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<https://www.pilotonline.com/2023/08/10/hundreds-weigh-in-on-future-of-lamberts-point-golf-course-wit-h-many-opting-for-a-public-park/>

Hundreds weigh in on future of Lamberts Point Golf Course, with many opting for a public park



Hundreds of concerned locals attend Wednesday, August 9, 2023, evening's community meeting about the future of Lambert's Point golf course. (Stephen M. Katz/The Virginian-Pilot)

By IAN MUNRO | ian.munro@viriniamedia.com | Staff writer
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NORFOLK — City and sanitation district officials told a crowd of roughly 300 people Wednesday that discussions about the future of a city-owned portion of the former Lamberts Point Golf Course, which many want to become a park, are still in the early phase of considerations.

“We want to take our time to do this right,” said Pete Buryk, chief of staff for the office of the Norfolk City Manager. “City Council has asked that we do that.”

The closed Lamberts Point 9-hole golf course sits on a former landfill. Hampton Roads Sanitation District bought roughly 40 acres of the course from Norfolk for \$30 million and [plans to build a second water treatment plant](#). But that leaves about 15 acres of the course that still belong to the city.

[Some community members are advocating](#) for that part of the golf course to become a public park.

The city has received no formal proposals for the site, issued no requests for proposals and is not interested in selling the land, according to Buryk. But the city has had some preliminary conversations with Old Dominion University about use of some of the site. Though the golf course was closed in 2022, parking is being leased to nearby ODU and the [university's golf team has a lease for use of the clubhouse](#), according to Buryk.



The Lambert's Point golf course in Norfolk, Virginia, as seen July 3, 2023. Norfolk residents are organizing a petition to the city to transform the old Lambert's Point golf course into a public park. (Billy Schuerman / The Virginian-Pilot)

During Wednesday's packed community meeting at the Lamberts Point Community Center, city and sanitation district officials gave short presentations on the background of the property and limits to uses for the site because of environmental and landfill concerns and then answered questions.

Asked if the city has a plan for an environmental study of the site, Buryk said that is a "critical step" in determining the best use. But he said the city does not have such a plan at this time.

Many of those attending the Wednesday meeting wore green ribbons — given at the door by the Lamberts Point City Park Steering Committee, and many of the questions fielded at the meeting were about the potential costs and possibilities of a park or other community space. More than 4,000 signatures have been collected in favor of a green space at the city-owned parcel, according to Liz Paiste, one of the committee organizers.

A city survey, [open until Aug. 23](#), also is collecting feedback. The majority of responses — almost 125 — voiced support for a park, with roughly 50 responses supportive of a golf course/driving range. Other responses included support for a variety of other amenities, such as a track, bike path and playground, or an amphitheater.

HRSD bought much of the course, [which closed at the end of last year](#), from Norfolk to build a new water treatment facility as part of the Sustainable Water Treatment for Tomorrow. The new facility is slated to shoot treated water from an adjacent water treatment plant into the ground. The current water treatment facility, next to the golf course, discharges its treated water into the Elizabeth River.

HRSD needs the new facility to meet standards set by a 2021 state law that requires nitrogen and phosphorus load reductions for the Chesapeake Bay via new upgrades to facilities, according to Lauren Zuravansky, chief of design and construction for SWIFT with HRSD. She said HRSD's engineering team is putting together a plan for building what's needed at the site.

"This is not something that can be done at other locations," she said when asked about potentially building the new HRSD facility elsewhere.

The land being used for the HRSD facilities will be fenced off for security and safety purposes, according to Zuravansky.

City Council approved the construction of the golf course in late fall 1997, according to previous reporting. An environmental review was completed before the development was approved, according to The Virginian-Pilot archives.



Spencer Tinkham asks attendees of Wednesday evening's community meeting about the future of Lambert's Point golf course to sign a petition to keep the 15-acre course a public green space, seen on Aug. 9, 2023. (Stephen M. Katz/The Virginian-Pilot)

Park Place native Terrell Davis, 53, was at the meeting Wednesday and recalled being able to fish at the river's edge of the property as a child. He said he'd like to see more done with the site, including some sort of amphitheater and fishing pier.

To some, like Lamberts Point resident Mark Hattler, there were still too many things unclear about how the new HRSD project will develop their portion of the property. Hattler, a member of the city's environmental commission, said he'd like for all the property to remain open space.

Buryk said there was no assigned funding in the city's budget for the current fiscal year for any development at the site. But he said the city will take direction from City Council for future funding and the turnout at the Wednesday meeting shows elected officials the public's desires.

"This is the first step of that process," he said.

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