dave communicated with Fort Belvoir to express his interest in participation in the Fort Belvoir Restoration Advisory Board. He understands it may take some time to get going. Kris will follow up with Friends of Huntley Meadows on the status.

Dave observed the Board will deal mainly with cleanup of spills, ordinance, etc. He expressed the hope that participation would lead to access to the Engineer Proving Grounds (aka Fort Belvoir North Area).

Julie shared anecdotes of her work on Fort Belvoir in her previous employment, mentioning the suspicious color of a pond once used for tank testing and how the base discourages bird nesting in some sensitive areas.

• Asad Rouhi Retirement:

Philip advised NVSWCD is planning a gathering for Asad's retirement and will let us know when the details are finalized.

• Whither FACC:

Philip shared his musings on the status of FACC (**BELOW**). He invited any brilliant ideas or inspirations.

Discussion included:

Kris -

- We're not asking for money.
- Focused outreach could produce teams for each cleanup site.
- New organizations have a certain energy.
- Lands and Waters had grant-getting difficulties that are instructive.

Dave –

- Is FLAP diverting possible members?
- Friends of Sligo Creek has committees, that is to say, volunteers recruited for specific tasks, thus making people feel more useful.
- We could do an adult Follow the Water at his church, Grace Presbyterian.

Bryan –

- It is a matter of finding the right people.
- Scout troops have dedicated committees for recruitment.
- Attending civic association meeting would be productive.
- Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions is a group of the environmentally-minded who might have watershed interests.

Julie –

- "With great tragedy comes great opportunity".

Sandy –

- Visibility is needed, just keeping it up, plus “feel good” projects to have people feel ‘I made a difference’.
- We must offer activities that are easy, visible, and intriguing.
- An adult Follow the Water is also possible at her church, possibly with a participation fee, as is done there with some social activities.

Katie –

- The Fairfax City Environmental Sustainability Committee will be making a donation to FACC, but the point was made in the Committee discussion that FACC has never asked for funding.

Dave will meet with Friends of Sligo Creek to learn from their example.

Philip enquired if there was interest in pursuing Volunteer Fairfax’s [Boardlink](#) program to match skilled board members with non-profits. There was consensus in favor and Philip will pursue this.

Whither FACC?

Some thoughts (and laments) of my own on capacity.

Capacity – What is needed:

- More active membership
- More public awareness of us and our issues
- More funds

Capacity – What we lack:

- Entrepreneurial instincts
- Sufficient expertise to make our positions meaningful to others
- The charisma and camaraderie that would draw in new members
- The ability to see what needs to be done and where and how
- Organizational skills (including financial) to make reality the ideas in our heads
- The individual drive and force of personality that would send us out knocking on doors in search of opportunities to spread our message.

Capacity - Some things we wish to do but seem to lack the wherewithal to accomplish:

- We need an expanded [Follow the Water](#) .
- We need a Follow the Water for adults.
- Our regular stream cleanups are not accomplishing their goal. That goal is public awareness and recruitment. “Find just one other person who cares” is our motto, but without realization.
- We should get something done on the Americana North meadow project (area you saw on 495 tour), replicating what was done nearby at the County’s initiative, in [2015](#) and [2016](#).
- We aspire to get traction in clearing the [Accotink Gorge](#) of Chinese Wisteria, something we have considered turning into a summer work/study program.

Closing gripes:

- So often we see 1000 people at baseball games vs. a handful at our events. We wonder how can we achieve higher numbers. We wonder how we can find some of the energy and commitment people so willingly apply to sports.
- We are modeled after the Friends of Sligo Creek, a group in Maryland conserving a creek very similar to Accotink. Yet they are doing so much better than we are, as evidenced by a glance at the activity and funding described in their [budget](#)
- My days are numbered. When my wife retires in another year or two, I have been informed that we will spend our time travelling. I don't see much hope of anyone taking over the sundry tedious tasks I now do for FACC.

Philip Latasa
