

Wednesday, September 22, 2021- 7:00PM
Meadowbrook Athletic Complex
5001 Meadowbrook Lane
Ellicott City, MD 21043

Members Present:

Dave Grabowski, Chair, Ed Coleman, Co-Chair; Herman Charity; Tom Franklin, Jolene Mosley, Chloe McGeehan

Staff Present:

Michael Milani, Bureau Chief of Administrative Services, Nicola Morgal, Bureau Chief of Recreation; John S. Marshall, Bureau Chief of Parks; Robert T. Linz, Acting Bureau Chief of Capital Projects, Park Planning and Construction; Ryan Etter, Recording Secretary

Call to Order:

Mr. Grabowski called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Public Comments:

No Public Comments

Approval of July Minutes

Minutes were approved unanimously

Director's Report:

No Director's Report

Bureau of Parks:

- Believe we've arrived a solution for the Lightning Alerting System at Savage Park. Hope to have it operational by the end of October.
- Connection to the warning horns and strobes at Centennial Park to be installed in October.
- Health Department funding the remainder of the Department fountains with bottle fillers. When completed, (58) fountains will now be equipped with bottle fillers.
- My last day will be October 29th. I am retiring.

Bureau of Capital Projects, Park Planning and Construction:

- **Centennial Park North Playground** - should be completed by the end of the first week in October.
- **Savage Playground**- safety surface is being installed the end of this week, with total completion anticipated for the first week of October.
- **Haviland Mill Trail** - Trail work continues with boardwalk helical pier installation to begin the week of September 27th.
- **Atholton handball court** - renovations have started, completion is anticipated for the end of October.

Bureau of Recreation:

- 2 new Superintendents
 - Michael Blevins has been hired as the Superintendent of Recreation Services Division
 - Ruth Coleman has been hired as Superintendent of Recreational Licensed Childcare and Community Services Division
- Summer Camps
 - Record numbers for outdoor camps
- Gym floor at GJACC
 - Center will be closed while gym floor is being redone
- Staffing Concerns
 - Down 62 part time staff
- Fall Events
 - Truck or Treat on October 30th
 - Holiday Mart in December 4th
 - Encore Showcase on October 5th

Bureau of Administrative Services:

No Report

Old Business:

No Old Business

New Business:

No new business

2022 Land Preservation, Park & Recreation Plan (LPPRP) Presentation:

- Rhiannon Sinclair of Agency Landscaping & Planning presented strategy and progress for the Land Preservation, Park & Recreation Plan
 - Sharing early analysis findings
 - Brought in two new partners
 - Heritage Strategies
 - Natural Resources
 - Update to the 2017 Plan
 - Re-examine Goals
 - Have had 2 steering committees
 - Started in the Summer of 2021 and working through December of 2021
 - Will send to the state for feedback from State and public
 - 80% of people seek out recreation and parks services when deciding where to live
 - Quality Open Space
 - 3 State goals we need to satisfy
 - Resource Conservation
 - Agriculture Preservation
 - Recreation Open Space
 - Based on surveys, developing land is the top response from the public
 - Since 2017, many new plans have been put in place
 - Many involving flooding and climate
 - To make sure we take care of current resources and historic districts
 - There is currently 60,000 acres of Open Space in the county
 - Looking at a variety of facets when it comes to Natural resources
 - Very important to be part of the Chesapeake Watershed

- Biggest barriers to visiting parkland
 - Lack of time
 - Not conveniently located
- Open Space and facilities account for 25,000 acres
- 101 parks and 900 programs offered
- Terms of Access
 - In western Howard County
 - Services are provided within a 5 to 15-minute drive
 - In eastern Howard County
 - Services are provided within a 5-minute drive and has walkability
 - 100% of residents are within 3 miles of a park
 - 73% of residents are within a 5-minute drive to a park
- Barriers of access to programs
 - Not convenient times and locations
 - Not knowing
 - Affordability
 - During the pandemic many adapted to virtual programming
- Next steps
 - Looking at Operating Budget
 - Increased since 2020
 - Capital Budget
 - Decreased
 - Strengths
 - Therapeutic Recreation
 - Active aging
 - Summer camps
 - Special events
 - Where to improve
 - Trail maintenance
 - Childcare
 - Customer service
- Comments and questions
 - Chloe McGeehan asked if there are opportunities for students to share how the open space can be used


- Are in talks with school system to reach students
 - Camps
 - Before and After School Programs
- Jolene Mosley from Howard County Public School System asked if there is an optimal balance for agricultural preservation with the protein farming to make it more environmentally safe.
 - Looking more at a land preservation angle
 - More opportunity with community connections
- Jolene Mosley asked if they will be working with the RTA bus systems and safer bike routes
 - Will look at all alternatives
- Tom Franklin asked about ideas, opportunities about new actions with resource conservation
 - Very excited about landscaping through cultural landscape lens
 - History
 - Natural Resources
 - Water quality and stream health issues
 - No strategies yet
- Tom Franklin commented that we are faced with the impacts that the county is having on wildlife resources and losing natural habitats because of agricultural and urban development. Can have a larger strategy to promote the use of vegetation to promote conservation for wildlife and help with the problems of evasive species.
 - There has been a lot regarding this
 - Looking to clearly identify areas where these issues are present
- Chloe McGeehan asked a question about therapeutic recreation for events and programs. Who have you been in contact with, and how will these take form in open spaces?
 - Have had many conversations with staff regarding programming and events
 - Talks are still on going
 - Full recommendations will be part of next steps
- Laura Corcoran (12030 Old Frederick Road, Marriottsville, MD 21104) asked if Open Space areas are county owned or government owned?

- Some are county owned, state owned, and/or 3rd party owned such as Columbia Association
 - Still doing research
- Laura Corcoran asked about clarification with solar farming in regard to agriculture.
 - Definitely a possibility for the county to install
- Brent Loveless (9570 Whiskey Bottom Road, Laurel MD 20723) asked a question about the overlaps of what the school system does and what the Recreation & Parks does. There's parking level structures and different facilities, and housing. Why do we not have recommendations from other departments such as facilities for these different items? I do not know what we would need to have, as far as resources go, to mitigate the issues we have to legislate to get the solutions. Some of those guidelines and metrics if provided here would be helpful with this plan.
 - I will have to look into how this document and policies speak to each other.
 - You highlighted exactly what this plan is about with the many different pieces
- John Garnett (10420 White Court, Laurel MD 20723) asked about community pools
 - Just received the information today and will delve deeper into aquatics and community needs
 - Bob Linz commented that the new pool would fall under Department of Public Works. Pool was budgeted in previous capital projects budgets. Recreation and Parks does not have final say on that budget.
- Susan Garber (9100 Gorman Road, Laurel MD 20723) commented that she never understood why the pool would fall under Department of Public Works (DPW). Was the Roger Carter Community Center also DPW?
 - Bob Linz commented that since they are building the structure, it would fall under DPW.
- Susan Garber commented about the survey and how she missed it and was not involved.

- It was sent out randomly by mail and phone.
 - Will be made available for everyone to see.
- Susan Garber asked how much of the budget goes to land preservation and why is the plan Parks and Recreation when its Recreation and Parks in Howard County?
 - We will be looking at how the budget aligns.
 - The plan is called that because of the state guidelines.
- Laura Corcoran asked a question about the North Laurel Pool, and the senior center
 - Bob Linz clarified that he was just using an example of the great number of the public that showed up in favor of the senior center.
 - He suggests doing the same in favor of the pool.
- Jolene Mosley asked if a county member is paying attention to the budget and to the plans, and it recommends a pool. When does the community supposed to know to stand up and cheer and that's something they want or its already an understanding and part of the plan.
 - Mike Milani responded by saying that you should never quit fighting for something until you see construction starting.
 - Bob Linz responded by saying to speak out to your council member and to come out to all public meetings
 - Very important to stay engaged
- Chloe McGeehan asked what students can do to see what is happening in the county, especially those who cannot attend meetings?
 - This plan is a response to community needs and could think about recommendations and goals that are a valid form of communication and data sharing.
 - Because of COVID, many have gotten comfortable with virtual settings for meetings.
- Chloe asked how to keep the public updated and where the public can see updates and progress?
 - Hoping to schedule pop up events and do collaborations with the schools

- Creating more surveys on the website
- Brent Loveless commented that it would be valuable to see if the plans being proposed in the general plan match and what is the end result when they add additional points on the equity score, access to parks, etc.? Everything was labeled an activity center, as well as community centers and parks, what is going on there?
 - No answer yet on the labeling of the activity centers
 - With the first half of the question, currently in phase 1 and with next phase we will look at HoCo by Design and see how we respond to the future vision.
- Susan Garber commented that it is extremely critical that the plans work together with the numbers and the 30,000 additional houses.

Mr. Grabowski made the motion to adjourn the meeting. A second motion was made by Mr. Coleman. The meeting was adjourned at 8:20pm.



Dave Grabowski, Chairperson



Michael Milani, Acting Executive Secretary