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**JULY 13, 2022 PUBLIC MEETING
FOR THE MCLEAN-SPELL PARK MASTER PLAN
WEDNESDAY, JULY 13, 2022 – 6:00 P.M.
TOWN BOARD MEETING ROOM**

6 **1. Opening and Introductions**

7 Parks and Recreation Director Candace Dooley introduced herself, directed attendees on how to
8 use the microphones provided, and explained that the meeting would follow the same format as
9 Board of Commissioners meetings, with public comments limited to 3 minutes. She requested
10 that those who had signed up to speak state their full name and their address for public record.
11 She then introduced Anne Darby from Summit Design and Engineering.

12
13 Anne Darby introduced herself as the planning department manager for Summit Design and
14 Engineering and gave a brief overview of McLean-Spell Park. This overview included a
15 statement of the existing conditions of the park, its purchase history, and both physical and legal
16 limitations on the development within the park. She then outlined the schedule of Summit's
17 involvement. The schedule began with initial research and the administration of the stakeholder
18 survey, followed by an ongoing site analysis process and a needs and equity analysis. Next she
19 explained that the firm would provide concept options and cost estimates, with a final report
20 expected to be completed and presented by November. She finished by reviewing the public
21 participation opportunities which had been provided, including the current in person meeting,
22 and emphasized that the firm was interested in hearing the community's wants and needs.

23
24 **2. Public Comment**

25 At this point the floor was opened for public comments, and Candace Dooley introduced the first
26 attendees who had signed up to speak.

27
28 George E. Davis Jr., 317 Live Oak Street, spoke first, stating that he wanted to have trails at the
29 park similar to those at Emerald Isle Woods Park, and that he did not support any further
30 development. At Candace Dooley's prompting he then stated his name and address.

31
32 Linda Davis, 317 Live Oak Street, then expressed her concerns about how the removal of trees
33 would impact animals living in the park.

34

35 Dustin Peck, 317 Live Oak Street, expressed his concern that the removal of 10 acres of trees
36 would put the surrounding areas at risk of damage from a hurricane. He emphasized the ability of
37 trees to soak up water. He stated that he might be open to walking trails.

38

39 Amy Lock, 404 Hickory Street, stated that she was in favor of maintaining the park's existing
40 trails while preserving the park's trees.

41

42 Carol Peoples, 401 Hickory Street, explained that she had already attended the two previous
43 virtual meetings, and highlighted the services being provided by the park in its current state with
44 regards to stormwater management and water filtration. She emphasized the importance of these
45 services considering the lack of freshwater on the island and the future well that is going to be
46 built on the site.

47

48 Paige-Taylor Ward, 326 Live Oak Street, stated that she was against any development in the
49 park. She expressed the various benefits of maritime forests, including the provision of habitat
50 for various flora and fauna, storm protection, and groundwater conservation. She stated that the
51 building of facilities in the park would destroy this forest, and it would not be justifiable due to
52 the low number of children on the island. She also expressed concern regarding the cost of
53 maintaining the park, whether with existing staff or with contractors.

54

55 Jeff Ward, 326 Live Oak Street, described how the existing maritime forest protected
56 surrounding properties during Hurricane Florence. He referenced the board's previously stated
57 commitment to preserving trees and vegetation on the island, and felt that a proposal to clear
58 trees from the park would violate this commitment. He expressed concerns about the costs
59 related to development of the park from the construction process to maintenance. He outlined
60 the benefits of the maritime forest, ranging from the way it functions as a sanctuary for wildlife
61 to its role as an heirloom for the island. He then referred to the legacy of Betty Carr and her
62 impact on the attitude of Pine Knoll Shores residents towards tree preservation.

63

64 At this point Candace Dooley stated that that was everyone who had signed up to speak, but was
65 quickly corrected, as there had been a second sign-up sheet which she hadn't seen.

66

67 Diane Schools, 106 Indigo Drive, spoke next, and was in favor of saving the trees. She also
68 expressed a desire for the town to focus on the maintenance of existing amenities, such as Blue
69 Heron Park, which she felt was in need of many improvements. She ended by stating that there
70 would not be sufficient parking to support any development in the park.

71

72 Jan Ray, 7410 Archers Creek Court, stated that she was in favor of keeping the park as it is. She
73 emphasized the value of the current park as a place for children to play, and in particular her own
74 granddaughter. She stated that she would be in favor of cleaning up the existing park, but
75 otherwise wanted it to be kept as it was as a resource for children currently and in the future.

76

77 Rick Walling, 7509 Sound Drive, voiced his concerns about how the removal of trees in the
78 center of the park might impact hurricane protection. He also expressed doubts about the ability
79 of the town to maintain the park, both in its current state and with any proposed development. He
80 suggested increasing the police presence within the park.

81

82 Ginger Miller, 7523 Sound Drive, stated that the island already has sufficient attractions for
83 children and teens without the development of the park. She also expressed concerns regarding
84 overdevelopment and the loss of a hurricane barrier if the trees were to be cleared. She voiced
85 her support for maintaining the existing trails and stated that she was against any tree removal.

86

87 Dave Thomas, 7521 Sound Drive, stated that he did not want to see any development in the park
88 other than trails. He expressed concerns regarding the current use of the park by teenagers, and
89 criticized the track record of the town regarding the transition of Cedar Street Park from a private
90 to a public park. He emphasized the potential issues with regards to parking, and impact on
91 property values surrounding the park. He concluded by emphasizing the need for the survey
92 sample to be randomized in order to avoid bias.

93

94 Jeannie Malone, 7411 Archers Creek Court, spoke about access to the park, and voiced her
95 concern that future development might lead to increased parking along her street. She also
96 described the benefits of the park as a place for her granddaughter to play, and requested that the
97 park stay the same.

98

99 Dick Yelverton, 6611 Ocean Drive, began by expressing his appreciation for the town's purchase
100 of the land, and then posed a series of questions. First, he asked what the premise was for "doing
101 anything to the property." Secondly, he asked whether there was any obligation to develop the
102 park. Finally he asked why money had already been spent on a master plan. He then expressed
103 that any suggestion to remove trees from the park would contradict the existing Call Before You
104 Cut program. He closed by stating his support for the preservation of the natural area of the park,
105 and questioning the need for a dog park.

106

107 Joy Brownlow, 7506 Sound Drive, also thanked the commissioners for purchasing the park. She
108 described how her family currently uses the park, and requested that the commissioners reject
109 any proposed tree removal from the site. She described how the site currently functions as an
110 active recreation facility, and mentioned the accessibility of Western Park as an alternative
111 recreational facility. She then outlined how maritime forests contribute to coastal resilience,
112 before referencing the conclusions of Michael Schafale from the site survey report he produced
113 at the town's request in 2017. She then questioned the sale of a tract of land behind the Islander
114 Hotel & Resort, suggesting that it could have been an alternative location for the potential
115 amenities at McLean-Spell Park.

116

117 Rebecca Drohan spoke as a representative of Coastal Carolina River Watch. She said that in the
118 past weeks her organization has been contacted multiple times regarding the potential
119 development of the park. She expressed concerns about the impact of developing the park on
120 surrounding water quality. She outlined the various services provided by forests and wetlands,
121 and their connection to issues surrounding stormwater. She urged the town to consider low
122 impact alternatives to the potential development, and voiced her support for complete
123 preservation of the park in order to protect the town's water quality and uphold the wishes of
124 Emerald Isle residents.

125

126 Kelly Burke explained that she is a former resident of Emerald Isle, and that her children who
127 were raised here had no shortage of recreational facilities, including Western Park. She described
128 the benefits of wetlands and maritime forests to combat rising tides and hurricanes, as well as
129 filtering water. She said that she is also affiliated with Coastal Carolina River Watch.

130

131 Mara Browder, 7515 Sound Drive, stated that she is in favor of McLean-Spell Park remaining a
132 passive park, and that it is unnecessary to destroy the park and that it should be protected.

133

134 Tony Browder, 7515 Sound Drive, referred to the covenants of the military grant which helped
135 fund the purchase of the park, and expressed that it would be best to avoid creating a park that
136 would encourage people to congregate due to the military buffer. He said that he supports
137 maintaining the existing trails, and expressed concerns about kids using the park at night. He also
138 stated that he is concerned about maintenance of the park and the impact of development on
139 water quality. He expressed the importance of preserving the trees in order to prevent damage
140 from hurricanes and voiced concerns about potential parking issues. He said that the paths need
141 to be improved and made safe, and that he supports the inclusion of educational elements to
142 teach children about the local wildlife.

143

144 Lisa Herring, 7507 Sound Drive, described her experiences growing up on the island, and the
145 impact of losing the dunes as a natural barrier for hurricanes. She said that while she
146 acknowledges the need for progress she does not want Emerald Isle to become like Myrtle beach
147 and wants it to stay the way that it is. She stated that there are already enough amenities for
148 children to entertain themselves.

149

150 Deborah Styron, 404 Bogue Inlet Drive, explained her initial idea for a dog park at the point, and
151 asked why development of a dog park at an area at the point that was already cleared did not
152 happen. She said that she does not want any trees removed and supports leaving the park un-
153 developed. She suggested alternative locations for building a splash pad at an existing park, and
154 stated that children already have places to go to. She then expressed support for preserving the
155 maritime forest, and stated that no one was in favor of its removal. She asked the board if they
156 were the ones in favor of the potential removal of the trees.

157

158 Candace Dooley responded to the question, stating that the purpose of the meeting was to listen
159 to the community and that there were no preconceived notions regarding the parks development.

160

161 Deborah Styron reiterated that no one was in favor of the park's development before running out
162 of time.

163

164 Someone asked why the town manager wasn't at the meeting, to which Candace Dooley replied
165 that she had told him she had the meeting handled so that he could be with his family.

166

167 Irving I Monclova, 117 Arthur Drive, spoke about how he had walked the paths in the park for
168 many years with his wife. He said that he had volunteered to support the previous director of
169 parks and recreation, and has offered the same to the current director. He stated that based on
170 previous comments from attendees there was a need for the organizers to justify the ideas put
171 forward regarding the park's development. He said that he felt the only thing that needed to be
172 done was keep the park safe and sound.

173

174 Lori Taft, 312 Lord Berkeley Drive, described her frequent use of Emerald Isle Woods Park. She
175 outlined the need for a certified pool operator to conduct inspections if a splash pad were built at
176 McLean-Spell Park. She stated that residents could use the existing facilities at Emerald Isle
177 Woods Park instead of building new amenities at McLean-Spell Park, and questioned whether
178 the park funding could be used to build the amenities elsewhere. She also stated that many
179 facilities exist off the island. She then voiced her support for the funding of projects that protect
180 the beach and the dunes, before concluding that she hopes the park stays the way it is.

181

182 Andrew Allen, 7516 Sound Drive, voiced his support for the preservation of the parks natural
183 resources. He stated that the current park functions better for dogs compared to a dog park
184 without any trees. He then described how he and his wife were motivated to move from Pine
185 Knoll Shores after speaking with Art Schools at Emerald Isle Woods Park about the way the
186 town is run. He stated that Emerald Isle should adopt a similar attitude towards tree protection
187 that is common in Pine Knoll Shores. He then stated that he hopes the engineering firm
188 investigates appropriate forest management techniques in wake of the damage to trees in the park
189 from Hurricane Florence.

190

191 Jennifer Welborn, 309 Lamroc Drive, stated that she was representing the younger generation of
192 homeowners. She said that she is the chair for Surfrider, Bogue Banks, and that many of the
193 organization's members support total preservation of the park. She described the importance of
194 the tree's root system for preserving the island.

195

196 Candace Dooley called on AJ Miller to speak but he passed, and she proceeded to ask if anyone
197 who hadn't spoken already had anything else to say.

198

199 David Thomas, 7521 Sound Drive, asked why the future well that will be located on the property
200 was not shown on the presented diagrams. This led to a discussion regarding the amount of area
201 that the well would require, and Mr. Thomas then finished by saying that he would like the well
202 to be included in the discussion surrounding the park's potential development.

203

204 Candace Dooley then invited the commissioners to speak.

205

206 **3. Comments from Board of Commissioners**

207 Commissioner Jim Normile stated that he did not disagree with anything that had been said, and
208 went on to outline several points. First he stated that there are no plans in place for the park,
209 meaning that the 9.7 acres shown on the map is where development would happen if something
210 were to be done with the park, and that there are no plans to clear cut the area and no list of
211 things to be included in that area. He then went on to discuss the grant money from PARTF, and
212 explained that there was no mandate or guidance regarding particular amenities to be included in
213 the park such as a ballpark, however something has to be done with the park to justify the grant
214 money that was received. He then addressed the decision to use a vendor for the master planning
215 process instead of having one of the commissioners lead that process, explaining that the desire
216 was to have a neutral party in charge of conducting the research and public engagement. He

217 reiterated that there is no current plan for the park, but that the vendor is in charge of leading the
218 development of a plan based on public input.

219

220 Someone questioned why there was no public input before hiring the firm, and Jim responded
221 that there was public input before applying for the initial grants.

222

223 Someone else questioned why there was not a public input meeting before spending \$65,000, and
224 Jim reiterated that he personally felt it was best to rely on a third party as a neutral party to lead
225 the engagement process. He then went on to address the timing of the master planning process,
226 and stated that it is based on the need to plan in advance of five, ten, or fifteen years for any
227 major projects. He expressed the need to balance paying off the town's debt with planning ahead
228 for future spending. He then concluded by stating his desire to be able to stand up and cheer once
229 again once the public engagement process is over, just like when the land was initially
230 purchased.

231

232 Commissioner Steve Finch expressed how many people have shared their ideas for the park over
233 the years, and stated that this meeting had brought closure to what should be done with it. He
234 stated that he would go on the record in support of preserving the park and not doing anything
235 with the 30 acre tract other than cleaning it up and making it presentable. He suggested that park
236 benches might be added to the trails, and reiterated that he would do his best to preserve the 30
237 acres.

238

239 Candace Dooley then concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for attending, and stating that
240 she would work with Summit and report back to the town.