

City of Fayetteville Staff Review Form

**2014-0365**

**Legistar File ID**

**9/2/2014**

City Council Meeting Date - Agenda Item Only  
 N/A for Non-Agenda Item

Byron Humphry

8/14/2014

Parks & Recreation /  
 Parks & Recreation Department

**Submitted By**

**Submitted Date**

**Division / Department**

**Action Recommendation:**

Approval of the revised Botanical Garden Society of the Ozarks Master Plan and Land Lease Agreement.

**Budget Impact:**

Account Number		Fund	
Project Number		Project Title	
<b>Budgeted Item?</b>	NA	Current Budget	\$ -
		Funds Obligated	\$ -
		Current Balance	\$ -
<b>Does item have a cost?</b>	NA	Item Cost	
<b>Budget Adjustment Attached?</b>	NA	Budget Adjustment	
		Remaining Budget	\$ -

V20140710

Previous Ordinance or Resolution # 129-03

Original Contract Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: *K. Adams 8-14-14*

*Mark Hester 8/15/14*

*Ann Mann 8/15/14*

**ENTERED**  
 8/14/14

*Donald Jordan*

Approval Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**ENTERED**  
 8/14/14 *BeP*



## CITY COUNCIL AGENDA MEMO

### MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 2, 2014

**TO:** Mayor and City Council

**THRU:** Don Marr, Chief of Staff  
Connie Edmonston, Parks and Recreation Director

**FROM:** Byron Humphry, Parks Maintenance Superintendent

**DATE:** August 14, 2014

**SUBJECT:** Botanical Gardens of the Ozarks Master Plan and Lease Revision

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#### RECOMMENDATION:

Approval of the revised Botanical Gardens of the Ozarks Master Plan and Land Lease Agreement.

#### BACKGROUND:

On September 2, 1997, City Council approved a Land Lease Agreement with the Botanical Garden Society of the Ozarks (BGSO) for the purpose of operating a botanical garden at Lake Fayetteville to serve Northwest Arkansas. On September 2, 2003, the Land Lease Agreement was redefined and a master plan developed by Portico Group was approved. The lease boundary extended along the south side of Lake Fayetteville from Highway 265 westward to Veterans Park, consisting of 82 acres with the western half designated as a non-fee area. The approved Master Plan utilized and showed development on the entire 82 acres of the lease boundary.

In December of 2012, BGSO approached City Staff with a proposal to revise the Land Lease Agreement and Master Plan. BGSO asked to return the non-fee area to the City. They also requested for the Lake Fayetteville trail to be removed from their lease. The initial draft of the Master Plan depicted the nature trail relocated to the south side of the asphalt trail with the BGSO lease boundary extending to the lake. Since BGSO needs to have a barrier along the lease boundary to control access, the initial draft depicted a barrier that extended to the edge of the lake. The proposed relocation of the nature trail brought opposition from the public. A public meeting was held at the Botanical Gardens on April 24, 2013 with 114 citizens attending. Trail users and advocates pointed out that the nature trail had been located in that area many years before the first BGSO lease and concerns of leaving the trail in its current location dated back to 1997 when the original lease was drafted.

City Staff assembled a group of Lake Fayetteville stakeholders to obtain feedback on the BGSO proposal. Stakeholders were chosen based on their demonstrated interest in Lake Fayetteville and included representatives from Fayetteville Natural Heritage Association, Ozark Off-Road Cyclists, Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society, Lake Fayetteville Watershed Association, and the Environmental Study Center. On February 21, 2013, the stakeholder group met with BGSO

and City staff to discuss the proposed plan. At this meeting, based on comments already received, BGSO presented a revised map that showed the proposed lease boundary set back from the lake with the nature trail within a narrow corridor between the lease boundary and the lake. After reviewing the plan, the stakeholders had concerns in three main areas that included: 1) the nature trail location (too close to the lake and in a wet area), 2) wildlife corridor (too narrow for wildlife and human movement), and 3) wildlife buffer area between the lease boundary and the lake (too close to a sensitive area of the lake utilized by waterfowl). At the conclusion of the meeting, we asked each representative to write a letter specifying their organization's recommendations. BGSO asked City Staff to develop a staff recommendation for the lease boundary.

City Staff received the letters from the stakeholders and summarized the key recommendations. Staff also received two letters from an Urban Game Biologist with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission who the BGSO had consulted. Based on this input, City Staff developed a proposed boundary location with key elements that included: 1) a minimum 100 ft setback from the lake to accommodate wildlife and human traffic between the barrier and the lake, 2) locate the nature trail approximately half-way between the BGSO proposed location and the current trail location which will maintain approximately 200 ft buffer to the lake, 3) remove invasive species and introduce native plants to provide habitat and screening in the buffer area, and 4) build a boardwalk trail where the trail intersects wet soils to prevent erosion. These elements represented a compromise of BGSO and stakeholder input.

Some comments suggested that an environmental impact assessment be conducted in the buffer area where the trail was to be located. City Staff received bids on an assessment with a low bid of \$5,000. After weighing the cost of the assessment and considering what information would be gained, it was decided that with the expertise of City Staff, stakeholders, and other outside professionals, enough information already existed to make an informed decision on the location of the lease boundary and trail alignment. The location is considered one of the most environmentally sensitive areas of the lake by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and other professionals, and will be developed under the jurisdiction of the US Army Corps of Engineers.

Once the lease boundary location was agreed upon by BGSO and City Staff, the proposed Master Plan was refined and the proposed changes to the Lease were drafted by City Attorney Kit Williams and BGSO's attorney Robert Rhoades. On August 4, 2014, BGSO presented the proposed Lease and Master Plan to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. The board voted (5-4) in favor of recommending the approval of the Lease and Master Plan. Opposition to the plan centered on the recommendation to conduct an environmental assessment of the proposed trail corridor and the cost to the City to build a new bridge and boardwalk through the wetland.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

The proposed BGSO lease area is approximately 37 acres versus the current lease which is 82 acres. The proposed Master Plan contains eight new garden areas, three parking lots and five buildings and structures, including a 17,000 square foot visitors' center, 6,700 square foot event pavilion, 2,000 square foot office/restroom, 7,800 square foot community market, and 265 seat amphitheater. In addition, the City has proposed \$190,000 in the CIP Budget in 2015 to build a new trail-head parking lot adjacent to the southeast corner of the BGSO lease area. The entrance to this City-built parking lot will serve as a second entrance to the gardens.

The proposed lease refers to the proposed Master Plan and sets forth the BGSO responsibilities to operate, maintain, improve, and promote the Garden. The lease term is until June 30, 2050 with two, 25-year, automatically renewable terms upon mutual consent. Fayetteville residents will still be provided free access on Saturday mornings from 9:00 am to noon and Fayetteville School children will have free access for school sponsored, academic visits. The existing City-built parking lot and the proposed City-built parking lot will be available for public use 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. All of the City nature trail and most of the paved trail are outside of the lease boundary. The existing nature trails will remain open to the public and will not be blocked off with barriers until the nature trail is relocated and the boardwalk is constructed. Staff will consult the Army Corps of Engineers to determine the most appropriate permitting process before construction begins. No time frame has been established for beginning work on the boardwalk.

**BUDGET/STAFF IMPACT:**

The proposed City-built, trailhead parking lot is requested in the 2015 CIP budget for \$190,000. The relocation of the nature trail will require roughly 750 linear feet of constructed boardwalk. City staff plans to work with Eagle Scouts to build the boardwalk in which labor and some materials will be donated. Estimated costs for this new section of boardwalk based on past Eagle Scout projects is \$20,000.

**Attachments:**

Proposed BGSO Lease Agreement  
Proposed BGSO Master Plan  
PRAB minutes, August 4, 2104  
Stakeholder letters and summary

**RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_**

A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE BOTANICAL GARDEN LAND LEASE AGREEMENT WITH THE BOTANICAL GARDEN SOCIETY OF THE OZARKS, INC.

**WHEREAS**, for almost two decades the Botanical Garden Society and the City of Fayetteville have cooperated and worked harmoniously to create and improve the Botanical Gardens of the Ozarks on substantial acreage on the eastern side of Lake Fayetteville Park; and

**WHEREAS**, an initial twenty five year Lease Agreement for the Botanical Garden was entered into between the Botanical Garden Society and the City of Fayetteville on September 2, 1997; and

**WHEREAS**, a replacement twenty five year Land Lease Agreement between the City and the Botanical Garden Society was agreed to on September 2, 2003; and

**WHEREAS**, in order to help spur further development of the Botanical Garden and to better serve Fayetteville citizens, the City of Fayetteville entered into a Contract on July 16, 2004 with the Botanical Garden Society in which the City invested \$250,000.00 “to construct the entry and grounds infrastructure (driveway, parking, walkways, Great Lawn, etc.)” for the Botanical Garden as well as another \$500,000.00 to complete the Carl Totemeier Building; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2007, the Botanical Garden Society received a \$115,128.00 Federal Grant through the Arkansas Parks and Tourism Outdoor Recreation Grant Program for display gardens and parking which requires ongoing duties of public availability, nondiscrimination, maintenance, etc. for the Botanical Garden Society; and

**WHEREAS**, the parties now wish to modify the leased premises and other provisions of the lease by entering into a new Land Lease Agreement to replace the existing Land Lease Agreement of 2003; and

**WHEREAS**, by their execution of this Land Lease Agreement, the parties wish to express and confirm their approval of the 2028 Botanical Garden of the Ozarks Master Plan including the plan for the City to build a new parking lot designated and devoted for City trail users between the Southeast corner of the premises and Highway 265.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FAYETTEVILLE, ARKANSAS:**

Section 1: That the City Council of the City of Fayetteville, Arkansas hereby approves and agrees to the Botanical Garden Land Lease Agreement attached to this Resolution and authorizes Mayor Jordan to sign this Lease Agreement.

**Page 2**  
**Resolution No.**

**PASSED** and **APPROVED** this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of September, 2014.

APPROVED:

ATTEST:

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
**LIONELD JORDAN, Mayor**

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
**SONDRA E. SMITH, City Clerk/Treasurer**

## **BOTANICAL GARDEN LAND LEASE AGREEMENT**

This Agreement to lease a substantial portion of the east side of Lake Fayetteville Park to the Botanical Garden Society of the Ozarks, Inc. as shown on the 2028 Botanical Garden of the Ozarks Master Plan for the continued use and continuing development of the Botanical Gardens of the Ozarks and to approve the 2028 Botanical Garden of the Ozarks Master Plan is entered into by and between the City of Fayetteville as landlord and the Botanical Garden Society of the Ozarks, Inc. (hereinafter the "Botanical Garden Society") as tenant on this \_\_\_\_\_ day of August, 2014.

**WHEREAS**, for almost two decades the Botanical Garden Society and the City of Fayetteville have cooperated and worked harmoniously to create and improve the Botanical Gardens of the Ozarks on substantial acreage on the eastern side of Lake Fayetteville Park; and

**WHEREAS**, an initial twenty five year Lease Agreement for the Botanical Garden was entered into between the Botanical Garden Society and the City of Fayetteville on September 2, 1997; and

**WHEREAS**, a replacement twenty five year Land Lease Agreement between the City and the Botanical Garden Society was agreed to on September 2, 2003; and

**WHEREAS**, in order to help spur further development of the Botanical Garden and to better serve Fayetteville citizens, the City of Fayetteville entered into a Contract on July 16, 2004 with the Botanical Garden Society in which the City invested \$250,000.00 "to construct the entry and grounds infrastructure (driveway, parking, walkways, Great Lawn, etc.)" for the Botanical Garden as well as another \$500,000.00 to complete the Carl Totemeier Building; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2007, the Botanical Garden Society received a \$115,128.00 Federal Grant through the Arkansas Parks and Tourism Outdoor Recreation Grant Program for display gardens and parking which requires ongoing duties of public availability, nondiscrimination, maintenance, etc. for the Botanical Garden Society; and

**WHEREAS**, the parties now wish to modify the leased premises and other provisions of the lease by entering into a new Land Lease Agreement to replace the existing Land Lease Agreement of 2003; and

**WHEREAS**, by their execution of this Land Lease Agreement, the parties wish to express and confirm their approval of the 2028 Botanical Garden of the Ozarks Master Plan including the plan for the City to build a new parking lot designated and devoted for City trail users on the Southeast corner of the premises.

**NOW, THEREFORE, the City of Fayetteville and the Botanical Garden Society of the Ozarks, Inc. hereby mutually covenant and agree as follows:**

**1. Leased Premises**

The City of Fayetteville agrees to Lease the land shown on the attached map showing the agreed 2028 Botanical Garden of the Ozarks Master Plan (Exhibit A) to the Botanical Gardens Society of the Ozarks, Inc. which agrees to accept such leased premises to be used for the purposes normally associated with a botanical garden and as set forth in later provisions of this lease.

**2. Use of Leased Premises**

The Botanical Garden Society agrees that it will, as a nonprofit public charitable corporation, operate, maintain, improve, and promote the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks upon the premises on behalf of the City of Fayetteville, its citizens and visitors.

**3. Consideration for the Lease**

In consideration of the thirty six year lease and any extensions thereof of about 40 acres of City of Fayetteville parkland to the Botanical Garden Society of the Ozarks, Inc., the City's \$750,000.00 investment in 2004 to fund the driveway, parking lot and completion of the Totemeier Building, and the City's agreement to build a second trail users' public parking lot on the Southeast corner of the leased premises, the Botanical Garden Society of the Ozarks, Inc. agrees to:

- A. Provide free access to the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks to Fayetteville School children on official, school sponsored academic visits, except for the Annual Northwest Arkansas Regional School Education Program and assist in the botanical education of the students.
- B. Provide free access to the Botanical Garden for all Fayetteville residents on Saturday mornings from 9:00 a.m. to noon. Free access for both Fayetteville school children and residents does not have to include all displays, areas, gardens and buildings, but must include at least the Great Lawn, the surrounding Display Gardens and the Totemeier Building.
- C. Maintain 24 hours a day, seven days a week public access to the existing parking lot built with City funds for persons desiring to access the Lake Fayetteville trails. The Botanical Garden Society may use signs and personnel to direct parkers to the supplemental parking lot once constructed by the City and available to City trail users.



- D. Maintain 24 hours per day, seven days a week public access to the proposed parking lot to be built by the City on the Southeast corner of the premises. This parking lot shall be devoted to and limited to City trail users, and the City is empowered to place appropriate signage for this lot and to enforce such parking restrictions just as with any other City parking lot.
- E. Operate, maintain, improve and promote the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks and all of the premises leased from the City.

#### 4. Lease Term

This lease term shall commence upon the approval and execution by both the Botanical Garden Society of the Ozarks, Inc. and the City of Fayetteville. It shall continue for about thirty six (36) years until June 30, 2050, unless sooner terminated pursuant to this Agreement or by mutual consent of the parties. This Lease Agreement shall automatically be renewed for a subsequent twenty five (25) year term unless either party notifies the other party in writing of its desire to terminate the lease at the end of the initial term by giving such written notice prior to June 30, 2049. This Lease Agreement shall automatically renew for a third twenty five (25) year term unless either party notifies the other party in writing of its desire to terminate the lease at the end of the second term by giving such written notice prior to June 30, 2074. As long as the Botanical Garden Society of the Ozarks, Inc. continues to successfully operate, maintain and promote the Botanical Garden and has abided by all of the terms of this Land Lease Agreement, the City shall not unreasonably deny the subsequent twenty five year lease terms.

#### 5. Botanical Garden Operating Policies

The Botanical Garden Operating Policies shall ensure nondiscriminatory operating policies for the Garden for all Fayetteville residents and school children. These policies will be designed to preserve and maintain the integrity of all buildings, grounds and improvements on the property although the Botanical Garden Society may alter or remove buildings and improvements when needed for further improvements, construction or for safety reasons.

#### 6. Botanical Garden Rules and Regulations

The Botanical Garden Society may establish and enforce any reasonable rules and regulations regarding behavior of visitors to assure the well-being of the plants and gardens, as well as the safety, comfort and quality of experience for visitors to the premises and shall provide copies of these rules and regulations to the City. To the extent permitted by law, either the City or the Botanical Garden Society may exclude

objectionable uses, or abusive or offensive persons from all premises subject to this agreement.

7. Botanical Garden Operation and Supervision

The Botanical Garden Society shall exercise sole operational and supervisory authority over all grounds, buildings and personnel of the Botanical Garden and over all such matters, including but not limited to, safety, insurance, planning, plant acquisitions, displays and gardens, and the purchase, exchange, or acquisition of additional items to be added to the collection, except as otherwise provided in this agreement. The Botanical Garden Society at its expense will be responsible for all maintenance and security associated with the operation of the Botanical Garden, including equipment, parking lots, and other improvements. The Botanical Garden Society may not sublet any portion of the property without the express written consent of the City Council except that the Botanical Garden Society may temporarily rent areas or buildings for short term special events such as weddings and receptions. Such events may not interfere with Fayetteville residents' right to access the Great Lawn, the surrounding gardens and Totemeier Building on Saturday mornings.

8. Trails

The Botanical Garden Society, City of Fayetteville and trail user groups have agreed to the location of the hard surface and soft surface trails that go past or through the leased premises as shown on the Master Plan of 2028 (attached). The Botanical Garden Society agrees to continue to permit and authorize constant and unimpeded access to these City trails from its current parking lot, the proposed new trail users' parking lot to be constructed by the City and at other reasonably designated locations. The City agrees that its trails are publicly accessible and accessible to patrons, volunteers and employees of the Botanical Garden. Both parties pledge to continue to work together to minimize any possible adverse effect that the public City trails and the Botanical Garden could have on each other and to make all reasonable efforts to ensure that users of the Botanical Garden and the City trails facilitate, respect and honor each other. The City retains the right to access, maintain, repair, reconstruct, enhance, and modify trails within the leased premises.

9. Botanical Garden Society of the Ozarks, Inc. is an independent entity

The parties agree that the Botanical Garden Society of the Ozarks, Inc. is an independent entity and nonprofit public charitable Arkansas corporation and will maintain that status and remain in good standing throughout the lease terms. The City of Fayetteville has no authority to hire, fire or supervise any Botanical Garden Society employee. The Botanical Garden Society has the sole authority for selecting,

**engaging, terminating, fixing compensation, supervising and otherwise directing all of its personnel, contractors and volunteers.**

#### **10. Botanical Garden Master Plan**

The Botanical Garden Society of the Ozarks, Inc. has created its 2028 Botanical Garden of the Ozarks Master Plan which supersedes and replaces all former Master Plans. By agreeing to this Land Lease Agreement, both the City of Fayetteville and the Botanical Garden Society agree to, approve of, and adopt the 2028 Botanical Garden of the Ozarks Master Plan which is attached to this Agreement.

This Master Plan shall be the development guide for future construction, expansion and improvements to the leased premises. The Botanical Garden Society shall submit to the City for review site and construction plans for future construction, alterations and improvements that should be in conformity with the 2028 Master Plan or any amendments thereto. All such construction must comply with the Unified Development Code. The 2028 Botanical Garden of the Ozarks Master Plan may be amended as needed in the future upon the mutual agreement of the Botanical Garden Society and the City of Fayetteville.

#### **11. Operations and Development must comply with Federal, State and City requirements and restrictions**

The Botanical Garden Society acknowledges that certain federal use and operating restrictions apply to the entire Lake Fayetteville Park property and it agrees to always be in full compliance with such Federal requirements and restrictions as well as State or City requirements and restrictions. Specifically the Botanical Garden Society agrees it will not do any development nor operate in such a manner that would violate Federal Outdoor Recreation Grants. The Botanical Garden Society agrees to always use best management practices including obeying all State and City laws and regulations governing the use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers to protect the quality of water flowing into Lake Fayetteville which is the City's secondary water source. The Botanical Garden Society shall maintain at least a 100 feet minimum setback from normal water elevation of Lake Fayetteville.

#### **12. Insurance**

The Botanical Garden Society agrees to obtain and maintain through the duration of the lease at its own expense, Commercial General Liability Insurance covering public liability, bodily injuries, death, products liability and property damage for damages and expenses arising out of the operation of the Garden.

### **13. Defense and Indemnification**

The Botanical Garden Society agrees to defend, indemnify and hold the City, its officers, employees, agents and representatives harmless against all damages, expenses, loss or liability from any claim or suit arising or alleged to have arisen from any act or omission of the Botanical Garden Society, its officers, employees, agents or representatives by reason of the operation of the Garden under this agreement, including, but not limited to, damage to or destruction of property or injuries to or death of a person or persons.

### **14. Selection of Trustees**

The Botanical Garden Society agrees that the City Council may appoint one member of the Botanical Garden Society's Board of Directors. Another member shall be a current member of the City's Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and a third member shall be a Parks and Recreation Department employee. The Botanical Garden Society further agrees to supply the names of those persons elected to the Board of Directors to the City Clerk as public record. The Board of Directors shall faithfully and diligently exercise such authority as herein conferred in conformity with the provisions of this agreement.

### **15. Nonprofit Corporate Status**

The Botanical Garden Society shall file a true and correct copy of its corporate charter, with amendments, if any, and an accurate and complete copy of its Bylaws and any amendments thereto, and a copy of the I.R.S. Letter of Determination of I.R.C. Sec. 501(c)(3) status with the City to be maintained as a public record. In the event of subsequent amendments to such charter or bylaws, true and correct copies of the same shall be timely filed with the City Clerk. If the IRS revokes the Botanical Garden Society's 501(c)(3) status, the Botanical Garden Society shall immediately notify the City of this occurrence.

### **16. Financial Reports**

The Botanical Garden Society shall provide the City a copy of the financial audit of the Garden's financial books and records every year. The report will be provided within ninety (90) days of each completed audit. In addition, the Botanical Garden Society shall timely provide to the City the yearly operating budget of the Botanical Garden Society.

### **17. Rent, Fees, Concessions and Taxes**

The Botanical Garden Society shall have the right to set admission fees to the Garden as well as fees for optional services such as programs, space rental, etc. Fees shall be reasonable and in line with similar services available in the tourism market place.

The Botanical Garden Society shall pay promptly all taxes and license fees of whatever nature applicable under municipal, state, and federal law. In addition, the parties agree that the Botanical Garden Society shall indemnify and save the City harmless from and against any liens or similar liabilities claimed or charges against the Botanical Garden Society pursuant to the Botanical Garden Society's operation of the Garden.

### **18. Remedies for Breach or Bankruptcy**

- A. *Termination of Agreement.* The parties agree that if either party materially breaches or fails to perform its obligations under this agreement, the other party may give notice in writing of intent to terminate. If the breaching or non-performing party fails to commence and effect cure in good faith to the satisfaction of the other party within six months of such notice or such longer period, if agreed in writing by the parties, the agreement shall be deemed terminated at the expiration of the sixth month period or other agreed period. Any request of extension shall not be unreasonably withheld.
- B. *Bankruptcy.* In the event the Botanical Garden Society shall be adjudicated bankrupt or insolvent or take the benefit of any reorganization of composition proceedings or insolvency law, or make an assignment for the benefit of creditors, or if the Botanical Garden Society's interest under this agreement shall be levied upon or attempted to be attached or sold under any process of law, or if a receiver shall be appointed for the Botanical Garden Society, then and thereafter the City shall have the right and option to terminate this agreement irrespective of whether or not default exists hereunder, said determination to be effective immediately upon City's exercise of such option by giving written notice to the Botanical Garden Society.
- C. *Acts of God.* The parties agree that neither party shall be liable or responsible to the other for delays or impossibilities of performance caused by force majeure occurrences beyond the control of the parties including, but not limited to, civil disorder, fires, floods, or acts of God.

**BOTANICAL GARDEN SOCIETY  
OF THE OZARKS, INC.**

By: Walt Eilers  
**Walt Eilers, President**

Date: 7.29.14

**CITY OF FAYETTEVILLE**

APPROVED:

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Lionel Jordan, Mayor**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Sondra E. Smith, City Clerk/Treasurer**





**BGSO priorities in alphabetical order**

- A Education / Visitor Center 17,000 sf
- B Parking
- C Event Pavilion 6,700 sf
- D Parking
- E Office / Restroom 2,000 sf (indoor / outdoor)
- F Community Market 7,800 sf (indoor / outdoor)
- G Amphitheatre
- H Joint Access Entry

**Future Gardens**

- 1 Field to Fork Garden
- 2 The Peoples Garden
- 3 Horticultural Display Gardens
- 4 Woody Plant Gardens
- 5 21st Century Sustainability Garden
- 6 Hilton Creek Garden
- 7 Kingman Arboretum
- 8 Woodland Interpretive Garden
- 9 No Fee Area

**MASTER PLAN 2028**

DAVID W. MCKEE, ARCHITECT  
 Prepared in cooperation with the BGSO Board's Master Plan Dated 10/20/13  
 Trail alignments and boundaries based on City of Fayetteville, MO



## MINUTES

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board  
August 4, 2014 at 5:30 p.m.  
City Administration Building, Room 219  
113 West Mountain Street  
Fayetteville, AR 72701

**Members:** Phillip Watson—Chair, John M. Paul- Vice-Chair, Wade Colwell, Richie Lamb, Terry Lawson, Chuck Maxwell, Phillip McKnight, David Priest, David Proffitt

**City Staff:** Connie Edmonston, Director; Byron Humphry, Maintenance Superintendent; Alison Jumper, Parks Planning Superintendent; Alan Spann, Recreation Superintendent; Melanie Thomas, Senior Secretary; Kit Williams, City Attorney.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board members present were Watson, Colwell, Lamb, Lawson, Maxwell, McKnight, Paul, and Priest. Proffitt arrived later. No members were absent.

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

A. Addendum 1 – Add to agenda the Paige Mulhollan Waterfowl Blind

B. Addendum 2- Add to agenda Steve Schneider presentation for the Bronze IMBA Ride Center

**PRAB Motion:** 8-0-0 approval for both addendums to accept the additions to the agenda.

3. Approval of July 7, 2014 PRAB Meeting Minutes

**PRAB Motion:** McKnight motioned to accept the minutes as written, and Priest seconded it. Motion passed 8-0-0 by voice vote.

4. Eagle Scout Project Proposal, Lake Wilson: Logan Schwartz

In coordination with Park staff, Logan Schwartz will present a proposal to improve drainage at the Lake Wilson pavilion and repair and upgrade a bench and trash receptacle.

**Staff Recommendation:** To approve the proposed Eagle Scout project at Lake Wilson.

Schwartz said he was with Troop 102. He talked with Alison, and then looked at Lake Wilson. He said he saw lots of drainage issues around the pavilion, and a board on a bench is bad. The trash can area needs improvement. He said he will build a french drain around the pavilion and lay down perforated pipe. He said the rainwater will drain to the



lake. He will repair the bench, and build a trash can barrier. He said he's not sure how far the pipes will extend out of the hillside. He said he won't request tools or help from the City. He has a \$100 donation from both Lowes and Home Depot, and the Lowe's manager will throw in an extra \$100. He added there will be no more donations. The planned workdays will August 16 and 17, as well as August 23 and 24. He said 10 to 15 people will be working approximately 300 man-hours.

Paul asked how the drain would be dug.

Schwartz said with picks and shovels.

Maxwell asked how far from the foundation the drain would be placed.

Schwartz said it will be about two feet away.

**PRAB Motion:** Colwell motioned to accept the project, and Priest seconded it. Motion passed 9-0-0 by voice vote.

**5. Eagle Scout Project Proposal, Lake Fayetteville Northshore Disc Golf Course: John Wolf**

In coordination with Park Staff, John Wolf will present a proposal to build a walk bridge and new steps at the Lake Fayetteville Northshore Disc Golf Course.

**Staff Recommendation:** To approve the proposed Eagle Scout project at Lake Fayetteville.

Wolf said he was from Troop 116, and he's working on his Eagle Scout project. He wants to build a foot bridge at Lake Fayetteville at the Northshore Disc Golf course. He said it will be 30 feet long, and 6 feet deep. He plans to use 30 foot telephone poles. He showed a sketch of the top, middle, and bottom view. He said concrete under the telephone poles will hold it into place. He said he plans to work on weekends and some week days. It will depend on when he can get the materials. He said he possibly can get a donation from Home Depot.

Watson asked if any additional materials would be needed.

Wolf said he would need 9 feet of concrete.

Humphry said that could be provided.

**PRAB Motion:** Maxwell motioned to accept the project, and Priest seconded. Motion passed 9-0-0 by voice vote.

**6. Botanical Garden of the Ozarks Master Plan and Lease: BGSO Representative and Park Staff**

**Staff Recommendation:** To approve the proposed Master Plan and Lease

Humphry gave a brief history of the lease agreement process. In the fall of 2012, the BGSO wanted to change their lease agreement and boundaries. They gave Parks and Recreation their proposal. A meeting was held with John Beneke, the director of the

Outdoor Recreation Grants in January 2013 about the Outdoor Recreation grant. The Parks department had a stakeholder meeting in February with OORC, FNHA, the Audubon Society, the Environmental Study Center, and the Fayetteville Watershed Association. They also received two letters from AGFC. BGSO asked the City staff to come up with a recommendation. Parks investigated an environmental impact study that would cost \$5,000. The current nature trail was muddy all the time and needed to get out of the mud. The north boundary was shifted with a 100 foot setback or more from the lake. The nature trail wouldn't be in the lease boundary. It is hoped to build a boardwalk using Eagle Scout labor. Parks and BGSO both made changes and compromised.

Edmonston asked everyone to let the BGSO make their presentation, and then the public can come up. She asked that everyone keep it brief, and that she appreciated everyone coming to the meeting.

Bill Schwab, a guest, said that he was part of the BGSO. He said he was requesting that the master plan be approved. The BGSO approved it in their July meeting. Their tagline is "Learn, Play, and Grow". Thousands of student and adults have attended classes and programs there. The new lease will allow, among other things, free admission on Saturdays. Last year the BGSO received approximately eighty-four thousand visitors. They budgeted \$560,000 for programs and activities, and used no City money. The BGSO provides areas for people to meet for many programs, such as weddings and memorials. The master plan is a fifteen year project that will add several new buildings and gardens. He said that it's a well thought out master plan.

Linda McMath said she's a longtime BGSO member. She said there is a site on the BGSO website that is very informative and tells all about the gardens. The Walton Foundation supports many events. There is a wide range of topics for the educational programs. There were approximately 10,880 children that came to visit last year. The Little Sprouts program has grown to ninety children. The large number of people that come now exceed the meeting space available. The BGSO wants a visitor center and gift shop. The master plan supports the educational role. She said she would appreciate the support of PRAB.

Robert Rhoads said that he's the attorney for the Botanical Gardens. He helped negotiate the new lease. He handed out a sheet that compared the old lease with the new lease. The BGSO has a plan for greater educational opportunities. The parking areas can still be used by trail users.

Watson opened up the floor for public comments.

A guest said that he loved the BGSO and the trails, but he felt that a Corps of Engineers permit and evaluation was needed. He said financial allowances needed to be included, and possible engineering work.

Humphry said the Corps of Engineers would be contacted when that point was reached.

Priest asked what the cost would be for the boardwalk, and who would pay for it.

Humphry said the parking lot would be \$190,000. He said the boardwalk cost has not been determined, and the cost of the new bridge would be included in the boardwalk.

Williams commented that the question about costs should be answered by the City Council.

Lamb asked if the trail would be closed.

Humphry said there were no plans to close the trail.

Maxwell asked if public restrooms would be build.

Humphry said they had been discussed, but no plans had been decided.

Williams said there would be access to Veteran's Park. He added that he was appreciative to BGSO for allowing the trail users to use their restrooms.

William Mertins, a guest, said that the staff recommendations and the lease suggests that the stakeholders are in agreement with it. He says that is not true. The trail is moving closer to the lake. He said the OORC and the Lake Fayetteville Environmental Center, among others, have objections. He said Parks and Recreation needs to be good stewards and protect the environment. He asked PRAB to reject the lease and master plan now until an impact study is done. He said the Corp of Engineers won't bless a boardwalk. He said if they do, he wants to see it in writing. Also, he would like to see something in the lease that will allow the City of receive funds back. He added that the recreation grant doesn't allow walled structures. Parks is saying that John Beneke said that wall structures are permissible. He disagrees. He said the trail is used by a lot of people, and fencing off 40 acres is a lot. PRAB needs to be concerned about this.

Edmonston said that they met with John Beneke, who is the current Outdoor Recreation Grants director, and Parks feels confident with Mr. Beneke's statement.

Williams said things were put in the lease to protect the citizens. The Botanical Gardens are one of our great natural resources. The soft trail has lots of users, and the Botanical Gardens realizes that. He said it's a difficult issue, so a creative solution was sought. The boardwalk is a better solution than building a soft trail into wetland. When Humphry walked the trail with stakeholders, a new location was chosen.

Paul asked if it would be a violation of the grant.

Williams said that the same person that said it was ok would indicate that there was a problem. He said if that happened, we'd talk with them and tell them that we relied on their predecessor's opinion, so don't punish us now.

Paul asked if Williams felt confident with that.

Williams said yes, he did.

Edmonston said if that happened, Parks would have to come up with replacement property, which would be 40+ acres that had recreational opportunities. She said that had to be done for the easements on 265. Replacement property had to be found to replace a ditch.

Priest asked what 40 acres would cost.

Edmonston said they would have to come up with the cost.

Priest questioned that if Parks violated the lease, and had to come up with 40 acres, at this point in time we don't know how much it would cost.

Williams said that maybe land could be purchased and annexed around Lake Sequoyah. He added that he didn't think a violation of the lease would happen.

Priest said that Parks didn't know the financial impact of this.

Edmonston said that Parks will have no intention to violate the grant.

McKnight said that right now the project is approved by Arkansas State Parks and Tourism.

Edmonston agreed.

Priest said that money needs to be spent wisely, and the HMR impact needs to be looked at. He wanted to know if it would take away from future facilities.

Williams said he wasn't sure how to answer that. He said that it was good to get whatever advice you can.

Lamb said he was on the BGSO board, and he has a long history of using trails in the area. He says BGSO is asking to move 250 feet of trail. It's mowed and walkable. A person can look left to see the existing trail. The citizens are getting maintained trails. He said his loyalty is to PRAB, and he's recommending to accept the changes as proposed.

Watson said he has walked the trail, and it was a constant give and take where the buffers are concerned. He said he wants everyone to be aware of the ideal border and where the compromise is. He would like to stay as close to the happy medium as possible. He said he wanted educated information.

Edmonston said City staff composed of landscape architects and engineers walked the trails. She said they had a lot of knowledge.

Watson said he was concerned that the Corp of Engineers won't allow it.

Jumper said that it is permitted by the Corp and that she thinks they will accept it. Right now it's a muddy area, and a boardwalk would elevate the trail.

Colwell said the future improvements would remove trees. He wanted to know how the removed trees would be used. He also asked if the trees would be replanted.

Williams said that they would have to comply with the Tree Preservation Ordinance.

Rhoades added that most of the building sites are prairie, but how to use the wood would be something to look into.

Phil Penny said that the City needs to understand the impact. If activities can't be done, the area may be ruined.

Steve Schneider said that he loves the Botanical Gardens. He said he thinks the trail should stay open forever. He doesn't think the taxpayers should be burdened with the expense of a boardwalk. He added that he didn't think the BGSO should be excluded from the financial burden.

A resident of Fayetteville said that he is part of the BGSO. He said the project must be approved, and lots of professionals should weigh in on the decision. He said it was time for the master plan to be approved.

Maxwell asked if there was any reason the BGSO hadn't done an environmental study.

Rhoades said the suggestion came from the board and it was considered. He said that if they were mandated to do it, they would want to do it. He added that the trail is the City's responsibility.

Maxwell said that an impact study might change things. He said it should have been done before the plan was presented.

Rhoades said the experts said it was ok.

Williams said to remember that there has been a lease agreement since 1997. BGSO will have to follow all requirements when building. He advised not to table the decision, because it's been in the works a long time. He said thanks to everyone for their hard work.

Aubrey Shepherd, a guest, said he's lived in or around wetlands for 74 years. Wetlands can be destroyed. Creatures and plants live there. Wetlands shouldn't be mowed. Land is precious. Everything we do to preserve wetlands is beneficial.

Ron Troutman said that he helped build the Razorback Greenway. He said that he learned in dealing with the Corp while building in wetlands, they would ask you to elevate trails. He's worked in mitigation many times with the Corp. He added that building a boardwalk would actually help the environment.

Colwell said that the Environmental Education Center impacts kids greatly. He said kids remember things. This facility will help educate kids.

Watson said the wetland area is a big concern. When he walked the area, part of the trail was in the wetland. Part of the trail needs to go the other way. He has no problems with the rest of the plan. He said he would like to see an environmental assessment.

McKnight said that experts have come in and the boardwalk is acceptable. He added that a study couldn't be done on just 250 feet of the trail. He said the entire seven miles would need to be done.

Watson said that everyone needs to be aware of the boundaries and compromises. He added that he thought the \$5,000 was for the study of the entire trail.

Edmonston said no, the price was just for the part of the trail being discussed.

Williams said that other trails have been built already, and no changes will be done to them. He added that the land was currently under the BGSO control. The boardwalk will be elevated, and the land will be going more into nature.

Paul said PRAB didn't need to handcuff themselves.

Williams said that experts have looked at it and approved it.

Lamb said that a study could be required.

Maxwell said that we're not just talking about 250 feet that's going to be moved. He said it's almost 6/10 of a mile.

Lamb commented that the entire trail is wetland. It's close to a lake. He has ridden the trail since 2003. Much of the trail has been rerouted and greatly improved. He added that no assessment was done when the OORC improved the trail.

Schneider said that Mt. Kessler is having one done.

Paul asked why the trail is being moved such a short distance to accommodate BGSO.

Ron Cox said the concrete bridge is incorporated into the BGSO fee area. BGSO built it. The trail must cross the creek in another location.

Watson said that there is a normal barrier between the water and the boundary. The wildlife needs enough room to move around. He said that is a big concern to him.

Williams said that motion could be changed somewhat so that the environmental site assessment be done before the City Council votes, rather than before submission to the City Council. He said that PRAB is an advisory board, so if the other condition was put on it, the Council may think that they couldn't vote on it. He said that if PRAB will accept it as a friendly amendment that the environmental site assessment be done prior to the City Council decision, it would probably be more proper.

Watson said that he would make that amendment.

McKnight asked how it would impact future trails.

Williams said each situation would be case by case as determined by City Staff.

**PRAB Amendment to Staff Recommendation:** Watson motioned to require an environmental assessment to be done before the City Council votes on the lease, and Maxwell seconded it. Motion failed 4-5-0 by voice vote.

Priest motioned to amend the recommendation to say to have a clear accounting to what the cost to the City of Fayetteville would be for the restructuring of the lease. There was no second.

Williams told Priest that the City Council will get the minutes of this meeting, so they will understand your concern.

Priest said thank you.

**PRAB Motion:** Colwell motioned to approve the BGSO Master Plan and lease as written, and McKnight seconded it. Motion passed 5-4-0 by voice vote.

**7. 2015-2019 Capital Improvement Plan: Connie Edmonston, Parks and Recreation Director**

**Staff Recommendation:** To approve the proposed 2015-2019 CIP, unless an offer for purchase of land adjacent to Gulley Park is accepted.

Edmonston said the Gully Park renovation is still in the making. The City purchased the Dunn property for \$970,000, and the remaining \$130,000 will come from the Nation Heritage Association. The City will pay down \$700,000 this year. There is \$270,000 in the contract for 2015, and \$130,000 is pledged by the National Fayetteville Heritage Association.

Colwell said that he thought it was \$270,000 in 2016, and \$130,000 in 2015.

Edmonston said yes, that was right.

Williams said that the signed offer was received today. He said it will now go to Council.

Edmonston said the land addition could possibly be a dog park, or a park for the aging population.

Williams said Gulley Park will expand, but there probably won't be much development for a while, unless the Council says differently.

Watson asked about the two lots located on the land.

Edmonston said they probably will be sold.

Paul said that he is concerned that people are spending money elsewhere to go to a splash pad. Everyone asks him when Fayetteville is going to get a splash pad. He says it's needed.

Maxwell asked what the plan was for the hard trail at Gulley. He said really soft chat is good and has good drainage. He added that there aren't as many issues with it.

Edmonston said that idea will be looked at.

**PRAB Motion:** McKnight motioned to accept the proposed 2015-2019 CIP plan, and Proffitt seconded it. Motion passed 8-1-0 by voice vote.

**Addendum 1- Naming of the Lake Fayetteville Bird Blind**

Edmonston said that this needs to be tabled. Parks didn't get the justifications needed.

**PRAB Motion:** Watson motioned to table the naming of the Lake Fayetteville Bird Blind, and McKnight seconded it. Motion passed 9-0-0 by voice vote.

**Addendum 2-** Steve Schneider, South Central Regional Director of International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA), would like to make a presentation about Fayetteville becoming a bronze IMBA Ride Center.

Schneider said he was the Regional Director of IMBA. He passed out an IMBA magazine. They would like to become a bronze IMBA Ride Center. He said it was like being in the Hall of Fame in Football. Fayetteville needs to develop trail builders and funding, and maybe jump to silver status. He added that the trail around Lake Fayetteville has to stay open.

McKnight asked what came after bronze and silver.

Schneider said it would be gold. They are looking into a regional ride center. He said no one has applied for that.

Paul asked how many issues of the magazine are published.

Schneider replied that the magazine goes to places such as bike industries, wholesalers, etc. He said over 365,000 have gone out.

Williams commented that Schneider's presentation would be good for the City Council to hear. He said he will arrange for a presentation.

Schneider said he would be glad to do a presentation. He added that the application process is significant. He said it's a blessing to have the chance to push to the next level.

Lamb asked if it would be appropriate to draft a letter to IMBA thanking them for placing a director in NWA, and thanking them for choosing Steve.

Edmonston said yes, and she would do it.

Schneider said he was having expert trail builders come in for a trail blazing school. He said that there are great trail builders in this area, but this will put them to the next level. He wants to have the class at Frank Sharp's location. There will be no cost to the City. The tentative dates are October 23-25, 2014.

## **8. Announcements**

Edmonston said that everyone needs to be more careful on the trails. She said she had an accident that's taken a while for her to heal. She added that another man had an accident on one of the trails, and he is paralyzed now. She asked everyone to please watch their children and pets while they are on the trails.

## **9. Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Minutes taken by Melanie Thomas.



**BGSO Stake Holder summary of recommendations**

Group	Contact	Wildlife Corridor	Wildlife Habitat Buffer	Nature Trail	Other
OORC	Steve Schneider			trall can be conctructed to be environmentally sustainable	impact assessment would be helpful
Audubon	Joe Neal	at least 100 ft	250-300 ft - compromise, flatten out "W" and plant native habitat		
Environmental Study center	Lawanna Banning	stakeholders need to agree on an adequate corridor width and be specific about the placement of barriers	flatten the "W" to accommodate building site and stay out of wetlands		
Environmental Study center	John Watterson	250-300 ft	do not move trail closer to lake	the construction of the trail in wetland will increase erosion and disturb wildlife	
FNHA	Bob Caulk	250 ft from 1240 ft elev.	250 ft from 1240 ft elev.	move to elevation that allows drainage and avoid boardwalk	
Fayetteville Watershed	John Pennington	at least 50 ft needed around entire lake, 200-300 ft is ideal when a barrier is present	avoid moving the trail closer to the lake into the wetland		
AR Game & Fish	Mark Hutchings	(with proposed setback) deer movement wlll not be adversely impacted to deter their use of habitat	min of 50 ft and max where can of proposed 300 ft - invasive removal, native establishment; wood duck box, bat house, concealment cover		designate no-entry zones for boats?
Parks Staff		set boundary at 100 ft minimum from lake edge (top of bank) to accommodate wildlife and human traffic between barrier and lake	flatten the "W" to accommodate the building site and maintain approximately 200 ft buffer from shallow cove area of lake. remove invasive species and reintroduce native plants to provide habitat and screening between the lake	where trail intersects wet soils, build a boardwalk or raised tread trail that does not cause erosion or impact the environment	there is enough information and expertise amongst staff and stakeholders that an environmental impact study would not be definitive or cost effective with regards to setting the BGSO lease boundary and trail location

OORC

OZARK OFFROAD CYCLIST

## Humphry, Byron

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**From:** Steve Schneider <steve.schneider@imba.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 23, 2014 2:20 PM  
**To:** Walt Eilers; joeneal@uark.edu; bobcaulk@cox.net; John Pennington; Marr, Don; Edmonston, Connie; Jumper, Alison; rroads@hallestill.com; chuck maxwell; rcox@bgozarks.org  
**Cc:** wmertins@mertinslaw.com; phil penny; John Sage; Lawanna Banning; Humphry, Byron  
**Subject:** input

Walt, first of all, I don't envy your position one bit. These meetings you have hosted could seem easy, when you start your fundraising efforts. We all appreciate you listening to us, thanks.

I feel like a 'solution' and 'compromise' are what we all seek. It is certain that not many of the various user groups would ever agree %100 to each of our 'social' activities. And that is what they are, 'social' activities, exercise, recreation, whatever you want to call being in nature.

As Joe pointed out, this is what we all seek, and that is why the PRESERVATION of Lake Fayetteville is most important. Maybe we 'all' have gone about this backwards. Protecting the Lake, and what it has to offer, should be priority #1. Has that really been addressed? Or the 'buffer' area we discussed Friday, **maybe some sort of Impact Assessment would answer many of the questions** being thrown at you, about buildings and barriers the BGSO is proposing.

In regards to the soft surface trail, Mt Bikers will focus on sustainability, with elevation in mind, managing low lying wetland areas, to create consistency partnering with the City of Fayetteville as well as the BGSO in preserving the Park/Lake and it's environmental concerns. **Some type of environmental assessment should** render a much better understanding about the impact that will be created from this 'new' master plan, as well as the trails impact, if moved.

Greenspace is being squeezed out by growth, sometimes unavoidable. So in this case, it seems BGSO and the City need to work closely together to the BEST of there ability's to preserve this awesome City Park, and help the Gardens progress over the next 20-30 years.

Nature is what humans seek, everyone, everywhere. That is undeniable, and we all want to see the Park continue to thrive, and the Garden flourish for all, now and 100 years from now. Passionate mindful folks can get that done, and you must agree we all fit that description, to a tee... ss

--  
Stephen Schneider  
South Central Regional Director  
International Mountain Bicycling Association  
VP, Ozarkoffroadcyclists  
[steve.schneider@imba.com](mailto:steve.schneider@imba.com)  
479-466-0988

Audubon

## JOSEPH C. NEAL

Wildlife Biologist, USDA Forest Service, Ouachita NF (retired)  
Visiting Scholar, Department of Biological Sciences, UA-Fayetteville  
145 E. Cleburn Street, Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701  
479-521-1858 [jocneal@att.net](mailto:jocneal@att.net)

February 22, 2014

Mr. Walt Eilers, Chair  
Botanical Garden of the Ozarks Board of Directors  
Greetings Walt,

Thank you for setting up yesterday's meeting at the Garden. I appreciate the work that you and the architects have accomplished since last fall's meeting and field trip. I think we have made some important progress. I like it that the blind we wanted to build in honor of Paige Mulhollan is now part of the long term plan.

I would like for us to keep going with a few additional changes. I believe that these changes will protect the natural values of the park and will benefit the future growth of the Garden.

But first I would like to clear the air as much as possible about why the Garden seems to be getting rough treatment over the master plan 2013. You were right on the mark yesterday in noting that there was no objection to the document from 2005. Now nine years later, there is a lot of dissension. The reason for this, as I stated yesterday, is that during these nine years we have slowly realized that Lake Fayetteville is in the process of being changed what amounts to forever. We did not see this at all prior to the Garden's proposal for how to manage its lease.

A lake that was functionally out in the middle of nowhere in 1950 is now our most important public space totally enclosed by increasing dense and complex urban development. That is what has sharpened the debate. It is not about you or the Garden as such, not about trail advocates or bird watchers. We recognize that what has been taken for granted – an unlimited amount of wild space in a relatively large park – is about to disappear.

What existed in 1950 has already disappeared. What we have in front of us now is the challenge to manage what we still have in the best way we know how in 2014. Maybe nine years from now, in 2023, the challenge will look even more different.

As you know, bird studies of various kinds have been underway at Lake Fayetteville since 1953, and are ongoing. Dr H. David Chapman's book, *The Birdlife of Lake Fayetteville*, presents all of this. He documents 255 species in the park. Of these 255 species, more than 70 are either aquatic obligates (like ducks) or are directly dependent upon the aquatic ecosystem, like Great Blue Herons.

My chief argument here is that there is no replacement for a wildlife buffer, only a discussion of the size and quality of this buffer. During the past 30 years, we have noticed that waterfowl – for example, ducks, geese, swans, pelicans, cormorants – spend significant amounts of time in what was formerly a swampy, relatively remote cove in the southeastern portion of the lake. They use this area when foraging and as importantly, a safe resting area. The area I'm talking about is adjacent the Garden lease, about 500 feet east of the current Garden fence.

As a community of park users, we became alarmed when two years ago there was some clearing along the shoreline and we slowly became aware of plans – which you rightly point out date from 2005 – that had great potential to negatively impact this cove

My recommendation to you and the Garden Board is to establish the Garden perimeter at about around 250-300 feet of undeveloped existing vegetation between the shoreline and Garden fencing. As you know from your own contact with Arkansas Game and Fish, all kinds of numbers can be thrown out in this discussion, depending on the goals of the buffer.

I did not make up the 250-300 feet recommendation out of thin air. These number fall within a range (+ and – depending on species and nature of disturbance) that come up in wildlife research involving estimates of how and when disturbance impacts wildlife. For example, how far away can disturbance force ducks to start swimming away, then flush? How closely can you approach a fishing Great Blue Heron without interfering? This section of the shoreline provides the best refuge, with modest disturbance, on the lake for many species of water birds and other animals (besides birds, mammals, frogs, turtles, salamanders, etc) in a park now crowded with other developed activity.

I urge you not to support a minimum width in terms of this buffer. Nine years into the future, with more development around and within the park, we may wish we had been more careful in establishing a buffer suitable to the park's robust wildlife values. As park use increases, so will problems with wildlife disturbance. A minimal buffer likely ceases to serve the function of providing modest protection for the park's wildlife values.

I'd like to urge a compromise idea. On the master plan 2013 map the future Field to Fork garden labeled as 1 seems to have driven the need to relocate the mountain bike trail closer to the lake shoreline and therefore closer to the sensitive cove that requires a buffer. I think the Field to Fork garden is a great idea. I think this could be joined with another idea to help break the deadlock over the final trail route and the Garden boundary fence AND provide the needed buffer.

The current trail alignment is a wide W here. My first suggestion is that this W could be modestly flattened on the 2 sides, allowing a bit more workable space for the Field to Fork garden. It would still be a W, but a flatter one, with more Garden space, while maintaining the wildlife buffer width.

My second suggestion involves restoration activities involving the bottomland and shoreline vegetation of this cove. Removing non-native invasive plants, releasing existing natives for growth, and planting appropriate natives, could allow this cove – while outside the Garden's fence – to functionally carry out one of the Garden's goals in showcasing native vegetation of the Ozarks. City Parks is working on a project like this elsewhere in Fayetteville. The Garden could partner with Master Naturalists, Arkansas Native Plant Society, Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society, and others. We could also seek to involve the energetic mountain bike riding community. You could have a gate here. With care and foresight, this could resolve the trail alignment knot, protect the waterfowl cove, and provide the Garden with a bunch more volunteers and publicity in a good cause.

I will be glad to discuss this in more detail and could help with networking the idea among potential partners.

One other thing that came up in yesterday's meeting involved the narrow strip of shoreline east of the cove. On the master plan 2013 map, this is roughly the area adjacent the proposed event pavilion. The map shows the required riparian zone plus a slightly wider set back with the existing trail more or less forming the boundary. I understand that the Garden has made a compromise here, but in my opinion, a strip so narrow will not in the future serve the best interests of the Garden or the Park. It will not serve the Garden because the public will view the fencing as an unjustified overreach and an intrusion on the open spaces of the park.

My chief concern here is that all wildlife uses will be forced into a narrow bottleneck, hemmed in by water and a fence. Here, and elsewhere on the lake, the buffer needs to be wider. I wouldn't argue that it needs to be as wide as the buffer for the cove, but it may need to be at least 100 feet rather than 50. I wouldn't mind going in the field with the Urban Biologist and others to talk about this.

I would like to quickly add here that I understand none of this was raised in 2005. Just speaking for myself, I was vaguely aware of the Garden but it never occurred to me that a fairly large chunk of the park would have to be fenced-off from all other uses. In 2005 I thought the park would just remain the same, albeit with a Garden as asset.

I realize that it is quite a problem to request that the Garden and City Parks rework aspects of the 2005 plan in order to accommodate public views in 2014. Doing so may require the Garden to rethink the eventual extent of what can be accomplished. It may require some non-traditional thinking about the role of the Garden and the wider ecosystem concerns about this park. I do think the Garden will be a stronger entity for working this out now, rather than sticking with a plan that doesn't accommodate concerns about the park itself.

In encouraging the Garden to rethink what was settled in 2005, I am also encouraging the City of Fayetteville to rethink how it plans to manage the rest of this park, and others, going forward. Other leases exist in this park, and they may too require us to consider conditions that exist in 2014, rather than 2005, or earlier. Protection of the shoreline with buffers becomes more and more important as use increases throughout the park.

As I stated yesterday, we are at Lake Fayetteville Park because of nature and its attractive natural setting, now more and more attractive as our area continues to build up and burst at the seams with people and projects. For this park, we are clearly at a tipping point. Our decisions reflect what we see as the future of the park.

My suggestions to the Garden here reflect my hopes for keeping nature in as healthy a state as possible while we visualize and then actually make changes to the park. The Garden has an honored place in this and I think it will be a place that can be secured by enfolded into the plan needs for specific wildlife protections.

Thanks for reading Walt, and for all that you do for the Garden and the park.

Sincerely, Joe Neal

ENVIRONMENTAL  
STUDY  
CENTER

Mr. Eilers, Parks Staff,

Thank you for meeting with several of the stakeholders to discuss the BGO master plan. We appreciate the fact that some changes were made relative to the earlier plans. Unfortunately, there are still two basic issues that haven't been fully addressed:

1. A sufficient corridor is needed for the movement of wildlife and people around the lake, and
2. The soft surface trail should not be moved into the wetland (a move which would also put it too close to the sensitive cove area).

It was stated at the last meeting (2/21/14) that each discussion brings up new challenges to the master plan like a game of "whack a mole". This statement should be challenged, because, although new ways of approaching the problem were discussed for the first time (such as an environmental study), it appears that all of our remaining concerns have boiled down to these same two things that we have been talking about all along.

At the meeting, it was stated that the old master plan (2005) had to be revised because, among other reasons, the designers from California did not know enough about the Arkansas landscape to match the proposed uses to the land. The implication was that the local designers had a deeper knowledge of how to fit things on the Arkansas landscape.

The argument of this letter is similar: that it is appropriate to change some of the currently proposed master plan for the same reason – it doesn't work with the landscape. Sure it **fits on the property** leased to the Botanical Gardens, but that property is part of a larger picture.

The experts on this larger system – experts on how this natural landscape **functions as a whole** - are not those obviously talented people who designed the beautiful buildings and gardens in the proposed plan. The experts are the people who have studied this natural landscape and its populations of plants and animals for decade after decade... the people who have been represented at the stakeholder meetings.

The value of this large natural area cannot be overstated. And when we chop it up and destroy it as a *functioning* natural area, we *cannot get it back*.

Choking off that narrow part of the park, and fencing an area basically from the lake to Highway 265 would be devastating to the wildlife and to the tiny corridor of land left beside the lake. This, in turn, would seriously diminish the valuable experiences that our students have out here day after day, seeing these animals in their natural habitat. These are life-changing experiences for our students at the Study Center, many of whom have had no previous access to natural areas such as what we enjoy at Lake Fayetteville Park.

Additionally, for those animals that *are* able to survive the changes, the forced adjustments in their movement patterns **will** endanger drivers on the highway. We don't need to do this.

The good news is that we CAN have our cake and eat it, too. We can have a superb botanical garden, **and** we can have Lake Fayetteville Park - a large *functioning natural* area in the middle of our ever-expanding urban sprawl. We just have to agree to limit the size of the fenced ("barriered") botanical garden so that it won't interfere with the movement of animals/humans around the lake.

We should also consider how this decision would reflect on the City of Fayetteville and on the Botanical Gardens. I suspect they would rather be seen as making plans that fit in with the landscape and preserve the parks' traditional and prescribed uses, rather than as blocking off access and harming the wildlife in the park.

Based on the above considerations, I'd like to present a list of specific requests, which take into account the entirety of the Lake Fayetteville Park:

- 1 - have the city and stakeholders agree on how best to determine what would constitute an adequate corridor for the south shore and agree to set back the fence/barrier to that specification
- 2 - straighten out the "W" of the existing trail near the cove to make it a "shallower W" in order to accommodate the proposed building site, but do not move it into the wetlands
- 3 - be specific about the placement of the fences/barriers, so wildlife and human traffic corridors can be preserved going forward.

Thank you, I appreciate being asked to provide input on this important topic.

Lawanna Banning



ENVIRONMENTAL  
STUDY  
CENTER

Mr. Eilers, Park Staff,

Thank you for allowing me to attend the meeting regarding the BGSO Master Plan. I respect and appreciate the work that the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks conducts. I am also grateful for the opportunity to provide input on this situation.

I have several major concerns regarding the proposed trail relocation and barrier construction. I have a Master's Degree in wildlife management and have worked as a professional biologist in Northwest Arkansas for several years. This experience has helped me to see that there are some potentially serious issues with the Garden's plan.

The proposed plan calls for the soft-surface trail to be moved further into a wetland area at the edge of the lake. This encroachment into wetland habitat can have several negative impacts on the ecosystem of Lake Fayetteville. By constricting the movement of trail users into an area that is prone to flooding and moist soils will increase erosion in this location. Wildlife species that are now forced to move through a narrower corridor will also contribute to that problem. All of this activity near the wetland is also sure to disturb birds that are utilizing this area for foraging, resting, or nesting. Finally, moving the trail farther into the wetland will require more construction (also resulting in more wildlife disturbance) in a wetland. I am concerned that this may place BGSO's plan in violation of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Generally, construction and alterations of this type of habitat require either permits or letters of approval.

Along with the trail relocation, BGSO intends to build a "barrier" to keep wildlife out of their property. This barrier will be located approximately 5 feet from the soft-surface trail. Constructing this barrier will substantially compound the issue of wildlife disturbance. The final plan also includes extending this barrier along the entire western border of the Garden's property. This will leave a corridor that is too narrow to accommodate wildlife movement throughout the park. Research suggests that an appropriate corridor for wildlife movement should be approximately 250-300 feet. The proposal's corridor will be far narrower than that.

Constricting this corridor can also be potentially harmful to the public. Deer moving throughout the park may avoid this narrow corridor due to limited space and human disturbance. The next option is to go around the BGSO property, taking them onto a very busy road and potentially increasing vehicle collisions. During the meeting, BGSO staff members stated that they had looked for deer tracks in this area after our most recent snow event and saw none. This is insufficient to conclude that deer do not move through that area. A decision of this magnitude cannot be made off of an isolated observation. This observation was taken post-rut when deer are no longer moving as often in search of mating opportunities. It was also taken during extreme cold temperatures. This can also alter deer movement and they may localize around a known food source instead of moving large distances. Also, deer movement patterns will change throughout the year as food availability changes.

The BGSO stated that an urban wildlife biologist wrote that the proposed trail re-design would not hinder wildlife movement. I would like to know what criteria he had based this approval on. A major



question I also have about this approval is did he know about the construction of a barrier? There is no mention of it in his letter. He also mentions the potential for increasing deer-vehicle collisions.

I feel that the decision on this issue has the potential to set a dangerous precedent for the future of Lake Fayetteville, and for other parks in the area. We are supposed to be stewards of the land. I do not think that one can begin to make an argument that walling off a large tract of the park and encroaching on wetland habitat is good for the ecosystem of Lake Fayetteville as a whole. As Northwest Arkansas continues to grow, natural areas like Lake Fayetteville will become even more important to area wildlife and our residents. If we allow it to be further degraded now, what will we have left in the future? The BGSO also has an educational facility. What are we teaching visitors to the site about the value of natural habitat if we allow it to be damaged?

Potential solutions to this problem lie in maintaining a proper wildlife corridor between the lake shore and BGSO activity. The BGSO has also not been able to specifically describe the construction of their wildlife barrier. If specific construction details are provided, we can provide more specific potential resolutions. I also fully support the suggestions made by Lawanna Banning and John Pennington in their letters.

Thank you for your time and I hope we can all move forward together for the benefit of all parties involved in this issue.

Sincerely,

John Watterson

FNHA  
FAYETTEVILLE NATURAL HERITAGE

**Humphry, Byron**

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**From:** bobcaulk@cox.net  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 27, 2014 8:41 PM  
**To:** Edmonston, Connie; Walt Eilers  
**Cc:** Jumper, Alison; Humphry, Byron  
**Subject:** Lake Fayetteville south shore development plan input

Walt,

My original input on the BGO Master Plan comes from discussions at Fayetteville Natural Heritage Association (FNHA) Board meetings, but in an effort to be sure it is the FNHA's Board position and not just mine per Connie's request I find I need to amend the input. The following is the unanimous position of the FNHA Board. FNHA's top strategic efforts are working to provide access to exemplary natural areas and working to improve the areas we have today. The goals are to provide habitat for plants and animals, opportunities for the community to experience nature and to provide a venue for healthy activities. In order to be sure we are being consistent, I watched the video of the Special Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Meeting that was held on April 24, 2013. At that time we suggested a 300 foot buffer/corridor was desirable.

The key to achieving these goals along the south shore of Lake Fayetteville is providing an appropriate buffer. We have done a little research that suggests defining "appropriate" can be difficult, but it appears good buffers are at least 250 feet. At this size, animals and people can move about without completely destroying the habitat. A good buffer would be measured from the contour that is 1240 feet above sea level to insure it is above standing water and can support trees.

The cove north of the Education/Visitor Center is one area of concern. The existing trail goes within 200 feet of the shore and the proposal moves it even closer. Here we would hope we could keep the trail far enough south to avoid building a boardwalk and provide the full 250 foot buffer/corridor described above. As we go west along the trail, there are many spots that are wet almost all the time. In addition, the buffer shown on the Master Plan would only be 50 feet in many locations. We are concerned that habitat destruction would be complete if animals and people are forced into such a narrow corridor. Here we would hope that the trail could be moved to an elevation that allows it to drain and the barrier be located even further south. The buffer/corridor should be as close to 250 feet from the 1240 contour as possible.

Bob

February 24, 2014

Walt,

Thank you for inviting representatives of the Lake Fayetteville Watershed Partnership, Ozark Offroad Cyclists, Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society, Lake Fayetteville Science Center, and Fayetteville Natural Heritage Association to the Botanical Gardens on February 21 to review the latest version of the BGO Master Plan for development around the lake.



As you know, one of the concerns of the Lake Fayetteville Watershed Partnership (LFWP) regarding the "Master Plan" concept was the section of trail on the East end of the lake, and which is still of contention at this time.

Our primary concern that was expressed at the Botanical Gardens of the Ozarks (BGO) site visit in Spring with the Parks and Advisory Board was that moving the existing soft surface trail west, closer to the lake, would disturb wildlife habitat and wildlife movement corridors while also degrading the environment through constricting animals and people into a wetland corridor that is insufficient to handle all of the traffic. Those comments were also shared by many stakeholders, but not were not incorporated into the current design, nor were they remembered by BGO representatives on February 21, 2014.

A major factor of that will aid in damaging the sensitive wetland on the east end of the lake is forcing people and animals within a 50 foot corridor between the lakeshore and BGO barrier to keep animals and non-fee payers out.

LFWP still is of the position that moving the trail West toward the lakeshore and into the wetland is unnecessary, and should be avoided.

However, since we have had so much time to reflect on the issue, and one of the most important aspects of our concerns was not heard or recognized, we have now amplified and grown our concern. Our concern now relates to the entire lakeshore corridor. We, along with other stakeholders around the lake, have now realized that at least 50 feet of wildlife corridor is needed around the entire lake. Between 200 – 300 feet would be ideal since a barrier to control wildlife movement is going to be established at the perimeter of the BGO and the forest around the lake is a large area of habitat that is planned to be developed by BGO.

Thank you for taking time to provide a more complete picture of what BGO envisions to achieve in the future, and for excluding the land between the lake and the trail from your lease.

Sincerely,

John Pennington  
Chair  
Lake Fayetteville Watershed Partnership

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Lake Fayetteville Watershed Partnership ♦ P.O. Box 9943 ♦ Fayetteville, Arkansas 72703  
*The Mission of the Lake Fayetteville Watershed Partnership is "To Promote, Preserve and Enhance the Integrity of the Lake Fayetteville Watershed Through Scientific Evaluation, Educational Programs and Voluntary Cooperation"*

1<sup>ST</sup> LETTER

Ronald Cox  
Executive Director  
Botanical Garden of the Ozarks  
4703 North Crossover Road  
Fayetteville, AR 72703

Dear Mr. Cox:

I appreciate your invitation to tour the Botanical Gardens and the opportunity to look at the extended property and the Master Plan proposal. It is always a challenge to balance concerns for natural systems on the urban landscape, especially when the current condition of the landscape has already experienced so many changes in land use and continues to see more development every day. While the property has some potential and offers some degree of wildlife habitat quality, the fauna represented there is certainly a result of changes in land use and succession. A large percentage of the vegetative composition is made up of invasive species. The vegetative buffer between the lake and the existing developments is really the result of inactivity in and around Fayetteville Lake which is a man-made reservoir. It would appear that much of the land around the lake was once open land and was used probably for a combination of haying, grazing, and possibly some cropland. The wetlands were created by the lake development and much of the subsequent plant succession has resulted from its influence.

I would not recommend you purposely manage to improve habitat for whitetail deer in this urban setting. Deer densities are already quite high, deer vehicle collisions are on the increase, and complaints from landowners in the community in regard to landscaping and garden damage are numerous. Because of municipal ordinances control of that population becomes limited and expensive. My recommendation would be to work with the 50 feet required by city ordinance and where possible the Garden could expand up to 150 feet. This will be adequate to provide riparian habitat for stream bank and water protection as well as travel lanes for endemic wildlife. As I have discussed, the current habitat is nothing like what would have occurred naturally it is a result of manipulation of the site over the past several decades. The re-routing of the trail through the current "wetland" will create some disturbance during the construction process but once the boardwalks are constructed the area should recover quickly and not create a long term detrimental impact. I would encourage you to consider eradication of some of the invasive exotic plants and to consider establishment of some native wetland species of trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants in the process. Incorporating a viewing blind and developing additional interpretive trail enhancements would also add to the developments you are proposing. In addition, erecting wood duck nesting boxes, placing bat houses, and creating nesting, feeding and concealment cover with the suggested plantings will help mitigate the disturbance and enhance viewing opportunity and wildlife use.

I hope these suggestions are useful in your future development of the property and if I can be of assistance during that process, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Mark E. Hutchings  
Urban Wildlife Biologist/Region 7  
455 Dam Site Road  
Eureka Springs, AR 72631  
[mehutchings@agfc.state.ar.us](mailto:mehutchings@agfc.state.ar.us)



March 17, 2014

2nd LETTER

Ronald Cox  
Executive Director  
Botanical Garden of the Ozarks  
4703 North Crossover Road  
Fayetteville, AR 72703

Dear Mr. Cox:

I appreciate very much your situation in making decisions concerning further development of the Botanical Gardens. It becomes incrementally more difficult with each additional stakeholder involved in the process of decision making. It goes without saying that it is an impossible task to completely satisfy everyone to maximum satisfaction when so many different interests are intertwined. One piece of property cannot fully satisfy every habitat requirement for every species, or every recreational or educational purpose. That is where stakeholders have to come together and make decisions concerning priorities and management focus. The group has to determine collectively, what they determine to be the desired result of future development of the property. When I pull up the city's webpage for Lake Fayetteville it promotes fishing, boating, a marina, hiking and bicycling trails, nature viewing, a softball complex, Veterans Memorial Park, and the Botanical Garden. Obviously there has been a desire to manage for multiple uses and that is generally the rule for public lands. The property lies in the middle of an urban setting with all kinds of development and human activity.

I wrote in my previous letter that while the property has some potential and offers some degree of wildlife habitat quality, the fauna represented there is certainly a result of changes in land use and succession. A large percentage of the vegetative composition is made up of invasive species. The vegetative buffer between the lake and the existing developments is really the result of inactivity in and around Fayetteville Lake which is a man-made reservoir. It would appear that much of the land around the lake was once open land and was used probably for a combination of haying, grazing, and possibly some cropland. The wetlands were created by the lake development and much of the subsequent plant succession has resulted from its influence. This is not a pristine unaltered natural system and while sound conservation practices should be included in development, it is an urban environment already greatly influenced by development.

I respect the interests of each of the stakeholders in this process and each professional opinion that has been provided. Mine is just one among several opinions. I am not making an official statement on behalf of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission concerning the development of this property. I will give you a professional opinion based on 32 years of experience in managing natural resources.

First I believe city leadership needs to determine the priorities for the property moving forward. It can't be everything to everyone. It seems to me that the Botanical garden has the greatest vested interest in the land at this point with the development and commitment that has been established there. Each group with a stake in the

property should decide what they envision to be the best case scenario for their particular interest along with the least acceptable level of management that addresses their interests. Somewhere on that scale is a measure that will meet with each stakeholder's interests. If each group will approach these decisions objectively there will be opportunity for compromise and resolution to a plan to move forward.

You requested from me a professional opinion on a couple specific wildlife issues and I will do my best to address those. I maintain my position shared with you in our first discussion in regard to buffer widths. You can ask this question to a variety of professionals and you will get a variety of responses. Your city has an ordinance that requires a minimum of fifty feet. This obviously becomes the low end, the least acceptable level for all groups. You have had requests from a couple of group representatives of 350 feet. This becomes the best case scenario for their interests. My recommendation is that you do your best to accommodate those minimum and maximum widths in the development of your master plan. Where it becomes necessary for development of the gardens you can maintain a minimum of 50 feet and where there is opportunity to do so, maintain the maximum possible. The 50 ft. minimum width was put in place to insure vegetative buffers that provide stability within watersheds to improve water quality, reduce erosion, filter sediments and storm water run-off, as well as provide a level of wildlife habitat and aesthetic benefit in the form of green space.

Deer movement will not be adversely impacted to a level that will deter their use of the habitat. Deer movements are not migratory but seasonal. They occur generally in response to day length and in association with breeding behavior and other influences such as dietary requirements, fawning activities, etc. While most people enjoy the opportunity to observe deer in city parks and along trails, with the issues associated with high deer densities in urban NW AR, managing to improve habitat for whitetail deer is not recommended. With no opportunity to control population growth inside the city limits it becomes very difficult to manage. Whitetails are a species capable of population increase beyond biological carrying capacity, negatively impacting their own habitat. More times than not they surpass cultural carrying capacity (human tolerance levels) before reaching biological. These high densities can begin to dictate habitat change that results in a decline in species diversity of both plant and animal communities.

Maintaining these buffers in the range of a minimum of 50 feet and as wide as possible elsewhere, along with proper management, controlling invasive species and promoting native species, will provide habitat, screening for trail users that keeps disturbance to tolerable levels, provide wildlife viewing opportunities and provide the filtering and stabilization functions desired. Some consideration might be given to reducing the disturbance to migratory waterfowl from boating activities by designation of a no-entry zone from the lake, possibly by buoy. In effect this would widen the protective zone and lessen disturbance.

I hope this helps, I will be glad to provide whatever assistance I might provide. Thank you for the opportunity to comment and everyone's interest in conserving the natural resources provided on the property.

Sincerely,



Mark Hutchings  
Urban Wildlife Biologist  
455 Dam Site Road  
Eureka Springs, AR 72631  
479-253-2506  
mehutchings@agfc.state.ar.us



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Mayor Lioneld Jordan and Fayetteville City Council

The Master Gardeners of Washington County support the Botanical Gardens 2028 Master Plan. Of the 205 Certified Master Gardener memberships, 95 have contributed volunteer hours so far in 2014. These same Master Gardeners contributed 4100 hours at a value of \$183,191 in 2012 (Source: Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Community Service). 2013 hours and value have not been released as of August 1 but will certainly exceed these numbers.

The mission of the Washington County Master Gardeners is to provide horticultural information and improve the quality of life of the residents of Washington County through volunteer horticultural activities. Interacting with other organizations that share its vision, such as the Botanical Gardens of the Ozarks, is one of its many goals. The Botanical Gardens has been a sanctioned project of the Master Gardeners since 1999. The first thing the Master Gardeners did after BGO obtained the lease from the City of Fayetteville was to help clear invasive honeysuckle, poison oak and poison ivy from the trail along the south side of Lake Fayetteville, pick up trash along Highway 265 and plant a large flowerbed surrounding a "Future Home of Botanical Garden of the Ozarks" sign.

In 2006 the WCMGs purchased the Sensory Garden, one of the 9 backyard gardens that allowed BGO to open Phase 1 of the gardens to the public in 2007. This particular garden fit the WCMG mission of providing a place for people with varying degrees of ability to find stimulation through the various senses of sound, touch, taste as well as sight and smell.

The Botanical Gardens and its activities benefit everyone. The Lil Sprouts, a program started and run by a Master Gardener, reaches infants and preschoolers. Butterfly Days and Earth Day (in 2013, 10881 students attended these classes or educational days) reach out to the grade school children and teachers. Various family activities such as Firefly Fling, Gardenland Express and concerts reach all ages and individual classes and day camps are held to further education for both young people and adults.

The current BGO program space has reached its maximum capacity. The new plans will enable BGO to increase the level of nature education to the region's students and residents. This is a win, win situation for the entire community. The Fayetteville City Parks and Recreation Department has come up with a Lake Fayetteville trail compromise that will be of even greater benefit to those who enjoy all the recreational amenities that Lake Fayetteville offers. Please support the BGO plan for expansion.

Joyce Mendenhall – Lifetime Master Gardener, Botanical Garden of the Ozarks member since 1999, Current Botanical Garden of the Ozarks Board of Directors (City Council Representative).