

Attending: Michael Timm, Keith Schulenburg, Rick Kaiser, Betsy Abert, Jan Marsh, Don Lawson, Jody Johnson, Lynn Crawford, Jan Schumacher, Rob Vajagich, Jackie Benka, Debby Pizur

We discussed the Cudahy Gun Club and the environmental pollution created on the property it leases from the county. The issue was raised in a recent meeting with Parks Director John Dargle. In an e-mail from Guy Smith, Milwaukee County Chief of Operations, he said Director Dargle is informed and concerned about the problem. Not much more information was given about that meeting, but we hope that a meeting will be arranged soon with the club to address the club's responsibilities. We are curious about the possibility of lead shot (sold legally) still being used even though we think its use is restricted over bodies of water. Who enforces that? Could the DNR test for that? Are city or county ordinances against littering being broken? Is shotgun wadding available with paper instead of plastic casings? Other organizations may be concerned about the pollution as well, such as the Alliance for the Great Lakes, and Dr. Julie Kinzleman, from UW-Oshkosh, who is studying watershed issues affecting the Great Lakes. The Friends of Grant Park need to make their concerns known, with letters/e-mails to county officials and parks. We decided to wait 30 more days for parks' officials to make known their course of action.

Recent tree plantings in Grant Park have raised questions among visitors and neighbors. The cost of the tree stock was covered by a \$50,000 grant to the county. Volunteers and Americorps helped with the installation.

Brian Russart (Milwaukee County Parks Natural Areas Coordinator) explains:

The new tree planting at Grant Park is a reforestation project that achieves a number of the Park Dept.'s conservation goals for Grant Park. It focuses on reducing the amount of turf grass that is being mowed by staff and helps implement Milwaukee County's Greenprint Program which seeks to reduce the County's environmental footprint. The tree planting - all native species - accomplishes this by reducing the amount of carbon going into the atmosphere by eliminating mowing. As well, it will remove carbon from the atmosphere as the trees grow. The second and equally important goal of the tree planting was to provide vital migratory habitat for wildlife traveling along the lake front corridor in spring and fall. Tree and shrub species were chosen for their direct benefit to wildlife. Some of them provide flowers for pollinators such as Monarch butterflies and many of our native bees, while others will provide berries or nuts for songbirds and mammals. Another long-term benefit will be the stabilization of the bluffs at Grant Park. A great deal of erosion currently occurs because large amounts of groundwater flows uninterrupted and without uptake by the expanse of lawn through the park to the lake side bluffs. This ground water saturates the soil, and due to gravity, causes the bluffs to slough towards the lake. As the reforestation project matures, the trees will take up storm water from the soil and reduce the amount flowing to the bluffs. This will help minimize soil saturation and, secondarily, bluff erosion.

Other additional projects that park users may notice next year will be the addition of two more rain gardens. One was planted in the tennis court parking lot in 2013, while the second will comprise the planting of an acre prairie near the service yard. All of the restoration locations were chosen with feedback from Parks staff, the Grant Park Friends, and community groups such as the South Milwaukee High School who uses the park for X-country meets.

In all cases, these were turf areas that were not used very often by the public and by reducing the turf grass mowing, we can focus our limited staff resources on keeping the rest of the park looking great.

Betsy Abert will meet with Brian Russart and Lea Cutsforth of the Milwaukee County Parks dept. on Jan. 23rd to discuss illustrated educational signs to accompany last summer's slope restoration and upcoming rain garden project. The two main points should be about preventing erosion, and the importance of ravine ecosystems and what they mean to water quality and habitat protection. The funds to pay for a couple of these signs are covered by the grant we received in 2012 from Southeastern Wisconsin Watersheds Trust and its Water Quality Mini-Grant Program. Michael Timm expressed interest in also attending the meeting. Anyone else who is interested is encouraged to attend.

Due to icy stairs in the Seven Bridges ravine, the stairway has been closed because Parks staff is unable to guarantee safety during the winter months. Consequently, some of our slope planting is being trampled! Unfortunately, we could not think of a workable solution.

Another eagle scout project was completed this past fall. A new kiosk next to area 1 parking lot looks awesome. It boasts two comfy park benches under a gable roof, and has bulletin board areas. We have been invited to post FOGP information there. Suggestions for this include pictures of birds sighted in the park (most recently a juvenile bald eagle!), and open invitations to visitors to attend our monthly meetings. A flyer for our March fundraiser seems obvious!

Plans are shaping up for the Lake Michigan Trail Marathon, from Longrun Athletics, LLC. The race will be held Aug. 31st, or Sept. 6th or 7th. Runners must stay on the trails or be disqualified. Registration opens Feb. 1st. We will need several volunteers to cover this event. More details will be sent as they are determined.

The last item of business was our March fundraiser, Pullin' O' the Green Irish dinner party, changed this year back to a Saturday night. This year it is Saturday, March 15th. Frustration at lack of organized preparation in recent years was expressed, though meeting attendees graciously offered to take a bigger part in food ordering and preparation. One of our members has submitted a request for donation from local stores to help with the materials and food. The clubhouse has been reserved. The band, the Garlic Mustard Pickers, has put us on their gig calendar. We need lots of participation from as many members as possible to make this event a success. There will be a planning meeting on January 23rd at 7 p.m., Jody Johnson's home, 1000 Lake Drive, South Milwaukee, (phone 764-7262). Among the details being decided: menu, publicity, tickets, beer, raffle items, door to door flyer distribution, etc. ( A follow up meeting may be scheduled for Feb. 27th as well, if needed).

Our next meeting is on February 13th.

Submitted by  
Jody Johnson, member  
Friends of Grant Park