

Granite Pipeline Lawsuit Update – February 9, 2020 by Jack Lattimore

“What is the status of the Friends’ lawsuit against Baltimore City and BGE?”

The Friend of Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park filed a lawsuit against the city and BGE on April 11, 2019. We took this route following numerous attempts by Board Members to establish a dialogue with City officials and BGE regarding the value of the 2.2 miles of parkland lost to BGE’s Granite Pipeline project. Unfortunately these attempts failed and the city accepted just \$1.4 million for land that the Friends believe is worth between \$10-\$20 million for the 25 year term of BGE’s franchise to use the property.

Baltimore City and BGE attempted to have our suit dismissed; however, on October 17, 2019 Judge Jeannie Hong *ruled in favor of the Friends* that our lawsuit could go forward. The ruling and background information about the lawsuit is best summed up in the following 10/25/2019 article from the *Baltimore Brew*, [Judge denies city's request to dismiss Leakin Park pipeline suit](#).

The Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks notes that, “The 100+ year old Gwynns Falls Leakin Park forest is a rare and exceptional urban resource - providing a diversity of ecosystem services and enhancing urban environmental conditions for the City of Baltimore.” Following the pipeline’s construction in 2019, “a decline of overall forest health should be anticipated” and “ecological responses to the pipeline are sure to increase the cost of park maintenance.” Overall, Recreation and Parks gave a “conservative estimate” that 2,800 park trees will be “lost” because of the pipeline.

The Friends hired Michael McCann to represent us in our lawsuit against the City & BGE. Michael has extensive knowledge and practice in the areas of land use and development issues. Michael is based in Towson and serves as the attorney for the Valleys Planning Council of Baltimore County.

The lawsuit is currently in the discovery phase. Mark your calendars for the next significant dates for our lawsuit: pre-trial and settlement hearing scheduled for May 22, 2020 and a trial date of June 26, 2020.

We have established a legal fund with a goal of \$20,000 to pay our legal costs for the lawsuit. We have reached 58% of our goal thanks to many generous donors. Our donor base includes Friends Board Members, our general membership, and concerned individuals and groups from around the city, the state, and the nation. ***The most powerful action you can take right now to protect parks in Baltimore is to make a generous donation to our legal fund.*** If you have already donated please mention our fight to your friends and ask them to donate as well. You and your network are our most powerful allies in this fight.

We urge you to make a tax-deductible donation to the Granite Pipeline legal fund today at: www.friendsofgwynnsfallsleakinpark.org/Donate