


**CITY OF GREENBELT
City Clerk's Office
25 Crescent Road
Greenbelt, Maryland 20770**

Memorandum

Date: March 7, 2008
TO: City Council
VIA: Michael McLaughlin
Fr: Kathleen Gallagher 
RE: "Attick Park/Lake Public Forum (PRAB/APB)" on list of Council work sessions for later scheduling

At the chairs work session with Council, Lola Skolnik asked what the above item was and whether it still needed to be on the list of meetings to be scheduled. Staff is still evaluating whether this is still needed in some form. In the meantime, however, I wanted to answer the question of "What is it?"

At Council's June 11, 2001, meeting, Jean Newcomb presented letters enumerating a number of her concerns about Greenbelt Lake, including the need to re-establish a natural visual buffer between the lake path and the houses and yards abutting the path. A response was made by a Lakeside resident and PRAB member, Marc Siegel, who enumerated a number of water quality issues that he believed to be of much greater import than the buffer question. Council referred the complaint and the response to PRAB and the APB.

PRAB's response (Report #01-5) was received at Council's July 16, 2001, meeting, at which time the public forum item was added to the list of work sessions to be scheduled. PRAB said it was not ready to make a recommendation and that it might be useful for the City Council to hold a public forum on various Lake Park issues, including but not limited to the buffer issue, in order to get more information and a broader community response. Councilmember Alan Turnbull suggested that PRAB should convene this public forum rather than Council, but it was agreed to postpone further discussion until the Advisory Planning Board had also responded.

APB's report #01-04 was received at the September 10 meeting. Basically, it said any recommendation on lake quality or buffer questions would be premature until a detailed water quality/watershed study and a site map clarifying proper lines could be produced. APB suggested that when the results of these projects were available, they and PRAB could meet jointly to discuss them.

Obviously, there has been a great deal of water, so to speak, under this particular bridge since this item was placed on the list of meetings to be scheduled. The last time I asked if the public forum was still needed or could be pulled from the meetings list (probably a couple of years ago), I think Planning still thought some of these matters might require closure in terms of the public. It still needs to be determined whether there needs to be further staff, Council, or advisory board follow-up on this topic.

Attachments: PRAB and APB reports on buffer referral

Report #01-5
June 27, 2001

**PARK & RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD
REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL**

SUBJECT: Council Referral on Buddy Attick Park Letter Regarding Buffer Zone

At our regular meeting June 20, 2001, PRAB discussed the issue of a buffer zone at Buddy Attick Lake Park. Jean Newcomb, the author of the letters of complaint, and a number of Lakeside homeowners were present. Ms. Newcomb stated that she desired a natural visual buffer between the lake path and the houses and yards that back onto the lake. The homeowners stated that they are very conscious of the impact their yards have on the public space and maintain them well. They cited numerous issues at the lake park which they saw a far more urgent such as, safety, maintenance and water quality. (See attached PRAB meeting minutes for details of the discussion.) The Buddy Attick Park Master Plan adopted in 1992 did mention using vegetation to screen the houses along the path and at entrances to the park from the Lakeside community.

It seems clear from the discussion that there are no quick answers to the question of a buffer zone. Apparently, when the Lakeside homes were built, there was more a buffer between the path and the homes, because the lake path was merely a footpath. The City may have used whatever buffer zone existed when it widened the path to its present width.

In the course of the discussion, it was noted that neither PRAB nor the City has jurisdiction on private property. Therefore, any solutions involving private property will require the voluntary cooperation of the homeowners abutting the Lake path. Several of the homeowners at the meeting indicated that they would welcome ideas for vegetation that would screen the lake path from view, but not block their view of the lake.

PRAB did not feel ready to make a final report on this issue. It might be useful for City Council to have a public hearing on Lake Park issues to address the buffer zone issue, as well as the other issues raised (maintenance, safety, water quality.) The Lake Park Master Plan does address many of these issues and should be used as a reference in further discussions.



Respectfully submitted,
Lola Skolnik, Chairperson
Park & Recreation Advisory Board

**ADVISORY PLANNING BOARD
REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**Report No. 01-04
August 15, 2001**

SUBJECT: Council Referral on Buddy Attick Park Letter Regarding Buffer Zone

BACKGROUND: At the regular meeting of the City Council on June 11, 2001, Greenbelt resident Jean Newcomb presented a series of concerns that she has regarding the Greenbelt Lake path system. In particular, Ms. Newcomb voiced concerns regarding the clearing of property adjacent to the lake path and aesthetics, as they relate to the private yards that abut the lake path. Ms. Newcomb cited examples of how the removal of natural barriers (i.e. buffer zone) between the lake trail and private yards has been occurring over time.

In rebuttal to Ms. Newcomb's concerns, Greenbelt Resident Marc Siegel whose yard is one of those that had been cited unfavorably by Ms. Newcomb presented what he believes to be more significant problems at Buddy Attick Park: trash, beavers, erosion, algae and loss of vegetation along the shoreline.

City Council referred the issue to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and the Advisory Planning Board for discussion and action.

ANALYSIS: At our regular meeting on August 15, 2001, the Advisory Planning Board discussed the issue of the Lake Park Buffer zone. Ms. Newcomb, the author of the letters submitted to City Council and several Lakeside residents were present at the meeting. Mr. Comis, a Greenbelt resident and advocate of Ms. Newcomb's buffer zone concerns provided the APB with a pamphlet of information regarding buffer zones and their environmental significance.

Ms. Newcomb expressed to the Board her desire to have a natural visual buffer between the lake path and the houses and yards that back onto the lake. She shared her concerns that over the years property owners have been cutting trees and altering the character of the rear yards in a manner that detracted from the natural character of the lake, but more importantly was effecting the environmental quality of the lake. The board clarified with Ms. Newcomb that what was before the Board was not the issue of regulating aesthetics on private property, but rather the issue of how to enhance/protect the water quality of Greenbelt Lake. Several homeowners of properties that back to the lake path expressed objection to some of Ms. Newcomb's written comments, and expressed to the Board that they are very conscious of the impact their yards have on the Lake Park.

In the course of discussion, it became clear that everyone was in agreement that there does appear to be a water quality issue at the lake. However, without a detailed watershed study and a clear delineation of where private property ends and City property begins, it is

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too early in the game to begin developing solutions, including the implementation of a buffer zone. Any study should recognize that since the City does not have jurisdiction over private property, any solutions that involve private yards will require voluntary cooperation of the affected homeowners.

Until a detailed study is done of the water quality of Greenbelt Lake and a site plan showing the relationship of the Lake Path to privately owned property is completed, the Advisory Planning Board is not in a position to make a recommendation on the Buddy Attick Park Buffer Zone issue. Before the City takes any action, the problem needs to be clearly defined and analyzed and informed solutions need to be evaluated.

RECOMMENDATION: The Advisory Planning Board recommends that the City Council request a comprehensive water quality review of Greenbelt Lake, including looking at the watershed as a whole. The review should identify problems, recommend solutions and include a site plan showing property boundaries. The site plan will allow for further review of the buffer zone concept. Upon completion of the study, its findings and recommendations should be presented to the Advisory Planning Board and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board for comment. The presentation should include a joint meeting of the two advisory boards and a field trip to Buddy Attick Lake.

No formal vote was taken.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheldon Goldberg, Chair
Advisory Planning Board