

"Federation Corner" column
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Clarksburg residents still waiting for their carousel

by Kathie Hulley
Chair, Clarksburg Civic Association Land Use Committee

The following updated Federation Corner column was originally published on July 10, 2008. Now, four years later, residents in the upper county are still waiting for the Ovid Hazen Wells Carousel to be moved to its rightful home in Clarksburg.

When a gift of land is made to Montgomery County, the donor should have an expectation that any conditions upon the agreement will be fulfilled by the local government in a timely manner and in accordance with the stipulations of that agreement.

In 1981, Hallie Wells deeded nearly 300 acres in Clarksburg, now named Ovid Hazen Wells Park in memory of her husband, to the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, for the enjoyment of the residents of Montgomery County. Included in that Deed is the following provision:

"In consideration of the grant hereby made, M-NCPPC agrees to acquire from Fairhill Farm Antiques, at a price not to exceed \$60,000.00, the Hershell-Spillman Carousel (circa 1910-1915) which operated for many years at the Smithsonian Institute (sic) on the mall in Washington, D.C. The subject carousel is 40 feet in diameter, carries 36 animals and two chariots. The purchase of this carousel is to be completed within two (2) months following the recording of this deed. The carousel shall be installed in a park managed by the party of the second part and shall be operational no later than June 1, 1982. When this carousel is placed in operation, M-NCPPC shall dedicate same in the name of OVID HAZEN WELLS. At such time as the property hereby conveyed is serving sufficient numbers of park users to justify the placement of a carousel on the property, the party of the second part agrees to relocate the OVID HAZEN WELLS carousel to this property..."

The carousel was obtained as decreed and was placed in a temporary location, in Wheaton Regional Park, as the deed prescribes. But now much time has passed, and the move of the carousel to its permanent home in Clarksburg is long overdue.

The deed does not say that there should be sufficient residents in Clarksburg to justify the placement of the carousel in Ovid Hazen Wells Park, but rather "sufficient numbers of park users." But the Parks Department has seen fit to delay the move until Clarksburg will be nearly built out, and estimates that funding will be available to allow the carousel to be relocated in the year 2015. Residents should not be expected to wait until then, thirty-four years after the execution of the Deed, for this to happen.

There are hundreds of new homes that have been built within a mile or two of Ovid Hazen Wells Park in the subdivisions of Clarksburg Village, Town Center, and Arora Hills, with a large percentage occupied by families with children who would delight in having a carousel nearby. But, this park was not planned as a facility for use only by the local community, but as a regional park. And there are now more than enough residents and prospective park users in the upcounty--60,000 in Gaithersburg, 100,000 in Germantown, 12,000 in Clarksburg, and 11,000 in Damascus--to justify moving the carousel.

The government's inaction in a straightforward case such as this might cause other residents to question the wisdom and worth of making a significant land dedication to Montgomery County. It was in Montgomery County's best interest to appropriate sufficient funding to build the park and bring the carousel home long ago. This was not done in 1981, and the matter should not and cannot be relegated

to the middle of this decade due to inept budgetary planning. There is a master plan for Ovid Hazen Wells Park in Clarksburg which should be implemented in a timely fashion, and this is easily and immediately achievable. It is, simply put, a matter of honoring the wishes of, and contract that was made with, Mrs. Wells 31 years ago.

It is unfortunate that the temporary placement of the carousel in Wheaton Regional Park did not include a clear indication as to its ultimate relocation to the park in Clarksburg. Officials might want to attempt to bring another carousel to Wheaton Regional Park. However, the relocation of the Hershell-Spillman Carousel to Clarksburg should not be predicated on, or delayed due to, any decision connected with the acquisition of another carousel for the Wheaton area park.

The wording of the Deed is very clear that the specific carousel purchased per the agreement with Mrs. Wells must be brought home to Ovid Hazen Wells Park and should correctly be called the Ovid Hazen Wells Carousel. Montgomery County officials should stand by the agreements made in good faith by Hallie Wells and their predecessors, and act swiftly to relocate the Ovid Hazen Wells Carousel to its rightful home in Clarksburg.

The views expressed in this column do not necessarily reflect formal positions adopted by the Federation. To submit an 800-1000 word column for consideration, send as an email attachment to theelms518@earthlink.net