



Martin Luther King Jr./Warren K. Branch Park Stormwater Project
Virtual Community Meeting Minutes
6:30 – 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 20, 2020

Rebecca Zito, Acting Senior Manager of Public Affairs at the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority (PWSA) welcomed meeting participants and explained the purpose of the meeting.

Each meeting participant introduced themselves and shared why they are interested in the project. Participants included local residents, community gardeners, and representatives from Uptown Partners, the Hill Community Development Corporation, Grow Pittsburgh, the City of Pittsburgh Planning Department, and the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh.

Meghan Simek, Project Manager at PWSA, and James Pritchard, Project Manager at Michael Baker International, presented an update on the purpose of the stormwater project and the progress made on the project design. The presentation and the following question and answer session were recorded and are available at https://youtu.be/ZpljnBrPv_c.

Comments in red below are status updates since the May 20, 2020 meeting.

Discussion:

- Question: You said you are storing half a million gallons of water up there?
 - Answer: Yes.
- Comment: Water weighs 7 pounds per gallon, and the hill is made of fill.
 - Answer: We did a geotechnical investigation on the project site, and most of that material is clay, which has a low permeability. We will not be infiltrating stormwater from the tanks into the ground.
- Question: Have you looked at our property deeds on Moultrie Street and what they say that area is?
 - Answer: No, we haven't looked at your property deeds.
- Question: Our property deeds say this is a landslide prone area. How are you going to release the stormwater? Into the hillside or in a pipe away from the area?
 - Answer: The stormwater in the project will go into the pipe sewer system, not over the hill above Moultrie Street. We plan to regrade the park to slope back away from the hill into the ditch on the other side, which we are also going to re-do. The stormwater in

that ditch will then go into the same sewer pipe it goes into now. The stormwater in the underground tanks in the field area will slowly discharge directly into the sewer pipe after the storm. The underground tanks will be locked down and water-tight, so that if the tanks are filled, any emergency overflow would happen up on the streets where stormwater is already routed now, rather than in the field.

- Comment: Stormwater washes down Kirkpatrick Street. There is no curb there.
 - Answer: It is possible that we could install a rolled curb that would allow access to the park while keeping the stormwater out.
- Question: We created a garden below the field and the hill. Will that garden be disturbed?
 - Answer: As of now, we do not plan on disturbing that garden. We are planning to avoid the garden by piping the stormwater through another area, but that plan may not be possible.
- Question: What is the budget for this project?
 - Answer: Meghan Simek said she didn't remember the exact budget amount for this project, but that she would double check and share the budget. **The current construction cost estimate is \$2.3 million.**
- Question: Has PWSA signed an agreement with the City to move forward with this project?
 - Answer: We do not have a signed agreement yet, but we have discussed this project with the City Department of Public Works (DPW) and they know our plans for the project. **PWSA is currently coordinating with DPW regarding the gardeners' requests in the January 8, 2020 letter and working to get a Project Agreement in place.**
- Question: What accountability is in place to ensure the garden is returned to the gardeners after the project? We are worried that returning the garden could be cut if the project has budget cuts.
 - Answer: We are responsible for restoring the site to existing conditions and replace everything in kind. We had asked gardeners for list of desired actions for putting the garden back together after construction, but we haven't received that list yet. **PWSA has since received the letter dated January 8, 2020 and is coordinating with DPW. Please see comments above.**
- Comment: We had created the list of actions for restoration of the garden and shared it with the City, because we want to include this list in the legal agreement with the City and PWSA, so that there is a legal requirement for accountability in case of budget issues. The City said they shared the list with PWSA.
 - Answer: We did not receive the list from the City, so we would appreciate it if the gardeners could send the list to us. We will set up a follow-up meeting with the

gardeners about the list. PWSA has since received the letter dated January 8, 2020 and is coordinating with DPW.

- Question: Are these designs open to input from the gardeners?
 - Answer: Yes, we are looking for feedback.
- Question: We know most of the soil is clay about 12 inches down. After construction, are you planning to place a topsoil and compost on the site to make it usable for gardening again?
 - Answer: We will strip and stockpile the topsoil during construction and return it to the field after construction to ensure we do not leave the gardeners with clay soil.
- Question: What about weeds growing from the soil? The grass from the former ballfield means there would be grass seeds in the soil that could sprout up after construction.
 - Answer: We will remove the grass before excavation, and it is possible that we could stockpile the different soils on the field in separate piles to prevent mixing.
- Comment: Stockpiling soil compacts it, which changes the soil health, so there will need to be added measures to control damages to the soil.
 - Answer: We are open to using any specifications the gardeners need for soil.
- Question: Why not use part of the field itself as a rain garden like the East Liberty Presbyterian Church and make it a beautiful community amenity and park?
 - Answer: We originally planned to include a small rain garden at the site, but soil tests during the geotechnical investigation showed that there is almost no infiltration in the soil. Without infiltration, any water stored in a rain garden would not drain, which would then present mosquito concerns. We discussed potentially reusing water from the rain garden for food gardening, but stormwater from the streets wouldn't be clean enough. We will be improving the existing ditch to make it more of a bioswale with plants to help convey stormwater, instead of holding water like a rain garden.
- Question: What will the bioswale be like for this project?
 - Answer: Since the soil tests show no infiltration at the site, this bioswale will not infiltrate any stormwater into the ground. Stormwater will drain off the upper hillside into the bioswale, and flow through the channel slowly. Usually bioswales are built to help remove pollutants from the stormwater, but in this project the bioswale will simply convey the stormwater away. We are planning to improve the existing ditch by designing for stormwater management with shapes and plants. We are considering a grassy swale or a planted swale, depending on stakeholder desires, maintenance, and budget. We want to make the bioswale look as natural as possible, and a planted swale would require less maintenance than mowing a grassy swale.

- Question: How will the stormwater get from the nearby housing developments to the tanks in the park?
 - Answer: The stormwater will be piped underground.
- Question: What about the stormwater on the streets?
 - Answer: We are not planning to install any special stormwater infrastructure on the street. We are just planning to capture the stormwater on the street and route it into the underground tanks in the park. Any stormwater that runs down Kirkpatrick Street currently will continue to go down Kirkpatrick Street.
- Question: We have discussed many times the proposal from the adopted EcoInnovation District Plan (and the Greater Hill District Master Plan) for trail access through this area. This is a major priority for City Planning and in the DOMI Bike+ Plan. We phased the conceptual design to include stairs and some portion of the trail as part of this project. Do you need us to resend that information?
 - Answer: We've seen the plan and incorporated it into our design. We are putting the 10-foot trail on the southern side of the park to connect Kirkpatrick Street to the driveway, which is going above and beyond replacing in kind. We have left the space available for the future trail coming from Bentley Drive.
- Question: Are the steps near the driveway still there?
 - Answer from community members: Yes. There is a stairway there, covered by the driveway, that could be fixed up.
- Question: Is there a plan to connect De Ruad Street to Kirkpatrick Street with a vehicular path around or alongside the field? Part of the problem with De Ruad Street has been that it is a dead end and there are not enough eyes on the street there.
 - Answer: No, the trail from Kirkpatrick Street to the driveway will just be for pedestrians and bikers, not for vehicles.
- Question: What maintenance will PWSA be responsible for at the park?
 - Answer: We will be maintaining our facilities. We expect that our maintenance of the underground detention facility and the bioswale will be minimal. Our understanding is that any maintenance inside the fence will be the gardeners' responsibility and any maintenance outside the fence (like mowing) will be the responsibility of DPW.
- Question: How will the parking lot be treated? Will it be landscaped?
 - Answer: The driveway will be gravel, so it will be permeable, and stormwater will infiltrate through it. We are reducing the impervious area on the site, and the driveway won't need stormwater management itself. Our understanding as of now is that the gravel driveway would be associated with the park and maintained by DPW. We will not

be planting on the driveway. We are only allowed to plant vegetation that manages stormwater, not general landscaping.

- Comment: It would be nice to have a more recreational bike path through the area.
- Question: How much maintenance would have to take place after the project is completed?
 - Answer: The bioswale will need to be maintained at the beginning and end of each season. The underground tanks will need to be inspected quarterly through one of the manholes. We are planning to install a sump to catch most of that debris before it gets into the underground tank system. We will inspect for trash, leaves, or debris. For our other bioswales installed in high traffic areas, we have to remove litter somewhat frequently, but we expect that this bioswale will have less litter since it is in a park.
- Question: How would making driveway and parking lot permeable affect this landslide prone neighborhood?
 - Answer: We are not planning to replace the entire driveway with gravel - just a small portion. It should reduce water going down the hillside. We are still in the 60% design phase right now, so we still have some things to figure out, but we might be able to redirect the surface water into a catch basin.
- Question: Do you know about the 15-foot-deep open well by the driveway? Or the other well on the east side of the driveway (De Ruad Street)? I am concerned about public safety.
 - Answer: We haven't inspected those areas of the neighborhood yet. We will have our surveyors search for those wells, which might be manholes, when they are out again in the next month. **Michael Baker International has since sent their survey crews to the area and could not locate this structure. It is believed that the "well" was an existing manhole that has since been covered over.**
- Question: Snakes live in the grassy area. Is the project going to ruin the snake habitat?
 - Answer: We don't anticipate any changes to the snake habitat from before to after construction.
- Question: Have these underground tanks been used elsewhere in the city? What is the expected lifespan of these tanks and what is the material?
 - Answer: I am not sure if other organizations have installed these HDPE pipes elsewhere in the city. We have installed different modular tanks that look like plastic milk crates, called R-Tanks at our Centre and Herron, Hillcrest, and Wightman Park stormwater projects. R-Tanks are more expensive. These 5-foot pipes are like storm sewer pipes, not traditional water tanks. These HDPE pipes have an expected lifespan of at least 50 years. Their material is durable even in acidic soils, unlike some other types of pipes. Pipes made more sense than R-Tanks in this situation, because we aren't infiltrating any stormwater into the ground, and the large openings within the pipes allow more storage.

- Question: Will maintenance on the underground storage pipes disturb the replaced garden?
 - Answer: We are planning to include two access points (like manholes) for maintaining the underground pipes, to avoid any digging and disturbance to the garden.
- Question: Can the water freeze in the underground storage pipes?
 - Answer: We don't expect water to freeze in the storage pipes, since they will be underground with at least 2 feet of soil on top of the pipes, insulating them from cold temperatures.
- Question: How do you keep silt and small particles from filling and clogging the underground pipe storage? Is there a method for evacuating the solids from these pipes if they clog?
 - Answer: We will have a sump upstream of the pipes to capture material and prevent it from getting into the pipes. We will be able to vacuum out the material in the sump easily. Any material that sneaks through the sump will settle out of the water near the entrance of the pipe storage system. We plan to install an access point right by that entrance so that we can jet and vacuum out any built-up debris.