

Recreation and Parks Advisory Board Meeting
Wednesday, December 15, 2021 - 7:00 p.m.
Department of Recreation and Parks
7120 Oakland Mills Road
Conference Room #1 & #2
Columbia, MD 21046

Members Present:

Dave Grabowski, Chair, Ed Coleman, Co-Chair; Herman Charity; Antonia Watts;
Tom Franklin; Chloe McGeehan

Staff Present:

Raul Delerme, Director; Michael H. Milani, Bureau Chief of Administrative Services; Nicola Morgal, Bureau Chief of Recreation; Robert E. 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 Hearing and Presentation of the FY 2023 Capital Budget:

Acting Bureau Chief of Capital Projects, Park Planning, and Construction, Mr. Linz gave a presentation for the proposed FY 2023 Capital Budget.

Public Testimony:

Public Present:

- Brent Loveless- 9570 Whiskey Bottom Road, Laurel, MD 20723
- Susan Garber- 9100 Gorman Rd., Laurel, MD 20723
- Peggy Gaegler- 9802 Davidge Dr., Columbia, MD 21044
- Carol White- 10783 McGregor Dr., Columbia, MD 21044
- Harold White- 10783 McGregor Dr. Columbia, MD 21044
- Ira Franckel- 3702 Dorsey Search, Ellicott City, MD 21042
- Joanne Griesser- 14813 Sapling Way, Glenelg, MD 21737
- Duane St. Clair- 9347 Gentle Way, Columbia, MD 21045

Brent Loveless, 9570 Whiskey Bottom Road, Laurel, MD 20723

"I am the current legislative head of the PTA council. Obviously, there is a lot of overlap with the parks budget and the school budget. The pathways to and from school and the playgrounds. The PTA is in full support of all of these. This morning I woke and saw a blog and it had my favorite four-letter word. APFO. Wouldn't it be nice if our parks service actually had APFO criteria to help pay for capital improvements, 9,826 acres and 328,000 people. That makes for a very measurable metric. That is .29 acres per person. If we actually had criteria in our APFO we could fund the expansion and capital needs. Enrollment is dropping temporarily, but it's going to grow. The next thing I wanted to point out was looking at the transfer tax. We have petitioned a lot for increases. It directly ties for site acquisition. I'm looking at the estimates and questioning. You have \$5.6 million in transfer tax for FY23, \$3.5 million, \$3.9 million, \$4.2 million, \$6.9 million. And then all of a sudden at the end it doubles to \$12.15 million. I'm wondering where you are getting the financials for this. Transfer tax comes from the sale of existing and new homes. Right now, for the county, 4,959 units have been sold as existing. 800-100 new homes have built this year. That's a 5:1 ratio. I do not know what they plan to occur in that fiscal year that will generate that many additional home sales. I ask that you and the school system and anyone who relies on this transfer tax, to really look at these estimates and question what is going in these assumptions. They will greatly affect your planning. So, going full circle, if you are not getting enough from transfer tax, I really recommend consider applying for APFO. Thank you for your time.

Susan Garber, 9100 Gorman Rd., Laurel, MD 20723

"I want to start by expressing my thanks for the good things that came to Savage in the last 12 months. Not the least of which were the addition of almost 5 acres of park land by saving Savage Mill Remainder and I was also quite excited for the \$250,000 for the improvements to the Savage Mill Trail and I am glad that money is going to be pursued. But I cannot help to point out that the funding came from State funds, Program Open Space and legislative. So, there is a hole when it comes to county funding in the Savage area. We are thrilled with the new playground. The families are really enjoying it. Couldn't help noticing the lady beside me was appalled by the condition of the stairways. I think that speaks to the fact that because of all the expansive projects we sometimes forget about the maintenance of the smaller ones. Of

all the million-dollar projects happening in the county, they are not happening in the southern eastern part of the county.

I know it's not a Rec and Parks budget item. We are still heartbroken, that our pool was snatched out from under us at North Laurel. At the Executive's budget meeting, since it was virtual meeting, there was no way to bring a large group to show support. But that support is very strong. I am very pleased to be working with Jason Thompson on the project to improve the trails and we hope that bridges to connect from middle Patuxent to one side of the other come to be. I love the expression 'If you're in a hole, stop digging.' I feel our county is in a tight budget situation. I worry when Rec and Parks is asked to take on additional acres, with the expectation to continue to develop with athletic fields. You mentioned that the operating costs of woodland and natural areas are absorbed in current operating budgets, whereas developed park areas are maintained at an average cost of \$3,900 per acre. So, I would like to suggest one way to stop digging holes, is instead to expand the parkland acquisition program but not with more courts etc., but instead to focus on targeted ecological areas like in Savage. Those areas are what Program Open Space money is expected to be paid for. I'd like to see Parks get a priority, as opposed to active Recreation. I think COVID has proven how we need a place to be with nature and not be crowded. It will help with mental health and climate change. Thank you.

Mr. Grabowski followed up "Of our total Park property, how much is in active recreation? It was at 30%."

Mr. Delorme "Its around 30% of park projects into active uses. If you look at Blandair Park, lower side is 100 acres developed. The northern side is 200 acres and will mostly be passive use."

Susan Garber responded "That is wonderful news. Of the acres that is Open Space, how much of that is the 'scraps' development?"

Mr. Delorme responded "When I first started with the county, I was doing the sub-division review process. During this process we connected a lot of open space parcels that created greenways throughout the county."

Joanne Griesser, 14813 Sapling Way, Glenelg, MD 21737

"I am the President of the Howard County Pickleball Association. I would like to thank Recreation and Parks staff for increasing our facilities and opportunities for playing this year. The free play days encouraged a lot of new players. All classes are well attended. The 55-plus tournament was a successful collaboration and effort between our organization and yours. Also, we are very thankful for Krista. She has been very responsive. She answers all of our inquiries. She has tuned us in to all the future plans.

The Howard County Pickleball Association has been active for 5 years. We started in a tiny conference room over the YMCA gym. There were about 20 of us. We had two simple goals in mind: play and promote pickleball. Our membership has grown to over 600 active members. We add new members every week. While I am advocating for our association, we are advocating for our non-members as well. Ad Hoc groups are popping up all over the county. I also participate in ad hoc group of about 60 people. Pickleball is mainstream. It has grown from few players drawing lines in the parking lot to being showcased on Good Morning America. It is the fastest growing sport in America today.

This is a great sport that encourages camaraderie and good sportsmanship and is a wonderful way to get exercise for young and old people. It meets the Healthy Howard agenda. Our membership includes, longtime residents, such as myself. Four decades in the county, my husband and I raised our son here and we plan to retire here. Many association members have similar stories. We are here because of the amenities the county has to offer. We plan on staying here, aging in place, because of these amenities. Our association wants to be part of the amenities the county has to offer. To help support the youth programs, our organization has donated equipment to Howard County schools. We have volunteers who are willing to be trained to coach after school programs if Howard County had the facilities. We are developing playbooks we will share with you that will contain rules, drills, and play tips for each level of play, from novice to advanced.

In addition, we contribute in other ways. We organize Food Drives for the Howard County Food Bank. This year, we donated hundreds of pounds of food, and several thousand dollars. We hosted a tournament over the Thanksgiving

holiday that raised \$2,100 for Grassroots. Unfortunately, we had to use a Baltimore County facility to accomplish this. There is no facility in Howard County. We only have two dedicated courts. We do not have dedicated covered or indoor facilities. There is one set of courts at Rockburn with lights, but we share with basketball. We get a few hours a week in the gyms and very few hours in the evenings for those who work during the day. Once the weather gets too cold or the snow gets too deep, we have very few places to play.

We are respectfully requesting that you consider funding for permanent courts in parks like Blandair, Western Regional and Atholton. Dedicated courts so we are not at odds with basketball and tennis players. We have submitted drawings to Jason and Krista for a dedicated facility that we saw in Florida and would hope to be considered during the planning phase and would like to work together. We are asking for more dual use courts: Centennial, Savage, Atholton, Warfield Pond, and Blandair. This seems like a big ask, but the cost to line one pickleball court on an existing tennis court is only \$500. The association would be willing to cost sharing some of these. The additional dual courts could be considered as great venue for tournaments. The county would benefit from having 16 courts in one location. That kind of availability sets up Howard County to host regional tournaments This would create tourist dollars. If our group could raise \$2,100 with local talent in 4 hours, imagine the amount of money we could raise with tournaments over 3 days. Between sponsors and admission fees, the county would see significant profits. This does not include the tourist dollars from hotels, restaurants, and entertainment venues. If you do begin to create facilities to host tournaments, people will spend their money in other counties. Montgomery and Anne Arundel are ahead of Howard in their support of this support.

Finally, we are asking for a dedicated indoor or lighted court for night play and inclement weather. Pickleball could be played year-round. We know this is a big ask, but funding generated from tournaments could be help subsidize the project. We hope you will consider our request. Thank you.”

There was a question about lining tennis courts to make them dual purpose. The department will look into this and see if this is feasible.

Mr. Delorme responded to the Pickleball association, "May not have a 16-court venue at one location but can have an 8-court venue close enough or another 8-court venue to do a tournament. Would not want a tournament at Blandair, as Blandair is already packed with tournaments year-round for other sports. Western Regional Park would be a possible location, as there are already 8 courts, and they are resurfacing the tennis courts in addition to creating more pickleball courts. Lights would also be a possibility there and would need the support of the Pickleball association to help secure funding for it."

Brent Loveless had a follow-up comment "I see a lot of tennis courts at the school sites with trailers sitting on them. If we clear up the trailers, then we would have a lot of good courts under the temporary structures."

Approval of October Minutes:

Minutes were approved unanimously

Director's Report:

- Land Preservation Parks & Recreation Plan (LPPRP) will be submitted by the end of the month
- Park staff-built Ellicott City Holiday tree at welcome center as well as the boxes for trees in Elkridge
- Toys for Tots at Recreation and Parks Headquarters this weekend
- COVID testing bus continues to be at headquarters every Thursday

Bureau of Parks: (Presented by Bob Linz and Mike Milani):

- Zone 1 had 30 volunteers for National Volunteer day at Savage Park on November 20th
- Zone 2 Centennial North Stream Restoration project is underway
- Benches at Meadowbrook Park have been repaired
- Zone 3 a lot of landscape maintenance in November
- Zone 4 worked on new trail sections at Rockburn Branch and completed Disc Golf entrance sign
- Zone 5 has been working on landscaping at Blandair Park Playground
- Last weddings of the season at Belmont Manor and Historic Park were in November
- 3 new park maintenance workers have been hired

- Planted over 7,500 trees so far for Curb to Trees program
- 8 managed hunts so far, and harvested 77 deer
- All in a Day's Work competition was held in November
 - Glen Ferguson was the Top Dog in the competition

Bureau of Capital Projects, Park Planning and Construction:

- **Haviland Mill Trail-** Trail work continues. Boardwalk framing and decking is well underway. HTI has found a certified stone contractor that should be able to install the stone abutment walls.
- **Blandair Park-** The replacement of field #1 artificial turf has started. The contractor is currently removing the existing turf fabric and will be preparing for the new turf installation in the month of February. New goal posts will be installed during this project.
- **Symphony Woods Park Plateau-** We are awaiting redline instructions for Jason Thompson to complete the redline and apply for the grading permit. We will be obtaining proposals for the work in the month of January. The work will be completed prior to the wine festival.
- **Centennial Park South Lower Area-** The contractor has completed a large portion of the excavation and lowering of utilities has been completed. The engineered block delivery is expected this week. We have received 3 proposals for replacing the upper decking, railings and seating, with one contractor coming in at budget. This work will begin this winter with completion anticipated this spring.
- **Waverly Mansion-** We await MHT's second response on the improvement application. We are reaching out to BGE about the parking lot light pole and electric pole relocation requests. Tim is obtaining proposals for all work and supplies in preparation for application approval.
- **Barnard Fort House-** The design has been submitted to the Historic Commission for their review.
- **Patapsco Female Institute Historic Park-** Jason Thompson is working with the Bureau of Facilities to set up a meeting with Department of Licenses and Permit to discuss the current design before forwarding to MHT.
- **Belmont Station Bridge-** We await the paving of the approaches.
- **Land Preservation Parks & Recreation Plan-** The Plan survey has been promoted through social media, signs in all parks and in-person engagement with the consultants at Centennial Park. The Steering

Committee is meeting to develop vision, chapters and goals for the draft due December 31, 2021.

- **Centennial Park East Area-** Ecotone has developed and submitted the Environmental Concept Plan to Department of Planning and Zoning for review and approval.
- **Dugout Covers-** Hammond Park dugout covers, and bench pads have been completed. The ADA pathway will be constructed after the Belmont Station bridge aprons. Schooley Mill Park and Cedar Lane Park installations will follow.
- **Blandair Park-** Phase 6 is currently in design through WRA. Jason Thompson coordinated a Teams meeting between Spohn Ranch and the local skaters to review and give input on the current concept design. The meeting went well with at least 12 participates relaying valuable design information.
- **Centennial Park Pavilion Renovations-** Heritage Construction continues to work on siding replacement at pavilion E. We have approved proposals for residing Pavilions D and H with Hardie Board siding this winter. The completion date for both projects is April 30, 2022.
- **Cradlerock Cricket Pitch-** Use of the Cradlerock site has been approved by Howard County Public School System. Construction of the new cricket pitch will begin in January and completion is anticipated by May1, 2022.
- **Fleet-** Dawn Poholsky has been dealing with Kubota recalls, SAP work and fleet administrative tasks. She is also working with Fleet to verify vehicle purchases to match with replacements and equipment purchase tracking.
- **GIS & Infrastructure Support-** Dawn has been working on Quality Control of the departments Trails GIS layer mapping, along with updating kiosk and website maps and Open Space record mapping and data management.
- **Bond Bills-** Bryan Moody presented 6 proposed State Bond Bills to the Howard County Delegation for consideration in the 2022 legislative session.
- **Department of Natural Resources Program Open Space (POS) -** The FY22 Annual Program for POS has been reviewed and approved by MD DNR and MDP. Bryan Moody submitted project review forms to MHT for the Savage Mill Trail grant and HTCC 2021 Bond Bill.
- **Leadership Training-** Capital Project staff gave presentations on the Troy Park POS conversion and Blandair Park Laura's Place Playground to the Leadership Premiere Howard County participants last month.
- **Holiday Lighting-** Heritage Construction staff assisted with constructing 2 Christmas tree box bases and a leveling base at Tourism, along with the

purchase/installation of lights for the trees. They coordinated the Menorah move to the Log Cabin site with Zone 5, along with the purchase and installation of new candles for all Recreation and Parks historic building sites in Ellicott City.

- **Walden Woods-** Heritage Construction installed a concrete pad and bench along the path at Walden Woods.

Bureau of Recreation:

- Howard County Public School System cancelled all programs in schools until January 15.
 - Before and Aftercare will still be held
- We have reached 60% of Pre-COVID numbers for programs in the fall.
- Wine in the Woods is scheduled for May 21 and 22, 2022
 - Deadline has been extended for vendors, crafters, and wineries
- Lifelong Learning Day was held on December 14, 2021
 - Had many demonstrations and tours
- Reindeer Games
 - Free Community Engagement event at Roger Carter Community Center
- No Boundaries put on production of Oklahoma
 - No audience, was filmed instead due to pandemic
- RLC staffing issues
 - Now only 45-50 staff short
 - 100 children have been removed from waiting list
- CAPRA accreditation will be submitted on January 10, 2022
 - Visit will be end of March
- Information page for Teens has been added to the website

Bureau of Administrative Services:

- KRONOS payroll system has been hacked
 - Going back to paper system until fixed
- Timbers at Troy Golf continues to do great with revenue
- Operating Budget Process
 - Fixed costs will increase
- There are currently 29 full time vacancies and 6 frozen vacancies.

- Minimum wage will increase to \$15
 - \$1.4 million hit to the budget

Student Member Update:

- Working with Jamie Ponton for Suicide Prevention 5k
 - Will be in April at Meadowbrook Park

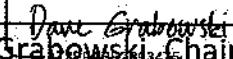
Old Business:

No Old Business

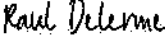
New Business:

- Harriet Tubman Building will now open on March 29, 2022.
 - Supply chain issues postponed February opening

Mr. Grabowski made the motion to adjourn the meeting. A second motion was made by Mr. Coleman. The meeting was adjourned at 8:56 pm.

DocuSigned by:


Dave Grabowski, Chairperson

DocuSigned by:


Raul Delorme, Executive Secretary