

September 21, 2020

The Honorable Elizabeth M. Hewitt, Chairman
Prince George's County Planning Board
14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive
Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772

RE: Proposed Fiscal Year 2022 Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission Budget

Dear Chairman Hewlett:

The Bowie City Council respectfully offers the following comments regarding the FY 2022 Proposed Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission Budget. Thank you for your review and consideration of these issues of importance to the City of Bowie and its residents.

PARKS & RECREATION

- A. Multi-Generational Community Recreation Center – The City recommends construction of the next Multi-Generational Community Recreation Center in Area 3. This regional facility could be constructed on the Commission owned Green Branch property, located between Ball Park Drive and Mill Branch Road. The City conducted an indoor facility analysis in 2013. The results demonstrated indoor aquatics as the greatest need, with a need for additional courts as well. The City requests that indoor competitive lanes as well as recreational splash pad amenities are included in design and construction. Basketball courts should also be included in the final design and construction.
- B. Green Branch Park – As highlighted above, the City requests that the next Multi-generational Community Recreation Center be constructed at this site, including both aquatics and court-based services.
- C. Sandy Hill Park – Due to budgetary constraints, the Commission has removed field lighting from the Sandy Hill Park redesign. The City continues to support M-NCPPC in this park redesign, and requests that additional funding be budgeted for installation of athletic field lights.
- D. Foxhill Park – The City continues to support the conversion of Fields 1, 2 and 4 to a baseball diamond with a base path distance of 70'. This improved field should have permanent fencing as well as field lights. This park has field lights on baseball field #3 as well as the tennis courts.
- E. Horsepen Branch Trailhead on WB&A Trail – There are no restrooms along the Bowie sections of the WB&A trail. The City encourages planning for a restroom / rest stop for bicyclists. Budgeting and construction should occur prior to the Patuxent River crossing

being completed, and will be an attractive and useful amenity for bikers on the WB&A trail. The Patuxent River crossing should be a showcase for the Commission.

- F. Watkins Regional Park – The Park Master Plan recommends including a Natural Exploration Area. The City continues to support this aspect of the Regional Park’s development.
- G. Outdoor Water Related Recreation – The City is interested in seeing the Commission install splash pads or spray pads on some parkland located within the City. These amenities exist at other Commission facilities, such as at Largo Town Center. Using these types of water features helps to activate public spaces, which is a goal of the City’s Sustainability Plan.

ALLEN POND PARK

Allen Pond Park is the City of Bowie’s premier park and is the City’s largest active park serving the community with a wide variety of amenities. The City Council is respectfully requesting the consideration of a larger annual contribution from M-NCPPC to maintain the park which serves the recreational needs of Bowie residents and is open to and receives many residents of Prince George’s County.

The City of Bowie currently receives \$101,700 each year from M-NCPPC to support the costs of maintaining Allen Pond Park. We appreciate your recognition of this asset as a regional amenity. For the City of Bowie, it annually spends just under \$500,000 in operational costs in Allen Pond Park. Capital expenses for synthetic turf, field lighting, amphitheater, irrigation, pump station, turf management, playgrounds, and other infrastructure add another \$800,000 to \$900,000 per year. In Bowie’s budget there is just over \$8 million in infrastructure in the Capital Improvement Plan.

In a June 2018 survey of organized recreational sports groups in the City of Bowie, it was learned that Bowie resident participation in field sports is 47.5%. The remainder are regional users. This data indicates the strong draw of Bowie recreational amenities for meeting regional recreation needs.

Please let this letter serve as the City of Bowie’s request that M-NCPPC annually contribute 50% of the operational expenses, for FY 2022 \$250,000 is projected. In addition, an annual contribution be made to the City of Bowie for Capital expense of \$425,000.

With M-NCPPC’s goals of providing an award winning system of parks and creating recreational experiences that enhance quality of life of all individuals, the City of Bowie appreciates your consideration of this funding request in helping Allen Pond Park in meeting them.

TRAILS

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to make regional trail system improvements, particularly the WB & A Trail crossing of the Patuxent River. We understand the river crossing trail is 100% designed and is expected to go to construction in 2021. It will likely be advertised this fall. City residents are excited about the imminent connection between the WB & A Trail and the Anne Arundel County trail connecting Odenton to the Two Rivers development.

The City asks for your leadership and participation in trail planning activities for the following specific projects, which are mostly located beyond the City limits:

- A. The Bowie Byway – Natural Surface Trails – The City is very interested in advancing the recommendations of its approved Trails Master Plan, which establishes a main north-south corridor through the City known as “The Bowie Byway”, connecting the Bowie Heritage Trail system in the north to the M-NCPPC Master Plan trail alignment planned within the new South Lake development. The Trails Master Plan recommends two natural surface trail alignments: (1) along the Collington Branch between South Lake and Old Town Bowie and, (2) along the Patuxent River between Governor Bridge Road and the WB & A river crossing.

Many participants in the City’s public input workshops emphasized the need for natural surface trails for walking and jogging, with equestrian and mountain bicycling also allowed. We understand the Natural and Historical Resources Division manages nature programs and might take the lead in exploring the potential for natural surface trail construction in these areas, especially the proposed Collington Branch trail and the Pollinator Trail. We look forward to an opportunity to partner with you to make these recreational trails a reality. The City further supports the Parks Department’s efforts to assemble a trail system along the Patuxent River, particularly in the area between Governor Bridge Road and the Melford development, which is one of the priority loop systems identified in the Trails Master Plan.

- B. Collington Branch Stream Valley Park/Hall Road Sidewalk – This is a project the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) is leading. The project includes construction of pedestrian facilities in front of Commission property along Hall Road between the CSX railroad tracks and Pointer Ridge Drive. The pedestrian improvement will provide safe access to the County Library at Hall Station. In 2016, SHA completed construction of the segment between Hall Station Drive and the CSX railroad tracks. The M-NCPPC property located between the railroad tracks and Pointer Ridge Drive is a key segment of the overall system, since it will connect the Pointer Ridge neighborhood to the Hall Road sidewalk. SHA stated that planning and engineering funding is being pursued for this segment, but their funding sources are highly competitive Statewide. It is critical that M-NCPPC keep the \$396,000 commitment in the CIP to help encourage SHA to fund the construction of the much-needed pedestrian link between the CSX railroad tracks and Pointer Ridge Drive, and eventually to MD 214.
- C. Bowie MARC Heritage Trail Underpass of MD 197 – Funding within the M-NCPPC Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is requested for construction of a pedestrian underpass under MD 197 (outside the City limits) to connect Lemon’s Bridge Road to the MARC Train Station at Bowie State University. Concept plans and a preliminary cost estimate were completed by a consultant funded by a Transportation-Land Use Connections (TLC) grant from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. This connection is part of the Bowie Heritage Trail, and it will provide off-road access from City parkland and Old Town Bowie to the rail station and proposed mixed-use, transit-oriented development. The City’s Jericho Park Trail consists of a 2,200-foot long hiker-biker trail, including a new trail segment across M-NCPPC parkland. Per the memorandum of understanding, reimbursement of up to \$100,000 from the Commission for the Jericho Park Trail is expected. Construction is expected to begin in FY 2021.

- D. A-44 Greenway Trail – The City is also interested in a partnership with M-NCPPC to design and build a north-south trail system in the Church Road corridor, using lands dedicated to public use from the now-obsolete Inter-County Connector (A-44). The City would like to explore the possibility of trail construction on M-NCPPC property between Dolphin Way in Woodmore Estates and Dunwood Crossing Drive in Woodmore Highlands. The City's 2019 Trails Master Plan Update did not focus on the Church Road area, so this potential project would be in addition to that effort. The A-44 trail could connect to Church Road Park and the trail system going down through Pin Oak Parkway to Hall Road. It also could connect to Mount Oak Road, which needs an east-west trail separated from the road. There could be a connection from Woodmore Highlands into the Bowie Town Center near the dog park (railroad permission and crossing required). The system could also connect northward using local streets and Church Road. Since so much of this system would require County leadership, guidance and funding, it was left out of the City's Trails Master Plan to be pursued separately. The City would certainly be a major partner in this endeavor.
- E. Pedestrian Bridge over MD 214 – A project should be added to the M-NCPPC CIP to construct a new pedestrian bridge over MD 214 (outside the City limits). A recommended location for a future bridge is on M-NCPPC land situated between Hall Road East and Pennsbury Drive, on the north side of MD 214, and County owned land in the South Lake (Karrington) development, on the south side of MD 214. A feasibility study, funded by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' Transportation and Land Use Connections Program, is already underway.

We appreciate the opportunity to share the City of Bowie's perspective on these issues and thank you for your thoughtful consideration of them as we work with the Commission on projects of mutual interest in the Bowie community.

Sincerely,

Bowie City Council

Timothy J. Adams

Mayor

Cc: The Honorable Todd Turner