

## Report to Town Council on September 14, 2009

**From:** Councilman Gary Nelson

**Subj:** Summary of Activities by the Parks and Recreation Department, Beautification Commission, and Schools Committee.

### Parks and Recreation

1. **Recreation Coordinator** – It has been over three years since I proposed this position that has been approved on three separate occasions as part of the annual budget. The position remains unfilled despite the addition of other positions (three interns and the code enforcer). We have gone completely through the hiring process on two occasions for a recreation coordinator and the process has been stalled again and again. Over \$500K of approved grant funding is in jeopardy without hiring this person just for Parks alone, not to mention any grant funding for Center Street improvements and a streetscape design. In addition, other Parks related functions such as negotiating easements with landowners for Rails-to-Trails, and pursuing acquisition of the old CSX rail-line area from downtown to Md. 144 have virtually been put on hold. These are functions that I thought were important enough to attempt to bring on B.J. Dixon's replacement in January and every month after that. Considering the need for our town planner to concentrate on the Master Plan for the next several months, it is unlikely that the town will be able to maintain continuity on the Main Street Program with any level of efficiency. Any further obstruction to hiring a person to fill this position would be unwise and irresponsible. We need to act on this now.

2 Several improvements have been made to town parks in the past couple of years. An updated summary of improvements follows.

**Watkins Park:** An outdoor concert stage was added last year and has been used for six concerts thus far. A doggie playground was added this year and has been extremely well received and used by the community. Staff is nearing completion of a design of a permanent restroom facility at Watkins Park. The town received a \$26K grant through Program Open Space a few years ago for this project. Pet waste stations have been positioned around the walking path and a new outdoor movie screen has been used to show free movies in the park this year. The Beautification Commission has continued to maintain the garden areas. The softball field above the pavilion was improved with fresh loads of dirt and was also tilled in August in preparation for the Fall season that is now underway. We applied unsuccessfully for grant funding last year to replace the roof on the pavilion but have been unable to reapply this year to date. Hopefully this can be accomplished soon after a recreation coordinator is hired. Camp night was held at Watkins in August and was a very big success. Special thanks to Larry Hushour for putting in numerous hours to coordinate this activity.

**Prospect Park:** A new roof was put on the pavilion this past year and the Kiwanis graciously donated three new park benches for placement around the pond. A memorial for Wayne Norwood was also added last year and included two additional benches overlooking the new playground which was also added last year from funding obtained from a DNR playground fund grant. We would like to use this same source of funding to continue to purchase playground equipment for other town parks but without a recreation coordinator, this endeavor has not been pursued. In August, the pond at Prospect was drained and dredged to remove a massive amount of invasive weeds. A fountain has been installed to improve aeration and aesthetics. The Parks Department assisted by members of Streets and Roads, also dug a trench and ran wiring up to the electric lines at the pavilion which was also upgraded last year. With the continued application of Aquashade

each spring, we are hoping to maintain the pond much better than has been done in the past and for minimal cost. A local landscape architect has offered her services in designing improvements to the appearance of Prospect Park, especially in the area between the pavilion and on the embankment nearer the Maintenance Bldg. This is rapidly becoming a first-class park and expected to draw increasing numbers of visitors to enjoy the fountain and relaxing atmosphere. Lights can be added to the fountain for special occasions.

**Village Gate:** The lines at the tennis court were repainted and the net was replaced last year. Two years ago, well over 100 trees were planted by volunteers led by the Beautification Commission at Village Gate. The Commission has continued to maintain these trees and the vast majority survived despite normally expected losses at up to 20%.

**Wildwood Park:** Some attractive improvements have been made to this park in the past few months. The butterfly garden was surrounded with stone border and the walkway was paved around it. An extension of the walkway from the gazebo up to the parking lot will make this area more accessible to those in wheelchairs. The Beautification Commission has begun planting an undergrowth of younger trees and the dead limbs have been removed from the older trees making the park much safer. Last year, a wrought iron fence was placed on the block wall which provides additional safety and a better appearance. Shakespeare's A Midsummers Night Dream was performed on Saturday, August 8<sup>th</sup> at Wildwood Park. The Summer Concert series at the gazebo is also over for the season.

**East-West Park:** New dugouts were added at the baseball field this year. Several trees were planted two years ago and are doing well.

**Windy Ridge Park:** The Master Plan proposal should be submitted to the Parks Board in October. Signs for the nature trail have been purchased with POS funds. There are commonalities in all of the alternatives considered for the master plan especially with regard to conservation areas around the perimeter of the Park (nature trail) and the addition of new trails, picnic areas, informational signage, etc. These projects will begin during the winter months when the leaves have fallen and poison ivy is no longer alive.

**Twin Arch Soccer Fields:** Two new soccer fields were added last year and have alleviated some of the scheduling problems, especially for practices.

**Twin Ridge Fields:** The field on the east side of TRES is now under the scheduling control of the Parks and Recreation Board. New dugouts were erected at the 90' baseball field and the infield was tilled there. There is an eagle scout project for privacy fencing and ribbons around the fence. There is funding in reserves, particularly for improvements for this field that will be used for some of the cosmetic changes for this field. This was also the source of funding for light and bulb replacements last year.

The Parks Board meets on the third Thursday at 7:30 p.m. at town hall.

## **Beautification Commission**

The Commission has voted to recommend purchase of a gazebo for Vestpocket Park and will be making a recommendation to the Parks Board. Three options are being presented. The preferred choice is approximately \$11K and includes a small footbridge. An eagle scout has submitted a proposal to extend a walkway from the garden to the intended site near the old water tower. We believe these additions will significantly increase the appearance and usability of the park.

The Beautification Commission normally meets monthly at 7:30 pm on the 4th Tuesday at the Town Hall.

**Schools Committee:** The Facilities Master Plans for both Carroll and Frederick County are available on-line for viewing and a hearing will be scheduled for public input. The addition to MAMS has remained a top priority but is, unfortunately, ranked below the Career and Technology Center that the BOCC did not support last year. Following are excerpts from the BECC minutes from August.

- **South Carroll High School Fine Arts Addition**

Construction management firm is Hess Construction.

Reed discussed the need to disconnect the storm drains from the shop building that are currently discharging into the sewer system. Investigation of floor drains and roof drains in Career & Technology Building has not been completed; awaiting rescheduling of group to resume investigation.

A Confirmatory Deed will be recorded with a plat in the future that will also show the easements (sewer, Forest Conservation, and Water Resource Protection). Al indicated the utility easements will be completed probably in February which will then lead to the submission of the plat. Submission of plat is delayed because site contractor has not provided survey information for sanitary sewer installation. Plats to be submitted shortly. **Modification to forest conservation plan will be proposed as the approved plan juts into acreage needed for physical education activity.**

Site work continues. Al is working with MDE on appropriation permit numbers and once received will submit a letter to request that the County water and sewer master plan be updated. **New State Water Appropriation permits have been received.**

Renovation of the G-wing to commence on or about June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Extremely tight schedule as completion is required prior to start of school in August. Inspection of G-wing: building on August 3<sup>rd</sup> and Fire Marshall on August 6<sup>th</sup>. **Permission to Occupy received 8/19/2009.**

Reed indicated that the head wall at the stream will need to be removed and replaced with rip rap. **CCPS needs to complete work under this permit by October 1, as the stream is a trout stream.**

- **Mt. Airy Elementary School Roof Replacement**

Approval of Award of Contract being sought at July 8, 2009 Board of Ed Meeting - received. Budget transfer approved by Board so steep slope metal standing seam roof option can be selected. On County Commissioners agenda for August 11<sup>th</sup> for approval of budget transfer. **The low slope portion of the roof has been completed. The rest of the building will have a steeply sloped metal roof that will be constructed after school hours.**

### **Final Thoughts**

Welcome aboard to our newest council member, Chris Everich. There were several quality applicants for this position and my hope is that these individuals and several others from different walks of life will consider running for office next March. Turnout at the last town election in 2008 was very low and this is disappointing in view of the strong feelings that many townspeople have with regard to growth, taxes and low-cost solutions to the town's water problems. Residents need to become actively involved, at least by voting, if they want to influence the direction of the town in future years.