



Vision 2030

Montgomery County Parks and Recreation Vision 2030 and Strategic Plan

Department of Parks - Partners

Focus Group Notes

May 24, 2010, 7-8:30 pm

Attendees – Representatives from the Trolley Museum, King Barn Dairy MOOseum, and Red Wiggler Farm

1. What is the current partnership between your agency and the Department of Parks?

- Trolley Museum – 45 years old
 - Original agreements were to build and operate, Commission retained ownership and relocation rights
 - All volunteer organization
 - Little connection with Commission – grass cut by Commission
 - Income to pay for loans
 - Expansion needs, but couldn't due to highway development
 - Buildings are Commission property
 - Having a difficult time getting the grass cut
 - Share site with a Verizon tower
 - The operator thinks that over the years, the agreement has been more beneficial to them than the Commission
 - Educate Commission on our services and desire to build the relationship
 - A "lease"
- Red Wiggler Farm
 - Agreement specifically says we are not a partner
 - Not allowed to sub-lease
 - Bluebird trail boxes
 - Eyes and ears for this historic building and the site with no one in the building
 - Looking at over \$1M to capitalize that site and turn over to Commission
- King Barn Dairy MOOseum
 - When the property was sold to the Commission, the intent was to preserve the homestead and buildings (even though the land sat vacant for many years, and the homestead became unusable)
 - Different organizations need advice or help getting the word out
 - Are a sublet to the \$1 a year lease to the facility
 - These historic facilities could not exist by themselves
 - "Right of Entry" stage and now trying to finance the operations – what happens after ribbon cutting
 - Commission support of renovation and planning
 - Lots of site maintenance because we sit in their park

2. What are the strengths of these partnerships with the Department?

- Making real estate available to use
- Staff have been supportive of the services and the mission
- We help the park Department achieve the goals of a historic landmark by managing the preservation according to the agreements in place
- We could help with the under-funded needs of the historic sites
- Stewardship resource working with the naturalists
- Partnerships help with political support

3. What are opportunities to improve partnerships with the Department

- Multiple permitting through multiple agencies – one-stop shopping versus process, process, process
- Park development is difficult to get things done through
 - What if we could lease out your design services?
- There is a business side to these partnerships – which timelines of the Department systems and processes don't really meet
- Out of necessity, we have picked up maintenance practices that funding have been cut for
- We need flexibility in responsiveness
- Most of the bumping up against a wall has been with individuals versus processes – they may be under-qualified – they may be fearful or unknowledgeable
- Partnership track
 - Are you good at fundraising but not design and construction?
 - Are you the content expert but aren't good at business plans?
 - Do you have volunteers available to do the work but the agency's processes and rules get in the way?
 - Do you need assistance in getting through processes – getting all the "I's" and "t's" dealt with?
- Department of Public Services is difficult – other County agencies get in the way – it's difficult to maneuver through the various processes, and agencies – bring park development and DPS in the same room
- Competition for grants – or the centralization of the public review/management/administration from the public entity like in Prince George's County or through a Foundation
- Retirees or those that worked in the system are not allowed to come back and work as a consultant
- Perhaps hire the County to manage projects, to help them navigate through the internal processes, for design services, or for project/construction management– but not as a mandatory process
- Union restrictions to get the job done
- Not providing an inordinate amount of time in oversight
- What is the value/benefit?

4. From your perspective, what role does the Department currently play or fill in the community? Does this role align with what you believe they should be doing? What role should they not serve?

- The role they are playing is the correct one
- There are duplicate services between park development and County permitting
- To maintain the green buffer belt in the north – be the lungs of the county – the Agricultural Reserve is the soul – stewardship – the county has a lot invested in these areas and the activities within the areas
- Parks and recreation as separate agencies – duplication or cross-purposes
- Cultural and historic resources should be in the planning function, recreation functions in the Recreation Dept.