

Neighborhood NEWS

RUXTON-RIDERWOOD-LAKE ROLAND AREA IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

WINTER • 2015-16

Water: the Fight Against Nature Continues

by Cynthia Allen

Flooding and drainage problems have existed in our area for many years. Looking back through our Association newsletters from the 1970s, articles on this topic include: *Roland Run Flood Damage Creates Major Property Problems* (May 1973) and *Roland Run Flood Control Cited As Urgent Case* (February 1974). In the 1970s, six houses along Ruxton Road near the bridge over Roland Run were razed because of flooding problems as were two houses on Springway Road (and possibly others that we're not aware of). In our February 1973 newsletter, the Traffic and Roads Committee reported on flooding problems for residents of Ruxton "in the low area of Roland Run". Clearly, this water issue has been a recurring problem for many years.

One locality in our northeast corner has had water run-off problems for decades where residents on the north side of Bellona Avenue between Ruxton Crossing and Ridervale Road have dealt with run-off issues related to inadequate storm drains. Over the years, various plans have been discussed to deal with this problem. A study was completed in 1998 and Baltimore County proposed widening Bellona Avenue to better accommodate vehicular and bicycle traffic, adding sidewalks for pedestrian safety and constructing storm drains to intercept the water that coursed through the neighborhoods. The project was scheduled to begin in 2006 but when County officials obtained feedback from community residents, it was apparent that some residents were opposed to widening Bellona and adding sidewalks. As a result, the project was aborted and nothing was done to correct the water drainage issue. In 2008, the County resurfaced Bellona Avenue and installed a berm along some parts of the road;

however, residents say this is insufficient to correct the problem and many of them continue to suffer damage to their properties as a result of storm water runoff.

In August 2014 RRLRAIA joined several residents who met with Councilwoman Almond, Baltimore County's Chief of Storm Drain Design and Bureau Chief of Engineering and Construction to request that the County focus on resolving the drainage issue only (no road widening or sidewalks). This group of residents prepared and presented a formal project request to the Baltimore County Planning Board. As a result of the commu-

nity's efforts, the County hired consultants, Brudis & Associates, Inc., who are currently reviewing the results of a survey they recently conducted to determine the extent of the problem; a field meeting will then be scheduled. Residents are hopeful that the County will soon take appropriate action to resolve this longstanding storm water problem.

Moving farther west in our area, other water issues have arisen over the past few decades. Ten years have passed since the levees failed in New Orleans from the surge of coastal waters caused by Hurricane Katrina. The resulting devastation all along the Gulf Coast was catastrophic and still plagues many of the affected communities. But certainly no one in our neighborhood had any idea that the fallout from this costly storm would affect homeowners in Riderwood.



A Ruxton resident wades down his driveway near Circle Road during a 2008 storm Photo courtesy Tammy Wiggs

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Lake Roland Once Again

by Nancy Worden Horst

Known to generations of Baltimoreans as Lake Roland, the beautiful 500-acre park in the heart of our community will no longer be called Robert E. Lee Park. While Baltimore City continues to work through its process regarding the legal name of the park, the County has moved forward to identify the entire area as Lake Roland, the name of the former reservoir that anchors the entire park.

The new name was unveiled when Baltimore County Executive Kevin Kamenetz, Department of Recreation and Parks officials and members of the Lake Roland Nature Council (LRNC), formerly known as the Robert E Lee Park Nature Council, broke ground this fall for the Lake Roland Nature and Environmental Education Center.

This addition to Lake Roland will provide much-needed year-round education programming and meeting space with audio/visual capabilities for the many activities offered by the Nature Council. A deck spanning the entire front of the building will provide additional meeting and activity space as well as stunning views of Lake Roland dam. Total cost of this project is \$1.2 million, comprising \$285,000 of County funding, \$200,000 from State capital grants, \$375,000 from Program Open Space and \$340,000 from Nature Council fundraising which is ongoing. To make a donation to LRNC to support the Education Center, go to www.lakeroland.org.

The Baltimore City waterworks reservoir project that resulted in Lake Roland began in the 1860s and was originally called Lake Swann after then Baltimore Mayor Thomas Swann. But by 1876 the lake was variously identified on maps as Lake Roland or Roland Lake, taking its name from one of its feeder streams, Roland Run (Jones Falls and Towson Run being the other two streams).

In 1945 the park was enlarged and named to honor Robert E. Lee by an ordinance approved by the Baltimore City Council with funds from a bequest by the late Elizabeth B. Garrett White. Robert Garrett, White's great-nephew and executor of her will, and also chairman of the City's Recreation and Parks Commission, petitioned the Circuit Court to use White's bequest to fund recreation at Lake Roland rather than erect a statue in Lee's honor at Druid Hill Park as Mrs. White had requested in her will.

Since Baltimore County entered into a formal agreement with the City in 2009 to manage the park, it has made many renovations and improvements including: Paw Point dog park; a boardwalk trail leading from the light rail station to the heart of the park; a new pavilion overlooking the dam; decking replacement on the old railroad trestle for pedestrian use; Acorn Hill playground; and staffing by Baltimore County park rangers who educate park users and ensure safety. These amenities were made possible with funding from the State of Maryland as well as Baltimore City and County.



Groundbreaking for Lake Roland Nature and Environmental Education Center. From left: Maryland State Delegate Chris West, Maryland State Delegate Shelly Hettleman, Baltimore County Councilwoman Vicki Almond, LRNC President Larry Zeafra, LRNC Secretary Nancy Horst, Baltimore County Executive Kevin Kamenetz, Head Park Ranger Shannon Davis, LRNC Treasurer Jeffrey Budnitz, Director of Recreation & Parks Barry Williams, LRNC Vice President Elise Butler

Photo courtesy Siobhan O'Brien Budnitz

Information from Baltimore County Office of Communications and Department of Planning.

Editor's Note: A recently renovated Swann Park, also named for the former Mayor and Governor of Maryland, is located in South Baltimore.

Recycling Comes to Lake Roland

Before tossing your water bottle or other recyclables into the trash can at the park, look for the green or blue recycling containers in one of seven locations around Lake Roland's peninsula area and do your bit to keep the park as green as possible.

County Executive Kevin Kamenetz recently announced that Lake Roland is one of 12 regional parks with the potential to participate in recycling since existing on-site staff already empties trash and aggregates it into dumpsters for weekly collection. The initial cost of the program, excluding weekly hauling fees, is about \$44,000; private haulers charge approximately \$88 per unit per year. Paper, plastic, cans and bottles are acceptable.

The program began in May and features a combination of blue or white recycling barrels and attractive green trash and recycling containers. Two of the green containers will be placed at each of the designated parks and the number of barrels varies according to the park's popularity, size and anticipated amount of recyclables.

Annual Meeting Highlights

by Paddy Morton

Autumn is a special time of year. It brings cool evenings, foliage changing to bright red and gold, and a sense of a new beginning with children back to school, relaxing summer vacations behind us and a refreshed optimism for tasks that lie ahead. Perhaps it was that eagerness to engage that brought so many neighbors out on a rainy Tuesday evening for the Annual Meeting of the RRLRAIA. On September 29, neighbors, members and elected officials turned out in good number for the 61st Annual Meeting of our Association at the Church of the Good Shepherd.

Reverend Arianne Weeks, our host, thanked all for coming out in inclement weather and welcomed everyone to the meeting. She also extended a kind invitation to neighbors and members of the Association to join in Church activities at Good Shepherd.

We were lucky to be joined by several distinguished guests, who were introduced by our Association President Patrick Jarosinski; Maryland Senators Jim Brochin and Bobby Zirkin; Maryland Delegates Shelly Hettleman, Steve Lafferty, Dan Morhaim, Dana Stein, and Chris West; Baltimore County Council members Vicki Almond and David Marks; and Nancy Surosky (representing County Executive Kevin Kamenetz). These elected officials, who represent areas within our RRLRAIA boundaries, turned out to meet and greet neighbors before the meeting. Many made themselves available for conversation after the meeting as well.

We are fortunate to have such committed representatives, especially because they have demonstrated an ability to work across party lines for the benefit of our area. One example of this is the successful collaboration between Councilman Marks (Republican) and Councilwoman Almond (Democrat) to achieve the removal of the lighted electronic changeable copy sign that was originally installed outside West Towson Elementary School. After this accomplishment, the Council members joined to sponsor legislation prohibiting electronic signage along Charles Street, a newly-designated Federal Scenic Byway. Additionally, they have worked together to advance renovations to Dumbarton Middle School which should start later this year, which is important to all homeowners in the area as schools impact property values.

With even more good news about what is happening in the Ruxton-Riderwood-Lake Roland area, we heard from Tom Weadock, new president of the Greater Ruxton Area Foundation (GRAF). GRAF was formed in 2002 to promote beautification and other local quality-of-life issues and, in just a few short years, has created numerous gardens and hedges along our local routes that really enhance the beauty and atmosphere of the area. GRAF also holds 15 development easements (totaling 50 acres) that will protect

several properties from over-development. GRAF is a 501(c)(3) public charity, so your donations to that Foundation are tax deductible and a good investment in the future of the community.

Reporting on behalf of Linda Murphy, the Association Treasurer, Patrick Jarosinski stated that the RRLRAIA's budget is strong, the Association is functioning in the black and we have reserves set aside for the next update to the Community Plan, due in 2020. Patrick also shared other accomplishments of the Association from the past year including the new traffic light in Bare Hills, tree and vine trimming along Bellona Avenue and a new membership directory. These accomplishments are in addition to our recurring neighborhood events such as Friday Night Lights, Holiday Party in the Woods and our spring and fall roadside and stream cleaning projects.

Finally, Gina Adams, Chair of the Nominating Committee, proposed the slate of new Board members, who were all approved unanimously: Tom McCord, Lauren Madsen and Rachel Seba. In addition, Carlton Sexton, John Baer, Laura Shmerler, Kelley Keener and Linda Murphy were elected to a second three-year term on

the Board. We thank retiring members Justin Wiggs, Tracy Miller, Jeffrey Budnitz and Jessica Paffenbarger for their years of service. Hope to see you all around the neighborhood!

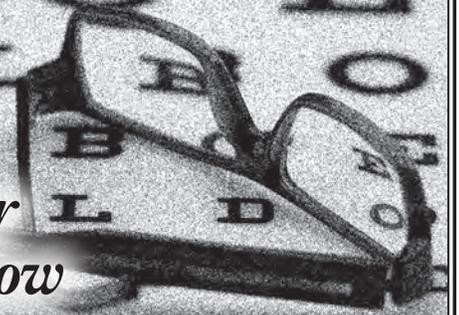


Jeffrey Budnitz's perseverance pays dividends
Photo courtesy Nettie Washburn

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“Changing of the Board” (not quite like the changing of the Palace Guards!)

by John Baer

This time of year gives us the opportunity to thank Board members who have served so diligently and to welcome new members of the community to the RRLRAIA Board of Governors. The bylaws of the Association limit Board membership to a maximum of two consecutive three-year terms which provides many residents of the community an opportunity to serve on the Board. It also ensures that we can offer a current pulse of neighborhood activity, needs and changes.

It is with heartfelt appreciation that we have to say goodbye to retiring Board members. We thank them all and are fortunate to have two graciously offering to serve in



New Board members Tom McCord, Lauren Madsen and Rachel Seba
Photo courtesy Nettie Washburn

a consulting roll and allowing us to retain them as Board Members Emeriti. Welcome to our new Board members and, to the members

re-elected for a second term, we thank you for renewing your commitment.

Thank you to the following members who have retired this year:

Tracy Miller served two terms and was a member of the Zoning Committee, the Nominating Committee Chair and the Membership Committee. She also participated in many of the events that the Association sponsored. Tracy served as our Secretary for the past two years, tirelessly documenting Board meetings and publishing minutes for review and reference.

Justin Wiggs served on various committees during his two terms on the Board including this year's

Nominating Committee. He previously served on the Board of the Greater Ruxton Area Foundation. His contributions are most appreciated.

Jessica Paffenbarger served two terms and will be continuing to assist us as a Board Member Emeritus. She served two years as 1st Vice President and has been a key member of the Newsletter/Website Committee, leading it since 2012. Jessica's work has resulted in a newsletter style guide, introduction of color pages and documentation of guidelines to manage the newsletter and web pages.

Jeffrey Budnitz is a two-term Board member who volunteered with our Bare Hills Committee, Community Plan Committee and Robert E. Lee Park Committee (now the Lake Roland Committee) and who has worked very hard behind the scenes with business leaders in the area. Jeffrey will continue his commitment to the careful development of this area and RRLRAIA as a Board Member Emeritus for this coming year. Jeffrey previously served a six-year term on the Board and then took a one year hiatus. He is very involved in the activities and changes at Lake Roland.

Current Board members who were re-elected for a second term are: Laura Shmerler, Carlton Sexton, Linda Murphy, Kelley Keener and John Baer.

Finally, welcome to the three newly-elected Board members and thank you for your commitment:

Tom McCord is quasi-retired with a background as CEO of ThinkSharp and several years in the corporate world in CFO roles. Tom has a BS in commerce from the University of Virginia, a BS in engineering from the Johns Hopkins University and is licensed in Maryland as a CPA. He has lived in Ruxton since early childhood, has been married to Bliss for 42 years and has three children and one grandson. Tom's interests include nature and the outdoors.



A Park Ranger's Profile: Jonathan Wood

by Nancy Worden Horst

Ranger Jonathan Wood has been a history buff since his childhood in Boonsboro, Maryland, accompanying his father to nearby Antietam Battlefield, Fort Frederick and Gettysburg. By the time he was 14, he was firing a replica colonial musket while participating in living history reenactments with his uncle at Fort Frederick.

After obtaining a degree in history from Towson University, Jonathan then demonstrated living history at the Jonathan Hager House, spent time as a seasonal historical interpreter at Fort Frederick and completed an internship at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. Jonathan has also completed training from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources as an historic weapons safety inspector.

As he learned more, he "became more interested in the cultural side of history...the way people lived during times of crisis and peace. [Presenting a] living history can tell both sides of the story. The funny thing with history is that there's always a deeper side to every story and every story can move you onto another topic."

A newlywed, Ranger Jonathan lives in Hagerstown and commutes to the park as his schedule demands. His wife sometimes travels to historic sites with him and she enjoys hiking and the outdoors as well. He also volunteers at Fort Frederick and Harpers Ferry.



Sweet! After boiling down sap for hours in a small still, Ranger Jonathan Wood opens the spout to draw off some maple syrup.

Photo courtesy Ranger Bart Viguers

As a park ranger at Lake Roland, each of Jonathan's working days brings new rewards and challenges. He could find himself patrolling the trails on his bike, giving directions, emptying trash, leading programs, performing maintenance, providing traffic control, issuing off-leash dog citations or working on administrative duties.

If he has the opening shift, Ranger Jonathan's day begins "when I drive onto park property. The park opens at sunrise and closes at sunset and I generally work until close most days. During the summer, I close the park late, maybe 9:00 [p.m.] in late June. In the winter, however, sunset is earlier

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so I might get off work by 5:00 [p.m.] in December and January. Depending on programming, I may stay after hours, especially for our campout programs [when] I stay overnight with the group.

Ranger Jonathan “likes being outside for most of my day. I love jobs where I get to work with my hands. You feel [you have] really accomplished [something] when your hands hurt at the end of the day.” He dislikes extremes of hot or cold, wind and ice. “On hot days changing the dog park trash can get pretty gross,” he allows.

Jonathan’s favorite activities in the park “are my historical programs, drop-in programs and stream searches” as well leading Nature Quest hikes, canoeing, campouts and campfires, Nature Scouts and demonstrating the blunderbuss. To get new ideas for programs, Jonathan attends conferences, visits other parks or does research to find new ideas and experience tells which things work for a particular audience.

Asked which questions he is asked most often, Jonathan answered that every ranger and naturalist at the park need to know the answers to these three questions:

- ✓ Where are the falls?
- ✓ Where is parking?
- ✓ Where are the bathrooms?

Rangers are responsible for maintaining more than seven miles of Lake Roland’s marked trails. Jonathan and two other rangers, Shannon and Jeff, are all certified to use a chainsaw so they can remove fallen trees and heavy invasive trees and vines. Jonathan lauds the “great volunteer trails group that comes out” at least once a month to assist them. While the rangers, naturalists and volunteers do a lot of the upkeep on the 500+ acre park, Baltimore County also has a parks maintenance crew to help with the heavy

lifting and “a grounds management leader, Neil, who takes a lot of pride in the mowing done in the park.”

Asked what he would recommend if he could wave a magic wand to change or enhance the park, Jonathan answered: “I would recommend a few [historic] buildings or old mills be rebuilt along the



Ranger Jonathan Wood demonstrates firing a British-made .75 caliber non-rifled Brown Bess musket during a program at Lake Roland this summer. Photo courtesy Ranger Bart Viguers

Jones Falls to educate the public about the significance of water power” these rivers had. Because of the fame of the Baltimore Bellona Gunpowder Manufactory (said to rival DuPont’s factory at one time), “these buildings could also be used for demonstrating the production of black powder. There are no physical remains of the Bellona powder works, but it is an important piece of Baltimore history because it was a major business of its era.”

A more enthusiastic ranger would be difficult to find, as Jonathan concludes:

“The park is beautiful at sunrise with the cool mist coming off of the dam and is beautiful at sunset with the brilliant colors in the sky”; and the fall, with the trees changing colors and the air again cool, is his favorite time of year.

*Editor’s Note: More information about the Bellona Gunpowder Works can be found in the Fall 2014 **Neighborhood NEWS**.*

Home Security - Matching Mayhem One for One

by Grant Cleverley

With the holiday season in full swing, many of us hit the road to visit friends and family. Do you needlessly put your property in peril when you leave town?

Perhaps you think you are quite safe within the confines of your home. But, like the hapless Allstate customers on whom ‘Mayhem’ preys, you may be totally unaware of the many opportunities for theft of your belongings or mishaps to your property. In addition to being relaxed about securing your possessions, you may also be overlooking safety concerns in your home and yard.



When stepping into your back yard for a couple of hours or actually leaving your property, whether it’s for two days or ten, your house should appear occupied at all times. Here are some tips for doing so:

- ✓ Lock your front door!
- ✓ Use timers to switch lights and radios on and off when you’re not at home and use energy efficient LED exterior lighting that automatically goes on at dusk AND motion detectors for flood lights that are mounted in high places. A few pennies a day and your house will be safer and nicely illuminated at night. Most thieves hate well-lit homes.
- ✓ If you have a faulty alarm that frequently goes off, get it fixed immediately and tell your neighbors that it’s been repaired. Many people ignore an alarm that goes off periodically.
- ✓ If you lose your house keys, change the locks immediately.

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