

SIMONE COLLINS
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
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MEETING NOTES

Project: **Mercer County Dam Site 21
Master Plan**

Project No.: **18063.10**

Location: **Boathouse at Mercer County
Lake-Cove Room, 334 Post Rd,
West Windsor, NJ 08550**

Meeting Date/
Time: **02.19.2019
3:30-5:00 PM**

Re: **Focus Group Meeting 1**

ATTENDEES:

Melissa Barley, Simone Collins (SC)

Kathleen Browne, Rider University

Anthony Cucchi, Mercer County Park
Commission

Daniel Druckenbrod, Rider University

Leslie Floyd, County of Mercer

Lisa Fritzingler, County of Mercer

Heidi Furman, Mercer County Special
Services School District

Kris Gould, Mercer County Special
Services School District

Angelo Hall, Hamilton Resident

Ed Hume, Resident

Kelly Klein, Princeton Hydro

Sarah Leeper, Simone Collins

Wendy Mager, Friends of Princeton Open
Space

Peter Simone, Simone Collins

NOTES:

1. Leslie Floyd welcomed attendees to the meeting, and Peter gave a brief presentation about the project background, general site analysis, and a photo tour of the site. He then opened the meeting up for questions, and a brainstorming session.
2. It was asked if the decision to improve the park was set in stone. Peter Simone said the County sees the park as a resource they want to manage well and make available to more County residents. It is possible to not change anything on the site, but the County's goal is to the make the site more accessible and available to the community.
3. The existing trails in the park are informal, beaten earth paths created by hikers, deer, etc. on the dam breast and through parts of the park.
4. A current inventory of birds and other wildlife on site does not exist, but Princeton Hydro will do a habitat and vegetation study of the site to determine what species may exist, and to advise protective measures to preserve or enhance habitats.
5. It was asked how site maintenance is currently funded. Peter Simone replied that the County currently maintains the site from its operating budget as a flood control location.
6. It was asked if there are government controls on wetland protection. Peter Simone confirmed that these restrictions exist and pointed out these locations on the Park map. Nothing will

happen to change these areas, except possibly a boardwalk to allow visitors to pass through the wetlands. More exact wetland boundaries will be mapped by Princeton Hydro in the next few months.

7. It was asked if existing pollutants flowing onto the site can be determined. Peter Simone replied that some pollutants will be determined by a nonpoint source pollution loading study. Sarah Leeper said the team will also be completing a stormwater assessment to determine Best Management Practices for the site.
8. It was stated that the site is bisected by the Keith Line, a boundary established in the 1700s to delineate east and west New Jersey. The historic boundary is the same line (or close to) the existing line between West Windsor and Hamilton Townships. An attendee stated that he would send SC this information.
9. It was said that the Lawrence Township Trails, Open Space, and Stewardship Advisory Committee may be interested as a partner for this project. Peter Simone said this would be a great partnership and asked for contacts from this Committee.
10. It was asked how to control ticks in the park to reduce cases of tick-borne diseases in the County. It was said that there has been an increase reports of Lone Star Tick bites in Monmouth County. Peter Simone replied that there are dangers and risks to visiting parks. The decision to go to a park belongs to the park users. Risks such as tick-borne diseases are huge problems that cannot be solved with this master plan but can be managed with proper maintenance and perhaps by habitat preservation and enhancement.
11. There was a concern that an increase in park activity would disrupt existing wildlife in the park, and add to the wildlife populations (deer, fox, etc.) in developed areas. Peter Simone said that deer and wildlife management is an on-going, county-wide concern. The County has begun to try and manage deer populations in Mercer County Park.
12. It was said that there should be areas dedicated for certain groups of species, where humans are not encouraged to go.
13. It was said that in a boardwalk that extends 50-100 feet into the water would be great for birding.
14. It was said that the park should be left essentially as-is and utilized for environmental study purposes. Studies could include best stormwater management techniques, removing nutrient loads, etc. Kids can visit the site use to learn about ecosystems. The educational areas could be designed to have less exposure to ticks via means of measures such as elevated boardwalks.
15. It was suggested that fishing access areas be created off of the berm near the dam breast. Maybe create safer access to fishing areas?
16. It was stated that park improvements may attract more people to that park. It was asked if the park could be maintained as preserved open space, with no public access. Peter Simone said that the park could become a preserved open space, but the County's view is that the Park was bought and maintained by taxpayers, and the County wants to provide a quality park, and maintain the park's resources. There will not be active recreation, but the goal of these meetings is to try and determine the best level of use for the site.
17. Peter Simone said the site's natural resources are already compromised because of the dam, but site is still ecologically rich. Even if left as is, the site needs to be maintained to manage invasive species, and pollutants.
18. Regarding long term management of the site, Peter Simone suggested that plants that now grow south or New Jersey, such as in North Carolina might do well at this site in the future as

the climate warms. This goal for the master plan is to plan for the for the long-term sustainable, future use of the site.

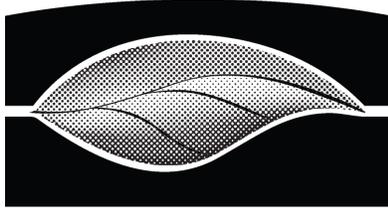
19. It was said that the Grounds for Sculpture should be referenced as inspiration for nature-themed artwork. Andrew Goldsworthy's work, which studies colors and textures found in nature to form interesting sculptures and artwork, is an example of artwork that would be great at this site.
20. Consider old growth forests and forest/field boundaries for creating successional habitat for birds.
21. It was suggested to consider the costs of a park improvements, or a nature lab-type facility through maintenance and security. Peter Simone said that there will be a cost to the taxpayer for improvements.
22. Park ecological study areas might be fenced off, but these areas not usually attractive for vandalism. An attendee responded that there are sometimes private grants, or partnership matches available for nature studies. These programs have taken place at Baldpate Mountain and Mercer Meadows.
23. Peter Simone said that this presentation can be added to the County webpage. There will also be a web-based survey available for everyone to take.
24. It was said that the park should simply be an informal "wild" area with informal trails made trails by people walking the site, instead of paved trails. This type of park would be unique for the County. Peter asked attendees how much access to provide for people with mobility issues. It was said that Mercer County Park is an ADA accessible park. Dam Site 21 should be more like a nature preserve.
25. It was asked that the what the ADA law requires for access to the site. Peter Simone said the ADA law is purposefully vague, stating access should be reasonable. No one should be excluded from experiencing the site. SC recommends at least some ADA access because it is the right thing to do for inclusivity, and it protects against liability. One benefit is that the site is mostly flat, so ADA access would be easy to achieve for most of the site.
26. It was said that the history of invasive species management seems poor. Let nature compete for itself. An attendee replied that New Jersey has managed loosestrife well.
27. Regarding wildlife management, Peter Simone said the goal for the park is to maintain the site's natural resources and mitigate negative effects as much as possible.
28. It was said that open space creates corridors for wildlife. Maybe this project could be catalyst for other municipalities to create forested areas along Miry Run for wildlife habitats.

This report represents the Professional's summation of the proceedings and is not a transcript. Unless written notice of any correction or clarification is received by the Professional within ten days of issue, the report shall be considered factually correct and shall become part of the official project record.

Sincerely,
SIMONE COLLINS, INC.
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE



Melissa Barley,
Staff Landscape Architect



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BRAINSTORMING ACTIVITY

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Re: **Focus Group Meeting 1**

NOTES:

1. After a brief introductory presentation, Peter Simone opened the meeting up for brainstorming about goals, facts, concepts, and partners for the park. The responses were as follows.
2. Goals:
 - Maintain the Resource
 - Determine Park Carrying Capacity
3. Facts:
 - Capital to Coast Trail (mown)
 - Earthen Trails
 - Existing Watershed (Central Delaware Watershed)
 - Wetlands
 - Existing Non-Point Source Pollutant Loading studies
 - Keith Boundary
 - Flooding Basements
 - People are using site however they want
 - Large deer population
 - Lone star tick in NJ
 - Park visitors currently self-select routes
 - Scope includes Wetland Delineation
 - Existing Trails in area D&R Canal
 - Successful Loosestrife management in state
 - Limited "wild" areas in park systems

- Conservation District Has Outdoor Classroom
- Healthy Soils = Carbon Sequestration
- Land Management Cost
- Nurseries Industry sell Native and Invasive Plants
- Development pushes wildlife into residential areas
- Site is "Island" Habitat for Wildlife

4. Concepts:

- Meet ADA standards within reason
- Create degrees of Access into site
- Shade Structure / Pier on the Water
- Gondola / Zipline over Sensitive Habitat
- Nature-Themed Artwork
- Park as Nature Laboratory
- Study the Change in Land from Farm to Forest
- Develop Learning Opportunities: Kindergarten to Doctorate
- Protect the sensitive habitats
- Manage Deer Population in County
- Honor "Old" Forest and Forest/Field Boundaries.
- Improve Successional Habitat
- Reforest Agriculture Fields
- Use Native Plants
- Connect/Enhance Wildlife Corridors
- Where does the Wildlife Go?
- Invasive Species Management
- Do not disturb habitat
- Leave the park alone
- Address tick borne disease
- Do not build park
- Use Hamilton-Trenton Marsh as a precedent
- Create a Wildlife Preserve
- Make Needs Assessment for County Parks available for review
- The More wild the fewer visitors
- Limit Site Regulation to create wildness
- Let Nature Compete for Itself

- Plan for Security Cost

5. Partners:

- New Jersey Conservation Foundation
- Lawrence Township Open Space
- Mercer County Soil Conservation District

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Sincerely,
SIMONE COLLINS, INC.
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa Barley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Melissa Barley,
Staff Landscape Architect