



CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION AGENDA

Work Session - FPAB Report - (Interim Pilot of Trail Management Activities in the Greenbelt City Forest Preserve)

COUNCIL MEETING WILL BE ONLINE ONLY

Due to the COVID-19 precautions, the Council Meeting will be held online and is planned to be cablecast on Verizon 21, Comcast 71 and 996 and streamed to www.greenbeltmd.gov/municipaltv.

Resident participation:

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87506868940?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87506868940?pwd=aXVEEd2tnejFCQWxoRW1JaVNvMTVYdz09)

[pwd=aXVEEd2tnejFCQWxoRW1JaVNvMTVYdz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87506868940?pwd=aXVEEd2tnejFCQWxoRW1JaVNvMTVYdz09)

OR

Join By phone: (301) 715-8592

Meeting ID: 875 0686 8940

Passcode: 102430

In advance, the hearing impaired is advised to use Video Relay Services (VRS) at 711 to submit your questions/comments or contact the City Clerk at (301) 474-8000 or email banderson@greenbeltmd.gov.

Monday, August 23, 2021

8:00 PM

Work Session Packet

Forest Preserve Advisory Board Report - #2021-02 (Interim Piloting of Trail Management Activities in the Greenbelt City Forest Preserve)

Suggested Action:

Agenda

- Introductions
- Council Discussion
- Questions and Answers
- Other Items

[FPAB Report 2021-02 Piloting of trail management activities in the Forest Preserve.pdf](#)

City Council Work Session Agenda Item Report

Meeting Date: August 23, 2021

Submitted by: Shaniya Lashley-Mullen

Submitting Department: Administration

Item Type: Work Session Item

Agenda Section: Work Session Packet

Subject:

Forest Preserve Advisory Board Report - #2021-02 (Interim Piloting of Trail Management Activities in the Greenbelt City Forest Preserve)

Suggested Action:

Agenda

- Introductions
- Council Discussion
- Questions and Answers
- Other Items

Attachments:

[FPAB Report 2021-02 Piloting of trail management activities in the Forest Preserve.pdf](#)

FOREST PRESERVE ADVISORY BOARD
REPORT TO COUNCIL

Report # 2021-02

SUBJECT: Interim piloting of trail management activities in the Greenbelt City Forest Preserve

DATE: 25 March 2021

BACKGROUND. The Forest Preserve Advisory Board is currently preparing a Master Trails Plan, based on the Forest Preserve Stewardship Guidelines approved by Greenbelt City Council in December 2019. The scope of the master plan includes trail maintenance. It would be useful to gain some experience with maintenance activities to try out options and inform preparation of the trails plan. This pilot project would occur in areas outside the potential SCMaglev project area and so would be relevant whether or not the SCMaglev train is built.

Chapter 12 Parks and Recreation; Article IX Forest Preserve; Section 12-156 Prohibited Activities states that:

- (j) No trail maintenance shall be permitted except as provided in the stewardship guidelines.
- (k) The creation of trails or the widening, grading, or change of surface materials of any existing trail shall be prohibited except as provided in the management and maintenance guidelines or as set forth in an adopted trails plan.

The current guidelines are the Forest Preserve Stewardship Guidelines approved in December 2019. They state (underlining added):

One of the simplest strategies is to identify and address conditions that are a threat to ecosystem health. In the context of the Forest Preserve these conditions could include areas being used as trash dumps, erosion along streams and trails, invasive species and a proliferation of trails in a sensitive habitat. Direct action can mitigate these threats and preserve the health of the Preserve.

When issues arise, FPAB will consider and address the need for trail maintenance at specific locations. Such issues might include a newly fallen tree blocking a trail in an ecologically sensitive area, eroding trails or newly created trails. Maintenance activities on designated trails will minimize disturbance to the Preserve to the maximum extent practicable, while at the same time allowing the public to experience a large, forested area and participate in activities consistent with that type of experience.

DISCUSSION: The language in the Stewardship Guidelines mainly concerns activities that would be done once a trails plan has been adopted. While the trails plan is still being prepared, it would be useful to gain experience with maintenance activities on a pilot basis. Trails in Hamilton Woods are a case where a variety of issues have arisen creating needs for trail maintenance, including the following:

- Poor trail drainage and muddy areas on the trail from Northway Road in the Hamilton Woods used for the Pumpkin Walk, which leads people to widen the trail, trample vegetation and create new trails. In some cases, branches or boards have been placed in the trail, which do not necessarily provide safe footing, and can sometimes further impede drainage, and make the trail harder to use.
- Fallen trees have obstructed trails, with no official procedure for dealing with blocked trails or keeping trails accessible for those unable to climb over or through large trees. In some cases individuals (without authorization and contrary to City Code) have sawn trees, cut or broken off overhanging branches, and unblocked trails, but without much attention to trail aesthetics, drainage, or a systematic approach to trail maintenance. We will pilot a procedure for responding to fallen trees on trails, to determine if any action needs to be taken and if so what alternatives might be considered.
- Erosion is occurring on the trail leading from Eastway and 44 Court Ridge into the Forest Preserve, including some areas with severe erosion that become muddy, difficult, and unpleasant to use. In other areas future erosion could be limited or prevented with relatively minor measures.
- In some cases, brush grows into the trail, partially blocking it. As a result, people may widen the trail on the other side, trample vegetation, or create alternative trails (shortcuts). We will balance the need to make trails passable for hikers while minimizing impacts on vegetation and preserving a natural experience.

RECOMMENDATION: Due in part to a marked increase in the usage of trails over the past year, the Forest Preserve Advisory Board recommends a pilot program to address these issues, and to test out a small sample of trail maintenance activities that can help inform preparation of the trails plan. Therefore, FPAB seeks approval from Council to coordinate with the Public Works Department and trained volunteers to engage in the following types of activities on the Pumpkin Walk trail and the trail leading from 44 Ridge Rd to the SW corner of the Northway athletic fields:

- Improve drainage of eroded or muddy sections of trail, by reshaping (manually grading) trail tread to divert water off of trails, make minor realignments or reroute short sections of trail, and (if other measures are insufficient) to possibly install waterbars (earth, wood, or rock) to control erosion and divert excess runoff away from trails.
- Address problems in persistently wet or muddy areas to keep the trail passable under wet conditions.
- In response to trails that have been blocked by fallen trees, consider and implement options including either a) sawing fallen trees and moving logs out of the way, with attention to aesthetics and minimizing impacts, or where more appropriate b) rerouting trails around fallen trees, if this option would enhance the trail experience or reduce environmental impacts. Dealing with problems related to fallen trees could include retro-active clean-up and adjustments where fallen trees were previously sawed and moved without authorization.
- Pilot test possible standards for controlling brush along the side of trails in selected areas, initially at a minimal standard appropriate for frequently used trails.

- Pilot a process for public reporting of problems and suggestions related to the trail, including online and perhaps through notices at the Forest Preserve sign on Northway Road or the trailhead leading into Hamilton Woods.

Duration of the pilot activities would depend on the time required for preparation and approval of the trails plan. For simplicity the initial period would be for the rest of 2021. In addition to contributing to the preparation of the trails plan, these activities would help create better and safer conditions for holding the Pumpkin Walk in October 2021.