

Q&A from Ovid Hazen Wells Park Community Meeting

September 13, 2023



This document contains responses to input received during the virtual community meeting to provide an update on the status of the project and inform residents about upcoming construction at Ovid Hazen Wells Recreational Park. Parks staff reviewed the questions and comments posted during the meeting and organized them by topic area below.

If you find your question was not answered or if you need additional information, please contact Brian Lewandowski, Project Manager, at Brian.Lewandowski@montgomeryparks.org

PROJECT BACKGROUND

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS – Planning Recommendations and Project Approvals:

Q: Ovid Hazen Welles is a neighborhood park. The carousel and skate park make it a destination park. The neighbors do not want this amount of activity behind our back yards. We need to see the data that there was a demand for this. Can you share the data? Is it credible?

Q: The roads around the park cannot support additional traffic. The Clarksburg Master Plan is the document that should be referred to. Was the skate part in the Master Plan? Why is the Clarksburg Master Plan being ignored?

Q: Carousel is not appropriate for this Park.

Q: Please also make sure it is clear to the attendees that the carousel is required to move as part of the deed of the land. It was required in the 1980s before the HOAs and all CTC, AH, and CV neighborhoods existed. As part of the planning committee in the early 2000s, I recommended an aquatic center

Q: This was approved almost 10 years ago...

ANSWER:

The current plans for the park are supported by approved and adopted area and park master plans. The 1994 Clarksburg Master Plan and Hyattstown Special Study Area identifies Ovid Hazen Wells as a “Recreational Park”, which is a large park (50 acres or more) that serves a variety of County-wide recreational needs. The master plan identifies a carousel as one of the potential future facilities and references the park master plan for additional information. The June 1995 Master Plan for Ovid Hazen Wells Recreational Park was most recently updated and approved in 2014. The plan recommended the location of the carousel off Skylark Road within the Active Recreation Area of the park and to be supported by additional active amenities, including a Teen Play Area.

In 1981, Hallie A. Wells conveyed 290 acres of land to The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) for this park. The conveyance of the property required relocation of the historic Wells carousel currently located at Wheaton Regional Park to Ovid Hazen Wells Park once the park is “serving a sufficient number of park users.” The Clarksburg community strongly advocated for this project and the return of the carousel to the park, prompting the update to the park master plan and the subsequent park facility plan.

Following the park master plan update, a facility plan for the expansion of the Ovid Hazen Wells Active Recreation Area was approved by the Montgomery County Planning Board in 2015. The first phase of the project was subsequently approved for funding by the Montgomery County Planning Board and the Montgomery County Council and is currently in the final stages of design and permitting with construction anticipated to begin in early 2024. This phase of the project includes the carousel relocation and a skate park as well as other amenities and supporting facilities.

Q: Which county council members advocated to bring the skate park to Ovid Hazen Wells Park?

ANSWER:

The project funding, which included the carousel and skate park, was first approved by County Councilmembers starting in the Fiscal Years 2017-2022 Capital Improvements Program and has received continued support through the most recent budget cycle in Fiscal Years 2023-2028. The Maryland State Delegation for District 14 also supported this project and obtained additional state funding specifically for the skatepark and swings in 2023.

QUESTIONS – Community input:

Q: There are three communities around Ovid Hazen Wells Park. Why are there no public meetings with the neighbors?

Q: The neighboring communities had no say in this project, yet they will be directly impacted by noise, traffic congestion, litter, and crime. How are these serious concerns being addressed?

Q: The three communities would like you to attend a Town Hall Meeting in Clarksburg, so you can hear from the residents. Can we work on scheduling a date?

Q: We would like to invite you to a Town Hall Meeting in Clarksburg.

Q: We appreciate the Park Department's efforts in moving this forward. How could we request various departments like Department of Recreational Activities, Police, and EPA to have a joint community meeting to provide more complete pictures and discussion on this?

ANSWER:

The Department of Parks followed normal protocols for the development of the park. The 2014 Park Master Plan and 2015 Facility Planning study included extensive public outreach. During these studies, staff attended individual meetings with the Park Ridge HOA (homeowners associations), Arora Hills HOA, Clarksburg Civic Association, Up-County Citizens Recreation Advisory Board, as well as three open public meetings, two public hearings at the Planning Board, and other outreach efforts. Public testimony was received from the Park Ridge HOA and Arora Hills HOA, as well as nearby neighbors. All public input was considered by the Montgomery County Planning Board prior to their approval.

With respect to additional meetings, the purpose of tonight's meeting was to provide information about the status of this project. The park construction documents are nearly completed, and we are not seeking additional public input for the overall project. The recording of tonight's meeting has been posted on the project webpage for those who could not attend. We are seeking public input on the skatepark design, as that element is being developed under a design/build contract with a specialized skatepark company. The public meeting for the skatepark design is scheduled for 1:00-4:00 p.m. on October 14, 2023, at Hallie Wells Middle School.

Links to the master plan and facility planning studies, including public meetings and public input received, can be found below.

Staff memo, including public input:

[https://www.montgomeryplanningboard.org/item4revised20141120_mcpbmemo-ovidhazenwellsmpupdate-worksession1_000.pdf](https://www.montgomeryplanningboard.org/https://www.montgomeryplanningboard.org/item4revised20141120_mcpbmemo-ovidhazenwellsmpupdate-worksession1_000.pdf)
(montgomeryplanningboard.org)

September 24, 2015 – Approved Facility Plan

Staff memo with project summary:

https://www.montgomeryplanningboard.org/agenda/2015/documents/OvidHazenWellsPlanningBoardReportMainDocument-DraftforMikeRiley_000.pdf

Agenda with links to individual attachments to memo:

[agenda20150924e.html](https://www.montgomeryplanningboard.org/agenda/20150924e.html) (montgomeryplanningboard.org)

TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS – Traffic Studies:

Q: Please share the noise, parking, and traffic studies with the communities around the park. This is Sarwar Faraz, I am the President of the Park Ridge HOA, located next to the park.

Q: The park may be ready, but I do not think the roads/neighborhood can support it.

Q: What "RECENT" traffic studies have been performed on Skylark Rd? How many additional vehicles will travel on Skylark Rd. on a daily basis?

Q: Where is the data?

Q: What's the projected daily or weekly users based on all those new houses in Clarksburg area? if not yet done, will the Park do that in the future? if so, when, and whether the community has opportunity to provide input?

ANSWER:

A traffic study was conducted during the facility planning study to evaluate whether the proposed new facilities would have an adverse impact on nearby roads and traffic. The study concluded that traffic volumes generated by the proposed park development would not exceed the roadway capacity and that the level of service will remain high. Links to the facility plan summary memo and traffic study are provided below.

September 24, 2015 – Approved Facility Plan

Staff memo with project summary:

https://www.montgomeryplanningboard.org/agenda/2015/documents/OvidHazenWellsPlanningBoardReportMainDocument-DraftforMikeRiley_000.pdf

Link to Traffic Study – Attachment 4:

[Microsoft Word - Paniati 6-29-2015 \(montgomeryplanningboard.org\)](#)

QUESTIONS – Skylark Road:

Q: Skylark Road is too narrow for overflow parking. The park has plenty of land to have separate access road . HOA's made that specific request in 2015 which was ignored.

Q: How will you prevent cars from parking on Skylark Rd and the adjacent neighborhood during large events?

Q: You cannot stop the public from parking on Skylark Road and our residential streets. Will there be constant Park Police present during the Carousel and Skate Park operation?

Q: So no parking signs will be erected?

ANSWER:

Skylark Road is under Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) jurisdiction and is not intended to have overflow parking. The traffic study and facility planning memo outline the parking projections for the project. Additional parking is being developed as part of this project to accommodate the anticipated demand. Approximately fifty (50) spaces are being added to the park for this phase of the project. Sycamore Farm Road can accommodate more parking spaces if needed, and as future phases enter design, additional parking will be added based on the additional facility's needs. There will not be police presence to prohibit parking on Skylark Road and adjacent residential streets.

Q: Has MoCo considered access from Rt 27, rather than adding congestion on Skylark Rd? The park looks great on paper, but WE have to live with the added congestion in our neighborhood streets

Q: Then provide access from Rt 27...

ANSWER:

Streams and wetlands separate each of the three programmatic areas of the park, constraining vehicular movement and connections between the areas. There is access from MD Rte. 27 to the Home Food Gardens and Organic Farm Area of the park, which includes the Red Wiggler Farm and the historic Oliver Watkins House, but it is infeasible to connect to the Active Recreation Area. There would be two separate stream crossings through environmental

forested buffers, as well as disruption to the historic settings of both the Oliver Watkins House and the Ned Watkins House. The environmental buffers include 7 acres of existing forest, wetlands, and seeps. The approved forest conservation plan for the park requires planting an additional 22 acres of forest in this park, which will be located within the environmental buffer areas.

Q: Will traffic lights be installed along the park entrances to avoid speeding and traffic?

Q: As you're reaching out to other agencies for questions on things in their portfolio can we please urge DOT to ensure we're taking into account additional measures for pedestrian safety (and traffic calming to stop the speeders on Skylark) to protect folks walking from neighborhoods across a busier Skylark Rd

ANSWER:

Skylark Road is under the jurisdiction of Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT). As such, the need for traffic lights as well as traffic calming along Skylark Road would be determined by MCDOT. There is no plan for installation of traffic lights as part of this project. Along Sycamore Farm Drive, Montgomery County Parks has jurisdiction and will evaluate traffic calming, as well as vision zero crossings as part of the continued operation of the park. It is expected that pedestrian access to Ovid Hazen Wells will be analyzed as part of future Vision Zero projects.

Q: So we will have construction vehicles on Skylark Rd?

ANSWER:

Construction vehicles will travel on Skylark Road only for deliveries of materials. All construction equipment will remain on site during project construction.

QUESTIONS – Public Transportation:

Q: Will there be more public transportation available at the park, with more frequency and more routes?

Q: How about public transportation arrangement? Will it be more buses and more frequent to the area?

ANSWER:

The need for bus stops would be determined by the Montgomery County Department of Transportation. We are not aware of new plans, but the Department of Transportation may be willing to consider public requests for additional service in the area.

CAROUSEL

QUESTIONS – Noise:

Q: Will music be playing throughout the time the carousel is open? Has there been any noise studies been done? Can you share?

Q: Wheaton Regional Park is over 500 acres. Ovid Hazen is 290 acres. How is it possible that we will not be disturbed by the noise?

Q: The carousel and Skate Park are next to Park Ridge. We can hear cheering from the ball fields. How will the carousel and skate park noise not disturb us?

Q: A carousel has no place in our serene neighborhood. If you absolutely need to place it, there are no requirements for noise and music. This is a nuisance.

ANSWER:

An acoustical study was conducted during the facility planning project to predict the sound levels in the adjacent residential communities. Sound levels were measured at homes near the park to establish background sound levels and to help verify potential locations for siting the carousel. Sound was also measured at the carousel within Wheaton Regional Park with the volume control on low and high settings. With this combined data, a computer model was developed to predict the sound levels at the nearest homes to the north and south of the site. The study concluded that the projected sound levels from the carousel, when on the low volume setting would be well below the limits set by the Montgomery County noise ordinance.

The carousel was sited with sensitivity to adjacent residences by limiting views from homes to new buildings and parking areas. During future operation of the carousel, the music will be set at a low level with the speakers facing the riders and will be played while the carousel is operating. A carousel ride lasts approximately 3-4 minutes. Carousel riders are typically children under the age of 10, the same age as children who use the playgrounds. Links to the facility plan summary memo and acoustic study are provided below.

~~September 24, 2015 – Approved Facility Plan
Staff memo with project summary:~~

~~Link to Acoustical Study Attachment 5:~~

Q: Has thought been given to add an acoustical material on the ceiling of the carousel building?

ANSWER:

The carousel building does not currently include any acoustical material on the ceiling. The sound level of the carousel music will be controlled by the Parks Operator, and therefore can be adjusted as needed. The music will only play when the carousel is running. As noted above, the acoustical study conducted for this project concluded that the sound levels from the carousel will be below the limits set by the Montgomery County noise ordinance. Parks will continue to monitor this aspect of the project.

Q: We expect heavy landscape buffer all along Skylark Road. These are very quiet neighborhoods and you will be disturbing peace.

Q: Why do you need sound on the Carousel right next to neighborhoods? Would you like to have a carousel next to your house? What is the landscaping requirements to buffer this project from Skylark Road?

ANSWER:

Landscape improvements are an integral part of the upcoming project. Approximately 160 trees, 150 shrubs and 2,000 herbaceous plants of more than 80 varieties will be planted around the program areas. These plants will provide shade, visual buffer, and seasonal interests. The expanded plant community will enhance habitat and offer environmental learning opportunities. The plant materials will be sourced from the M-NCPPC Pope Farm nursery and installed by the parks staff.

The carousel building was carefully sited to provide visual and sound buffer from the surrounding neighborhoods. The structure is at least 700' from the nearest dwellings along Skylark Road and shielded by trees and rolling meadows. The sound of the carousel will be effectively deflected and filtered beyond the park boundary. The sound level will be monitored during operation to ensure compliance with the County's [Noise Ordinance](#).

The project is required to provide 5.5 acres of afforestation at the park as well as bioretention planting for the stormwater management areas. Landscape improvements around the new amenities are not required by the regulation but included in the project to enhance the program areas and buffer the surrounding neighborhoods.

QUESTION – Hours of operation:

Q: What are the hours of operation of the carousel and skate park?

ANSWER:

The carousel will operate on weekends from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm from spring through early fall. Hours may be revised depending on park attendance. A link to current operations at Wheaton Regional Park is below for reference.

[Operating Schedule & Pricing - Montgomery Parks](#)

QUESTION – Lighting:

Q: Are there lights for the carousel and skate park? Will they disturb our night sky?

ANSWER:

The carousel operates during the day, but there will be security lights for the building. There is currently no lighting planned for the skate park, and it would operate from sunrise to sunset.

SKATE PARK

QUESTION – Project Timing:

Q: Why is the skate park going in before the carousel as that was required per the deed of the land??

ANSWER:

The skate park will be constructed at the same time as the remainder of the project. It is being constructed under a different method with a design-build contractor who specializes in skate park design and construction.

QUESTION – Noise:

Q: What about the skate park noise level?

ANSWER:

The skate park is intentionally located in an area of the park where any sound may be ameliorated by the adjacent topography. We do not anticipate that the skate park noise levels will be quite different from the other active facilities within the park.

QUESTION – Design:

Q: Just want to thank the team for the skate park. My son and many kids venture all the way to Urbana to use their park. It is great that there will now be more options for kids that are local. Will it include a wooden half pipe or just a pump track? How much space will be designated for it?

ANSWER:

The approximate area of the skatepark will be around 14,500 SF. The design features have yet to be determined. Please attend our public meeting on October 14 to provide your suggestions. Hallie Wells Middle School Cafeteria, 11701 Little Seneca Pkwy, Clarksburg, MD, 20871
Registration: MoCoParks.org/OHWSkate

QUESTION – Upcoming Meetings:

Q: Is there a virtual option to join the skate park meeting?

ANSWER:

A hybrid format (Virtual/in-person) with the Skate Park Designer will occur on Oct 14th from 1-3pm. Hallie Wells Middle School Cafeteria, 11701 Little Seneca Pkwy, Clarksburg, MD, 20871
Registration: MoCoParks.org/OHWSkate

RECREATION/AQUATIC CENTER

QUESTIONS – Location for recreation and aquatic center:

Q: The same park space was reserved for an aqua center. Where will the aqua center go?

Q: When we bought the house, we were told there would be a rec center or community center, indoor pool. Is this still the plan? If not, when did it change to the current skate park?

ANSWER:

Parkland was acquired at the corner of Skylark Road and Piedmont Road to serve as a possible site for the future North County Recreation and Aquatic Center. This land will remain undeveloped until the site selection process for the new facility is completed by the Montgomery County Department of General Services. If this site is not chosen, additional park facilities may be developed in this portion of the park in the future.

QUESTIONS – Status of recreation and aquatic center project:

Q: Clarksburg resident and kids need an aqua center and a library more than a skate park

Q: We have been waiting for the aquatic center for a long time. It's on the master plan when we moved here. Any plans to build that?

Q: What happened to the swim center?

Q: There was a rec center with an Olympic size swimming pool, senior center, gym, meeting rooms. Nothing from the Clarksburg Master Plan has been adopted. Instead we are getting a carousel with music playing throughout the day and a concrete skate park? How is this good planning?

Q: Joined late, is rec center not being built?

Q: Yes, definitely want the rec/swim center

Q: Josh, can you answer the question about the swim center?

Q: This is great news for the Clarksburg community and there are many folks here excited about these developments. Looking forward to meaningfully engaging and providing Park and Planning with some constructive feedback on these long-awaited improvements to our park. One question- what happened to the aquatic center?

ANSWER:

The Montgomery County Department of General Services and the Montgomery County Department of Recreation are responsible for developing and managing recreation and aquatic centers within the county. Montgomery Parks staff recently inquired on the status of the North County Recreation and Aquatic Center and was informed that a site has not yet been selected for

the facility, nor has there been any meaningful progress on the project. Any further inquiries regarding this facility should be directed to the Montgomery County Department of General Services.

ADDITIONAL AMENITIES

QUESTIONS – Food concessions:

Q: Are there concession stands selling food and drinks?

Q: Will there be a small snack center or food center?

ANSWER:

No permanent concession stands, or snack center is planned for part of this project. The project does include a plaza for potential temporary food trucks or food stands for planned events.

QUESTION – Existing playground:

Q: Will there be any updates to the existing playground (the farm playground), or will those facilities remain the same?

ANSWER:

There are no updates planned to the existing playground as part of this project.

QUESTION – Amenities for older residents:

Q: Can you add some amenities for the older residents? Outdoor exercise stations, etc. along the paths?

ANSWER:

The pathways and trails throughout the park will provide opportunities for walking and jogging and will be connected to the Clarksburg Greenway trail in the future. The area with swings is intended to provide multiple types of swings for all ages, not just children. There will be additional shaded seating and gathering areas near the carousel building overlooking views to the stream valley.

SECURITY

QUESTION – Cameras:

Q: How about cameras around the parking area?

ANSWER:

Security cameras with multidirectional viewing will be installed near the carousel building and the skate park. Additional cameras could be installed if needed in the future.

QUESTIONS – Public safety in parks:

Q: Public parks often become youth gathering areas where they might become predators for crimes, drugs, and violence. How will county ensure sufficient police and adult surveillance?

Q: What are the most common public safety issues with current Montgomery Parks, especially to neighborhoods with big population like Clarksburg or Silver Spring?

ANSWER:

As stated above, security cameras will be installed in the park. As with all our parks, the monitoring, maintenance, and operations of the park will be handled by Park Police and our park management and operations staff. We encourage residents to call Park Police for any issues they observe within the park at 301-949-8010 (non-emergency) or 911 for emergencies.

Park Police proactively patrol all parks within Montgomery Parks to include the Clarksburg and Silver Spring areas everyday: 365 days a year; 24 /7. We encourage our patrons to contact our Communications Section (365 days a year; 24/7) with any suspicious activity or for police response to an incident. Both our Park Police Communications Section and agency never close. The most common public safety issue with Montgomery Parks currently, is the Theft from Auto (TFA) calls. We encourage our patrons to secure out of plain sight all items prior to arriving, parking, and leaving your vehicle; this deters a criminal from a criminal behavior opportunity.

QUESTION – Montgomery County police:

Q: Has anyone heard of the Montgomery County Police, de-policing in the county?

ANSWER:

No, not sure what this comment means.

MISCELLANEOUS

Q: There are motorized minibikes are routinely being ridden throughout the trails of the park. They come into our neighborhood. Your eyes and bodies have not stopped any of this. How will you manage additional violations?

ANSWER:

This is a violation on Park property. Park Rules and Regulations, Chapter V Section 14. Segways and Other Motorized Devices (A) No person shall operate an unlicensed motorized scooter, motorized or electrically assisted bicycle, Electric Bicycle, segway, hover-board or similar motorized personal locomotive device except (1) as authorized by Permit; or (2) in areas where expressly designated by Park Directive and posted accordingly.

Outside of the park any unlicensed motorbikes are not allowed on public MCDOT streets and sidewalks.

If this activity is observed at Ovid Hazen Wells Park, Park Police should be contacted at 301-949-8010.

The Park Management Staff has not seen minibikes at Wells or seen signs that minibikes had been through the park. However, if using the paved trails to cut through the park, staff would not know unless it is observed. We will continue to watch out for this, and please keep our staff informed when you find that this activity is occurring.

Q: We recently got some survey to fill out. Is this from the Park Department? If not, are you aware of such survey and maybe sharing the result of the survey could help future discussion. With so many new builders building new developments, it is critical for the agencies to provide the latest updates.

ANSWER:

We believe this survey was sent out countywide for the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan being run by Montgomery Planning:

<https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/communities/upcounty/clarksburg/clarksburg-gateway-sector-plan/>

They have a survey associated with this effort that is linked from the web site above. Based on the question citing new development.

Otherwise, we are not sure what this survey is. Parks did not send out a survey as part of this project.

QUESTION – Link to presentation:

Q: Please share the link to this presentation so we can share with our residents who could not attend.

ANSWER:

Link is provided here: [Ovid Hazen Wells Phase 1 expansion project: Update Presentation](#)

COMMENTS

C: thanks for the presentation and hard work

C: Thank you all MoCo Parks. This is all great for Clarksburg! It's a about a decade late, but as a long time resident I am glad we are finally getting these things that was promised 20+ years ago 😊!!

C: Thank you Clarksburg kids need more amenities