

Buckingham Pond Conservancy

1/24/2009 Meeting Notes

Thirty-three people attended the first meeting of the Buckingham Pond Conservancy at the Bethany Reformed Church on January 24, 2009 at noon. This meeting was organized by Mark Yolles and Anne Savage in order to form an organization to work for the pond and the surrounding park.

During the meeting, participants were encouraged to brainstorm on two topics: "Issues of Concern/Vision for the Future" and "Strategies, Committees and Actions". For each topic, participants worked in four small groups of seven or eight which then reported back to the whole group.

The ideas generated during the meeting fell into three categories: Possible Actions , Overall Strategies/Organizational Mission, and Issues Identified. The ideas are summarized below in those categories.

At the end of the meeting, participants were invited to join the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will be charged with formalizing the organization's mission, defining and prioritizing goals and devising a structure to achieve those goals.

If you were unable to be at the meeting, but would like to be a member of the Steering Committee, please let us know at albanybpc@gmail.com or 518-522-6494.

The next step will be to organize a meeting of the Steering Committee to determine next steps for the conservancy. We expect to have that meeting during the first week or two of February.

Possible Actions

Organizing Committee

- Define Name
- Membership Rules & Dues
- Bylaws

History/Legal

- Understand the legal status of the land and who has jurisdiction (Albany Law as a resource?)
- Determine if there is a master plan
- Understand boundaries, find or create a map
- Look for case studies/similar organizations (Washington Park Conservancy as a resource?)

The Pond

- Gather existing information about water quality, pond health & depth
- Understand current regulations for fertilizer runoff
- Understand current activities - who does them, goals, efficacy: fountains, copper sulfate, water testing, fish stocking, siltation basin, algae
- Work to get additional study/analysis done as necessary
- Work to identify solutions

Safety/Traffic

- Work with City on solutions to identified issues considering ideas such as speed bumps, lower speed limits, changes to traffic patterns, better signage, stop signs etc.

Activities & Education

- Volunteer efforts (clean ups, planting)
- Park appreciation events (seasonal themes, guided tours)
- Tree plaques, improved educational signage
- "Adopt a section" programs

Fundraising

- Seek private, state and federal grants
- Events
- Solicit donations from residents & park users

Government Affairs/Political Liaison

- Understand who at the City has responsibility and for what
- Build relationship with City staff
- Coordinate with City to offer our resources
- Lobby political representatives
- Identify influential people in the neighborhood to help

Community Outreach & Communication

- Keep our mailing list/email list/database of volunteers and skills
- Reach out to those without computers
- Provide regular updates on our activities to membership (newsletter, website)
- Publicize events
- Educate neighborhood about fertilizer regulations and options (once understood).
- Issue press releases, engage newspapers
- Identify neighborhood residents with special skills
- Build coalitions with neighborhood associations
- Reach out to schools, scouts, etc

Overall Strategies/Mission

Overall Strategies:

- We need to show that we are willing to work – not just complain/make demands
- We need to focus our efforts and prioritize, define a mission and goals, let tasks and committees derive from these.
- Primary focus should be on the pond itself
- We should be careful to not get bogged down on ancillary issues which could be handled by a neighborhood associations
- We should have a few easily attainable and inexpensive goals that we can achieve quickly to gain credibility.
- We need to have good information before we act. What does the City currently do, what are they currently planning? What information exists about water quality? etc.
- We need to be cognizant of the serious financial difficulties the City is facing.
- We appreciate Jack's hard work and want to support his efforts.

Issues Identified

The Pond

- Fertilizer Runoff
- Salt Runoff
- Lack of frogs/toads
- Water level is too shallow. Pond seems to be “filling up”
- Available information needs to be made public
- Maintenance of siltation basin
- Erosion of banks

Traffic/Pedestrian Access & Safety

- Speed & amount of traffic
- Playground proximity to road
- Rope “fence” around playground too high (kids can run under)
- Wide intersections at Colonial (North/Western Ave side) and Euclid (both sides) encourage speeding and are dangerous for pedestrians entering the park.
- Wide intersection with Colonial is particularly dangerous because of wide entrance to parking lot
- Parking lot could be striped more efficiently, and redesigning entrances could increase available parking and reduce safety issues.
- Sidewalks needed on Berkshire
- Sidewalks needed on Euclid & Lenox (South/New Scotland Ave side)
- Transition to Euclid on South/New Scotland Ave side is very dangerous
- Sidewalks needed on Euclid (North/Western Ave side)
- Crosswalk to playground leads to parking lot, not into playground

Maintenance - General

- Needs to be year round
- Continuum/Consistency throughout park
- Vandalism/Graffiti
- Better winter maintenance (especially for skating)
- Mixed opinions about winter path maintenance (walkers vs. skiers)
- Fencing
- Dumping of yard waste, especially on South/New Scotland Ave side
- Household waste dumped in litter baskets
- Litter baskets not emptied frequently enough
- Enforcement of pooper scooper laws
- Given tight economic times we need to ensure we won't lose current staffing levels

Maintenance - Trails & Plantings

- Trails suffer from repeated erosion
- Park should include habitat for native animals
- Tree health
- Beautification through plantings, wildflower gardens etc.
- Trail at east end of park is very narrow, problematic especially in winter

Neighborhood Park

- Nice to have events seasonally (winter/skating, spring, summer, fall/leaves)
- Nice to have educational opportunities for example tree tags, naturalist tours, more informative plaques – why should you not feed the ducks?
- Portajohn not well located, should be moved for aesthetics, perhaps locked at night?

Public Safety

- Occasional drug/party issues, especially in the warm weather
- Police are often parked in the pond parking lot. Their presence as a deterrent is terrific. How can we work better with them?
- Street lights are not sufficient in some places