

Hill District/Uptown Watershed Task Force Meeting Notes

March 31, 2021

- Attendees
 - Gavin White, Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy (PPC)
 - Meghan Simek, Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority (PWSA)
 - Rebecca Zito, Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority (PWSA)
 - Elaine Hinrichs, Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority (PWSA)
 - Megan Guy, Pittsburgh Water Collaboratory
 - Annie Quinn, 3 Rivers Wet Weather (3RWW)
 - Francine Bibbens, Hill District Consensus Group
 - Keyva Clark, Representative Jake Wheatley Chief of Staff
 - David George Himes, Penn State Center Pittsburgh
 - Marlene Willams, Uptown Partners
 - John Fleenor, Uptown resident and MLK Field gardener
 - Joseph Szabo, Moultrie Street resident and MLK Field gardener
 - Helen Perilloux
 - Beth King
- Gavin White (PPC) introduced the concept of watersheds and the PPC Watershed Task Forces
- Rebecca Zito (PWSA) and Meghan Simek (PWSA) provided an update about the PWSA Stormwater Program and the Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) / Warren K. Branch Stormwater Project
 - Joseph Szabo asked: Will the plan to turn the asphalt parking lot into a gravel parking lot result in more stormwater flowing aboveground and belowground into residents' basements on the streets directly below MLK Field?
 - Meghan Simek answered: The removal of the asphalt pavement should help reduce flooding. The stormwater in the parking lot area will be picked up by a storm drain and sent to the sewer system. In addition, PWSA's underground stormwater storage facility will be lined to prevent stormwater leaking.
 - Joseph Szabo asked: Would the system going down De Ruad Street be underground?
 - Meghan Simek answered: The pipe system down De Ruad Street would be underground.
 - Joseph Szabo asked: How will PWSA install that underground pipe down De Ruad Street?
 - Meghan Simek answered: The PWSA contractor will dig a trench down the street to lay the pipe.
 - Joseph Szabo asked: Would there be any puddles where mosquitos could breed after construction?
 - Meghan Simek answered: No, PWSA will be re-paving De Ruad Street to help reduce potholes.
 - Joseph Szabo commented: The Belgian block channel at MLK Field was original and should be kept.
 - Meghan Simek answered: PWSA made a change in their design to keep those Belgian blocks.
 - Joseph Szabo asked: Would the MLK Field project disturb the little park called Central Park that I created directly below MLK field at Moultrie Street and Orr Street?

- Meghan Simek answered: PWSA's original design had the outfall near Central Park and tying into Orr Street. After a meeting where concern was expressed about disrupting that slope, PWSA made the change to run the outfall pipe down De Ruad Street instead.
- Helen Perilloux asked: Can this diagram be emailed to participants, please? It is difficult to see — small on the screen.
 - Rebecca Zito answered: Yes, we can email it. We'll get email addresses from the PPC. **ACTION**
- Helen Perilloux commented: The Belgian block moat will look nice once cleaned up.
- Helen Perilloux asked: I was just at another meeting with Uptown Partners and Grow Pittsburgh and some gardeners. We were eager to see some more concrete plans for the project, so we will be glad to receive that plan image. We are working on suggestions for where the gardens structures could be moved to be better suited for the garden as part of the project restoration. Where should we provide those suggestions?
 - Meghan Simek answered: PWSA has been working with Claire at Grow Pittsburgh. PWSA met with Claire a couple weeks ago and provided a list of questions that PWSA wants the gardeners input on. We would like to hear from the gardeners.
- John Fleenor asked: What would the maintenance requirements be?
 - Meghan Simek answered: There are maintenance ports for the underground storage facility in MLK Field. Up on Bentley Drive, the manholes that direct water into the facility will have grates that PWSA will have to vacuum out with their vac trucks.
- John Fleenor asked: Does PWSA do maintenance on the landscaping/grounds at other stormwater projects?
 - Meghan Simek answered: Yes, PWSA maintains the landscaping as well as the underground infrastructure at other stormwater projects.
- John Fleenor asked: What landscaping areas would PWSA maintain at MLK field?
 - Meghan Simek answered: The surface maintenance responsibility for mowing will fall on the City of Pittsburgh Department of Public Works (DPW) for outside the fence and the gardeners will mow inside the fence.
- John Fleenor asked: Would PWSA mow if the gardeners abandoned the site?
 - Meghan Simek answered: PWSA probably would to maintain the underground system.
- John Fleenor asked: Is there a way to partner with PWSA on the maintenance?
 - Meghan Simek answered: PWSA will take that into consideration.
- John Fleenor asked: What would PWSA do if they needed to access the system and the surface was no longer a garden?
 - Meghan Simek answered: If the field ceased being a garden for any reason, PWSA or DPW would likely maintain it depending on the future use. Those are questions we would have to answer down the road.
- John Fleenor asked: What sites or elements would be untouchable after the stormwater project is built?
 - Meghan Simek answered: Any foundation for playgrounds or fences would not be allowed to be poured on top of the underground storage system. Large trees also could not be planted over the underground system.

- John Fleener commented: Forest plantings are of interest, so that should be a conversation.
 - Meghan Simek answered: As far as we know, the City does not have any plans for playground equipment in that area, but the City has said that they will avoid building over the stormwater project area itself.
 - Rebecca Zito answered: PWSA has been trying to set up a meeting with the gardeners to answer more of these questions, and we would be glad to do so.
- Joseph Szabo commented: The best bet for scheduling a meeting with the gardeners would be through Uptown Partners.
 - Meghan Simek answered: Yes, we will set up meeting.
 - Gavin White answered: The PPC will follow up via email with the meeting notes, recording, and action items. **ACTION**
 - Gavin White added helenperilloux@gmail.com and jthefleener@gmail.com to the email list.
- These comments and questions in the virtual meeting chat were not addressed before the end of the meeting:
 - Francine Bibbens commented: When it storms, the Francis Street and Webster Avenue intersection floods really bad. I think the catch basins need replaced.
 - Helen Perilloux asked: Maintenance like of the sidewalks, parking area, and surrounding brush/poison ivy encroaching on field?