



Geneva Cliffs Community Meeting

February 9, 2023

6:00 – 8:00pm via Zoom

Attendees:

Cathy Baker-Eclipse (BPRD Director of the Capital Plan)
Paul Sutton (BPRD Urban Wilds Program Manager)
Christine Brandao (BPRD Community Outreach Coordinator)
Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (Chief of Environment, Energy and Open Space)
Amy Linné (BPRD Project Manager for Geneva Cliffs Improvements)
Approximately 22 members of the community

Cathy Baker-Eclipse and Paul Sutton presented the Geneva Cliffs project starting with a site overview and project background. They shared that the Friends of Geneva Cliffs had requested a reclassification of Geneva Cliffs from an “urban wild” to a “park” and described the characteristics, programming and maintenance of the two types of sites.

Discussion Items

1. Eversource
 - a. Without the Eversource parcels the potential of Geneva Cliffs is limited. The open area of the site is on Eversource property; recreating that on COB land would mean cutting down trees.
 - b. Eversource used to let their land be used for events, but now they are insisting on the events being covered by insurance.
 - c. If the site is classified as a park, maybe Eversource would be more likely to sell.
 - d. If Eversource won't sell because they believe they may need the parcels in the future for improving the electrical grid, can we revisit the conversation with them about leasing the land?
 - e. The City should tell Eversource that they are not allowed to let their land go unused. If they're not going to use it, they need to maintain it, or offer a lease. This neighborhood needs these kinds of resources. It enhances the use of the Cliffs. The uses go hand in hand.
 - f. Why is the City maintaining Eversource property when we're no longer allowed to use it?
 - i. The City was doing maintenance when we were able to use that space. But if we're no longer able to use it then we may stop doing that maintenance.
 - g. If the City stops maintaining the Eversource property perhaps we could fine them if they don't do the maintenance. Bring in ISD.
 - h. We should focus on what we can do with what we own. We're wasting energy if we spend time on what's outside of our control and people will get discouraged.
 - i. If we demonstrate to Eversource that we are using the space in a positive way then they might be open to leasing out the land. Or we should consider getting insurance to use the land for events.



- j. BTD and BPDA have tried to say how Eversource uses their land. But even with zoning laws, utilities were outside of what the City was able to do. It might be worth figuring out what we can do on our own without their willingness to work with us.
2. Reclassification
- a. There have been some very special events at GC - drumming session, artist performance - unlike anything else, mystery, hidden but protected. Why make this like every other park? Can we keep it special and unique?
 - b. The wildness, flora and fauna, nature - people don't have access to these things elsewhere.
 - c. We would benefit from the maintenance of a park, but it doesn't have to be like Ronan Park. Participation in the neighborhood has diminished.
 - d. Space that is better cared for would be better for the neighborhood.
 - e. As a park, there would be enhanced maintenance and resources.
 - f. Park designation makes it easier to get in, more friendly to families and children. Lighting would be beneficial for safety. The space could be basically the same but with improved maintenance.
 - g. We want more maintenance because demographics change - people get old, or move away. There are cycles of neighborhood demographics, kids, families, neighborhood interest.
 - h. Will the design firm be engaged before a final decision is made on designation? Is it all or nothing?
 - i. It wouldn't have to be designated immediately. There can be parts of the property that are wildish, and no longer maintained by Urban Wilds, but these areas would likely need some volunteer attention since BPRD crews are limited in what type of maintenance they can do.
 - i. Concerned about environmental impact, cutting down trees. We shouldn't disrupt environmental habitat; we don't even know what habitat is in there.
 - j. Concerned that turning it into a park would mean losing trees. There are important reasons for keeping it as an urban wild. If we can turn it into a park and have the maintenance but basically keep it the same, then a park designation is okay. There's a real benefit to having a space that's wild.
3. Next Steps
- a. The City will be selecting a designer for the project in the next few weeks. Once the designer is under contract they will be presenting at additional community meetings and conducting community surveys.
 - b. The City will look into meeting with Eversource and discussing a lease or sale of their land; alternatively, the City will explore if there's a way to fund insurance for events on the Eversource parcels.
 - c. The City will look into the maintenance that was being done on the Eversource parcels and will consider discontinuing the maintenance of those parcels if we no longer have access.