



Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park



Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park Federal Advisory Commission Meeting

June 16, 2016

Warren County Government Center
Front Royal, Virginia

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| 1) General Introductions | Jim Northup |
| 2) Adoption of Minutes | John Adamson |
| 3) FAC Membership and Nomination
Process Update | Jim Northup |
| 4) NPS Programming and Events | Karen Beck-Herzog |
| 5) Park Foundation Document Date | Karen Beck-Herzog |
| 6) Park Facilities Update | Karen Beck-Herzog |
| 7) Cooperative Agreement Update | Karen Beck-Herzog |
| 8) Trails Event | Karen Beck-Herzog |
| 9) Park Outreach | Karen Beck-Herzog |
| 10) New Business | |
| 11) Questions/Comments from the Public | |
| Adjournment | |

Meeting Notes

Commission members in attendance: Jim Northup, Designated Federal Official (DFO), Superintendent Cedar Creek and Belle Grove NHP; John Adamson, chair, Belle Grove, Inc.; Karen Beck-Herzog, Site Manager, Cedar Creek and Belle Grove NHP; Carl Bernhards, Middletown; Dave Blount, Private Landowner; Paul Coussan, Civil War Trust (by speaker phone); Stanley M. Hirschberg, Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation (CCBF); Eric Lawrence, Frederick County; Lee Meyer, Warren County; and Richard Redmon, Strasburg.

Commission members absent: Jeanne Frink, Commonwealth of Virginia; Rob Nieweg, National Trust for Historic Preservation; and Nicholas Picerno, Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation (SVBF).

Others in attendance: Gretchen Coffey, NPS Volunteer; Bob Grogg, NPS Volunteer; Jered Hoover, Shenandoah County; Kristen Laise, Belle Grove, Inc.; and Dave Stegmaier, District Office, U.S. Representative Barbara Comstock.

John Adamson, chair, called the meeting to order at 9:09 a.m., and asked that everyone to identify him or herself.

The notes from the last meeting were approved.

Jim Northup reported that the nomination process continues, slowly. The park is waiting for the Commonwealth of Virginia to re-nominate Jeanne Frink. Rick Redmond's nomination is awaiting approval, as is that for Jered Hoover. A new USFS person has been hired, and we are awaiting the appointment of the district ranger to one of the ex-officio positions.

The park has hired four seasonal rangers and the seasonal programming is set to begin. The first History at Sunset program will be held July 10 at Bowman-Hite, the first public program to be held there. On June 24–26, 2016, the Vermont at Cedar Creek program will take place. The park has two more star-gazing programs at the Thoburn tract: August 13 and October 1, 2016.

As a part of the National Park Service Centennial each park will develop a foundation document that describes the park, including the mission, fundamental and other important resources and identifies planning and data needs. An NPS staff member of the Northeast Regional Office will be here on July 28 to facilitate park staff, partners and FAC members through the process, take notes, and answer questions.

The park has consulted with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) as the park proposes the removal and deconstruction of some buildings. In all cases the period of significance for the specific area is being considered, so that non-contributing structures are the ones targeted for such removal. At the Claytor property, in addition to the building removal, modern fencing will be removed and along the woodline, will be replaced with a Virginia worm style fence. The rationale for this work is set forth in the

General Management Plan (GMP). Money for this work is coming from Line Item Construction funds.

In situations where agricultural leases have expired and in other open field areas, park staff will be manage the land for natural resources, including pollinators. Invasive species should be dealt with so that species, such as monarch butterflies, can be encouraged and supported. The park needs to have a survey of vegetation to establish information about what is here.

The hardware has arrived for the signs for the auto tour and directional signage.

The draft cooperative agreements between the park and Belle Grove and the park the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation are in the regional office for review. Once they are approved the agreement with the Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation will be drafted. These documents will be the basis for task agreements for providing the partners funding for specific projects or technical support that benefit the public.

The Morning Attack Trails are now open. The park, Belle Grove, and Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation are working on the 19th Corps Trail. Underbrush is being cleared and bridges will be built over the entrenchments. The money for the materials is coming from a task agreement; the work will be accomplished for assembly and installation by volunteers of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club.

At the Thoburn tract two task agreements have been submitted to establish a trail, and conduct an archeological survey of some of the property including the trail area and a future parking lot site.

Blue Ridge Digest, a professional travel publication, is one of a number of sources the park and its partners are appearing in which will help raise public awareness. Blue Ridge Digest included the park as an editorial item, free of charge. An expanded press release list, tables at community fairs, working with tourism directors, and local associations like the Fauquier County African American Association are some other means being sought to make the park story and offerings known. Park staff have also contacted the Winchester Girls and Boys Club, the Front Royal Elks, the Martinsburg VA Hospital, and local Civil War parks and museums. John Adamson asked that Karen Beck-Herzog speak to the Shenandoah County Historical Association at some point.

New Business

Dave Blount asked Kristen Laise if she would tell about the ongoing slavery research at Belle Grove. She replied that what they know at present has been distilled into the panels hanging on the lower level. They are fortunate to have a Syracuse University Ph.D. candidate working for them. Ground penetrating radar has revealed much, but it has also raised many questions. Concurrent research needs to investigate both the historical and archival records. For instance, the radar has revealed the presence of graves, but it cannot determine if this is the site of a slave cemetery. The ground penetrating radar can tell

whether there was a coffin or a shroud, the age of the burial, and the size of the grave. A cluster of stones that seemed to indicate possible burials did not reveal any graves. And she reminded everyone that the level of research and discovery is only in its beginning stages. They are also working to get as much information resulting from the research onto the web as possible. Kristen Laise and Shannon Moeck have also made contacts with Coming to the Table, the Center for Peace and Justice at Eastern Mennonite University, with the Mid-Atlantic Researchers, and with the Josephine School Community Museum. They are seeking to diversify their contacts as much as possible.

To Be Sold, an exhibit developed by the Library of Virginia, will be at Belle Grove from the end of July until the end of September. Shannon Moeck will give a talk every Saturday about the life of Belle Grove's enslaved cook Judah.

Laise pointed out that September 24, 2016, is the date for the opening of the new African America Museum at the corner of 14th Street and Constitution Avenue, NW in Washington, D.C., the last day of To Be Sold at Belle Grove, and the last talk on the exhibit given by Shannon Moeck.

Laise stressed that "the more we know, the more we tell, the greater our attraction to visitors."

Carl Bernhards reported that Middletown is planning to build a veterans memorial at the south end of town, 0.10 mile from the park boundary. No public meetings or hearings have been held. The members of the FAC encouraged the NPS to contact the Middletown government for information about how the memorial might affect the viewshed and what impact it might have on the park.

Rick Redmond noted that there are four meetings per year, and wondered why the commission did not meet in four different locations. Perhaps consider a more public location?

Dave Stegmaier mentioned that Thomas Laws, a free black man for whom a wayside marker was recently installed near the parking garage on North Loudoun Street in Winchester, and his wife are buried in the cemetery behind the Josephine Community Museum. This Saturday night the Josephine Improvement Committee is having a fundraiser at the Lee-Jackson and will also make presentation to Clarke County entrepreneurs.

Gretchen Coffee suggested that there must be ways to make the works about African American history better known in the community. She also wondered if perhaps the Civil War Trust was interested in the Battlefield Market, just south of Middletown and just outside the park boundary.

The next meeting will be September 15, 2016, in Strasburg, at 9 a.m..

John Adamson adjourned the meeting at 10:54

Handouts

Meeting Notes for March 17, 2016

Agenda