

FACC Board and Friends,

I volunteered for an action last meeting to contact [Friends of Sligo Creek \(FOSC\)](#) in Montgomery County (MC), as a benchmarking exercise stemming from Philip's paper "Whither FACC?" that we discussed. Their officers recommended I talk with Kit Gage, a former President, who's active in several endeavors of FOSC, including Advocacy Committee Chair, and I've just finished a most interesting phone conversation I'd like to relate.

Sorry I won't be at the Town Hall meeting tomorrow, but I'm hoping some notes from my conversation with Kit might be useful. I've cc'ed Kit here (Kit, please reply to all with any corrections or additions). I'd suggest we can continue the conversation with email Q&A's going forward, recommending our Esteemed Chronicler, Philip, to be the conduit for any Q's for Kit.

Topically, I asked Kit about:

Organization, where I noticed that FOSC has committees and other positions, wondering how that works (standing vs adhoc, evolving?) Some noteworthy ideas:

- The committees are both standing and variable over time, mostly one person designated as Chair, coordinating activities with MC Parks, seeing to qualification requirements, etc.
- MC Parks has a trainer to establish qualified volunteer Weed Warriors, and Weed Warrior Supervisors, which are required for the RIP activities (Remove Invasive Plants). [does FCPS have anything similar?]
- As depicted on the [Creek Sections](#) map, Sligo has designated sections, each of which has or is looking for a Section Steward. We discussed how this promotes a sense of ownership among volunteers, who know and care about their own piece of the watershed.
- Web developer and Database Manager are two part-time positions that FOSC funds. The former is in the process of upgrading the web site to a WordPress-based site, which will be more easily updated by FOSC staff. The dB Manager organizes data on membership, indication of interests, donations, and forwards interests to committee chairs for follow-up and to listserv's for each functional area that has one (e.g., Stormwater Committee has its own listserv)
- Speaking of the Stormwater Committee, historically it has held its own meetings, and was active putting in rain gardens and other facilities in the watershed. It has become more of a policy entity more recently (here, we discussed salt management in MC, comparing notes with NVSCD's Salt Management Stakeholder group).
- Advocacy: Kit doesn't post all letters her committee puts out to Govt, but there are many: Inhibited by clunkiness of the web site (replacement in work).

Membership and Meetings:

- Walks: advertised walkabouts, focusing on a particular learning topic, such as bee population in a particular part of the park.
- Talks: Usually at one of the community centers, with a particular focus, for education/advocacy, advertised to the public.
- Round Table: Board plus committee chair, section stewards, etc., (not sure of frequency, but I think it sounded annual-ish).
- Board meetings, about bi-monthly.

Fundraising, where we had noted they have upwards of \$11K in treasury, with considerably more annual income than we have:

- Kit has been around multiple 501c3s and -4's over the years, and notes that FOSC's Board is typical of them, in that nobody likes to ask for money. They do roughly annual letters to members/constituents asking for personal donations, and get quite a few of \$100 or less.
- Grants are a significant amount of the revenue, both for direct support and for serving as Grant Agent for monies granted to non-501c3's to do projects. Kit is qualified as a Grant Agent, and they've been supporting a few such projects, for example the Three Oaks stormwater management project described in the [June newsletter](#).
- "Keep Maryland Beautiful" and Chesapeake Bay Trust are two grant sources FOSC taps [are we not making use of the latter?].
- There are no dues for membership. We discussed an open question: Does new tax law reducing the usefulness of tax benefits to most individual donors reduce their motivation? Neither of us know the answer yet. If so, over time, consideration of dues might be in the wind, but nothing moving in that direction.

Working with MC Parks:

- FOSC has no MOU with Parks, and hasn't been asked to do so.
- Committee Chairs and other meet with Parks counterparts frequently on tasks.
- FOSC meets with FOSC leadership annually to talk programs, cooperation, improvements.
- Kit mentioned a FOSC Policy and Practice that provided internal guidance on how to go about projects, but indicated it isn't a live reference.

Insurance: FOSC has liability and D&O (Directors and Officers) insurance, highly recommended. MC Parks does not cover liability for FOSC projects.

Strategic Planning: I asked about the FOSC Mission statements (main one and some committees are published), whether they are reviewed periodically, with Vision, Principles, etc., and whether reviews are/would be useful:

- The Mission or Principles was in place when Kit became president several years ago, she recalls acting on a recommendation from somebody working on an organizational grant, and they did so.
- [my two bits: I brought this up because I believe that at certain junctures it's worthwhile for a small group to review the Mission statement (I like the one on the web site) and develop some sort of a five-year/ten-year vision statement for Board's consideration: Useful both to convey what we're about currently and where we want to go, and to gage/celebrate progress]