

# The Capital South County

## Rival sides cooperating on Franklin Point Park

By E.B. FURGURSON III Staff Writer

In the latest conciliatory move over the development of Franklin Point Park, a local environmental group has agreed to help find ways to improve existing Shady Side fields while working with ballfield backers to find places for more.

That meshes with a recommendation last month from the county to set up a public process to explore every possible alternative before ballfields are built at the 477-acre site.

Members of the Shady Side Boys and Girls Club and South Arundel Citizens for Responsible Development made their overtures to each other on March 2, a week after a contentious public forum.

At the forum, the Department of Recreation and Parks outlined two options for the park, one of five the county is developing on the Shady Side Peninsula.

Both plans included ballfields, to the relief of strained athletic leagues and the dismay of the committee that had put together the plans and preferred more passive uses of the land.

Last week's meeting left both sides feeling encouraged.

"The energy level just skyrocketed after the meeting. People are looking for the win-win here - saving Franklin Point and doing right by the kids at the same time," said SACReD's Pam Foster.

Shady Side Boys and Girls Club President Pete Medhurst added, "The next day, phones were ringing and people were coming up with a lot of ideas."

Even County Councilman Ed Reilly, R-Crofton, saw the positive results.

"It was excellent," he said. "SACReD made overtures to find ways to assist the club with short-term problems, the condition of their fields, and long-term, getting additional fields."

The short-term condition of the fields is an "emergency situation," according to both sides. They're full of ruts, and in some areas glass and other debris from unscreened topsoil used by the county.

"We had a great discussion about how to get our current fields up to speed," Mr. Medhurst said. His group and SACReD plan to lobby county parks officials to do a better job maintaining the existing fields.

Long-term solutions - how to provide more facilities for a growing athletic program - will be more difficult.

People from the two groups are searching for property that might be suitable for ballfields, a tough task on the Shady Side Peninsula, more than 60 percent of which is in the Critical Area.

Meanwhile, the county Office of Environmental and Cultural Resources is weighing in.

In a Feb. 27 letter to Parks Director Dennis Callahan, Environmental Planning Administrator Ginger Ellis said her office supports the preservation and protection of the "valuable environmental assets" found at the five parks in Shady Side.

"But we also recognize the need for multipurpose athletic fields in this area of the county," she wrote.

The letter suggested exploring alternatives such as improving the current Shady Side Park field, improving the grassy fields at Shady Side Elementary School and

building a field at the county-owned open property behind the Lula G. Scott Community Center.

Those locations have problems of their own, however, ranging from size to the most common problem with property in Shady Side - wetlands.

Both groups plan to keep in touch on developments and ideas. "We look forward to working with them," Mr. Medhurst said.

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*Published March 11, 2004, [The Capital](#), Annapolis, Md.  
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