

Recreation and Parks Advisory Board Meeting
June 15, 2016
Department of Recreation and Parks Headquarters
Conference Room #1
7120 Oakland Mills Road
Columbia, MD 21046

Members Present:

Dave Brown; Tom Franklin; Sylvia Ramsey; Dan Tracy; Williams Santos;
Jonathan Gresham and Cindy Vaillancourt

Members Absent:

Dr. Joel Goodman, Chair; Joanne Kiebler

Staff Present:

John Byrd, Executive Secretary; John Marshall, Chief, Bureau of Parks; A. Raul Delerme, Bureau of Park Planning and Construction; Laura Wetherald, Chief, Bureau of Recreation; Mike Milani, Bureau of Administrative Services; Phil Norman, Natural Resources Deer Management Program Manager; Lauren Davis, Assistant to Ms. Wetherald and Recording Secretary.

Approval of Minutes:

Ms. Ramsey called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Mr. Tracy made a Motion to approve the May minutes as written. The Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Byrd stated that we have a couple of presentations including Sasaki and Associates (Barbara Heller) and Deer Hunt Management Program (Phil Norman). Mr. Byrd stated that the guests are welcome to stay or leave after any presentation.

Sasaki and Associates Presentation – LPPRP Update (Barbara Heller)

Ms. Heller started by saying that she has always heard great things about

the Department. She has been in the industry for a long time.

Ms. Heller stated that her company is in the process of finishing up the survey design that will be going out soon. She continued to say that they have already completed some analysis, especially on the Park inventory side of things. From there we do visioning and developing a plan. She talked about some of different groups and people that they have met with. They have done some internal focus groups because they believe that staffs have great ideas about what going on with the agency. They are also interested in similar providers and knowing what is out there. They have also worked with other agencies like Voices for Change, Howard County Public Schools, Columbia Association, and varies people within the Department. She states that it is always important to know what the driving force or the motivator behind doing the plan. Some of the key plan components include insuring and following the State guidelines, identifying the needs of the community (facility, parks and programs), insuring a robust analysis, and positioning the Department for the future. She also stated that they are paying attention to the CAPRA Standards, identified areas for expansion, and doing an inventory analysis of the existing facilities.

She stated that she has worked all around the country and that she puts this agency in the top tier or agencies. She talked about going into other agencies that have a vast need of improvement compared to our agency in which they have to be a little more sophisticated in their analysis. Sasaki and Associates wants to make sure that they are matching innovative efforts that the Department is doing. She also stated that she was really impressed with meeting with the Howard County Recreation and Parks marketing group. She is also impressed with the commitment of customer satisfaction and attention to program affordability. She meant with the front desk staff at Recreation and Parks headquarters and she can tell that there is a real sensitivity to making sure that our programs are affordable.

Ms. Heller also talked about some of the issues and challenges that can arise in an agency. Those issues include lack of programming and office space, internal competition of space as a result of a lack of indoor space,

lack of sufficient staff, needing to improve trail maintenance and connections, ongoing maintenance and operations money, having difficulties with the school department, and a lack of funding to manage the Natural and Historic Resources Division.

Ms. Heller presented a few slides on “Where Howard County is Going?” This slide show provided statistics on Howard County and its residents.

Ms. Heller presented a slide show on the parks supply in Howard County. She stated that they did inventory and had staff visit every park. They used a software web base platform called “Full Grown”.

Ms. Heller also stated that they take a look at the National Recreation and Parks Association benchmarking. They have taken a look at their field report as well as their Park and Recreation Operating Ratio GIS System to get some comparisons of other systems. Also, within the state guidelines they have two different areas to look at in terms of identifying service levels including a proximity model and park equity model. Those are some things that they are looking at as well.

Ms. Heller reported that there are 28,700 acres of publicly accessible space. The Department of Natural Resources requires 30 acres per 1000 residents, however, there will be more discussions to go over this data and to make sure it's the correct standard.

Ms. Heller stated that there are typically, generally, and historically used Park classifications. This is something else that will be discussed more with staff.

Ms. Heller reported that they are going to be doing a series of maps. She continued to show a slide show about our Community and Regional Parks. She stated that Regional Parks are more important for a County system because of the visitors that it brings from our surrounding areas.

Ms. Heller also stated that they have a person on their team that looks at all the historic sites that is managed by the agency. They also look at the programming at these sites.

Ms. Heller continued to go through the slide show presentation. Ms. Heller opened up the floor for any question.

Mr. Tracy asked what if the total Park plan only included Howard County Recreation and Parks. Also, does this include the Columbia Association?

Ms. Heller responded by saying that we look at all of them for each agency.

Ms. Vaillancourt asked if the 28,700 acres included all those things.

Ms. Heller responded by saying yes.

Ms. Vaillancourt asked that with those numbers, we could have over 100,000 acres of Park land.

Ms. Heller responded by saying that that information is something that they want to take a look at.

Mr. Byrd responded by adding that the State guidelines changed this year and they allowed the local jurisdiction to determine whether that number is relevant to their jurisdiction. And that we are finding that it is probably not.

Ms. Vaillancourt asked if they included in the activity analysis all of the places that we share.

Ms. Heller responded by saying that we are looking at that. Also, that we are conducting a survey to look at that research. If it was managed by the school then it was not included but if it is managed by Recreation and Parks then it is included.

Mr. Byrd responded by saying that it can come in as a recommendation as to where to go next and in terms of land access.

Mr. Santos asked if they did an analysis of the demand for nature orientated education and recreation.

Ms. Heller responded by saying yes, that it is part of the Recreation assessment that we are just starting.

Mr. Byrd asked Ms. Heller when she thought the survey would be out in the streets.

Ms. Heller responded by saying next week. The survey will be done by telephone.

Ms. Heller finished her presentation and thanked everyone in attendance.

Managed Deer Hunt Program – (Phil Norman)

Mr. Norman introduced himself and introduced Sean Harbaugh with Columbia Association.

Mr. Norman reported that Howard County Recreation and Parks have been running managed deer hunts since 1998 and sharpshooting since 2004.

Mr. Norman introduced the proposed 2016-2017 sharpshooting schedule. The schedule includes 5 locations that are either new or are new efforts for daytime shooting. Those locations are Mt. Hebron, Hollifield Farms, Daniels Mill Overlook, Gray Rock, and Dorsey Hall.

Mr. Norman presented the proposed 2016-2017 managed hunt schedule. The only significant change is the Gorman Area that is dependent upon an agreement with the Columbia Association.

Mr. Norman discussed that Columbia Association is also facing issues and complaints about an overabundance of deer on their property. Recreation and Parks and the Columbia Association have begun talking about the possibility of expanding our program to include the Columbia Association open space areas. He mentioned that together Howard County Recreation and Parks and the Columbia Association form about the largest single block of land left in the County where there is no deer management taking place.

Mr. Norman reported that the Columbia Association Board voted unanimously to proceed in investigating this joint opportunity.

Mr. Norman continued to show maps on the slide show. Mr. Norman reported that 150 yards is the minimum distance required by law.

Mr. Norman stated that we want to continue our sharpshooting management at our current locations while adding two new locations. A first class mailing was sent out to all of the surrounding homes for the new proposed locations inviting them to this meeting so that they would have the opportunity to comment.

Mr. Norman reported that there have been tremendous amounts of complaints of the deer population in the Dorsey Hall area.

Mr. Norman reported that this Spring they have initiated some tick control in the area with a device called Four Poster. This device treats the deer with a pesticide to kill the ticks.

Mr. Norman discussed more information on the newly proposed Gorman area which is managed by Columbia Association. The goal for this area is to have bow hunting taking place. Bow hunting is quieter and a much shorter range type of hunting. This will minimize the disruption in this residential area. Currently they do not know how many hunters that they will be able to put in this area.

Mr. Norman reported that they are hoping to get all of the proposals to Maryland Department of Natural Resources within the first couple of weeks in July so that we can get the applications out to the hunters during the first week in August.

Mr. Norman reported that the Howard County land will all most likely be shotgun hunting because we have the larger chunk of area to work with. The Columbia Association land will be bow hunting.

Mr. Norman opened the floor up to questions and comments.

Mr. Tracy asked what time would be considered daytime.

Mr. Norman responded by saying pre-dawn (half hour before legal sunrise) and proceeding until approximately 11 am.

Mr. Byrd introduced the two speakers: Lew Larson and Elisabeth Larson.

Mr. Larson (9774 Polished Stone, Columbia MD 21046):

Mr. Larson asked to put the Kings Contrivance map back on the screen. He pointed out on the map where he and his wife live. He stated that that they see deer but not a lot of deer and that his deck is in the woods. He stated that this house is more in the woods than any other home in his neighborhood. The number of deer that they have seen in the last 2 weeks is zero. He stated that the deer back there have no other place to go because we keep building houses. Mr. Larson stated that there are not enough deer's in the area to hunt. He continued to state that he grew up in Minnesota and that he was a hunter. Mr. Larson wants Howard County to reconsider how big this problem is. He also talked about how he and his wife are protecting their flowers from the deer. He proposed an idea of putting something into the tick control device to reduce their reproduction. He wants to see alternative methods to controlling the deer population other than just shooting them.

Mrs. Larson (9774 Polished Stone, Columbia MD 21046):

Mrs. Larson is very concerned with the overdevelopment of the area. She stated that she is stunned at the number of lots that these deer are being pushed out of. Mrs. Larson reiterated what her husband said and stated that there has been a decrease in the deer population. She stated her concerns of the bow hunting and deer's suffering from being hit. She continued to say that they paid a huge amount of money for the woods that they have in their backyard. She mentioned that they already have people in their back yard illegally hunting and that they don't allow their grandkids in the backyard during certain times. She does not like the idea of Howard County making it legal to hunt in that area. She stated her personal feeling towards the idea of hunting deer, including that it is cruel and inhumane. She stated that she does not understand how people are scared to go outside at night because of the deer and how a deer can

charge at them.

Mr. Norman stepped in to state that he is reporting what people are telling him.

Mr. Larson continued to state that the sound of a shotgun is terrifying to her.

Mr. Larson reported that they call the police a half a dozen times during the year because of the illegal hunting going on. Mrs. Larson reported that the police said that as long as they stay 150 feet from their house then it's okay to hunt.

Mr. Harbaugh stated that the Columbia Association has also seen an increase in the deer population and tick increase. He also reported that there is not a single inch of the Columbia Association property that allows anyone to have a gun except for law enforcement. Mr. Harbaugh provided his information to Mr. and Mrs. Larson in the event that the police are called because of hunting. He stated that the police are not accurate when they told the Larsons that hunting is allowed 150 feet from their home unless it is a part of this program.

Ms. Vaillancourt asked if the deer are butchered after being killed and if the meat is donated.

Mr. Norman responded by saying that in the managed hunting program, the hunters are responsible for the removal of the deer from the property. About a 3rd of the meat is donated and the rest is saved for personal use. By regulation, in the sharpshooting program, all of the meat has to be donated.

Ms. Vaillancourt asked Mr. Harbaugh if the Columbia Association Board have a position and do they get to vote.

Mr. Harbaugh responded by saying the Columbia Association Board have been presented information on this program and voted unanimously to enter an agreement with the County on a deer management program on

Columbia Association property. Columbia Association has also reached out to the owners in the community to make them aware of the proposed deer management program.

Mrs. Larson asked if the deer is hit but not killed, is it left to suffer.

Mr. Norman responded by saying that every hunter is required to make every effort to recovery any deer that they shoot. We have restrictions on how many deer you can take at one time.

Ms. Kiebler stated if the guest have any neighbors with written comments or suggestions on the Deer Management Program will be received in the Howard County Recreation and Parks office through 5 pm, June 30, 2016.

Mr. Byrd asked if the Board should make a Motion to endorse the program now or wait until after the 30th and do it by proxy vote.

Mr. Franklin made a Motion to endorse the program and Mr. Tracy seconded the Motion. Everyone was all in favor of passing this program.

Director's Report:

MET Belmont Woods Road Easement

Mr. Byrd reported that he mentioned at the last meeting that we were negotiating with the residents along Belmont Woods Road at the request of the MET Board to come to a compromise on the pragmatic scope. We submitted that compromise to the MET Board on June 6th with the written endorsement from the Belmont Woods Road neighbors and the MET Board unanimously approved it. The next step is to go before the State Board of Public Works for the approval. Once that is obtain and approved, the development rights that we are trying to establish for sale can be sold. This money will be given to Mr. Delorme to help with all the renovations that we have been doing for the past years. He stated that we are very happy about that.

Bureau of Parks:

Mr. Marshall passed out an inventory list of all of the species at Belmont

Manor and Historic Park. This list was compiled by the Howard County Conservancy.

Mr. Marshall reported that 10 trees were planted at Western Reginal Park's Native Tree Arboretum as part of the Arbor Day celebrations.

Mr. Marshall stated that Howard County has a volunteer program that is getting ready to start at Belmont Manor and Historic Park. We hired a gardener and we have 13 volunteers who have all signed up to work at Belmont.

Ms. Ramsey asked what types of hours the gardener and volunteers will be working.

Mr. Marshall responded by saying during the day on Monday through Thursday. They have to be done by noon on Friday because of the events booked on Fridays. There will be no work on the weekends.

Mr. Marshall reported that we start the Park Ranger interviews next week. There are 11 full time Park Ranger positions and one Administrative Support Tech II position available. We plan to have them on board July 11th.

Mr. Marshall reported that the Robinson Nature Center had its largest totals ever during the month of May. They brought in \$78,075 in revenue and 3,742 in participants.

Mr. Marshall reported that Brenda Belensky, the committee, and the contractor (Penn Trails) have completed the draft of the trails identification and way finding signs. The look will standardize our signs so that the public can navigate the trails and know that they are on the Recreation and Parks trails.

Mr. Marshall reported that all of the Heritage sites are now open. Shakespeare in the Ruins has been at the Patapsco Female Institute Historic Park. Romeo & Juliet runs until June 19th. The Three Musketeers begins on June 24th and runs until July 24th. A total of 1,295 people visited the historic sites in Ellicott City in May.

Mr. Marshall reported that our Park Operations staff are preparing for maintenance challenges due to ongoing construction at Blandair, Troy, and River Hill High School turf field.

Mr. Marshall reported that every weekend at Belmont is booked through 2017; however, we continue to get inquiries. Belmont received 844 inquiries during the month of May.

Mr. Marshall reported that the new traffic counter was installed at Belmont. They will start sharing reports to the neighbors beginning in July.

Mr. Marshall reported that Belmont Manor and Historic Park made the Baltimore Sun's list of the "50 Most Beautiful Places in Maryland".

Mr. Marshall passed out a flyer to the Board. He stated that they are working with the marketing division to try to help educate the public of the criminal activity on the smash and grab incidents in the parks.

Mr. Marshall passed out a picture of the black bear roaming around Howard County.

Mr. Marshall reported that a snakehead was caught in the Middle Patuxent River.

Mr. Marshall talked about a program that helps people that are involved in an accident that may emotionally affect a person. This program is called the Crisis Incident Stress Management Program (CISM).

Bureau of Recreation:

Ms. Wetherald reported that summer camps have started and staff trainings are in progress. We bring in over 700 staff to run our summer camps. We have over 350 offerings for different camps but over 1,100 options for those camps. People will continue to register over the summer all the way to the last week of camp.

Ms. Wetherald talked about our July 4th event that is approaching.

Ms. Wetherald stated that she attended the Lacrosse Fest at Western Reginal Park over this past weekend. There were over 1,500 participants in this event.

Ms. Wetherald reported that we are looking for alternative sites for programming. We are losing activity rooms to the school system. The schools include Veterans Elementary, Gorman Crossing Elementary, Forest Ridge Elementary, and Ellicott Mills Middle School. She stated that her team has met with the Head Start Program and they may have some space for us. At the school sites that we are losing, we will be using portables. Licensing will not allow us to do preschool licensed program in a portable but they will allow us to use it for before and aftercare.

Ms. Wetherald reported that there was a training held with the police on 2 different trainings. Part of CAPRA training includes getting training from the police every 3-5 years. Topics include office safety and office security.

Ms. Wetherald talked about the Heritage Training held last week. We visited several of the Heritage sites and learned about the history of Howard County.

Ms. Wetherald reported that North Laurel Community center is celebrating its 5th birthday.

Bureau of Administrative Services:

Mr. Milani reported that the Budget was approved. This included a couple of unfrozen positions and the Park Ranger positions.

Mr. Milani reported that he and Mr. Delorme are in the process of coming up with more office space at Headquarters. We are looking to expand some of the space in the Warehouse and the space that was previously occupied by Fleet. They are also looking at building a second floor over Fleet to bring back the Natural and Historic Resources Division and the Recreational Licensed Childcare Division.

Bureau of Capital Projects, Park Planning and Construction:

Mr. Delorme reported that Blandair Park is coming along. They have also paved the upper part of Oakland Mills Road. We are hoping to open up the upper end of Oakland Mills Road within several weeks so that they can start working on the roundabout.

Mr. Delorme reported that construction at Troy Park will begin in late July.

Mr. Delorme reported that Ms. Wetherald's team is putting together a focus group for the North Laurel Pool Project. He also reported that they are looking to get the same contractor that did the design of the original building.

Mr. Tracy asked if it will be an indoor or outdoor pool.

Mr. Delorme responded by saying indoor.

Mr. Tracy asked if the North Laurel Pool project is funded.

Mr. Delorme responded by stating that we have leftover money from the project.

Mr. Tracy asked if the pool size will be the same as the pool at the Roger Carter Community Center.

Mr. Delorme responded by saying yes.

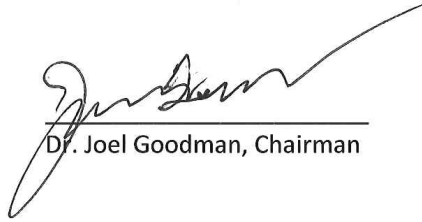
Mr. Delorme reported that we had our Grand Opening of the South Branch Skate Park. Mr. Delorme presented a slide show of pictures from the event.

Ms. Ramsey asked if anyone had any questions or comments.

Mr. Franklin would like to acknowledge and express his appreciation to the Natural and Historic Resource Division staff and Phil Norman for a great professional job in organizing the sharpshooting program under difficult circumstances. He stated that they are doing a great job.

Mr. Tracy made the Motion to close the meeting. Tom Franklin seconded the Motion.

Ms. Ramsey adjourned the meeting at 8:45 pm.



Dr. Joel Goodman, Chairman



John R. Byrd, Executive Secretary