

Hello members of the Community Affairs Committee. My name is Katie Kolden and I live at 6439 Washington Circle.

First, I want to thank you all for the time, work, and effort that has gone into this project so far, and the helpful clarification and advocacy questions for this committee.

I am here tonight to represent not only the Washington Highlands, but also a greater population of the city as well. While the creek and adjacent parks may be *managed* privately, they *function* publicly.

Many people within *and* outside of the Highlands benefit both directly and indirectly from the daylighted part of the Schoonmaker Watershed, AKA “the creek.” In addition to the City relying on this part of the watershed to relay water from north to south to mitigate flooding, the creek benefits many others as well. In fact, when Paul O’Keefe conducted a study within the neighborhood, it was found that 77% of people using South Park were **not** Highlands residents. Additionally, neighbors consistently highlight the “creek” as one of the best features of the neighborhood. It is one of the primary things that makes the neighborhood enjoyable for walking through, and a destination for wedding and family photographers. All of this has a net positive effect on the property values within and beyond the Highlands. Not to mention the homes to the north of the Highlands in the watershed who see decreased flooding since their stormwater comes through the open channel.

Again, we appreciate the work that has brought us to this point, but there is still more work that needs to be done. I am aware that this committee will likely favor Alternative B – the storm sewer down Martha Washington Drive. I am also aware that this option is a significant savings (roughly \$24 Million) over Alternative A. Given that fact, the residents of the Highlands, surrounding areas, and everyone who enjoys the neighborhood parks, strongly urge the committee to include the restoration and/or naturalization of the open channel as a required part of the project and budget accordingly. Since this will likely cost MUCH less than 24 million dollars, this is a reasonable request.

Moving forward, residents of the Highlands wish to work directly with the City on feasible options within Alternative B. One example would be burying the open channel in North Park only, which would result in a cost savings for the City. Additionally, certain areas of the “creek” could be converted into a natural channel. These are just two examples of additional solutions that could be proposed if we work together, and would result in “win-win” solutions for both the City and the residents.

The neighborhood is very open to looking into additional cost-saving solutions. We ask for your willingness to work with us, and your commitment to including addressing the open part of the channel into this project.

During the presentation on 10/15, upgrades to Martha Washington Dr. were acknowledged, which are appreciated. However, we also need to understand how disruptive this will be to those neighbors. If the contract company is going to use the ability to do upgrades at surface level as an argument for choosing Alternative B over Alternative A, then it is only fair for us to request that those surface-level upgrades include addressing the open channel as a requirement of the completion of this project.

Thank you.

Please include these comments in the official meeting minutes for this meeting, 10/15/24 and also the larger common council meeting on 10/22/24. Thank you.

Katie Kolden

6439 Washington Circle.