

Sandman Property Vision Planning Meeting
Saturday, February 23, 2008
3:00 p.m.

Town Council/Staff Representatives

Michelle James, Town Administrator
Jim Dugan, Mayor Pro Tem
Dean Lambeth, Commissioner
Barry Nelder, Commissioner

Committee Representatives Attending

Bob Fitzsimons – Parks & Recreation Advisory
Nancy Brigham – Parks & Recreation Advisory
Eric Vann – Storm Water
Herb Wiebe – Beautification

Citizens Attending

Craig Brigham, Bonnie Dodd, Kailee Dodd, Beth Johnson, Daniel Farriss, Bill Farriss, Sondra Nelder, Mary Beth Whitton, Jerry Haire, Karen Nadeau, G.T. Nadeau, Jacob Nadeau, Nicole Nadeau, Judy Larrick, Jill Davenport, Michael Davenport, Eva Grayson Davenport.

Bob Fitzsimons, Chairman of the Kure Beach Parks and Recreation Committee, welcomed everyone to the Sandman Vision Planning Meeting. He stated that the purpose of the meeting was to obtain ideas from the public about how the Sandman Property should be used. He turned over the program to Commissioner Dean Lambeth who gave a brief history of how the Town acquired the Sandman Property.

The Beautification Committee has worked on an idea for using the property for almost two years. Committee member Herb Wiebe showed a presentation on their proposal. He described using the property as a Maritime/Rain Garden with indigenous plants; something similar to Bald Head Island. The pathway wouldn't be dense and would be easy to travel through. He explained that a rain garden would help with the storm water run-off. In a rain garden, water becomes ground water in a matter of minutes after it rains, therefore the area should not attract mosquitoes. The property would contain many native trees, bushes and plants. It would more than likely be designed by a professional landscaper who would take into serious consideration the grading and drainage of the property. Beautification proposed for the project would be funded mostly by grants.

Residents who attended the meeting made the following comments about the presentation:

- Concerns about plants in the garden that deer like to eat.
- Density of the vegetation

- Beach Walk property gains a lot of water off of this property. It currently doesn't drain properly. Beach Walk should be considered and consulted on anything that is completed on this property, such as grading.
- Will the garden attract mosquitoes?
- Would this be a rain forest, a maritime forest, or an indigenous plant garden? Attendee feels very strongly that we are losing our native plants and trees. It would be easy to plant native trees which would drink water and serve our area well.
- Is it necessary to bring in the state and professional designers. Ccan't we do this ourselves?
- How is the renovation going to be funded?

Chairman Fitzsimons transitioned into the brainstorming portion of the vision planning meeting and asked for specific ideas on how the property should be used. The following were comments by the audience:

1. Should not have benches to encourage people and kids to come and hang out all day and all night on the property.
2. Only entry way is through Kure Dunes Village. Need proper access points into the property so people do not go through adjacent homes' properties.
3. A border (tree line) around the property would be helpful. This would help block out the noise level if children and adults continue to play on the property.
4. Property should be designed to accommodate a football, soccer field or a large play area for children. (Another walking area is not needed. The beach is for walking.)
5. Three adjacent properties have water drainage problems.
6. Share the use of the property with children, plants, tree buffer zone.
7. Survey shows that residents want an active place where children and adults can play. It is large enough to have a meandering walking path, with native trees, and still have a large green space for adults to throw a frisbee and for children to play.
8. Loves the idea of native plants and green space. More in favor of small neighborhood area for children to play along with plantings, trees, etc.
9. Range of kids who play at the current property is age 4 to 42. This is another reason to use the property as a neighborhood park.
10. Property is currently unsuitable for playing sports (sand spurs, etc.). It would be suited for playing sports if the property was improved. Transporting your kids to Carolina Beach. We don't play at the park in Kure Beach.
11. If it becomes a park, it comes under the Town. Then, the public will have access to the park.
12. If it's a park, will you make parking available? Will lighting be provided?
13. If I lived there, I would be strongly opposed to building a park because of the noise level. Kids should be playing at the Town Park. Parks and Recreation should be improving that park. If it's a park, it means people need a place to park, then you have parking issues. A maritime forest would not thrive if children are able to play in it.

14. Beautification never meant for the Sandman Property to become a park. Storm water run-off may be improved if trees are planted there.
15. I think we can do both; a park and a forest or rain garden of some kind.
16. Kids have been playing on the property. There is a no trespassing sign currently there. This park would be out of the way and more of a neighborhood park.
17. We purchased our house because of the openness of this property so that we could see our children playing on it.
18. I do not like the rain garden idea.
19. Why do we have to do anything? Can't we keep it the way it is?
20. I say take advantage of the resources we have for this property and improve it.
21. What about a buffer area and a green space? We need an illustration.
22. Create a 75 feet wide by 100 feet deep green space and design a buffer zone with trees to complement it.
23. At least 30 kids in the neighborhood play on the property. Also, grandchildren come in at different times during the year. At any one time there are about 7 to 10 children who are playing on the property during the day.
24. Storm water ordinances state to build green. Beach Walk needs to address the water drainage situation with the Town. This property isn't going to solve all these problems. I don't think we are talking about a park in the true sense of a "park."
25. Can the community obtain a 25-year easement, granted by the town? Then, we can go after grants to fund it.
26. I want something that is going to work for everyone. Don't want to have to reconfigure the area again when and if it doesn't work (green space, buffer area, etc.)
27. Town Council will ultimately make the decision about the property. Beautification and Recreation will recommend an idea from this session.
28. It's a rare, precious resource to have three or four lots together. It could be a lot nicer.
29. It could be sold if there was enough money.
30. Birthday parties could be held there.
31. Leave a space for people to walk their pets.
32. There are just as many adults that use the area as kids.
33. Arbor or gazebo with picnic tables would be a great idea.
34. Police will need to patrol the area so that people would not hang out there after-hours.
35. Water issues have to be straightened out before anything is completed on this property. Can't impact adjacent property owners.
36. Wrightsville Beach has a beautiful garden space that garden clubs maintain. The same thing could be done on the Sandman Property.
37. An arboretum would be nice. Could have sponsors contribute money to plant tree plantings, benches, etc. Use it as a memorial garden and plant trees in memory of someone.
38. A summary that was written by a UNCW Professor for Marine Science was read. It states that natural vegetation takes in millions of gallons of rain and storm water.

39. We already have a park, but what we are severely lacking is a green space.
Everything - trees and plants - on this island is being torn down.
40. Once it becomes public, it is open to everyone.
41. Right now the same people can use this property. Not much would change if we improve it green or otherwise?
42. The intent of a Maritime Forest would be passive, not active.
43. I think we are ALL talking about an active green space.
44. The front could be a park while the back could be a forest.
45. Originally the property was proposed as green space. If we have UNCW help with this area, they would use the property as an experimental property for the forestry, soil, etc. This should NOT happen.
46. What is the timeframe?

Chairman Fitzsimons wrapped up the meeting by stated that the Beautification committee and the Parks & Recreation Advisory committee will meet together and present their recommendations to Council at the May Council Meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.