PRA Meeting Summary: Rock Creek & Rock Creek Trail (Nov 9, 2026)

The link to the recording of the session is here:

Shareable link: https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/1Cd1Wk2hKWSxbDlR9n1Bw2CJUIdKffGIRL6tEWV-cP77mN8a4oOz-UR-3CIqYPkI.6NiAx6-A0PGeTXCd

Passcode: xWPt5+$U

Overview

The PRA hosted Christie Ciabotti, Division Chief for Park Planning and Stewardship at Montgomery Parks, to discuss Rock Creek and the Rock Creek Trail. Jeff Griffith closed with a brief traffic survey update.

Presentation highlights

- **Trail:** The Parks system is turning 100 years old next year. The section next to Parkwood sits in the floodplain, with flooding, drainage problems and root heaving. Full reconstruction would need drainage design, permitting, floodplain coordination and forest conservation review. It is not in the current capital budget, though targeted repairs continue. The next opportunity is the FY29–34 CIP cycle, with a public CIP forum before the Planning Board. Advocacy with the County Council and County Executive is what moves projects up.
- **Water quality:** Overall condition is rated *fair* on a four-level scale (poor, fair, good, excellent). The fish community rates *good*, with 24 species. Aquatic insects are limited by sand and sediment from eroding banks and runoff. Two monitoring stations serve the neighborhood; the last sampling was 2022.
- **Strategy and projects:** Parks focuses on outfalls, runoff, and floodplain capacity rather than the main channel. WSSC water main break repair near Knowles Ave and Beach Drive is in design, with construction expected in 2027. An outfall project near Howard Avenue is planned.
- **Beach Drive:** Resurfacing is starting north of Knowles (Garrett Park Rd to Wexford), including more separation between road and trail. The stretch south of Knowles toward Connecticut Avenue is not included and gets patching only, though WSSC may plan work there.
- **Trees:** Trails and Beach Drive trees are inspected annually, most recently in summer 2026, with little work found. Dead trees are not always hazards; priority goes to trees threatening the trail, road or homes. Residents can report concerns, including trees behind Parkwood Drive homes.
- **Volunteers:** In the first three quarters of 2026, volunteers in this area logged 1,539 Weed Warrior hours and freed 1,230 trees. About 4,861 lbs of trash were removed in three years. There are 3-4 organized cleanups a year in our area (often through Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Congregation and Rock Creek Conservancy) but none specific to Parkwood. Parks will support one with bags, gloves, and safety guidance if the PRA requests it.

Q&A highlights

- **Cyclists passing without warning:** Parks is developing a trail etiquette education campaign, led by trails planner Kyle Lucas. Park police patrol some trails occasionally.

- **Unpaved trail (Saul Road to Franklin Street):** Bikes are believed still prohibited there (the trail is not a Park-sanctioned trail, so Parks does not have a policy about it), and the old signs are missing or overgrown. Christie forwarded the issue to the natural surface trails crew during the meeting.
- **E-bikes:** Under a new policy, Class 1 (no throttle) e-bikes are allowed on natural surface trails.
- **Leaf clearing:** Trail leaf removal runs on a regular rotation.
- **Funding:** Long-lasting capital work comes from the six-year CIP. Stewardship also draws on the operating budget and the State Water Quality Fund.
- **Beltway widening:** Parks controls only county parkland and follows an avoid, minimize, mitigate sequence. Mitigation for parkland impacts must happen on Montgomery County parkland. Christie has no project specifics and will follow up.
- **Giving up parkland (Grosvenor/Rt. 355 project):** Jeff urged more flexibility for win-win compromises. Christie said Parks is under constant pressure for land and relies on the same sequence, but she was not familiar with this project.
- **Solar payback:** Christie had no specific figure. Funding is largely state grants, and the focus is on fast-tracked rooftop projects before tax credits end in 2028.

Parkwood Drive traffic survey update

Preliminary survey results suggest the neighborhood supports moving to the next phase on speed humps. The survey closed Nov 8 with 257 responses, about 20% more than in the spring. Data is being verified.

- **Next stage:** Residents on the affected segment (Saul to Brookfield, about 59 households) will be polled by DOT. A quorum must respond, and about 70% of respondents must concur. A failure at any stage ends the process.
- **Timing:** DOT has about 30 days to start, then residents have time to respond. Jeff cited 90 days; Kira's notes say 45 days for DOT to send information. Jeff will confirm from the regulation.
- **Sequence:** Results go to all residents first, then to DOT, then the PRA meets DOT on which components to implement.
- **Resident questions:** Gerald Sharp asked why non-abutting residents who drive the street cannot vote at the next stage. Jeff said the county regulation sets that two-stage process, and it applies only to speed humps.

Action items and opportunities

- **Jeff:** Post the county speed hump regulation on the PRA homepage and link the Civic Federation recording.
- **Jeff:** Release verified survey results to residents first, then share them with DOT.
- **Jeff / Kira:** Send Christie the list of unanswered questions, including Carol's, so answers can be shared with residents.
- **Christie (Parks):** Follow up on beltway widening impacts and the full fish species list.
- **Executive committee:** Plan to turn out for the CIP forum and County Council/Executive advocacy about a year from now, to push for the trail reconstruction.
- **Executive committee:** Decide whether to organize a Parkwood cleanup. Gerald offered to consider funding pizza or drinks; Parks supplies bags, gloves and guidance.

- **Executive committee:** Consider promoting Weed Warrior days to residents.

For Parks questions, Christie recommends starting with the customer service team at montgomeryparks.org.