

Neighborhood NEWS

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RUXTON-RIDERWOOD-LAKE ROLAND AREA IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Annual Meeting Highlights

by Jessica Paffenbarger

This year we had a full course of delights at our annual meeting. Our appetizer was a 40 minute Meet-and-Greet with candidates for the Maryland Senate and House of Delegates. Our main course was a presentation about *Robert E. Lee Park – Past, Present and Future*. And dessert was a brief business meeting including the Treasurer's report, a written update of the Association's business for the year, a goodbye and thank you to retiring Board members and a vote to elect new and second-term members to the Board.

Patrick Jarosinski, RRLRAIA President, opened with welcoming comments and introduced our host, Reverend Arianne Weeks, Rector of the Church of the Good Shepherd. Patrick continued by introducing our elected officials and other candidates for local offices including State Senators Bobby Zirkin and James Brochin. House of Delegates representatives included Delegates Susan Aumann, Steve Lafferty, Dan Morhaim and Dana Stein. Additional candidates for the House of Delegates included Tim Robinson, Michael McAllister, Chris West and Shelly Hettleman. County Councilman David Marks also attended as did Councilwoman Vicki Almond's aide.

Our main course was the presentation by Elise Butler and Jeffrey Budnitz, who are on the boards of both RRLRAIA and Robert E Lee Park Nature Council (RELPC). Their slideshow and talk featured the history of the Park from the early 1800s to the recent past with historic pictures of the Park as well as scenes showing the neglect in later years. The slideshow concluded showing the wonderful amenities now available – improved trails, new bridge, boardwalk from the Light Rail parking lot, new pavilion, dog park and Acorn Hill, the recently-opened

children's play area. And...we got a sneak peak at the concept plan for the proposed Lake Roland Education Center to be located near the Ranger Station.



Jeffrey Budnitz and Elise Butler present "Robert E Lee Park – Past, Present and Future"
Photo courtesy John Baer

Many were surprised to learn that our 500 acre park is over half the size of Central Park and boasts two National Register of Historic Places Districts (Lake Roland Historic District and Bare Hills Historic District)! The land for the Park was acquired from The Baltimore Gunpowder Company of Maryland (formerly The Bellona Gunpowder Company) in the 1850s by the City of Baltimore and flooded to create a lake

as a reservoir for the City. Construction of the Lake Roland dam started in 1858 and the reservoir was ready for business by 1860. By the early 1900s, however, the City wanted an improved supply of drinking water and by 1914 the Loch Raven Reservoir had been constructed and the City abandoned use of Lake Roland as a City water supply. At this point, the lake and surrounding land was placed under the authority of Baltimore City Parks and Recreation.

By the 1990s, the Park had experienced significant deterioration including erosion and run-off into the lake, neglected buildings, downed trees and crumbling sidewalks. And the Park had become a de facto off-leash dog park as well as serving as home for a number of homeless residents hiding away in its depths. Efforts

spearheaded by RRLRAIA and local residents, joined by elected officials, to get the City to make critical repairs in the Park were to no avail.

Recognizing that a new game plan for the Park was necessary, in the early 2000s RRLRAIA Board

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Meet-and-Greet: Delegate Susan Aumann with Board member Art Arthur
Photo courtesy Jessica Paffenbarger

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Lake Roland Education Center

by Elise Butler and Nancy Worden Horst

During temperate weather months activities and pleasures abound in Robert E. Lee Park: fairy princess parties, nature scout hunts and s'mores around the campfire, art classes and history walks, even a Zombie Horde scavenger hunt! But as the weather turns too cold for outdoor activities many of these fun opportunities have to be moved indoors. Currently there is one small activity space in which to pursue activities like these. Now called the Ranger Station, a former restroom has been re-purposed as an office for the Park ranger staff and a small meeting space. This same space also houses programs during warm seasons when weather chases summer camp participants under cover such as during summer thunderstorms or tornado alerts. The Ranger Station is also the only available place to host the special needs children from the Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital who visit for craft activities but the space is not sufficiently large or suitably equipped for use by individuals with disabilities.

To address these needs, the Robert E Lee Park Nature Council, in partnership with Baltimore County, is proposing to build the Lake Roland Education Center. The Center will be located in the heart of the Park and complement recent improvements such as the new pavilion, Paw Point Dog Park and Acorn Hill (the children's play area). The multi-purpose building will be designed to accommo-

date all these needs for year-round meeting or instructional space for up to 75 people, including for disabled children and seniors, and be fully ADA-accessible. The proposed building site would look out over the dam's waterfall and historic landscape and provide easy access to the Light Rail station via the existing boardwalk or to the main entrance of the Park on Lakeside Drive. Accessibility from the Falls Road Light Rail station via the raised boardwalk makes this facility a "transit oriented resource" and the first of its kind in the Baltimore metro area.

The building and construction are to be as 'green' as possible. Because of challenging topographical constraints, the Education Center will be elevated on piers to minimize its environmental impact. To the extent possible, renewable construction materials will be used. Both geothermal and solar array panels will be considered to minimize energy use. The location of the site along the boardwalk is also a naturally cool space during the summer months when the surrounding tree canopy will provide shading. Finally, the fact that fewer people need to drive to the Park because it can be accessed by public transport will minimize Park users' carbon footprint. The cost of this important project is estimated to be approximately \$1.2 million.

As much as a third of the money will need to be raised from private funds. We hope that Park users and neighbors will be

I like writing in French, but speaking in Italian.

I'm not superstitious
(except when I'm playing soccer).

There are two sesamoid bones in the distal
portion of the first metatarsal.

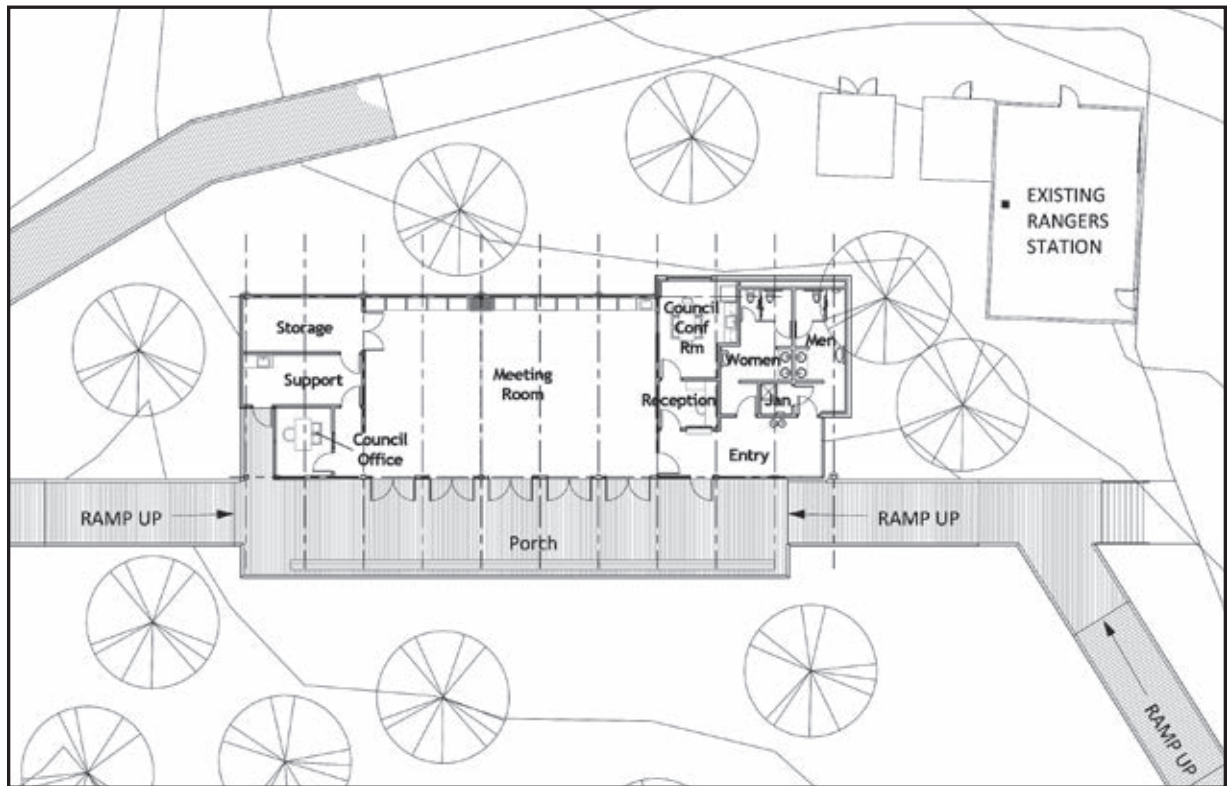
Sometimes the most valuable perspective
is someone else's.

I know this because I go to Park.

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generous with their resources and with their efforts. Part of the project may be funded through a State bond bill; however, passage of a bond bill in these difficult economic times will require active lobbying by all friends of the Park. Beginning in January please watch the website <http://relpnc.org> for information about how you can help with this effort by, for example, contacting your legislators, asking friends and neighbors to join in the effort and giving directly to this neighborhood amenity. Building the new Lake Roland Education Center in the heart of the Ruxton, Riderwood and Lake Roland area communities will require the enthusiastic participation of everyone.



Concept floor plan for proposed new education center Courtesy Hord | Coplan | Macht

visit with Santa
hotdogs
cookies and hot chocolate
roasted marshmallows
sing carols

Holiday Party in the Woods


Join your neighbors and friends on Saturday, December 20, from 4 – 6 p.m. at the Old Rugby Field (between Robert E. Lee Park and the Light Rail) off L'Hirondelle Club Road.

Dress warmly - wear boots - bring flashlights.
No dogs, please. Questions? Call 410-494-7757 or email office@rrlraia.org.

Have You Seen This Bug?

The *Emerald Ash Borer* is responsible for the destruction of up to 200 million ash trees in the U.S. and the numbers are expected to keep rising. In other words, *time is critical with this pest*. Contact your local Davey arborist for a property inspection and recommendations for EAB management.

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Photo credit: Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources - Forestry Archive, Bugwood.org

Annual Meeting Highlights

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members continued the efforts of many past Boards and worked with elected officials to eventually see the 2009 transfer of the management of the Park from Baltimore City to Baltimore County via two 50-year licenses. With the transfer of the Park to the County came many long-awaited capital improvements including construction of the new bridge by the lake's dam and a boardwalk from the MTA Light Rail parking lot, shoreline restoration, a one-plus acre enclosed dog park with water access (Paw Point), repurposing of a former restroom facility into a ranger station, a new pavilion for community use, renovation of the historic train trestle and, most recently, a children's playground (Acorn Hill).

The transformation of the Park became a reality because of the leadership of the County, State, RELPNC and RRLRAIA. Leaders of the aforementioned groups past and present played a role in the Park we all enjoy today.

RELPNC and Park rangers organize and run many children's programs, summer camps (our neighbors at Brooklandville Fire Station help out with some of these events such as providing the slip-and-slide), overnight camp-outs, maple sugaring, se-

nior walks and more. The trails committee manages trail clearance and trash removal. Several corporate neighbors have donated time and/or funds or provided services at cost to help with various Park programs and improvements.

There are many natural inhabitants of the Park (otters, birds, turtles, butterflies, deer...). Continuing challenges include overpopulation of the white-tailed deer and the invasive plants; sadly, there are more invasives than native plants at this point. A future project is a walking loop over the railway bridge since the Park currently has very few loop trails. Also, the proposed Lake Roland Education Center, an indoor space which would help turn the Park into a four-season destination, is in the planning stage. With a concept by Hord | Coplan | Macht, the proposed 2,500 square foot facility would provide for a 75-student main facility in a flex space, tied in to the



Caption: Meet-and-Greet: Delegate Steve Lafferty, Senator Bobby Zirkin, Senator James Brochin and Delegate Dan Morhaim Photo courtesy Jessica Paffenbarger

existing boardwalk, fully ADA compliant, with views of the waterfall/dam. For updates and information about activities, events and plans for the Park, visit <http://relpnc.org>.

The presentation was concluded with an update on progress being made in the Bare Hills area which includes a new retail and office development project and a new traffic signal at Falls Road and Clarkview. The collective effect of these improvements brings a new vibrance to the Bare Hills Village, with more to come in the future.

Following the presentation, Patrick introduced Treasurer Linda Murphy who reported that our annual budget is approximately \$100,000 which comes primarily from dues and newsletter advertising. Expenses include the salary of a part-time executive director, several RRLRAIA-sponsored events, the costs of publishing the newsletter and directory, as well as an annual set-aside for reserves for items such as updating our community plan every decade.

Kathy Mountcastle, Chair of the Nominating Committee, presented the slate of six new candidates for the Board (see page 10) and two current Board members, Patrick Jarosinski and Elise Butler, were re-elected for a second term. Kathy then proposed a Resolution (approved by the members) to authorize members of the Board to represent the Association in certain zoning matters. Patrick recognized outgoing Board members Greg Glessner, Jake Martin, Kathy Mountcastle (a former RRLRAIA President), Keith Murray (former Treasurer) and Grant Cleverley.

The Annual Meeting was adjourned and a brief Board meeting was then held to elect officers for the upcoming year: Patrick Jarosinski (President), Jessica Paffenbarger (First Vice President), Linda Murphy (Treasurer), Laura Shmerler (Second Vice President) and Tracy Miller (Secretary).



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