



October 30, 2017

Office of Council President Bernard C. "Jack" Young
100 N. Holliday St, Suite 400
Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Council President Young and the honorable members of Baltimore City Council,

We, the Board of the Friends of the Wyman Park Dell, write to provide the most enthusiastic support of Councilwoman Mary Pat Clarke's proposal to dedicate and name a portion of Wyman Park Dell in honor of the American hero Harriet Tubman. As volunteer stewards and advocates for community based improvements and enhancements to Wyman Park Dell since 1983, the Friends welcome the proposed renaming and find it an important addition to the park for at least three reasons.

First, we believe that the designation as "Harriet Tubman Grove" reflects the local community's desire to reclaim this important public space. Until its removal, the Lee Jackson Monument, had been the most prominent feature of this portion of the park. It also served as a divisive political icon since it was installed in 1948. The presence of a monument dedicated to perpetuating the myth of the Lost Cause actively discouraged a significant portion of residents from enjoying the area of the park that surrounded it. Since the removal of the statue in August, this area of the park has increasingly become a gathering place for city residents of all backgrounds to meet, talk, exchange points of view, and enjoy the location as a space that symbolizes hope and positive change. We hope that dedicating and naming a portion of the park for Harriet Tubman will continue to strengthen community and further encourage individuals to gather and build relationships in this beautiful public space. In contrast to Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee, Harriet Tubman was a Maryland native and respected hero who embodies the values of our community, including respect for all people and pursuit of justice.

Secondly, after years of focused financial investment and volunteer hours dedicated to the southeastern corner of the park (the "Union Plateau"), the Friends of the Wyman Park Dell are now focused on improving the western edge along Howard Street and the approach from Wyman Park Drive. For example, we recently obtained grant funding to prune trees and are partnering with Baltimore City's Department of Recreation and Parks to remove dead trees across this area. We have met with DRP Deputy Director William Vondrasek to identify short-term improvements to this area, and we see this dedication and naming as a catalyst to engage the community in planning for longer-term improvements to this side of the park.

Finally, this dedication of a grove of trees seems a fitting honor for a great abolitionist and U.S. Army spy who traveled countless miles through Maryland forests. The proposal to name part of Wyman Park Dell as "Harriet Tubman Grove" provides the city an opportunity to correct a historic injustice for a Maryland native. Our city has not yet properly recognized Harriet Tubman, who died in poverty.

We encourage the City Council to consider swift review and approval of this proposal.

Sincerely,

C. Ryan Patterson
Board of Directors President,
Friends of Wyman Park Dell

Attachment- Current Friends of Wyman Park Dell Board of Directors List



Attachment I:
Friends of Wyman Park Dell Board of Directors
2017-2018

Officers

C. Ryan Patterson, *President*

Tom McGilloway*, *Vice President of Maintenance*

Sarah Fawcett-Lee*, *Vice President of Membership & Development*

Cailin McGough, *Secretary*

Richard Fawcett*, *Treasurer*

Directors

Courtney Belew, *External Affairs Committee Chair*

Mia Moreno-Hines, *Communications*

Matt Fisher

Jessica Douglas

Laura Samuel, *Internal Affairs Committee Chair*

John Shields*

Sandy Sparks*

Rachel Swayne

Alice Young

Ex Officio Directors

Travers Nelson- Johns Hopkins University

**Denotes Emeritus*