

Recreation and Parks Advisory Board Meeting
March 16, 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; William Santos; Michael Smith; and Dan Tracy.

Members Absent:

Joanne Kiebler; Tom Franklin; Sylvia Ramsey; and Cindy Vaillancourt.

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, Chief, Bureau of Administrative Services; Lauren Davis, Assistant to Ms. Wetherald; and Barbara Anderson, Recording Secretary.

Approval of Minutes:

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

Mr. Santos made a Motion to approve the February minutes as written. Mr. Tracy seconded. The Motion passed unanimously.

Director's Report:

Mr. Byrd reported that Michael Smith will graduate in May. His last meeting could be in May or June.

Mr. Byrd has initiated the search for a new student member through the Leadership Howard County organization. He has one interested student so far. The position is still open.

Mr. Smith asked about the application process for those students that may be interested.

Mr. Byrd responded that interested students should send an email of interest either to him or to Dr. Goodman. It would then be forwarded to the County Executive's office.

Mr. Byrd reported that Barbara Anderson will also be moving on, and Lauren Davis will be replacing her as Recording Secretary next month.

Mr. Byrd forwarded several complimentary letters to the Board about the Prisms Program. The County Executive is interested in expanding services for people with disabilities. More money has been requested for such services in the FY17 Budget.

Dr. Goodman asked if the Prisms Program has been modeled after another program.

Ms. Wetherald responded that Prisms was created in the fall and incorporates a Montessori method of working with adults with Alzheimer's. The program has already doubled. Cathy Vigus went to Texas to be trained and then trained members of her staff.

Mr. Tracy asked how many times a week the participants meet.

Ms. Wetherald replied that they meet two times per week. Before this program, these folks would have been at home. They would not have been able to participate in other senior programs because of the severity of their Alzheimer's.

Dr. Goodman stated that in one of the letters, it was very nice to see how the program gives respite to the caregivers.

Bureau of Parks:

Mr. Marshall reported that the READY program will be utilized by the Department to maintain many of the bio-retention areas in the parks beginning July 1st. The program has been developed around getting high school, college students and others a great experience working with the environment. READY has been

working under the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay but is applying for non-profit status.

Mr. Marshall reported that a lot of work is being done in the formal garden at Belmont. Staff members are installing sod where the boxwood beds were. Most of the boxwoods died off this year, and they will not be replaced this spring. Twelve volunteers have signed up to help in the formal garden. The Department is still looking for someone to manage those volunteers.

Dr. Goodman asked if that would be a volunteer manager or an in-house manager.

Mr. Marshall replied that it had not yet been decided.

Mr. Marshall reported that, with help from Raul's staff, renovations at the Heritage Orientation Center are being completed. The Center will re-open this spring to interpret the site's recognition on the National Park Service's Network to Freedom Trail. This building was the County's first Court Records Building.

Dr. Goodman asked if the recognition came with any funding.

Mr. Marshall replied that it did not.

Beginning July 1, 2016, the Department will be adding twelve new full time Park Ranger positions. This will help with retention and will help to build a management system for the rangers.

Mr. Marshall distributed GreenFest reminders to the Board. The event will take place on Saturday, April 16th from 10 am to 4 pm at Howard Community College.

Mr. Marshall reported that after 23 years with the Department, Neal Hollingshead is leaving to take a position with M-NCPPC in the Montgomery County Park system.

On the first nice weekend of the season, Centennial Park was overwhelmed with visitors and had to be closed.

Mr. Byrd added that there has been a plan in place to widen Route 108 from Woodland Road to Centennial Lane for years.

Mr. Delorme stated that intersection improvements are planned at the light.

At Belmont, the new tent will be going up next week. The Aqua Pond opened today, and the grounds are looking good. About 86 weddings are planned for this season. All of the Teas and Paranormal events are sold out. The new kitchen is up and running.

Mr. Marshall reported that staff members are making preparations for spring programs and maintenance. It's a very busy time.

And lastly, the Department of Environmental Services will be kicking off a campaign to provide free paper yard trim bags to County residents. There will be pick up points at Roger Carter Community Center, North Laurel Community Center, and the Robinson Nature Center.

Bureau of Capital Projects, Park Planning and Construction:

Mr. Delorme reported on the Land Preservation Recreation and Parks Plan (Comp Plan). The Department had a great kickoff phone meeting with Sasaki Associates. There is now a timeline for the project. There will be an in-person kickoff meeting and park tour with Sasaki and the Bureau Chiefs on March 29th. Focus groups have been created and are made up of the superintendents from each Bureau. Those focus groups will meet separately at Belmont Manor and Historic Park on March 30th.

Several members of the Advisory Board will also be included in the last focus group meeting. Questions will be sent out in advance to those participating in the focus groups. On April 7th, they will meet with programmers and members of the marketing team. Sasaki will also meet with them as a group.

Sasaki will have a table at GreenFest and will gather public input as much as they can. They will use all of the information to create a survey which will be distributed to county residents.

Mr. Delorme reported that the Cedar Lane Park turf replacement field was completed today. Two more turf fields are to be replaced at Western Regional Park. It has been decided that future replacements will be done during the summer.

Mr. Brown asked about the life cycle of a turf field.

Mr. Delorme replied that it has been about 10 years. He is hoping to get more than 10 years out of the high school fields as they aren't used as much as the park fields.

The Robinson Nature Center storage building is going well. It should be complete by mid-April.

The skate project at South Branch Park is now moving along. They have not been able to pour concrete in the cold weather.

The County Executive has announced that he wants to start planning the North Laurel swimming pool. There is money in the project that can be used for the planning process. The Department will create a focus group to help with planning like they did when the Center was built. The pool is expected to be indoor or possibly indoor/outdoor. Space at the site is very limited.

Mr. Tracy asked how much they estimated the project will cost.

Mr. Delorme responded that it could be about \$15 mil.

The Middle Patuxent Environmental Area project is out to bid. Bid deadline will be extended through April 6th. It usually takes about a month or so to get a contract going.

Dr. Goodman asked if Mr. Delorme is concerned about any new neighbors complaining.

Mr. Delorme responded that he was not worried.

Mr. Tracy asked what was being constructed.

Mr. Delorme stated that they are building a small restroom facility off of Trotter Road, a storage building with two office spaces, and a bus turnaround. It's a small project but will greatly enhance the site and programming for Robinson Nature Center.

Mr. Delorme reported that they issued the Notice to Proceed for the design of the irrigation system at Timbers at Troy Golf Course. It will be an eight week design process. Once that is completed, it will go out to bid for the cart paths, bunkers, and irrigation together. He expects a contractor on board by July or August.

Mr. Byrd added that it's a tight timeline. The work needs to be at least 95% done before Kemper Sports Management, Inc. signs the new lease document. The lease is intended to go into effect January 1, 2017. The draft lease has been sent to Kemper Sports Management, Inc. for review. He hopes to have it before the County Council in September for approval.

Mr. Byrd continued that Kemper Sports Management, Inc. will be expected to pay off the remaining debt on the course which will be about \$3.5 mil. They will take on all operating costs and up to \$35,000 a year in capital improvement costs. It's a thirty year lease. After this work is completed, the County will no longer have a line item in the operating budget for Timbers at Troy Golf Course.

Mr. Byrd stated that they were hopeful that the easement at Belmont would be discussed at the Maryland Environmental Trust board meeting two weeks ago. Unfortunately, the Board decided to table the item for that night. The Department will try again on April 4th to get approval. The easement would allow the Department to sell the development rights off the property.

Bureau of Recreation:

Ms. Wetherald reported that there are many Easter egg hunts planned in the County for this weekend including one in the pool at the Roger Carter Community Center.

Ms. Wetherald distributed packs of promotional note cards to the Board members.

There was a county wide meeting held last Thursday. Dave Brown was there speaking on behalf of the Board of Education. Allan Harden and Mike Milani spoke on behalf of how the Department permits and orchestrates sports programs. Representatives from about thirty different local sports groups were also in attendance. Many topics were discussed in an effort to better work together. The meeting was moderated by David Lee from the County Executive's Office.

Ms. Wetherald added that there were some concerns expressed regarding how permits were issued. She will continue to work with that group. All in all, it was a successful meeting and very well attended.

Ms. Wetherald added that Mr. Milani meets yearly with all of the organizations that are active users of Department permits to keep them up to date.

Mr. Brown stated that he thought 90% of the feedback regarding field sharing and distribution was very positive and supportive. He felt the overwhelming theme was that the County needs more field space especially full sized baseball fields.

Dr. Goodman asked if there was an update on Blandair Park.

Mr. Delorme stated that construction continues at the Park and on Route 175.

Ms. Wetherald continued that KidsFest is coming up on March 26th at Meadowbrook Athletic Center. Attendance has been about 1500 in the past.

Staff participated in a CAPRA training. It was a four hour training covering overall aspects of CAPRA as well as how to be an agency visitor. The accreditation team will probably be here next March.

One of the ways in which the Department complies with CAPRA is by using a Trends Analysis Plan to assist with programming. They choose six to nine areas to focus on such as surveys, needs assessments, professional associations, supplier catalogs, and demographics.

Mr. Marshall added that there is now a recycling container next to every trash container in all of the County parks.

Bureau of Administrative Services:

Mr. Milani reported that he and his staff have completed a fee study. They have identified many areas where fees can be increased to help with revenue. New fees will go into effect on July 1st. Field fees, pavilion fees, programming fees, Belmont fees, and some of the heritage programming fees will all be increasing. The net increase is potentially \$500,000.

Mr. Milani stated that his Division is in the middle of the Operating Budget process. He is seeking to move some staff salaries from the Recreation and Parks Fund to the General Fund. He has asked for some positions to be unfrozen and for some increases in the contingent budget for Park Maintenance Workers.

The Division is looking into a new way of producing the brochure that is sent out to County households.

Old Business:

Mr. Byrd reported that he has testified on three bills in Annapolis on behalf of the Maryland Association of County Park and Recreation Administrators.

The Program Open Space bills were intended to restore some funding to the program over the next few years. The Governor submitted a bill that was slightly less aggressive than the bill submitted by Partners for Open Space via Delegate McIntosh from Baltimore County. There was enough support to combine the two bills with few compromises. The payback period now extends to 2029. By 2019, the fund is intended to be fully funded again. Funds can no longer be diverted as a means to balance the budget without a specific payback process.

Mr. Byrd reported that there is also a bill to require warning signs on synthetic turf fields. He believes the bill will die in committee as the study being conducted by the EPA, Consumer Product Safety Commission, and the Center for Disease Control is not complete. Warning signs would be premature.

The last bill would change concussion reporting and the penalty process for coaches and volunteers. It would have put much more onus on the Department and other organizations that manage volunteer coaches. He believes this bill will not move forward either.

Mr. Byrd reported that the Department has gotten feedback from this Board, the Office of Community Sustainability Board, Sierra Club, Agriculture Board, and from the Bird Club regarding the Pesticide Policy. The comments received are being incorporated into a revision that will be distributed to the Board prior to the next meeting.

Mr. Tracy asked for an update regarding selling signage in the parks.

Mr. Byrd replied that some time back the Department did a feasibility study and hired a consultant to assess the value of all of the park sites. It was decided after reviewing the results of the study that it was not necessary to hire a company to solicit sponsorships. The Department is beginning to solicit larger and more consistent sponsorships.

New Business:

Dr. Goodman announced that the Howard Astronomical League will host a public star party at Alpha Ridge Park on Saturday.

There being no further discussion, Mr. Tracy made a Motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Santos seconded.

Dr. Goodman adjourned the meeting at 8:00 p.m.



Dr. Joel Goodman, Chairman



John Byrd, Executive Secretary