



# **Recommendations of the Tydings Memorial Park Commission**

**DATE: 18 March 2015**



# Recommendations of the Tydings Memorial Park Commission

**DATE: 18 March 2015**

To the:

Mayor and City Council, City of Havre de Grace, Maryland

Mayor Bill Martin  
City Council President Stephen Gamatoria  
Councilman David Glenn  
Councilman Randy Craig  
Councilwoman Monica Worrell  
Councilman David Martin  
Councilman Michael Hitchings

## **Executive Summary**

The Tydings Memorial Park Commission was established on 20 July 2015 through Executive Order 2015-02 (Appendix A). Commission members and the chairperson were appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Mayor. The Commission consists of twelve (12) members

1. Two (2) City Council Members
  - 1.1. Michael Hitchings, Chair
  - 1.2. David Martin
2. Two (2) Members of the City staff
  - 2.1. Patrick Sypolt, Director of Administration
  - 2.2. John Allen, Directorate of Public Works
3. Eight (8) citizens of the City of Havre de Grace
  - 3.1. James Clark
  - 3.2. Mark Hemler, Havre de Grace Ambulance Corps
  - 3.3. Scott Hurst, Chief, Susquehanna Hose Company
  - 3.4. Darryl Leonetti
  - 3.5. Mary Martin
  - 3.6. Phillip Powell
  - 3.7. Deborah Stathes
  - 3.8. Jan Vanderhoff

The Commission is charged to study, analyze, and report to the Mayor on the following topics:

1. Band shell type and location
2. Lighting
3. Playground location and equipment
4. Swale area use
5. Sidewalks
6. Carnival
7. Seafood Festival
8. Special Events
9. Other topics as assigned by the Mayor

It should be noted that this is not the first attempt at an analysis of the future uses of Tydings Park. The recorded history of Havre de Grace is often sparing when it documents these analyses, but most recently in 1986, Mayor David R. Craig requested the Parks and Recreation Committee support the City in the execution of the recommendations presented by Mayor Craig's ad hoc committee on the park. The letter with a summary of those recommendations is included in Appendix B.

Consistent with the executive order, the Commission met not less than twice monthly including the following dates:

1. 25 August 2015 (Initial meeting)
2. 09 September 2015 - On site investigation at Tydings Memorial Park
3. 23 September 2015
4. 14 October 2015
5. 21 October 2015 - Public Input Session
6. 03 November 2015 - Public Input Session
7. 18 November 2015
8. 09 December 2015
9. 13 January 2016
10. 27 January 2016
11. 11 February 2016
12. 26 February 2016
13. 09 March 2016

The minutes of each meeting are included in Appendix C of this report and include a wealth of discussion, review, analysis, and consideration.

This report expands upon the initial submission provided to the Mayor and City Council in December 2015 and provides further analysis, discussion, and review of the subject topics requested within the Executive Order, as well as consideration of other subject areas.

## **Tydings Park Overview and Condition Summary**

Millard E. Tydings Memorial Park's history extends well into the late 1800's where it was originally known as Bayside Park. Geographically located at the south end of the City, at the foot of Union Avenue, it was often used by families for picnics, events, and a launching point for hunting and fishing expeditions. Bayside Park was renamed in 1962 to honor Havre de Grace's own Millard Evelyn Tydings (April 6, 1890 – February 9, 1961) who was an attorney, author, soldier, state legislator, and served as a Democratic Representative and Senator in the United States Congress from Maryland, serving in the House from 1923 to 1927 and in the Senate from 1927 to 1951. The park extends over eight acres at the foot of Union Avenue and is bounded to the north by Commerce Street and the Havre de Grace Yacht Basin and the Chesapeake Bay to the South.

The Park includes such features as a gazebo, War Memorial, playground, pathways, benches, grilles, tables, numerous trees (including some notable trees), and wide open spaces that serve the Citizens of Havre de Grace and visitors in a wide array of activities. Tydings Park also serves as the host to many events in the City, some of which have led to some significant damage to the grounds and plant life. Photos showing the character of the park as well as its current state are captured in Appendix D.

The Commission coordinated with landscape architects, playground designers, equipment providers, engineers, subject matter experts, landscape maintenance professionals, as well as citizens of the general public seeking recommendations for solutions. The following report captures a summary of this analysis, the recommendations, the considerations, as well as a number of supportive elements that can be used by the Mayor and City Council to plan for the future of this critical City feature and Maryland treasure.

## **Park Grounds and Landscape Condition**

### Summary of Findings:

Due to the extensive use of the Park by Citizens, visitors, events, festivals, and other uses, the grass, trees, landscaping, pathways, stairs, and other features are exhibiting significant stress, wear, and characteristics of fatigue.

### Recommendations:

*Grass Restoration* - The proposed ground restorations and maintenance would facilitate: deep aeration, core aeration 6-8 times and seeding, initial seeding followed by slice seeding, followed by another seeding procedure, and maintenance with water and cutting. If these recommendations are followed, the managed ground should be allowed to set for 2-3 months. Landscaping professionals that were consulted recommend, based on calendar of events, that the process should start sometime near the end of September. Given the park lawn covers approximately 3-4 acres, a rough estimate for the completion of this process would be \$8500-\$9000.

*Tree conservation* - In order to maintain maximum health, the trees need 2-3 inches of topsoil or at least a skim coat of topsoil that should be sloped off away from trees. If possible, the City

should construct a ten-foot ring round trunk areas of trees to protect the root system. The ring would also add a dimension of safety, since they are trip hazards. These roots have been exposed for so long, they have adjusted to the environment. These corrective actions, intended to heal and protect the exposed root systems would add some protection to the root system, and safety to the public.

*Swale Area* - The landscaping services consulted recommend restoring and maintaining this area is similar to the main park area. The holes and ruts should be filled in with topsoil/dirt. The grounds should be aerated and seeded in a process similar to main park area. It is also recommended that the City install a honeycomb/wafer board system at the entrance of the swale where the asphalt is located. After it is installed, it could be reseeded. This structure could support the ground, stabilize the soil, and would allow the grass to grow without as much impact.

*Tennis Court Area* - It is recommended that the City core aerate, seed, and maintain the soils in this area. In order to support maximum grass growth, the City should also ensure the former playing tennis court surface and subsurface materials have been removed and replaced with topsoil. The presence of these materials will impact grass growth.

*Park Slope Facing Yacht Basin* - In the area of the slope, just west of the current restrooms, the slope area has been compromised by water seeping from the slope and extending down into the parking lot area. While this water is ensuring strong grass growth in this area, the softened soil is reducing the safety and stability of this slope. The recommendation is to find source of this water and remediate the leak source. The Commission considered recommending that the slope areas be terraced to further support stabilization, but the landscaping professionals did not support this recommendation as it would likely detrimentally impact the existing tree root systems. However, it is recommended that the City look to reduce the degree of these slopes as they are difficult to stabilize due to their angle.

Beneficial Impact:

Repair of the soils, root systems, and grasses will result in a healthier overall park system. It will provide for greater use, greater stability, and overall better health of the park elements, especially the trees. Tydings Park is renowned for its large mature trees. These trees are currently experiencing significant stressors due to the soil compaction and wear. Through restoration of the grounds, the trees would also experience a greater level of health.

Detrimental Impact:

The stabilization and rejuvenation process will take time. The result is areas of the park will need to be closed or restricted for use during the restoration. In order to maintain the health, application of higher stress items would need to be minimized. Some of these are detailed in the sections below. It is important to maintain the soils, grasses, trees, and supporting landscaping once they are reestablished, as this will lead to greater park longevity. This may require that periodic maintenance be increased from current levels.

## **Band Shell Type and Location**

### Summary of Findings:

The Commission researched both portable and stationary type band shells. The commission collected prices for portable style band shells from 3 different vendors that included 7 different stage types and sizes. These prices ranged from \$72,000.00 to \$140,000.00. These stages included both electrical and hydraulic setup and higher prices included all options available to include a full complement of lighting, audio, stage extensions, and graphics. Although we did not receive any bids on permanent band shells, we feel the cost would far exceed the cost of a portable band shell even taking into consideration maintenance and labor.

### Recommendations:

The Commission recommends a portable type style of band shell as opposed to a permanent one. We feel the benefits and uses of a portable type band shell far outweigh the benefits of a stationary one. We also recommend semi-permanent hook ups and possibly concrete pads at certain locations for use of the portable style band shell.

### Beneficial Impact:

We feel there are many benefits of a portable style band shell. These benefits include but are not limited to: Low Cost; use by many organizations within Havre de Grace; use in many locations within the City; preservation of the open space of waterfront; preservation of the view of the Chesapeake Bay and Susquehanna River; reduced property damage concerns from weather related events (i.e. hurricanes, storm surges, and flooding); ability to customize stage in correlation to our City and Sponsors.

A portable stage may also be considered more appealing to the eye when compared to a permanent stage. Construction of a permanent band shell would impact the views of the upper bay from the park. The temporary placement and use of a portable unit will not alter the natural physical beauty of the park.

The City regularly uses the Harford County portable stage for events. If the City had its own, it could be used for events at locations such as including the swale, the old tennis court area, numerous locations within park, Concord Point both north and south of lighthouse, the Susquehanna Museum at the Lock House, Hutchins Park, First Fridays, the Halloween Parade, Mardi Gras, the Christmas Parade, Oktoberfest, and numerous other locations.

### Detrimental Impact:

We feel there are very few detrimental impacts with a portable style band shell. The detrimental impacts are the following: setup time; labor by City employees; maintenance; storage and transport.

### Additional:

A summary of portable band shell/stage units is included Appendix E.

## **Lighting**

### Summary of Findings:

The commission considered lighting options including accent uplighting for trees and park features; accent lighting for stairways and safety areas; and general illumination for the park, especially along Commerce Street.

### Recommendations:

All lighting should be on a programmable timer system that will support turning off the lighting at a reasonable time, thereby minimizing potential impact on surrounding homes and residents.

### Beneficial Impact:

Uplighting (LED) will provide feature enhancement, while not resulting in significant light pollution. LED uplighting recently been installed in the 200 block of North Washington Street in the Main Street District of Havre de Grace. This lighting has received many accolades and positive reviews. The City Department of Public Works could use the lessons learned from the installation and execution of this lighting package to provide additional uplighting in the Tydings Park area.

Street and park security LED lighting could be added, and may result in lower power consumption than current incandescent and metal halide lighting. There is minimal lighting in Tydings Park currently, and that lighting utilizes older more consumptive sources. LED lighting can be provided that is more appealing to the eye when compared to incandescent and metal halide lighting. Lighting along the park's pathways, stairways and Commerce Street would provide additional security and visibility.

### Detrimental Impact:

If not set on a timed setting, additional lighting may detrimentally impact surrounding homes and residents unless properly managed. Additional lighting will require additional wiring and maintenance in the long term.

Additional: "Guidelines for Good Exterior Lighting Plans" as prepared by the Dark Sky Society is included in Appendix F.

## **Playground Location and Equipment**

### Summary of Findings:

Public input, through meetings and surveys, indicates that the community wishes to keep the playground in place. The Commission agrees with this consensus, recognizing that improvements and updates need to be made. The current equipment is nearly ten years old, and the park configuration extends nearly a quarter century.

ADA compliant equipment needs to be integrated into the playground to maximize the opportunities for inclusive play, and support the park's use by all ages and abilities of children. The present location of the playground serves the public well. Professional playground planners should be involved in the decision-making process.

**Recommendations:**

It is the recommendation of this Commission that the playground should remain in its current location, but should be upgraded and updated to provide a greater level of inclusive play for all ages of children. The city should seek professional advice on playground improvements.

**Beneficial Impact:**

This Commission recognizes and honors the community's desire to keep the playground in its current location. The playground would comply with currently accepted standards, including ADA standards. The playground would serve as an attraction to the residents of Havre de Grace. The playground would serve as an attraction to people outside the city. An improved, ADA compliant playground will maximize use of the playground.

**Detrimental Impact:**

There is considerable expense involved in the design, manufacture, installation and maintenance of playground equipment that meets current codes and guidelines. These costs can often be offset through the selection of quality and reputable equipment vendors where wear rates are documentable and design can be integrated in all elements.

**Additional:**

A courtesy concept design was provided by Commercial Recreation Products, LLC, a vendor of Little Tykes playground systems. This design and supporting product cut sheets is included in Appendix G.

**Swale Area Use****Summary of Findings:**

The swale area in the western third of the park, located between the playground and the plateau that formerly hosted tennis courts, is a heavily used element of the park. It serves as one of the significant segway areas between the lower and upper park elements. However, its use is generally unmanaged at this point and has resulted in degradation of the grounds, grasses, and substrate.

The swale is used in the boating season predominantly for overflow parking for boat trailers and their hauling vessels. Parking of boat trailers has stressed the grass and the earth. Parking of boat trailers has created a perceived division of the park.

In the winter, the hillside that extends from the playground to the bottom of the swale is used and has historically served as one of the most favored sledding locations for children and families throughout the City.

There are a number of opportunities for use of the swale, but overall, its retention, in its current geometry, is highly desired. This is reflected through the results of the survey.

Recommendations:

The Commission recommends that the City increase the number of boat parking spaces in the yacht basin by removing some of the parking stops/barriers. This would encourage more boaters to use the asphalt parking lot before resorting to parking on the grass.

The City should also remove gravel at the bottom of the swale and replace with pavers which would serve both boaters parking trailers and the placement of a portable stage. The creation of a stabilized and semi-hardened apron will reduce the overall wear and tear on the grass and grounds in this area.

The City should allow a limited number of boat trailers to park at the bottom of the swale; and only as essential overflow if the lower parking lot spaces are all full. The parking will be subject to recommendations by professional landscape architects or other development professional and safety professionals. This could be combined with the recommendation noted in the band shell section above where a permanent power and utility hookup could be provided adjacent to the pavers, supporting placement of the portable band shell in this location for event use.

The Commission also recommends that the City relocate overflow boat trailer parking to the open grass areas adjacent to the Havre de Grace Maritime Museum and Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. This would require coordination with those museums, and signage, to help boaters navigate to this location. The impacts of truck & trailer use of the swale is clear in the degradation of the grounds in this area. As it is designed, it should support the ready absorption of rainwater during a storm event. Due to the heavy truck use over the years, the area has become highly compacted, and as a result, the rainwater tends to sheetflow off the swale ground, down into the parking lot, then off into the yacht basin as untreated runoff.

Beneficial Impact:

The City understands the challenge this causes as the boating traffic generates revenues to the Yacht Basin through the purchase of boat ramp use fees. However, the unregulated parking provides no financial return to the City. The City also recognizes the value of bringing boaters to the area and remain welcoming to out of City users. If the recommendations are adopted, the City would see a defined number of overflow parking spaces in the swale while also providing other locations within the City for overflow boat trailer parking. Additionally, the two perceived parts of the park would be reconnected if stated recommendations are followed.

The number of trucks and trailers that parked in the swale on a fair weather weekend is quite high. As a result, this area is not available for recreation. The relocation of these vehicles from this area would increase the potential use of the space for play, picnics, and other forms of enjoyment.

The relocation of boat trailers from the Tydings Park to the open space behind the museums would result in multiple beneficial impacts. First, the traffic, wear, and stress would be removed from the grounds of the swale area. Second, the physical co-location with the museums may bring more visibility to these facilities, thereby increasing their patronage. Third, this would

increase walking traffic through the City, encourage boaters to visit these high value locations, and also encourage greater use of the City owned transient pier at Concord Point Park. (Boaters could launch their boats, park their vehicle in the overflow parking, and walk down to the transient pier. After launching, the boat could be piloted by their launching partner from the yacht basin to the transient pier where the two parties are rejoined.)

Detrimental Impact:

If the recommendations are incorporated, there would be a reduced number of available parking spaces for boat trailer overflow in the yacht basin. However, this number of spaces could easily be offset with the additional parking located adjacent to the Havre de Grace Maritime Museum and Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.

**Sidewalks**

Summary of Findings:

The existing sidewalks are limited and in general disrepair. There are a number of areas where sidewalks have experienced upheaval or subsidence. Much of the sidewalk network has become overgrown due to lack of maintenance and upkeep. The sidewalk network is not fully connected and does not provide ADA compliant access to the entire park. The yacht basin is not accessible by wheelchair or other wheeled devices due to the slope and pitch of existing sidewalks.

Recommendations:

Create a comprehensive sidewalk network by laying a sidewalk along Commerce Street for the full length of the park; extending the though the former tennis court areas; and interconnecting with a sidewalk loop system that extends through the eastern part of the park;

The interconnected sidewalk system could be measured such that it doubles as a fitness trail network, increasing wellness in the City. This fitness trail could be accented with stop locations that include individual (not machine based) stretching and fitness goals. This would allow the park to serve additional functions, in addition to the leisure opportunities.

Signage should also be incorporated into the sidewalk network where certain vistas as connected to historically relevant actions. For instance, at the east end of the park, a sign could be placed facing the Bayou Condominiums, telling the story of the structure, and its evolution through time. Another sign could be placed facing out over the Susquehanna Flats and share the story of hunting, boating, and recreational use of the Upper Chesapeake Bay. Signage could also explain the significance of Millard Tydings to the City of Havre de Grace.

The City should incorporate the Little Free Library system into the Park as adopted in City Council Resolution 2016-01. These structures are publicly operated and maintained and would provide an opportunity for additional leisure within the park (relax while reading a book) while also serving to bring additional people to the park for this purpose.

The Commission recommends investigating the construction of a tiered/sloped sidewalk along the hillside to support an ADA compliant ramp and access from the upper park to the lower yacht basin. This sidewalk would interconnect with the existing termination point of the wooden promenade at the east end of the park, and provide a functional extension that brings the promenade into the park itself, thereby connecting these waterfront features.

The Commission also recommends strategically placing new park benches, grills, and picnic tables throughout the park. These devices should be of sturdy construction and be relatively maintenance free. New park benches should be constructed of a combination of concrete ends with either metal or composite seating surfaces. Grills should be constructed of steel or iron, designed with a closing lid, integrated grill surface, and a sturdy concrete mounted base. Picnic tables should also be constructed from a combination of concrete and composite materials. All of these structures will support a long life, lower maintenance, and a reduction in risk from vandalism and movement around the park.

Beneficial Impact:

Additional sidewalks will provide greater safety for walking and exercise. Additional sidewalks along Commerce Street will reduce the amount of walking in the street and connect neighborhoods. Additional sidewalks will reduce loading stress on the grass areas.

Detrimental Impact:

Additional sidewalks and structures will mean more upkeep and maintenance. Additional sidewalks result in additional impervious surface. Any signage placed would need to be sturdy to minimize the potential for vandalism

Additional:

Information relating to park structures is included in Appendix H.

## **Independence Day Celebration Carnival**

Summary of Findings:

The Commission recognizes the historical, cultural, and overall benefit to the City of Havre de Grace. The Independence Day Carnival is a central component of the total Celebration that includes the parade, fireworks, and concert. As such, the retention of the Carnival as a City tradition has been a significant point of contention and concern. This Commission remains cognizant of the carnival's beneficial components while also retaining a level of focus on the less beneficial elements.

The Independence Day Carnival/Celebration lasts for approximately one week (give or take a couple days), with the climax event being the City's 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade, concert and fireworks. These events bring thousands of people to town to enjoy the events, and necessitate a significant amount of loading onto the park grounds. In addition to the foot traffic, carnival vendors and rides set up within the upper and lower portions of the park as well as in the swale area. Due to the portable nature of a traveling carnival, this means that a number of heavy trailers are positioned within the park to maximize flow, ride usage, and vendor sales. These

trailers are positioned using heavy duty trucks that must drive on the grass surfaces and sidewalks. Heavier and larger rides are located in the parking lot in the lower park, thereby reducing their stress loading on the park grounds.

The Mayor and City Council engaged in a public work session with the Independence Day Celebration Committee on 17 November 2015. Notes from that meeting are available upon request.

#### Recommendations:

The Commission received overwhelming support to keep the Independence Day Celebration Carnival at Tydings Park. This information was received in the survey results. There were a few returns on this survey that favored relocation of the carnival, but a majority (67% of respondents) were in favor of keeping the Carnival in place. With this level of community support, and the ongoing support from the Mayor and City Council to retain the Carnival in place, this Commission's recommendations relate to how the Carnival may reduce its stress loading on the park grounds.

The Commission recommends that the Independence Day Committee consider moving as many rides and attractions into the lower parking lot area as possible. This would require the parking lot to be closed entirely during the carnival, but would significantly reduce park ground loading. The Commission also recommends placing only the lightest events on the upper grounds areas to reduce the stress to the grounds. The Commission also recommends that these events not be permitted to cause closures to Commerce Street as a result of their application or events.

The Commission also recommends that the Committee consider permanently moving the fireworks from Park Island onto a barge that could be floated further out in the river, which would make the fireworks visible from more locations throughout town. This would allow visitors to spread out along the numerous parks in the City, view the fireworks, and then leave the City, possibly with less traffic loading to the neighborhoods immediately around Tydings Park.

The Commission recommends that the Mayor and City Council engage in an annual after-action-review with the Independence Day Committee, no more than one month after the completion of the event, to document successes, challenges, and change recommendations for the following year. This should help the cooperative element of the festival, reduce time loss, and support the festival's vitality in the community. The Commission's recommendations for grounds restoration, maintenance, and upkeep may impact the execution of the Carnival in a future year. Early planning and coordination with the Committee is essential to minimize the potential for detrimental impact or event disruption.

#### Beneficial Impact:

The event brings a large amount of revenue to the City in associated tourism. The event features the park as a whole and allows participants to experience the City and upper Bay at the

same time. The event, in its current location serves as a book-end to the parade route. The Carnival provides funding to support the annual parade and fireworks.

The parade and concert w/ fireworks are always held on the Saturday or Sunday as close to the 4<sup>th</sup> of July as possible, with carnival occurring the week preceding the parade. This enables the citizens and their guests to enjoy the events outside of a work week schedule. This schedule also allows the committee to attract bands and other groups to appear in our parade because the City is not competing with other major parades in the area that are held on July 4<sup>th</sup>. Tydings Park is the center of all events – parade ends at the park, carnival held in the park and concert and fireworks held in the park.

Detrimental Impact:

The event provides significant loading on the grounds to include the trees, grasses, and surrounding habitats. The event has been perceived by some to have outgrown this location and often spills out upon Commerce Street and occupies much of the yacht basin.

**Seafood Festival**

Summary of Findings:

The Havre de Grace Seafood Festival is an event that has typically run during the second weekend in August and includes an array of food and product vendors associated with the seafood industry. In recent years, the event promoters also hosted a capstone concert event held at the conclusion of the festival. The festival would typically run from Friday through Sunday with additional days for setup and teardown.

The food vendors that participated in the event would use an assortment of individually set up stands, food trailers, food trucks, or a mix of all of these. The product vendors typically would not have large or significant weight bearing displays.

The capstone concert was located in the swale area which would be fenced off and visually obscured for security purposes. The organizer would have a large stage placed in the lower part of the swale with seating falling up the swale. Some chaired seating for VIPs was offered, but most of the seating was lawn seating (or bring your own chair). No part of the lower parking lot was used for this event and it remained open to traffic with the exception of vehicles associated with the concert.

Recommendations:

For 2016, the applicant and promoter of the previous events was not successful in requesting approval of their application for the event. The Commission recommends that if the Mayor and Council are to consider another event like this, of this caliber, or of this loading to the grounds, they encourage the promoter to seek an alternate site within the City. It has been recommended that promoters of large events like this one consider locations such as Concord Point Park, Hutchins Park (with the possibility of using part of Market Street as well), North Point Park and the grounds around the Susquehanna Museum at the Lock House, as well as other

locations. The Commission also recommends that these events, if held at the Park, not be permitted to cause closures to Commerce Street as a result of their application or events.

Beneficial Impact:

The event represents one of, if not the longest continually running seafood festival in Maryland. The event also brings a large amount of revenue to the City in associated tourism as thousands of people attend the event each year. The event features the park as a whole and allows participants to experience the City and Upper Bay at the same time.

Detrimental Impact:

The event provides significant loading on the grounds to include the trees, grasses, and surrounding habitats. The event has been perceived by some to have outgrown this location and often spills out upon Commerce Street.

**Special Events**

Summary of Findings:

Smaller events seem conducive to use of Tydings Park as their vendors, booths, attendees, and overall impact has historically been less than larger events with a heavy footprint. Some of these smaller events include the Children's Arts Festival, the Soroptimists Arts Show, Concerts in the Park, and other such events with a generally lighter footprint.

Larger events seem to provide a greater impact to the park grounds, the surrounding communities, and the City infrastructure. These events typically have larger trailer or truck based displays or vendor booths. They also typically have additional power or utility requirements that require that extra support vehicles be brought on site (power generation, bathrooms, water supply, etc.)

Recommendation:

It is the recommendation of this Commission that the Mayor and Council continue to support the smaller (e.g., lower impact) events in Tydings Park and encourage the larger (e.g., higher impact) events to seek alternative locations within the City, such as Concord Point Park, Hutchins Park (with the possibility of using part of Market Street as well), North Point Park and the grounds around the Susquehanna Museum at the Lock House, as well as other locations. The Commission also recommends that these events not be permitted to cause closures to Commerce Street as a result of their application or events.

Beneficial Impact:

The events often bring additional revenue to the City in associated tourism. The events feature the park as a whole and allows participants to experience the City and Upper Bay at the same time. Events hosted in other locations throughout the town feature those neighborhoods, support local businesses, and will reduce the demands on the immediate area around the park.

**Detrimental Impact:**

The large events often provide significant loading on the grounds to include the trees, grasses, and surrounding habitats. Some of the events have been perceived by some to have outgrown this location and often spill out upon Commerce Street.

**Gazebo****Summary of Findings:**

The commission conducted a survey and the community's (general) consensus is to keep the gazebo in place. The commission agrees with this consensus, but also recognizes that the gazebo is old and needs improvements and maintenance.

The gazebo serves as a focal point for many events in the Park. These include memorial events, celebrations, family gatherings, recreation events, small performing group performances, and more. It has been a central element of the Park and has been in place since at least the 1950s (the earliest available aerial photo). This structure defines the Park as much, if not more than any other elements. Its retention is crucial to the total character of the park. All of this considered, it should not be considered sacrosanct and ignored when it comes to addressing the park's overall condition.

**Recommendations:**

The commission recommends keeping the gazebo in place but the Mayor and Council should consider making several improvements. These improvements could include a significant refurbishing of the gazebo including wood, roof, pillars, and steps. This would address some of the damage and age impacts to the existing structure. The addition of new landscaping around the gazebo could increase the visual appeal of this space.

The Commission also discussed the concept of increasing the overall size of the gazebo. The existing structure could be demolished and reconstructed in the same architecture and style, but with a larger footprint. The simple addition of two feet in any direction would increase the overall footprint by 40%. Additionally, the new structure could be constructed such that railing sections can be removed on demand to support a more open feel for performing groups. The Commission discussed the addition of semi-permanent electrical hookups in the gazebo to support events that would use the space.

There are a couple of items to consider about the gazebo, regardless of the recommendations. The current structure is not ADA compliant. Reconstruction may require the addition of an ADA compliant means of access. There are existing utilities in the space under the gazebo, including a bathroom system that has been abandoned in place. This would need to be addressed during the reconstruction process.

**Beneficial Impact:**

The commission feels there are several benefits by keeping the gazebo in place. These benefits include: recognizing the community's request to keep it in place; keeping an important part of the history of Havre de Grace and Tydings Park in place; cost of maintenance will be

much cheaper than a complete rebuild or relocation of gazebo; refurbishing the gazebo enhances both the history of the gazebo and the use of the gazebo; small events and bands remain in the centralized location of the gazebo in the park.

#### Detrimental Impact:

The commission feels there are very few detrimental impacts of keeping the gazebo in place. These include the cost of refurbishing the gazebo; due to the age of the gazebo, a constant upkeep will need to continue to take place; the size and utilities that serve the of gazebo are not practical for larger bands or performing groups. Bands have mentioned that electrical, sound, and lighting need improvement.

### **Parking and Streetscape**

#### Summary of Findings:

Tydings Park has vehicle parking in two general locations; along Commerce Street and in the lower parking lot adjacent to the yacht basin. Approximately 800 linear feet of unmarked parking is available directly against the park on the south side of Commerce Street (including one designated handicap space) with another approximately 600 linear feet for parking spots on the north side of Commerce Street. The spaces on the north side of Commerce Street are not “for the park” in that they are also used by the residents of the homes that face the park. The standard parallel parking space is approximately 24 feet long. This would allow for about 33 spaces on the south side of the road and up to 25 on the north side of the road.

During most days, parking availability is not an issue, but parking maneuvering can be a challenge. Since the parking in this area is all parallel style, and the speed limit on this section of Commerce Street is 25 miles per hour, when someone is parking, drivers of vehicles in the queue often become impatient and attempt illegal passing of the parking car in order to get to their destination. This can lead to unsafe situations, especially when one considers the number of intersecting streets and the entrance/exit from the park, all of which introduce additional vehicles onto Commerce Street.

There are 138 single vehicle parking spaces in the central and western portion of the lower parking lot with an additional 57 single vehicle spaces along the yacht basin bulkhead (including four handicap spaces), 20 truck/trailer parking spaces in the western end of the parking lot. Surrounding and adjacent to the building hosting the Promenade Grille restaurant, there are an additional 42 single vehicle spaces (including four handicap spaces).

As already noted, Commerce Street in the area of the park has three major intersections: Union Avenue, Washington Street, and the entrance/exit to the lower park parking lot. Commerce Street also has three minor intersections; Freedom Lane at the northern extreme, Lodge Lane in the center, and Strawberry Lane directly across from the entry/exit area.

#### Recommendation:

The Commission considered a number of parking options to enhance the parking opportunities and safety along Commerce Street. These ideas included straight in parking, angled parking,

and reverse angled parking (similar to typical angled in parking but with the herring bone pattern facing away from traffic to promote drivers to back into spaces. Ultimately, no formal decision was made regarding how parking should be addressed along Commerce Street.

Some members of the Commission supported additional parking in this area while others feel that additional parking is not required or justified. Some Commission members expressed concern with any angled parking, either traditional or reverse pattern, citing a number of items. First, additional parking density may detrimentally impact the park view from Commerce Street and detract from those “just passing by for a look.” Second, the angled parking may encourage more accidents if drivers are backing out of spaces into traffic from normal angled, and may incur risk if backing into spaces in the reverse angled parking. Additionally, given that families with children typically use these spaces, any additional risk was considered as a significant challenge to overcome. Regardless of the final determination of the City, a professional traffic engineer should consider the impacts, benefits, and risks of parking solutions along Commerce Street.

When one considers the traffic speed limit, the intersections, and the placement of stop signs in the area, traffic along Commerce Street, traffic has a tendency to build up speed in this area to a level that may be considered risky to the amount of pedestrian traffic. The Commission recommends, at a minimum, to lower the speed limit in this section of Commerce Street (from Freedom Lane to Strawberry Lane to no more than twenty miles per hour. Additionally, the intersections at Union and the park entry/exit should be marked as three/four way stop intersections to slow traffic through the area. The City should also consider accents in the roadway, especially in the intersections. These accents could include brick pavers for sidewalks, road accent designs, and other features that don't impact road use, but may encourage drivers to slow down and enhance the visibility of crosswalk and other pedestrian areas.

Beneficial Impact:

Additional parking in and around the park would minimize the potential for additional traffic through the surrounding neighborhoods. This additional parking, combined with the traffic calming devices would enhance safety, reduce speeds, and promote a more welcome environment for pedestrians to enter/exit the park from Commerce Street and the adjacent areas. The visual impacts of the recommended pedestrian enhancements would also increase the curb appeal of the park and waterfront areas of the City.

Detrimental Impact:

Additional parking may impair the viewshed of the park and upper bay area from Commerce Street. Parking arrangements may or may not increase the risk to drivers, vehicles, and pedestrians.

**Restroom Facilities**Summary of Findings:

There is currently one set of functional restrooms in the Park, located in the lower parking lot, at the east end of the park. These restrooms consist of a prefabricated structure that contains a men's, women's, and a family restroom. Due to their location, and the lack of any ADA compliant ramp ways, these restrooms are generally inaccessible to anyone using the upper park. If you consider the perspective of a parent with a potty-training child at the playground, the difference of only a few steps can make the difference between a happy child and a wet ride home.

There are additional restroom facilities in a state of retirement in the park. These include a set located under the gazebo, and facilities located in the dockmaster's house in the west end of the park.

Recommendation:

The Commission recommends that the existing facilities in the lower parking lot be relocated west, closer to the center of the lower parking lot. This would support easier access from the upper lot, especially for young children needing the facilities.

The Commission also recommends removing all of the facilities from under the existing gazebo. These elements should be properly capped and removed to the maximum extent practicable. At the same time as these utilities are removed, the City should investigate to ensure that there are no system leaks in either the water supply or sewer system. There is a significant water seep coming from the adjacent slope, near the current restrooms. This seep is destabilizing the slope and causing water to flow across the parking lot. Further leaks in this area are likely to create a safety hazard.

The Commission also recommends a general renovation of the building location at the west end of the parking lot, traditionally used as the dockmaster's office. This building could still serve to support the dockmaster, but could also be outfitted with restrooms to support the users of the west end of the park, as well as those that use the boat launch and adjacent piers.

Beneficial Impact:

The relocation and addition of restrooms in more areas of the park would support the park users to the maximum extent practicable. These centrally located restrooms would also allow interaction with the marina users.

Detrimental Impact:

Relocation of facilities would require capital outlay, engineering, and construction. Additional facilities will also require additional maintenance and cleaning.

**Other Considerations**

In addition to the items discussed above, the Commission recommends the Mayor and Council investigate the following items:

The Commission recommends installation of historical signage identifying who is Millard E. Tydings, what he did for the City of Havre de Grace, Harford County, the State of Maryland, and the United States of America.

The Commission recommends to tie in of the Park with other City elements such as (1) the Harford County Public Library Havre de Grace Branch story walk and (2) the Havre de Grace Visitor's Center information by placing additional tourism information or signage.

The Commission recommends the City install additional signage on Union Avenue providing direction to Tydings Park.

The Commission recommends the City investigate the construction of an observation platform with binocular telescopes. In order to maximize the viewshed a platform would provide, locating it in the upper park, in the southeast corner of the grassed area is recommended. The Commission recommends placing binocular telescopes on the promenade.

The Commission also recommends the City research annexation of Park Island from the State of Maryland. This island is located across the yacht basin from the park but could extend the size of the park with the completion of a few projects. The City could construct a bridge/pier structure that would extend from the west end of the park (beyond the existing boat launch) over to the west end of the island. The bridge/pier should be constructed such that it still supports boat traffic exiting the yacht basin via the back channel, but this traffic would be restricted to smaller boats. The City could then dredge the basin in the northwest corner of the island, place floating piers (attached to pilings), and lease slips for smaller & shallow draft boats. The City could then construct a pathway loop around the island along with benches and educational viewing areas. Ultimately, the City could investigate the construction of a public swimming area on the south end of the island as this area is shallow, sandy, and could support a public swimming location.

### **Summary**

It is with great pleasure that the Tydings Park Commission submits this report to the Mayor and City Council of Havre de Grace. The summary of these recommendations, including the playground upgrades, the mobile stage, grounds enhancements, and landscaping upgrades equal approximately two million dollars (\$2M) in projected capital outlay. These figures should be supported by appropriate engineering design and cost estimation validation.

The tireless efforts of this Commission demonstrate the level of dedication experienced by the residents and citizens of Havre de Grace to preserving and maintaining the heritage of Havre de Grace while seeking to preserve the integrity of such a City resource for the future generations of Havre de Grace. The recommendations of this report serve as a guiding vision for this park well through the 21st century.

## **Pertinent Survey Responses**

### Playground

Question 2. Why do you visit Tydings Park?

Response: 140/344. Visit playground

Question 4. Do your children use the playground?

Response: 186/344. Yes

Question 6. What aspects of the park do you want to retain?

Response: 265/344. The playground

Question 7. What aspects of the park would you like to see changed?

Response: 54/344. The playground

### *Survey Comments*

1. Playground is in desperate need of repair.
2. Upgrading and remodeling the playground is most important.
3. Maybe some better playground equipment and updated picnic areas.
4. Improve playground.
5. Bigger playground
6. Newer playground
7. Fix current playground.
8. Playground needs updating.
9. Playground needs to be maintained more properly. Out of town family noticed it going downhill.
10. Improve, expand the playground.
11. We need to improve our playground and add a major feature like a splash pad to part of the park.
12. Update and repair the playground.
13. Restrooms need to be at the playground/ picnic area.
14. Playground equipment for handicapped children
15. Playground upgrade; keep in the same place; add handicapped playground.
16. Leave the playground as it is.
17. I think it is fine as is. Playground should not be moved.
18. Playground equipment needs upgrade and repair.
19. I'm appalled at the lack of maintenance. Something breaks and it is removed, never to be replaced.
20. Upgraded to more modern equipment.
21. The playground is in horrible condition. For being a tourist destination, there is no excuse for its condition. It is subpar compared to other playgrounds in the county.
22. Playground is close to picnic area, shade, bathrooms, and Promenade Grill.
23. We'd like to see more toddler swings because those are usually in high demand and toddlers take turns while the bigger kids' swings are empty.
24. toddlers take turns while the bigger kids' swings are empty.
25. Park should reflect the surrounding area and have picnic and playground area next to each other.
26. I don't think anything in this park should ever be messed with, other than to update and maintain existing structures.

27. Up-dated (sic), maintained
28. Should be ADA compliant but remain in its existing location close to the gazebo and picnic area.
29. Current facility appears outdated.
30. A splash park that serves both as public art and a play area for children
31. The park serves the citizens well.
32. Another venue should be considered for a young children's playground so there is less conflict between the older children and the younger. We found that McLhinney Playground provided a good place for the younger ones.
33. Playground needs a great dealing updating.
34. The playground is looking a little run-down. I saw a few other playgrounds that are real nice...Rising Sun near the little league fields and the new one in Perry Park in Perryville.
35. Although it is not in the best of shape. We really should have a playground drawing people to Havre de Grace from all of Harford and Cecil.
36. Would love for it to be fenced. Have seen numerous kids, including my own, take off toward the water and parents chasing them down the hill.
37. It's a shame that when a pice (sic) of equipment is broken it does not get replaced. The plywood looks REALLY nice...
38. The playground equipment is in need of an update. New mulch would also be a great addition.
39. Needs major updates and a mulch surface of better quality.
40. I would love for the playground to be fixed up or updated but please leave the sea monster. I feel like it adds personality and uniqueness.
41. It has been disappointing to see the playground not being kept up.
42. I think the playground could use some maintenance and improvement for the kids.
43. Possibly updating it.
44. Make improvements but retain.
45. We need a new playground.
46. We need new playground equipment. The playground needs better ground.
47. Nothing should be changed.
48. The playground should be updated. I don't believe there has been any new equipment for years.
49. The playground could be up-dated.
50. Update playground equipment.
51. Update equipment. Try to provide equipment for all ages – toddlers through adolescents.
52. There has been talk of the playground being relocated to an area not as visible from the road. From a safety standpoint, it needs to stay in a very visible location.
53. Playground needs to be updated.
54. Leave the playground in the same area.
55. Playground should be up-dated (sic) but not moved.
56. Happy the playground is located where it is.
57. Don't move playground.
58. Don't move playground. Equipment needs to be up-dated. Enhance playground but keep it where it is.

59. Don't move playground which is central to the park.
60. Playground with primary colors
61. Keep the playground where it is.
62. Update the playground
63. Don't move the playground.
64. Don't move playground.
65. Support ADA enhancement of the playground.
66. Up-date the playground.
67. Playground is great where it is.
68. Don't move the playground.
69. Playground is centrally located. Good for adult supervision. Should be ADA compliant.
70. ADA compliant playground
71. Playground should be relocated to adjacent hill...site to be made child friendly as well as safe. Ample benches for caregivers as well as tables. Lighting and two restrooms.
72. Move the playground to where the tennis courts were.

Swale

1. Suggest moving the playground to old tennis court area. Keep the park a quieter venue.
2. Picnic area with benches where the playground currently exists.
3. Retain swale.
4. We'd like to be sure you keep the hills for sledding during winter because they are the closest hills to our home.
5. I would not touch that hillside parking the boaters fill up each year.
6. Couldn't the park be expanded to include utilities in the area currently used for seasonal vehicle/trailer parking?
7. I do think that the town does a nice job by allowing bass boats to park on that hill by the playground – Fisherman's Hill. The town should continue to not pave this area; its use as a parking logins so infrequent that the grass seems to be holding up just fine. I would suggest improving the paved driveway to this area. It's a bit of an eyesore.
8. Retain the swale as it is.
9. No terracing of the swale.
10. Need area for sledding.
11. Swale is used for sledding.
12. Keep swale open for use by kids and dogs.

**APPENDICES:**

Appendix A - Executive Order 2015-02 - Establishment of Tydings Park Commission

Appendix B - 1986 David Craig letter

Appendix C - Tydings Park Commission Meeting & Public Input Session Minutes

Appendix D - Tydings Park Current Conditions Photos

Appendix E - Band Shell Models and Brochures

Appendix F - "Guidelines for Good Exterior Lighting Plans" as prepared by the Dark Sky Society

Appendix G - Playground Design and Cut Sheets

Appendix H - Park Structures (grills, benches, and tables)