

Recreation and Parks Advisory Board Meeting
January 16, 2016
Department of Recreation and Parks Headquarters
Conference Room #1
7120 Oakland Mills Road
Columbia, MD 21046

Members Present:

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

Members Absent:

Dr. Joel Goodman, Chair.

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; Michael Milani, Chief, Bureau of Administrative Services; and Barbara Anderson, Recording Secretary.

Approval of Minutes:

As there was not a quorum present at the December meeting, the November minutes were also considered for approval. Mr. Brown made a Motion to approve the November minutes as written. Mr. Santos seconded the Motion.

Mr. Tracy made a Motion to approve the December minutes as written. Mr. Franklin seconded the Motion.

Director's Report:

Mr. Byrd had emailed some complimentary correspondence regarding Department staff.

His other items will be addressed under Old Business and New Business.

Bureau of Parks:

Mr. Marshall reported that staff members are working on the Department's Pesticide Policy. They are trying to limit the types of pesticides used and the exceptions to where they will use them.

Mr. Byrd added that Calvin Ball was going to introduce legislation to prohibit use of neonicotinoids in the County. The Department was asked to review the proposal. The Department then wrote up a draft policy to address his concerns. As part of that process, County Administration met with Mr. Ball today. He agreed that the issue could be addressed with policy. A draft policy has been created and will be shared with the Board. Environmental organizations have been brought in to review the policy and make sure all of the points are being considered with regards to neonicotinoids as well as other pesticides. The issue brings up a broader question about the Columbia Association, the School System, and Public Works. It's a bigger discussion than just parkland. The draft policy currently addresses only Recreation and Parks.

Prior to the next meeting, Mr. Byrd will send out the draft policy for members' review. Then the Department will reach out to other organizations such as the Bird Club, Sierra Club, and any other partners.

Mr. Tracy asked if the other organizations will have the same question regarding the policy covering such a small part of the County.

Mr. Byrd responded that he assumes everyone using pesticides is following the MD and EPA regulations for restricted use and management.

Mr. Marshall continued that the Department is also trying to regulate what contractors can use on sites.

Ms. Vaillancourt asked if Recreation and Parks policy can be enforceable on other organizations.

Mr. Byrd responded that Department regulation cannot be imposed on anyone else. Other organizations could be brought in to try and have a consistent approach, but they may have a different philosophy on restricted use. He thinks it may be best to focus on what the Department can control and leave it at that.

Mr. Marshall added that Montgomery County has a broad policy that covers the entire county. Even if there is not a broader County plan here, it is worth it for the Department to develop its own policy and integrated pest management plan. Best practices have been followed for years. Now it's just a matter of putting it to paper and taking a closer look at the products being used.

Mr. Marshall stated that any use of neonicotinoids in the County is very targeted and only used on trees that are non-pollinators.

Mr. Franklin asked if the NRPA has a model policy.

Mr. Marshall answered that several different pest management policies have been reviewed.

Mr. Marshall continued that the staff at MPEA has begun the early winter meadow mowing in the woodcock habitat management areas.

Construction continues at Centennial Lake. After the inspection, it looks like the dam structure will just need cleaning and a few structural adjustments. Weather permitting, construction could be done by the end of February and the Lake level will start to rise again.

Also at Centennial, the restrooms are out of commission until the middle of February as crews complete the water and sewer installation.

At Belmont Manor and Historic Park, the spring programming is done. MHT has conditionally approved the alterations requested for the tent pad, ADA walkway and parking surface improvements. Staff members are working with Recreation on programming at the site. The new kitchen is nearly completed. All of the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday dates for 2016 are booked, and almost all of the prime dates in 2017 are already booked. A new fee schedule goes into effect on July 1, 2017.

The Deer Management Program continues to move forward. The Department is looking to implementing a GPS collar tracking study but the program will likely be pushed off until next year. Total take this season so far is 119 for the managed

hunts and 116 for the sharpshooting operations. That does not include the numbers from Monday the 18th. The Program will continue until the first week in March.

Staff members at the Robinson Nature Center are working with Amanda Hoff from the Howard County Department of Tourism to create a package offering for hotels in the area.

The Celebration of Partners in Parks will be held at Robinson Nature Center this year. The Celebration will alternate between Belmont and RNC each year. It will be an evening event in November.

Special event letters have been mailed out to non-profit organizations in preparation for the 2016 special events held throughout the various parks. The deadline to return the request forms to the Department was January 15th. Only about 10% of the forms have been returned.

The Department is very involved in Emergency Management in the County. Mr. Marshall has been in briefings concerning the weekend storm. It is expected to be a significant event beginning late Friday afternoon and continuing into Sunday morning. There could be accumulations of 1-2" of snow per hour. Best case scenario is 12-14" snow but the more likely scenario is 16-24" snow. Worst case scenario is 3 ft.

The Department will also be involved with transporting staff, hospital staff, and dialysis patients depending on the length of the event. Once 10" of snow is on the road, 4 wheel drive vehicles cannot push through that. A request has been put into the National Guard for two humvee units (that's four humvees). He is hoping to have them by 7:00 pm Friday. The Department will no longer be transporting staff to Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore.

Mr. Franklin asked how funds are appropriated for emergency operations.

Mr. Marshall responded that some funds could come from FEMA if this becomes a historic event. The overtime, except for what is provided for Public Works, comes out of the Department budget.

Bureau of Capital Projects, Park Planning and Construction:

Mr. Delorme reported that he and Mr. Byrd met with the County Executive and staff yesterday to present the FY2017 Budget. The meeting went well and the Executive agreed with what was in the budget.

Mr. Byrd added that funding to add the North Laurel Pool Project to FY2018 or FY2019 could be considered. The remainder of the budget should remain intact.

Mr. Delorme stated that Phase II construction at Troy will begin in a few weeks.

Blandair Phase II is being constructed now. Phase III will go out to construction in the fall.

The kitchen at Belmont is complete and awaiting use and occupancy permit. A plan for the kitchen use needs to be completed for the Health Department.

The road at Belmont has been paved from the bridge up to the manor.

Blandair construction has slowed a bit due to weather.

Bureau of Recreation:

Ms. Wetherald distributed the new Camp Brochure to members of the Board. The goal is to have 20% new programs over an entire year. Some of the new camps include: Sensory Friendly Little Nature Explorer Mini Camp; Mini Scholars; Summer Blast; a mini version of Kids on Tour; a Disney Pixar dance camp; Lego camps; Coding for Kids; and Sciensational Space 9 Robot.

The Department is seeking out sponsorships for the 2016 Summer Concert Series.

A few of the Winter programs for adults that are going really well include: Taste of India Cooking; Bike Maintenance; Knife Skills with Veggies and Fruit; Mingle Mingle with International School of Protocol; Pride of the Chesapeake Cooking Class; Bollywood Dancing; Maryland Crab Classics Cooking Class; Musical Muses Community Show Choir; Urban Line Dancing; Everyday Spanish; and Ready Set Paint.

At Gary J. Arthur, personal training is being increased for customers by reformatting and rebranding personal training sessions.

The Holiday Mart was attended by over 2500 people and featured 142 crafters. The event brought in a record high net revenue of \$20,000. A few changes were made this year including a hot cocoa bar, horse-drawn carriage rides, and a Children's craft corner conducted by Cindy Ochs. Ms. Ochs also used the opportunity to promote pre-school programs. Wegman's was a sponsor of the event and donated 1500 free tote bags as well as \$200 towards supplies for the cocoa bar.

North Laurel Community Center is getting ready for the Mommy Son Valentine Dance, the Spring Egg Hunt, and the Bunny Tracks event.

The Lego Bricks4Kidz Winter Break Camp went really well. There were 21 kids enrolled in the Sciensational Workshop and 17 kids in the Chess Winter Break Camp. Mommy & Me Fun Day with Thomas the Tank Engine was also well attended.

In the Fall 2015 Season, there were over 2500 kids just in the preschool and youth non-sport activities.

There is a volunteer work enclave that meets at the North Laurel Community Center every Tuesday from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm. They stuff envelopes and do other projects. That group put in 28.5 total hours for December.

The Community Knitting Group Holiday Luncheon was held on Wednesday, December 2nd with approximately 20 members in attendance. In 2015, they made 1370 handmade items that were donated to 27 organizations in support of the people of Howard County and surrounding communities.

Volunteer hours for 2015 totaled 9,268 and included: Junior Counselors (8,196), Community Knitting & Crocheting Group (504), Earth Family Volunteer Day (250), Work Enclave (180), Earth Day (98), Camp Day (27) and Cindy Ochs event (12.5).

The Coaches' Registry in Sport and Adventure Services reached 1,000 members during the holiday week and is already up to 1200. It should be up to 1600 in the next several months.

Mr. Tracy asked if the registry was just for Department programs or everyone's sports.

Ms. Wetherald responded that the registry is for all Department programs and any other organizations that want to come in and do it with the Department. There are some cooperative groups such as EYO.

There were two inspections – one at Pointers Run RLC and one at Triadelphia Ridge ELC. There were zero non-compliance issues.

It has been a struggle to maintain the needed levels of participation in the Can-Teen Program. The Patapsco Middle School Can-Teen Club had to be closed due to low enrollment. The students left at that program had companions and were moved to the Hollifield Station RLC. The Department is going to try a few changes to the program but the need for after school care at the middle school level is not being demonstrated strongly.

Bureau of Administrative Services:

Mr. Milani reported that he and his staff are currently working on the operation budget. The Self Sustaining Fund has been renamed the Recreation and Parks Fund, because it truly was not self-sustaining. Audits have been completed by the County Council on the Recreation and Park Fund and the Forest Conservation Fund. Both audits have gone well. Two positions will hopefully be moved out of the Forest Conservation Fund and into the General Fund. There will need to be changes made to the Code to allow some of the funds from Forest Conservation to go to the General Fund. The budget is flat but is not expected to be cut. The auditors have been very helpful in identifying expenses that should actually be coming out of the General Fund.

Staff members are working on a comprehensive review of fees and charges to see if there are changes that should be made. The fee to rent sports fields will be increasing next year.

Ms. Vaillancourt stated that she has heard a complaint regarding the amount of field time Recreation and Parks is given to the high schools.

Mr. Milani responded that the schools get priority for use weekdays until 6:00 pm. In his view, the turf fields have been a great deal for the community. When the stadium fields were grass, schools could only use those fields for games. The schools are getting much more usage out of the fields than they did when the fields were grass. Every team is given the opportunity to practice on the turf field. Schools are also given priority to rent the fields on the weekends at a lower rate.

Ms. Vaillancourt asked if there was a chart showing who is using the fields and when.

Mr. Milani stated that there is a chart but only the schools are using the fields weekdays until 6:00 pm.

Ms. Vaillancourt asked if any activities were being conducted outside of what the agreement states.

Mr. Milani responded that the Department has made the effort to make the school system the first renter. Saturday mornings have been blocked out in case schools want to hold practices on those days. That is outside of the agreement. Overall, the agreement is working very well.

Ms. Wetherald added that the agreement is evaluated every year and it has really been a non-issue.

Mr. Byrd stated that he would be happy to discuss the issue with the individual.

Old Business:

Mr. Byrd reported that the consultant bid for the Comprehensive Plan has been awarded to Sasaki out of Boston. Their presentation was very impressive, and they connected well with the group. He will probably bring them in to meet the Advisory Board and plans to use this venue as a public forum for some of the process. If any Board members would like to be part of the review team when the survey vehicle and questions are being discussed, please let Mr. Byrd know.

Mr. Byrd reported that the Department had been approached several months ago by the new development at Miller Library for an access pathway for the new senior housing project. Paul Walsky from Mr. Delorme's division has sent letters out to the HOA communities of Font Hill, Dorsey Hall and Grey Rock asking them to put information out in their newsletters. He is also soliciting a survey from each community that can be brought back to the Department and to the Board.

Mr. Delorme and Mr. Walsky will also attend the community meetings to answer any questions.

Mr. Byrd stated that there was not a quorum present at the Capital Budget meeting in December.

Ms. Vaillancourt made a Motion to approve the FY17 Capital Budget.

Mr. Tracy seconded the Motion.

The Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Tracy asked if Mr. Byrd had looked at the LED lights mentioned in the December meeting.

Mr. Byrd responded that the LED lights are about twice as much as the current lights. The technology is improving but he doesn't think it's ready yet. The warranty on the LED's is only 10 years. The warranty on the current lights is 25 years. It is unknown how long the LED circuit board will last which is the concern.

Mr. Byrd reported that the Department is trying to establish a Maryland Environmental Trust Easement at Belmont so that development rights can be sold. After almost two years, they are close to an agreement. Once a mutual agreement has been reached, it will be shared with the residents living around Belmont. He will present at the MET Board in February, Department of Public Works in March and then finally the County Council to get the long term disposition of the property.

Ms. Vaillancourt asked what type of development rights are being considered.

Mr. Byrd responded that there are 75 development rights available for residential development.

Mr. Marshall added that it could be as much as \$3.5 mil to the County.

Ms. Vaillancourt asked if the neighbors were aware of the plan to sell development rights.

Mr. Byrd responded that the neighbors are aware of the development rights. The Department has been very transparent with the neighbors. In general, the neighbors have been satisfied and happy with what the Department is doing.

New Business:

Mr. Santos reported that the Bicycle Master Plan is coming up for review soon before the County Council. The Bicycle Plan will be implemented in two ways. One will be roadway improvements. Roads will either be expanded or a bike lane will be made on an existing road or signage will be installed informing drivers to share the road. Those changes will be handled by Public Works. Second will be pathways. They may be handled by Recreation and Parks at some point.

A concern of the Planning Board is that there is no standardized way to hold a public meeting. There is a process at the Recreation and Parks Board and at the Public Works Board, but with respect to the bicycle improvements, there is no standard. There needs to be a uniform way to involve the public in the approval process.

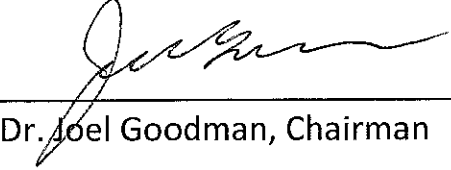
Mr. Franklin asked if the Park app is out.

Mr. Marshall replied that the app is on a soft launch right now. It is still being tweaked a bit, but it is planned to be launched in the spring. It is available for both iPhone and Android.

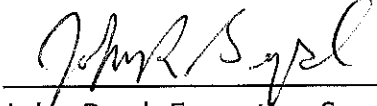
Mr. Tracy made a Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Santos seconded the Motion.

There being no further discussion, Ms. Ramsey adjourned the meeting at 8:15 pm.



Dr. Joel Goodman, Chairman



John Byrd, Executive Secretary