

April 2, 2020

Mr. Joseph C. Shearouse Jr.
City of Savannah
2 East Bay St.
Savannah, GA 31401

re: Naming of "**Harmon Creek Park**"

Paradise Park was developed as a low-density suburban residential community during the 1960's. At the time the entire area consisted of un-incorporated parts of Chatham County and no provision or plans for parks and recreation facilities had been required or even envisioned. Over the years other developers added additional surrounding residential communities and the planning of each was similarly internally focused, with little or no planning for interconnections of roads, sidewalks or provision for recreational facilities. By the time Southside communities were incorporated into Savannah, most of our buildable tracts had been developed into a patchwork of separate developments; which typically have narrow, winding streets and no space for sidewalks. For decades, most of our residents were typically focused on their immediate neighborhood and its schools and not orientated towards dealing with a large and well-organized entity such as the City of Savannah.

During the early 2000's, street crime and home break-ins were rising alarmingly and residents began experiencing and sharing their considerable frustrations about their various attempts to deal individually with the various City agencies. In January 2005, Paradise Park Oakhurst Neighborhood Association was formed including all of the (7), now (8) developments bounded by Montgomery Cross Road, White Bluff Rd. and the Vernon River Marsh.

Some years ago, the Association noticed that a section of Atwood Street, between Chatham St. and Montgomery Rd. in Oakhurst, was the source of a large proportion of the criminal investigations conducted within PPONA by the SPD. At our Association meetings, the residents of this area frequently complained of "drug related activities" on their nearby streets, vacant lots and in some houses. SPD expressed their belief that our frequent home break-ins and these "Drug activities" were strongly linked. On more detailed investigation, we discovered that much of this anti-social activity was centered on a group of adjacent, empty lots roughly bordering the Atwood crossing of the Vernon River/ Canal. Increased police patrols and numerous arrests reduced the severity of our crime problem, but there remained a residual stubborn "core group of bad actors" who identified this area as their turf! Clearly, any further reductions in street crime was going to require a more proactive approach.

At the same time, we noticed that this part of our neighborhood had become home to an increasing number of younger children. These school age children were regularly playing in the streets and on these very vacant lots, much to the consternation of their families! The children's natural inclinations to play in open-spaces, were placing them in direct conflict with the "interests" of the most anti-social elements in our neighborhood. So, we concluded, that we urgently needed park/recreation facilities for the children in this area, but conventional wisdom was that there simply was no place to put them.

Early in 2018, several residents noted that (10) of these contiguous lots, and their canal easements bordering Atwood, Chatham and Kandlewood were City owned, having been purchased under FEMA grants due to historical flooding issues, and therefore could not be used for buildings or residences. Working with Alderman Miller, we immediately began the planning process to develop a park on these plots with the added goal of renewing and reviving this part of our neighborhood.

After the park construction plans and construction schedule were formally agreed by the various City officials, the Association began the process of selection of a suitable name for our newest park. This beautiful park was completed last fall! Looking at older maps of the area, we discovered the formerly over-grown, litter filled "canal" that meanders through our new park is actually a branch of the Vernon River called Harmon Creek. The name ***Harmon Creek Park*** was proposed and discussed and then voted on at two successive PPONA meetings and is our unanimous choice. We therefore are requesting that the City of Savannah name the new park at Atwood and Chatham Streets ***Harmon Creek Park***.

Thank-You for you Assistance

Alan Boulton, President
Paradise Park Oakhurst Neighborhood Association