

Thurston Nature Committee Meeting

September 17, 2024

Zoom

Attendance: Praveena Ramaswami, Pam O'Neal, Jim Vallem, Holly Zechar, Beth Caldwell, Colin Brooks, Emily Eisbruch, Michael Tucker, Harrison Tucker, Amy Creten, Kristen Cella

- Kristen Cella is the new TNCC PTO representative.
- The 2nd AAPS meeting with community members went into more detail from the first meeting. The AAPS took TNC feedback and made some changes.
- Trees will be removed beyond the oak savannah from the Prairie side. 21 trees in the Oak savannah, AAPS identified 7 trees good to be transplanted. Colin will inventory the trees to be impacted in the upcoming weeks.
- TNC newsletter has been sent detailing the impacts of the new Thurston project on the pond and nature center.
- Praveena asked the committee about issuing an official letter about the TNC working with AAPS on the new Thurston project. Amy suggested we note the plan has changed from AAPS 's original proposal via input from the TNC.
- The TNC voted and approved a statement detailing the committee's engagement on the project and continuing concerns with the plans. The statement was sent via social media, posted on the TNC website and shared with the AAPS on Friday Sept. 20:

Many of you may know or have heard that the Thurston Nature Center Committee (TNCC) has been meeting with AAPS regarding the construction of the new Thurston Elementary Building. While we have been a part of discussions, the TNCC has not agreed or endorsed the proposed location of the new school.

We have expressed our concerns about the decision to build the new school close to TNC. The construction project last proposed to the Committee would lead to the removal of many trees, the oak savanna, and rain/butterfly gardens. This would significantly disrupt wildlife habitats, especially turtle and bird migrations, and lead to light pollution, increased noise, flooding risks, and overall habitat loss, all of which are extremely concerning to us.

The Thurston Nature Center named our country's first Educational Environmental Center nearly 60 years ago, has thrived thanks to this community's continuous dedication and unwavering support. We speak for the Nature Center as volunteer stewards; however, we cannot speak for the entire

community. We hope that you are able to attend the upcoming community meeting to share and voice your concerns and feedback. September 26th, 5:30pm at Thurston Elementary School. More information at : <https://a2schoolsbond.org/school/thurston-elementary/>

We thank you for your continued support.

Thurston Nature Center Committee

- The TNC agreed to a debrief meeting after the September 26 meeting to discuss outcomes and next steps for engagement.
- TNC will have a booth at the OHMHA fall festival on October 6.
- Jim, Michael, and Colin will clean out the shed this fall. Discussion on moving the shed, signs and kiosks was delayed until more finalized plans for new Thurston have been presented.