



Founded 1999

**Board Minutes
Of the Friends of Lafayette Park
May 23, 2017**

Attendees: President Jeff Stoiber, Tad Stewart, Dennis Smyth, Judy Goodman and Paul Rosenbaum. And Jane Kratovil, bookkeeper.

Minutes: Minutes for the March 28, 2017, meeting were approved without revision.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Dennis Smyth presented the treasurer's report, summarizing various expenses. Gardening expenses were a large part of the expenses, i.e., hiring labor to handle the large amount of work for maintaining the gardens on the perimeter of the park. Acknowledgements and thank you notes were sent to all the donors from the past fundraising campaign.

Status of FOLP: The other friends park group had circulated an online poll about the planned renovation and expansion of the rec center at Lafayette Park. The FOLP is very interested in learning what the community actually wants regarding the rec center and looks forward to the tabulation of the poll results. A community meeting is being planned to allow the neighborhood to come voice their concerns and interests regarding the rec center. Questions the FOLP board is interested to discuss is whether the neighborhood wants to have a "rest" from major construction projects for a while after three years of constant construction, noise and trucks passing through the neighborhood; and, secondly, how large a rec center is planned and what is desired by the neighborhood.

School and Park Project Update: Jeff and Kimberly, as well as others, walked the park with a representative of D.C. Dept. of General Services (DGS) and Skanska, the contractor for the school renovation project, to discuss the unfinished work in the park and other problems. Two of the key issues were the continued presence of a concrete pad in front of the rec center and ongoing erosion issues.

The concrete pad, which had been used for dumpsters during the school construction, is attracting vehicles to enter into Lafayette Park to park on the pad, driving down the path that can be congested with children and park users. FOLP board members said the city needs to discourage vehicles entering the park in general. The pad is being used for parking, and is an eyesore to neighborhood residents, who have complained. The consensus of the board, though not unanimous, was that the pad should be removed. It attracts a hazard. If, in the future, a pad is needed for the rec center new construction, another pad could be poured at the time, with minimal cost. And the FOLP would strongly encourage any construction staging be based behind the rec center, not in front.

Regarding the erosion problem, during rain storms, particularly heavy downpours, water starts at the top of the hill in the park and flows down the hill, eroding the park toward the ballfield, leaving dirt on the running track, and then more water flowing down the banks to 33rd Street. The board discussed how the erosion is causing damage to the park grounds, the track, the ballfield and the area along 33rd Street, and to the southeast corner of the park. The city official was shown video on a smart phone of the water gushing down during a storm. He indicated he would look into it. However it was noted at the board meeting that the city has not responded to numerous previous requests to address erosion.

The consensus of the board was that the ongoing erosion problem is more critical than a new rec center and should be addressed before - or at least along with - the rec center. Fixing the erosion problem was supposed to have been addressed with the PlayDC park renovation and then later with the school project, but was not

Other items viewed during the walk-thru were tree stumps not removed after removing several trees; a tree was killed during the construction process; the amphitheater needed repair; and the large stones used to keep vehicles out of the park replaced where they were. It was noted that the ballfield had the wrong kind of dirt placed in the infield, and the field overall is not draining properly despite an extensive drainage system installed under the field.

Spring Clean-Up Day: The spring park clean-up day May 6 had a strong turnout, including a number of students. There were many other activities in the park that day and people volunteered to work or were interested in the work FOLP does. The board discussed that for the next clean-up day it would be advantageous to determine a few specific projects to work on during the clean-up day, and promote those project prior to the clean-up. It may attract additional volunteers. Students can get community service hours as well.

Garden Group: The board discussed how best to maintain the extensive gardens around the park -- all originally developed and maintained by volunteers. The current volunteers are finding the work too burdensome now. They no longer can keep up with the work needed. Hourly labor is being hired to support them, but it is costly. Although the board has sought new volunteers for the gardens, the effort has been mostly unsuccessful.

Therefore, the board's consensus regarding the perimeter gardens is that FOLP now needs to find the right landscape maintenance contractor – rather than relying on various individual workers on an hourly basis – and enter into an annual maintenance contract.

It is clear FOLP will need to raise additional funds to hire a landscape contractor. The city does not maintain the gardens. The cost for maintaining the gardens for the spring through fall season will need to be determined.

The board agreed that maintaining the beautiful gardens around the perimeter of the park needs to be FOLP's primary focus and effort for now. The park itself and playing structures have been recently renovated, and the school just renovated.

The FOLP feels the perimeter gardens are a major asset to the park and to the neighborhood. (Gardens along Broad Branch, Quesada and 33rd St.). The board discussed erecting small signs in the gardens letting the neighborhood know that it was FOLP volunteers who created the gardens originally many years ago, and have maintained them since.

Tennis: Paul said the spring tennis program is nearing completion, and the summer program will begin soon. There has been a lot of interest. He said the courts are developing even larger cracks, expanding from the ones he had mentioned a year ago. The city is not addressing them, and the courts will continue to deteriorate unless the cracks are addressed.

New Business: The FOLP website needs to be updated.

The next meeting was scheduled for July 27, 2017.