

# **BALLSTON POND IMPROVEMENT PROJECT**

## **Notes from Public Meeting #2**

**June 13, 2011**

The notes below reflect the consolidated group discussion about the three pond improvement alternatives that took place following separate table discussions of these options. The notes from each of the table discussions are provided as well. These discussions will be very useful in moving forward with the development of a single improvement plan for the pond area.

### **A. Consolidated Group Discussion**

#### **Alternative A**

- Hydrologically, this option is the most effective at cleaning the pond water, given the weir at the northern end
- This option presents potential conflicts between viewing areas and bike/pd paths
- Has deep water area in the middle of the pond which is good: attracts certain birds and larger fish to “winter”

#### **Alternative B**

- This option has too many overlooks: fewer would be better
  - Being able to get out over pond is nice
- Liked mix of vegetation and deep water in middle
  - Can you provide a channel in middle?
- Maintenance would be a concern: trash may be trapped at the boardwalks
- More costly? Is there enough money to build and maintain this option?
- Worried about the safety of boardwalks for kids/dogs, etc.

#### **Alternative C**

- Mixed opinion about whether trees on the islands would be good
- Liked the focus on wildlife in this option
- Liked alternative walkways along southeastern end
- Concern about potential bike/pedestrian conflicts on the trails for all of the options. However, in this alternative, the good views from the trail on east side will attract pedestrians to this area, and away from the fast-moving bikes on the southern trail
- Edge habitat is nice
- Likes the multiple ways to move water through in this option
- Includes litter control downstream and could include this upstream, too
- Would like to maintain an overlook where it is now
- Maybe add a shorter overlook at SW corner as well.

## Preferred Option?

- Table 1: Prefers Concepts A and C. Liked the multiple view points, water flow and weir from concept A, and the diverse wetland habitats and boardwalks on the east side from Concept C.
- Table 2: Prefers Alternative C with some “B” element to get people closer to the water.
- Table 3: Prefers Alternative C: variety of edge habitat, channels, overlooks on land and on apartment. building side to allow for minimum pedestrian/bike conflict.
- Table 4: There was no clear consensus on a preferred alternative.

## **B. Individual Table Discussions**

### Table 1

- **Alternative A**
  - I don't know that the observation area on the corner by 66 is useful...it may be too close to the bikers and loud from being near the highway.
  - I like the viewpoints through the vegetation in this concept.
  - The weir at the top is good, because it would allow you to collect trash and sediment before it enters the pond.
  - Could you add some forested wetland area to this concept?
- **Alternative B**
  - Concept B seems like too much.
  - I am concerned about the maintenance required for the boardwalks, and the additional project cost to construct the boardwalks.
  - Maybe one cost solution would be to shorten the boardwalks or eliminate several of them.
  - I wonder if the additional cost to build the boardwalks would be better spent on long term maintenance of the pond?
  - Could you add a structure at the top of this design to add a litter control device?  
(yes)
- **Alternative C**
  - I like Concept C with the boardwalks along the side.
  - I like that this design encourages pedestrians to linger on the east side on the boardwalks, out of way of the bikers on the bike trail.
  - There seem to be barriers to sight lines on the bike trail (western) side – would it be possible to add one viewing area there?
  - I like the boardwalks on the east side, but keep them a little ways away from the water so people don't disturb the wildlife.
  - There are some safety concerns about the rail along the boardwalk.
  - This concept seems to have the most diversity of habitat and lots of edge habitat, which is good for wildlife.

## **Table 2**

- **Alternative A**
  - No specific comments
  
- **Alternative B**
  - Liked the way that the overlooks steered the view away from I-66 and would make people feel more connected to the pond and away from the interstate traffic.
  - There was a general consensus that anything that could be done to make I-66 less intrusive the better.
  - There was a lot of discussion about having adequate maintenance for both plant upkeep and trash control. We spoke about the Operations and Maintenance Manual that would be in place at the completion of this project.
  
- **Alternative C**
  - All liked the focus on attracting wildlife and providing different habitats and different types of vegetation rather than focusing on structures for people to use in viewing and walking.
  - A suggestion: Add shorter overlook at the corner between I-66 and the bike path, similar to what's shown in Concept B but with a shorter path.
  - Also suggested that the shorter boardwalk shown near the current "dog park" be replaced with an overlook. That way, you still have an overlook on that side as well.
  
- **General Comments**
  - The group was very interested in attracting birds, turtles – there was mention of seeing mallards and wondering if any of the proposed concepts would help to keep them there. Justin Reel confirmed that these habitats would be alluring to mallards.
  - The group liked the bridge in front of the outlet structure.

## **Table 3**

- **Alternative A**
  - Path is a current commuter route. This needs to remain.
    - Keep safety in mind with path slope; width of path is difficult since it has to be shared with pedestrians
    - Don't create a gathering point that is in the way of commuting bikers
  - Make eastern path more of an attractive pedestrian path
  - Trees along Route 66 – must be tolerant to pollution (Note: the group liked the trees along Route 66 in all of the alternatives)
  
- **Alternative B**
  - Will boardwalks be trash collectors? Maintenance and up-keep are concerns: will county monitor and maintain?

- Likes a catch basin at top (as shown in Alternative A); do not prefer the option shown here
- **Alternative C**
  - Better approach than the boardwalks in Alternative B. But allows for good views from overlooks
  - Better hydrological flow; like it but with a weir at upper end
- **“Preferred”**
  - A hydrologic solution that is as stable as possible to last as long as possible.
  - Prefer Alternative C
  - Maintenance is an issue there needs to be a long term plan and commitment
  - Can Alternative C put a structure in that makes O & M easier -- make access to community cleanups easier?

#### **Table 4**

- **Concept A**
  - Like the viewing stations although there were too many; just one or two would be sufficient.
  - Like the flow path.
  - Didn't like the boulders on the slope, would prefer vegetation.
  - The less concrete the better, prefers the most natural look (one individual).
  - The weir is ok.
- **Concept B**
  - The group was evenly split between whether they liked or disliked the platforms. Those who liked them, liked them so much they thought it might be nice to connect them and create an elevated pathway through the pond. Those who disliked them, however, thought it was too much intrusion into the pond.
  - The mix of vegetation and the deep water feature in the middle was viewed as nice.
- **Concept C**
  - The boardwalks were liked; however, it was felt that they could cause pedestrian/bicyclist conflicts.
  - The group liked the increased visibility of the water.
  - The elevated pathway in front of the water was disliked by some; others liked it as an opportunity to cross the wetland.
- **General Comments**
  - The area should be a meadow only.
  - Trash needs to be managed.
  - Create a destination area.
  - The sense that “if you built it they will come”, the idea that by making the area attractive more individuals will spend time there.
  - One person didn't like trees in the middle, another did.
  - One person didn't like the trees by the viewing platforms; others thought they were good habitat for large birds.
  - There should be a solid wall of trees along Route 66.

- Make sure, whatever design is chosen, that there isn't exposed soil.
- Trash cans should be installed everywhere.

### C. General Questions and Comments

- **How long will the construction take, and where will the equipment be parked?**  
The grassy area north of the pond will likely be used for the staging area, to stockpile materials and equipment. The pond will likely be accessed from the eastern side. Construction will take a 3-6 months.
- **Which of the concepts has the better water flow?** Probably A and C have the best water flow through the pond.
- **Which concept has the best water cleansing and filtration?** All of the concepts will have good water filtration, but Concept A probably has the best of the three concepts.
- **How tall will the trees get?** The trees could get 50-75 feet tall.
- **Are the trees OK with being in a wetland environment?** Yes, the trees that are selected for the project will be able to survive in a wetland environment, with wet roots. The areas where the trees are planted will probably be slightly higher than the surrounding areas.
- **What is the benefit of the deep water areas?** The deep water sections are important because they allow larger fish species, and larger turtles, to stay protected during the cold winters.
- **Will these concepts be good habitat for frogs?** Yes, all three concepts will create good frog habitat.
- **Would it be possible to add a litter control device where Lubber Run goes under the bridge?** Yes, we can check into that to see if it's possible.
- **Is it possible to put a litter control device, or sediment capture area, at the top of the pond with all three designs?** Yes, there is likely a way to do that.
- **Will beavers come back to the pond?** It is possible. As young adolescent beavers become adults, they move away from their parents' lodge and look for a new place to live. Some of them find the Ballston Pond and live there for a little while, but the pond cannot support beavers year-round, because it is in a very urban setting and there are not enough trees to support a year-round beaver population.

### Comments Received via Email

#### **Subject : WEBSITE COMMENT: Ballston Pond Comments**

I was unable to make the public meeting, but would like to submit a couple of comments on the Ballston Pond Restoration concept designs. I am glad to see the County working hard to naturally treat storm water runoff and seizing the opportunity to provide some much-needed education and interpretation. As a cyclist though, I am especially pleased to see that a goal of the project is also to increase trail connectivity in the area. I would like especially to point out that the existing trails are an important transportation mechanism in the County and any

changes to the trail should enhance, not detract from that role. I worry that the placement of the interpretive areas of Concept A, appearing to be directly on the trail, will lead to an increase in interaction between stationary pedestrians and swift-moving bicycles, potentially leading to an increase in tensions and collisions between those two types of users. I would much prefer to see the more set-back configurations in Concept B and C, though none of them appear to move all of the interpretive areas a distance back from the trail proper.

While Arlington has made great strides in improving bicycle infrastructure, it is still quite limited in comparison to all other modes. Setting back these interpretive areas and viewing areas even a few feet from the main trail could make a big difference in ensuring the trail's continued excellence as a bicycle thoroughfare.

Thank you for your time and hard work!

**Subject : WEBSITE COMMENT: Beaver Pond redesign**

I presume all 3 options include stocking the pond with fish to keep the mosquito population under control, or is the dissolved oxygen expected to be so low that fish would not survive. What is the profile of pollutants currently found in the pond? I personally favor option A because it seems to have less standing water to promote the growth of noxious stuff and would encourage more flowing water.

**Subject : WEBSITE COMMENT: Ballston Pond Renovation**

Please keep the interpretive areas off the multi-use trail connector between the Custis trail and Ballston. This trail generates a lot of bicycle traffic that will not mix well with people stopped on the trail reading information signs. It should be possible to move the interpretation signs a short distance off the trail to minimize these conflicts.

**Subject : WEBSITE COMMENT:**

Several years ago, I was performing field research on a stormwater wetland along Rte 288 outside Richmond. The wetland got blocked up by beavers, resulting in the same problems you have in Ballston. VDOT tried trapping and tearing down the dam, but the animals repeatedly came back. We learned that they don't like the sound of running water, so that's where they build the dam.

The solution we implemented was the Clemson Beaver Pond Leveller. A google search will return a link to the pdf from the Clemson Agricultural Extension Services (<http://www.clemson.edu/psapublishing/Pages/AFW/afw1.pdf>). It was relatively simple to construct. It created a compromise between the beaver habitat and maintaining stormwater function.

None of the alternatives for the retrofit of the wetland appear to fundamentally address the issue of the beaver habitat (although I admit I didn't read anything more than the brief blurbs on the web page). I'd worry that lots of money will be spent to retrofit the pond, but in 10 yrs' time Arlington will be faced with the same problem unless the root cause is addressed.

**Subject : WEBSITE COMMENT: Ballston Pond**

Comments : What do you currently value about the pond? I love that it exists. It is wonderful to watch the seasonal changes.

How do you currently use the pond and its surrounding area? I work in the area and can see the pond from my desk. I love to watch the wildlife and the evolving foliage. I find it relaxing to lose myself in the natural beauty.

What would you like to see improved about the pond/its surroundings? Clean the sludge and litter.

What would you not want to see changed in this area? I wouldn't like it to be too accessible such that the wildlife is disturbed.

I prefer option A from the three available options.  
Best of luck...

**Subject : WEBSITE COMMENT:**

Comments : Vote for concept B.