

**Critical Area Commission  
Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays**

**July 24, 2024**

**Project Subcommittee Minutes**

**Subcommittee Members in Attendance:** *Conway (Chair), Roberson (Co-Chair), Bradford, Grant, R. Hance, Kiernan, Morgan, Palma, Patel, Roche, Young*

*Guests: Elisa Deflaux, Ethan Bright (MDE), Danielle Brock (RKK), Dennis DeShields (Bellevue), Philip Logan (Bellevue), Christi Bishop (SM Rec and Parks), Kyle Mundy (AMT), Philip Rhodes (AMT), Stacy Clements (SM County)*

**Item 1. Approval of May minutes.**

Commissioner Hance motioned to approve the minutes from the May 29 Project Subcommittee meeting. Commissioner Bradford seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

**Item 2. Information Only**

**St. Mary's County Department of Recreation and Parks – Shannon Farms Park Beach Access Trail**

Presented by Katie Hayden, with Christi Bishop also presenting on behalf of St. Mary's County Recreation and Parks.

St. Mary's County is seeking to construct a 1 mile long, 10-14 foot wide access trail as the first phase in developing a new waterfront park on the Chesapeake Bay in St. Mary's County. Half of the proposed trail would be on land designated as RCA, and would disturb Forest Interior Dwelling bird habitat. The County is seeking feedback on access trail design and mitigation. Two main points to consider during discussion are: Is the 14' trail width justified? Is the required mitigation adequate?

**Discussion:**

- Commissioner Conway – One of the plans shows another emergency path, is that still planned? Christi Bishop (CB) – it was an option, but opposed by the community.
- Conway – Is there a turnaround area proposed at the end of the path? Kyle Mundy (KM) – No turnarounds, but several pulloffs on the path and a K-turn can be done in an emergency.
- Commissioner Hance – proposed mitigation is inadequate, and mentioned a location on site where mitigation plantings could be placed. Would like to see that reflected the next time the plans come before the Commission. She then asked about why asphalt was chosen for the trail, and why not gravel? CB – trail is not just emergency access, but also a means to access the beach. Gravel is not ADA compliant. KM – boardwalks were designed by structural engineers to be able to hold vehicle weight.

- Claudia Jones – asked about the meadow mix planting along the asphalt pathway – still bring proposed? CB – yes, for stabilization after construction. CJ will offer suggestions for appropriate plantings.
- Commissioner Conway – is it really necessary for the path to be 14' wide in some places? KM – yes because it's not a linear path, so there are places where it has to be wider to accommodate some zigs and zags.
- Commissioner Conway – would the height of the boardwalk inhibit species crossings? KM – boardwalk areas are only going over wetlands, and were designed to minimize impact to wildlife.

### **Item 3. Information Only.**

#### **St. Mary's County Department of Recreation and Parks – Snow Hill Manor Park Boat Launch, Kayak Launch, and Parking**

Presented by Katie Hayden, with Christi Bishop

St. Mary's County is seeking to construct a boat launch, kayak launch, and associated parking at the Snow Hill Manor Park, a new public park on the Patuxent River. The plan is to provide parking for 96 cars, 28 boats, and 8 ADA spaces. The proposed work is located in the 200-foot buffer and will require Conditional Approval from the Commission. The County is seeking feedback on Buffer impacts and proposed mitigation.

Christi Bishop gave some information on the reasoning behind some of the plans. The property was bought with the intention of providing waterfront access to the public. Facilities must be ADA compliant. Much of the property is sloped, which makes it difficult to locate the parking spaces outside the buffer. The County has removed many improvements in the Buffer – house, two swimming pools and more, totaling ~6,000 square feet of lot coverage removed.

#### **Discussion:**

- Commissioner Conway – wonderful project, but concerned about the parking spaces. Any consideration for locating them outside the Buffer? CB – kayak launch is already being used daily, and expecting the use to increase once the park is formally opened. KM – parking lot has been designed to minimize the impervious surface needed. Open space is being used for stormwater management, and more parking spaces there would push it even further into the buffer. MC – still seems like excessive parking, is it really necessary to have so many parking spaces? CB – once additional facilities (nature center) are built, she's not even sure the proposed parking spaces will be enough. At another park in the county with 100 parking spaces they frequently have to close the park to new entrants because there is insufficient parking.
- Kate Charbonneau – Since this is a new park, effort should be made to move as much development out of the Buffer as possible. Uncomfortable with the idea of more impervious surface in the Buffer.

- Commissioner Hance – echoed concerns about parking. Also, seems that boat launch will benefit primarily the county’s highest income bracket while impacting the beach. Asphalt does not belong in the Buffer. CB – The property was purchased specifically for the boat launch. Will not just provide access to rich boaters. Watermen will use, and the rescue squad at the Hollywood VFD will use for water rescues.
- Jennifer Esposito asked if the proposed parking could be redesigned to use the open space outside of the Buffer. Phillip Rhodes (AMT) said that the majority of the space will be used for stormwater management, with some grass for overflow parking.
- Commissioner Hance – main recommendation is to look at ways to reduce parking spaces in the Buffer.

**Item 4. VOTE:**

**Maryland Transportation Authority – Francis Scott Key Bridge Rebuild – Memorandum of Understanding (Baltimore City)**

Presented by Kate Durant

The Maryland Transportation Authority is seeking approval of a Memorandum of Understanding that will govern the Critical Area requirements for the rebuild of the Francis Scott Key Bridge. Approval recommended.

**Discussion:**

- Commissioner Kiernan asked for clarification on the project being treated as a linear project. Kate Durant responded that the as a roadway, the project is defined as linear so that impacts and mitigation can be calculated appropriately.

Hearing no further questions, Chair Conway requested a motion to approve the MOU. Commissioner Grant so moved. Commissioner Hance seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

**Item 5. VOTE: Bellevue Passage Museum – Conditional Approval (Talbot County)**

Presented by Annie Sekerak

Talbot County is seeking approval to construct the Bellevue Passage Museum at the site of the Bellevue-Oxford Ferry Crossing and exceed the 15% lot coverage limit for the Limited Development Area. Recommend approval with conditions.

**Discussion:**

- Commissioner Hance stated it’s a wonderful project. Asked for clarification about what the vote was for – conditional approval versus approval with conditions. Annie explained that conditional approval is the process under which the project is being reviewed due to the fact that it exceeds the County’s lot coverage limit.

Hearing no further questions, Chair Conway requested a motion to approve with conditions. Commissioner Palma so moved. Commissioner Kiernan seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

**Item 6. VOTE: Maryland Stadium Authority – M&T Bank Stadium Improvements (Baltimore City)**

Presented by Kate Durant

The Maryland Stadium Authority is seeking approval to renovate and replace several elements at the M&T Bank Stadium including parking within the Intensely Developed Area of the Critical Area. Recommend approval with conditions.

**Discussion:**

- *Commissioner Conway* – commented that the last time the project was presented to the Commission for information, one of the takeaways was that tree removal should be limited. That doesn't seem to have happened based on the plans. Also, not seeing any on-site mitigation. *Danielle Brock* – the plan is to retain as many trees as possible but that is still in the design process. Also mitigation plantings still in the design process. *Commissioner Conway* – difficult to vote today without knowing the final design.
- *Commissioner Hance* – has same concerns regarding the lack of details, voting on something that hasn't been finalized. *Phil Hutson* – thanks for feedback.
- *Commissioner Hance* – Glad to hear that MSA is considering planting or retaining some trees. Maintaining current trees would be better than replanting. Would like to see plans for that.
- *Kate Charbonneau* – It looks like more information is needed before the Project subcommittee can vote on it. *Chair Conway* – Do we have to make the decision today or can we meet before the full Commission meeting?

Vote postponed until full Commission meeting.

**Item 7. VOTE: Maryland Department of Natural Resources – Point Lookout State Park Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrades (St. Mary's County)**

Presented by Jon Coplin

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources is seeking to construct Enhanced Nutrient Removal upgrades to the existing wastewater treatment plant within the Resource Conservation Area of the Critical Area. Recommend approval with conditions.

**Discussion:**

- Commissioner Hance commented that she appreciated the site selected for on-site plantings. Commended DNR and MES for being so thoughtful in their design.

Project Implementation Subcommittee Minutes

July 24, 2024

Page 5 of 5

Hearing no further discussion, Chair Conway asked for a motion to approve with conditions. Commissioner Hance so moved. Commissioner Patel seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.