

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

May 17, 2007

Strasburg Town Hall  
Strasburg, Virginia

Agenda

- I) General Introduction
- II) Review and Approval of Minutes of March 15, 2007
- III) GMP Status Update
- IV) Facilitated Discussion on GMP Alternatives and Zones
- V) Old Business
- VI) New Business
- VII) Next Meeting—July 19, 2007, Middletown Town Hall

Meeting Notes

Commission members in attendance: Diann Jacox, Designated Federal Official (DFO); Fred Andreae; Mary Bowser, chair; Gene Dicks; Patrick Farris; Randy Jones; Howard Kittell; Elizabeth McClung; Gary Rinkerman; Dan Stickley; and Kris Tierney.

Commission members absent: Roy Downey and Jim Smalls.

Others in attendance; Suzanne Chilson, Executive Director, Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation; Dawn Goodwin, NPS; Bob Grogg, NPS volunteer; Drew Houff, *Winchester Star*; Sarah Mauck, Strasburg; Tom Price, Shenandoah County; Sue Renaud, NPS; Chris Stubbs, NPS.

Chair Mary Bowser conducted the meeting.

The notes from the March 15, 2007, meeting were reviewed and approved with minor editorial corrections.

Chris Stubbs gave the GMP status update. He noted that the alternatives newsletter has been out for public review since late March, and that the Denver Service Center has also been working on the environmental impact statement. He also noted a number of meetings have been held to present the GMP alternatives.

Diann Jacox reported that she and Chris had spoken before the monthly meeting of the Shenandoah Valley African American Association. Members come from Clarke, Fauquier, Frederick, Shenandoah, and Warren counties and represent people who have lived in the Valley for generations as well as people new to the area. Their questions and

comments after the presentations gave both Diann and Chris new perspectives to ponder and offer the NPS an opportunity to connect to a community that is sometimes overlooked.

### **Zones**

Suzanne Chilson, Executive Director of the Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation, passed out a letter from the Foundation expressing its concern about including the Panther Cave property and areas along Meadow Brook within the GMP natural resource zone. Suzanne said that the Foundation's board of directors does not believe that the designation, as proposed, would be in the best interests of the public or of the reenactments conducted by the Foundation.

Following a brief discussion of the natural resource zone, Diann Jacox suggested that a separate meeting should be devoted to a discussion of the GMP zones. It was agreed that at the July 19, 2007, meeting the commission would have an opportunity to revisit the larger question of zones, and specifically the natural resource zone on the Bayliss tract and other areas throughout the park. Meanwhile, on June 7, 2007, Diann and Chris will make a presentation to the Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation board on the management alternatives, the concept of management zones, and the state-designated Panther Conservation Area on the Bayliss Tract.

### **Discussion of the Alternatives**

Dawn Goodwin, from the National Park Service Washington Office, facilitated the discussion.

The bulk of the meeting was devoted to discussing the four alternatives. Chris Stubbs gave a brief PowerPoint summary of the elements of each alternative.

Though the discussion was wide-ranging, the comments reflected the commissioners' own series of discussions with their boards, community members, and interested parties. The conversation became an elaboration of the themes that derived directly from the alternatives and that clearly were manifestations of the visions that all commissioners have come to have for the park over the course of their service on the board. The broad topics were:

- Park Management Elements
- Access
- Interpretation
- Land Protection
- Cooperative Relationships

### **Park Management Elements**

- Several of the commissioners thought that the public expected the National Park Service to operate a visitor center at the park and believed that such a facility was essential to the success of the park. It was also thought that given the partnership nature of the park, a visitor center would provide a central identity and focus for the visiting public.

- There was consensus that establishing a partnership park showed great wisdom, but the visiting public was not interested in a series of separate entities, but in one park functioning as an integrated, seamless whole.
- Some commissioners thought that initially much of the public wanted to see the National Park Service have a small presence at the park, but largely because of the collaborative manner in which the park has engaged the public in the planning process, they believed that the public was open to the NPS assuming a larger role.
- It was stated that a National Park Service visitor center would draw people and give credibility to the efforts of those who have labored for years to preserve these properties. The NPS brings both national and international recognition to the area. Someone mentioned their recent visit to the new Jamestown visitor center and said that it effectively tells the story of the English settlement, while making clear the role that various partners play in preserving that site.
- The commissioners said that a central visitor center would give the park identity and visibility. “People see that arrowhead and know what it means” was a sentiment that the commissioners expressed.

### **Access**

- There was discussion among the commissioners that a visitor center was also needed to educate the public about the areas within the park that were open to public access and those areas that were not. Much of the park remains in private ownership, and may remain so for some time to come. It is extremely important that the public not trespass on private property.
- In addition to physical access, intellectual access to the stories of the Shenandoah Valley was also discussed. As visitors move throughout the park, they will be able to connect to resources reflecting different stories and different time periods. The park can also serve as a public repository of research that is conducted at or about the park.

### **Interpretation**

- There was a discussion of interpretation at the park – and it was said that it should be accurate, consistent and coordinated among the partners – and that the National Park Service should coordinate interpretation among the partners. While the interpretive themes have already been identified through the foundation plan, there should be an objective process for those themes to be modified and adapted over time.
- It was expressed that interpretive information given out throughout the park should be consistent among the partners regardless of the media or method chosen to disseminate the information.

### **Land Protection**

- The commissioners thought that the National Park Service should consider land acquisition and ownership. They thought there should be an overall coordinated strategy among both public and private partners with the goal of protecting land both within and outside the park boundary. The issue of providing connectivity between the various partner-owned parcels throughout the park was discussed.

Connectivity should also be part of the coordinated land acquisition strategy. Local governments could support land protection through their comprehensive planning and local government zoning processes. The goal here should be to look at the character of the land, its history, and continued public access so that decisions can be made about priorities for land protection.

### **Cooperative Relationships**

- The National Park Service should have the lead responsibility for promoting collaborative and cooperative approaches to managing the park. There should be a thematic cohesiveness among the various sites at the park, and the park should have a larger interpretive umbrella that covers all the stories and themes of the park. The success of the park lies in the ability of the partners to cooperatively work together in managing the park. It is also important that the park and local governments work cooperatively on park issues. The funding challenges currently within the National Park Service were also discussed.

### **Items Requiring More Discussion**

- The NPS role in operations
- Park Zones

The next meeting will be July 19, 2007, in the Middletown Town Hall.

Chris Stubbs reminded everyone that the annual meeting cycle ends in July, and that the commissioners will need to consider how often they want to meet in the upcoming year.

Chair Mary Bowser adjourned the meeting at 12:05 p.m.

### Handouts Provided at the Meeting

1. Meeting agenda
2. Minutes from the March 15, 2007 meeting
3. GMP status update