

Recreation and Parks Advisory Board Meeting
April 20, 2016
Department of Recreation and Parks Headquarters
Conference Room #1
7120 Oakland Mills Road
Columbia, MD 21046

Members Present:

Dr. Joel Goodman, Chair; Dave Brown; Joanne Kiebler; Tom Franklin; Sylvia Ramsey; William Santos; Michael Smith; Dan Tracy; and Cindy Vaillancourt.

Members Absent:

No members absent.

Staff Present:

John Byrd, Executive Secretary; John Marshall, Chief, Bureau of Parks; A. Raul Delorme, Bureau of Park Planning and Construction; Laura Wetherald, Chief, Bureau of Recreation; Lauren Davis, Assistant to Ms. Wetherald and Recording Secretary.

Approval of Minutes:

Dr. Goodman called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Michael Smith made a motion to approve the March minutes as written. Everyone seconded that motion and it was passed unanimously.

Mr. Byrd stated that we have been emailing the correspondence as we get it. Dr. Goodman mentioned that we have been getting some great emails from the correspondence.

Director's Report:

Susan Potts (Howard County Therapeutic Recreation Manager) gave a power point presentation on American Disability Act (ADA). The purpose of this presentation was to get everyone familiar with the definition of disability under the ADA. It is also to help understand the intensions and impact of the ADA law in your work and our departments work.

Mr. Byrd reported about the MET Belmont Easement update. A presentation was made to the MET board last month. The neighbors asked us for a delay so they would have more of an opportunity to participate in the process. They were granted that request. So we are at the table with the residents along the road to try to come to a conclusion on a level of programming that is mutually acceptable for Belmont and the volume of traffic for all of the events that take place at Belmont. We had a good meeting this past Tuesday with the board and residents. Mr. Marshall's staff is working with Meg Boyd, who runs the conservancy program on site, to try to come up with a realistic scope of services that we all can live with and that is practical. Mr. Byrd plans on attending the next MET Board meeting in June.

Mr. Byrd reported that Recreation and Parks presented the capital budget to the County Council. He stated that they received a lot of questions and concerns regarding projects that have been deferred to accommodate the reduction in the debt ceiling for the County bonds. He stated that they are done with the capital budget and is now preparing to move onto the operating budget work session that will begin in May. The biggest change in the operating budget is the increase in park ranger positions that will now be available. He continued to state that the operating budget is good and it is about an 8% increase from last year.

Mr. Byrd reported that we had a community sports meeting in March to talk about space allocation and the needs for space for programs. He mentioned that Mr. Brown came to the meeting to represent the school system. Mr. Byrd would like to continue that meeting at least once a year.

Question: Is that an alliance group?

Mr. Byrd and Ms. Wetherald responded by saying there is an alliance group and they were included in this sports meeting. Ms. Wetherald continued by stating that about 28 different groups attended this meeting.

Mr. Brown stated that this meeting not only included traditional sports groups but it included groups like cheering leading, jump rope, and Ultimate Frisbee.

Ms. Wetherald stated that every group got the opportunity to listen and learn how the permitting process is done.

Mr. Byrd reported that Recreation and Parks requested two bond bills from the legislation for Huntington Park and South Branch Park. He continued to state that they were successful in receiving both requests. \$150,000 was received for Huntington Park and \$100,000 for South Branch Park to continue projects at those sites. All the improvements and projects for Huntington Park will be able to be completed with this money. This fund will allow us to continue the next phase for South Branch Park.

Dr. Goodman asked when you get into the historical preservation of that building at South Branch, does that come from Recreation and Parks funds or somewhere else.

Mr. Byrd replied that it mostly comes from us. He stated that they try to get the town to step up as much as they can but they just don't have the money to provide the funds.

Ms. Vaillancourt asked is there some way that we calculated what additional space would be necessary to fill the need for land space.

Mr. Byrd responded by saying that we do not have that now. Mr. Delorme explained the land preservation park and recreation plan.

Mr. Brown stated that the big issue is the lack of indoor facility space during the peak season (November, December, and January). During the whole school year, there was over 4500 hours of gym time lost during community use time.

Mr. Byrd reported that at the sports meeting he mentioned to all the groups to be sure to not over permit. Facilities and fields are being permitted but not used during those time slots.

Bureau of Capital Projects, Park Planning and Construction:

Mr. Delorme reported that our consultant had a session and asked a lot of great questions to the upper management staff. The consultants thought that it went really well.

Dr. Goodman gave feedback and said that the meeting could have gone all day.

Mr. Delerme reported that they had a second session with staff that the upper level management was not involved in. The purpose of the session was to get more information from the programming staff.

Mr. Delerme reported that the next phase will include doing the survey.

Ms. Wetherald stated that the actual survey will be conducted by actually talking to people over the phone.

Mr. Delerme stated that he hopes that the input provided by the citizens will help identify the needs for the community. This is for the next five year plan.

Mr. Delerme passed out photos of recent projects completed by his staff.

Mr. Delerme stated that the Robinson Nature Center storage building is now complete. His crew has also put in a new skylight in the lobby at Robinson Nature Center.

Mr. Delerme reported that the Troy Park phase II bids are due back sometime in mid-May. They are hoping to get the project construction started this summer. Once the construction begins, the park will be closed in the morning from 6:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday so that people are not using the fields during the construction process.

Mr. Delerme reported that Cedar Lane Park and Western Reginal Park synthetic fields were completed and reopened this month. The fields were replaced with new synthetic turf. Also, two batting cages at Rockburn Park were completed. The batting cages turned out so well that EYO has decided to contribute money to build a 3rd batting cage.

Dr. Goodman asked if we do a press release every time a Recreation and Parks project is complete.

Mr. Delorme and Mr. Byrd responded by saying sometimes we do. Sometimes it is posted on social media, reported by Recreation and Parks, or reported by the County Executive's office.

Mr. Delorme reported that the irrigation design for the Timber's project will be completed in the next couple of weeks. We will probably go out to bid towards the end of May and start the project in August.

Mr. Delorme reported that they have been able to pour a lot of concrete for the skate parks at South Branch Park. The project should be completed in May.

Mr. Delorme reported that the bids for the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area storage building/office came in about 14% higher than the engineers estimated. Mr. Delorme, Mr. Byrd, and the engineers will reexamine it to see where they can make some cuts.

Mr. Brown mentioned that he visited Blandair Park and that he is very impressed with the work that has been done there. Mr. Brown told Mr. Delorme that the work that has been done out there is phenomenal.

Mr. Delorme reported that they are working to get a lot of pavement done in that area so that traffic can use a certain area again. They are also extending the parking lot from Phase One. This will add about 150 additional parking spots.

Mr. Marshall reported that the playground contractors are very excited to build the new playground at Blandair Park. The playground will be there showpiece to show people around the country. He stated that a 3D design and presentation has been created by the contractors to show what the playground will look like.

Mr. Delorme stated that he will have the contractors send the presentation so that it can be shown at the next board meeting.

Bureau of Parks:

Mr. Marshall reported that his crew has begun mowing lawns throughout the County. He also stated that his crew also monitors the contractors.

Mr. Marshall reported he had a chance to attend a session at MRPA with the National Capital Park Police and they brought up ideas that Recreation and Parks have already considered. He talked about the “smash and grab” incidents that have been occurring in some of our Howard County Parks. “Smash and grab” is where a person will break a car window and grab whatever they see. Recreation and Parks have decided to do something about these incidents by working with the Police Department and marketing team to come up with a campaign to make people aware of what is “smash and grab.”

Mr. Marshall reported about the “Felony Lane Gang.” They are a group of people that prey on members of our local community centers, pool centers, and health clubs. The FLG finds a way into people’s cars by grabbing keys out of unlocked lockers that are inside the facility. Once they grab the victim’s keys, they will find your car and steal whatever is available. The “Lock It or Lose It Program” will help catch the people that are committing these crimes.

Mr. Marshall reported that there is a recycling container next to every trash can in the Park system.

Mr. Marshall passed out pictures of a local boy scout club planting trees at Schooley Mill Park. About 15 kids with parents came out and planted 4 flowering dogwood trees. He mentioned that we have a dozen of these programs that plant trees all year long. He also mentioned that the Boy Scout club paid for everything that had to do with this project.

Mr. Marshall reported that free paper yard trim bags are now available for County residents through the County’s Environmental Services Division. The coupon is available on the County’s website. To access the coupon you have to go under the following heading: Public Works, Bureau of Environmental Services, Recycling, and Paper Yard Trim Bags. The bags can then be picked up at the Roger Carter Community Center, North Laurel Community Center, and the Robinson Nature Center. Once the bags are gone there will be no more bags distributed.

Dr. Goodman asked if this is for leaf collection.

Mr. Marshall responded by saying yes.

Mr. Marshall reported that the Ellicott City Spring Fest is this Saturday, April 23, 2016.

Mr. Marshall reported that there was a great turnout for GreenFest.

Mr. Marshall recognized one of his staff, Greg Fiala, who is an Operational Supervisor I in Zone I. Mr. Fiala performed CPR on an individual last week and probably saved her life. As the paramedics took over and attended to the lady, he decided to watch over the 3 year old child that was sitting in the back seat. The young lady did survive this ordeal. Mr. Marshall stressed the fact that CPR training is very important.

Bureau of Recreation:

Ms. Wetherald reported that the Department is looking at a new way to promote our facilities by providing virtual tours. Ms. Wetherald mentioned Matt Zervas, a facility coordinator at the Gary J. Arthur Community Center at Glenwood took this research on as a project and helped put the video together.

Mr. Delorme asked if these virtual tours will be available to view on our website.

Ms. Wetherald responded by saying yes.

John B stated that these virtual tours will be similar to real estate virtual tours.

Ms. Wetherald reported that Wine in the Woods is approaching towards the end of May. She stated that the members should be receiving the invitation for VIP tickets to Wine in the Woods very soon. Ms. Wetherald mentioned that they have two new wineries this year bringing the total to 30. She noted that there is 73 wineries in Maryland but we only accept about 30-35 wineries for Wine in the Woods. The first new winery is Crossroads and there specialty is wine ice cream. The second new winery is called the Urban Winery located in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Ms. Wetherald reported that pre-registration for Wine in the Woods is going very well. We have about 2200 online sales already. She stated that the most we have had is about 9800 right before the festival. We have about 55 ticket sales from in house registrations. We also have over 30 sponsors for this year festival which

adds up to about \$50,000 in sponsorship. Phil Bryan and Nicola Morgal have been in charge of sponsorships for Wine in the Woods. We have 16 onsite sponsors. Ms. Wetherald mentioned that next year will be our 25th year for Wine in the Woods and it will be Columbia's 50th anniversary.

Laura reported that Merriweather Post Pavilion will sit next to the new Chrysalis building that is being built. We sit on a committee to make sure there is a contract with the Columbia Association, Howard County Recreation and Parks, and the Inner Arbor Trust. Wine in the Woods will always be dedicated for the 3rd weekend in May. Also, once it is all built our Department will have options (about 3 per month) to have an event or concert in that arena. We are very happy with that opportunity.

Dr. Goodman stated that he hopes everyone has the opportunity to see Vanessa Collier perform on Saturday at 1:30 p.m. Dr. Goodman mentioned that she is touring the County.

Ms. Wetherald stated that the list and schedule for the entertainers performing at the festival is located on the website.

Ms. Wetherald passed out a flyer for the Prisms Art Show. The Prisms program caters to adults that have Alzheimer's disease. The staff have been doing artwork with the participants and are now displaying the artwork in an art show.

Ms. Wetherald reported that they are looking to find different indoor facilities to hold our programs. They have been having conversations with the school system and that they also have concerns with spacing. We may be losing some of the activity rooms within the school to make room for more classroom space. Recreation and Parks will be looking at using portables to use for child care and for programs. A tour is being set up to go out and look the portables at certain school sites.

Ms. Wetherald asked everyone in the room if they know of any indoor space that may be available to hold programs like cooking class, art class, preschool, adult classes, etc. Ms. Wetherald is looking for something outside of the traditional venues. The program fees would pay for these venues.

The question was asked for Laura: How much space do you need?

Ms. Wetherald responded by saying about a classroom size.

Mr. Brown asked how long of a lease Ms. Wetherald was looking for.

Ms. Wetherald responded by pointing out that we hold programs all year round, twice a week, three times a week, etc. Anything that is available can be an opportunity to hold programs in.

Ms. Wetherald reported that Camp Day is the first Saturday in May. Camp Day will give people the opportunity to see all the different camps that Recreation and Parks have available. There will also be entertainment and it is the same day as the fishing tournament.

Mr. Marshall mentioned make sure people arrive early to get a parking spot.

Old Business:

Mr. Byrd reported that there were several bills floated to address Program Open Space funding. The best case scenario would have been full funding right now with a lock box so that you can never use it for anything else. The Governor proposed a bill that has sequential payback with full funding to begin in 2019. This Bill passed.

Mr. Byrd stated that for the next two years the funding will be pretty flat. By 2019 it will bounce back pretty strong.

Mr. Byrd reported that the bill for warning signs on synthetic turf died. At this point, they are waiting for the EPA report to come out at the end of 2016. Mr. Delorme is exploring options for infield material and what those cost differences might be.

Mr. Byrd reported that the state passed a pesticide restriction so that neonicotinoids can't be sold off the shelf at stores. The bill was unanimously approved and signed. It will allow farmers to continue using neonicotinoids. He also stated that the department is working on a policy to restrict neonicotinoids.

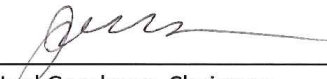
Dr. Goodman reported that this past Saturday night was a perfect day for the Howard County Astronomical League at the Observatory. The parking lot was full and there was a great crowd.

New Business:

Mr. Byrd presented Michael Smith with a gift for his last meeting with the Board.

There being no further discussion, Mr. Smith gave the motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Franklin seconded that motion.

Dr. Goodman adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.



Dr. Joel Goodman, Chairman



John R. Byrd, Executive Secretary