

Recreation and Parks Advisory Board Meeting
Wednesday, December 11, 2019- 7:00pm
Department of Recreation Headquarters
Conference Room #1
7120 Oakland Mills Road
Columbia, MD 21046

Members Present:

Dave Grabowski, Tom Franklin

Members Absent:

Sylvia Ramsey, Ed Coleman, Joanne Kiebler, Mavis Ellis, Anna Boyd

Staff Present:

A. Raul Delerme, Director; Laura T. Wetherald, Bureau Chief of Recreation; John Marshall, Bureau Chief of Parks; Mike Milani, Bureau Chief of Administrative Services; Bob 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 7:00pm.

Public Hearing and Presentation of the FY 2021 Capital Budget:

Acting Bureau Chief of Capital Projects, Park Planning and Construction, Mr. Linz gave a presentation on the Capital Budget for the upcoming fiscal year 2021.

Mr. Grabowski reminded everyone that individuals are limited to three minutes to speak. Those speaking on behalf of a group are limited to five minutes.

Public Testimony:

Chris Barnard, 14762 Justifiable Court. Woodbine, MD 21797

"I am a coach at Glenelg High School for the hockey program. 54 kids playing ice hockey, just at that school. Pretty remarkable. We have a varsity team and 3 JV teams. One of the JV teams is an all girl team. The sport is growing tremendously. There are 7 other varsity and 3 other JV teams in Howard County. Glenelg spent \$40,000 on hockey last year. Of that \$40,000, only \$8,500 was spent in Howard County. We buy ice in 6 different counties. We

will go where the ice is. Howard County is missing out big on this. There are other businesses in ice rinks. Gyms and cafes, and there are hotels and restaurants around them. Currently when I go to Laurel to play ice hockey, where there are 2,500 players in the adult league, I buy my meals in PG county because that is where the rink is. So I spend a lot of money outside of Howard County. Currently, Montgomery county has 7 sheets of ice, PG County has 6, Anne Arundel has 3, Baltimore and Carol both 2. Howard County currently has 1 sheet of ice. Howard County Huskies has over 600 players in that program. It's the only sport I know of where the kids have to leave the county to participate. There are enough fields around for other sports, but you don't have a choice but to leave the county if you play hockey. I find it a shame with all the money and taxpayer dollars. I don't really think a county run rink is the best way to do it. There are some private run groups, I'm tied into. There are some groups looking to start a rink. If we can find some space, preferably out west. These kids, once they start will stick with it. They will grow up with it. There kids will be in it. We really need a rink. Thank you."

Susan Garber, P.O. Box 222, Savage, MD 20763

Susan Garber speaking on behalf of the Savage Community Association.

On numerous occasions over the past 7 years, representatives of the Savage Community Association have come before this body to request that a 5 acre rectangular parcel that creates a hole in Savage Park be acquired. The parcel, known as the Savage Mill Remainder, sits beyond the upper parking lot to the historic Savage Mill and is surrounded on 3 sides by County land. The parcel is in the green infrastructure network, is a targeted ecological area, and home to rare, threatened, and endangered species (3 to be exact). It also provides habitat to rapidly declining forest interior dwelling birds. The parcel is totally wooded and sits on high bluffs above steep slopes to the Little Patuxent River on two sides. The falls or rapids along the river below make the Savage Mill Trail a popular spot for a stroll, photography, fishing, or bird watching. I can think of no more environmentally sensitive (plus historically significant) parcel which would qualify for acquisition by Program Open Space funding. It's just the kind of land the Office of Community Sustainability values and seeks to protect, as was evidenced by the strengthening of the Forest Conservation Act. We

don't want to see the continued 'death by a thousand cuts' which has decimated the ecosystem in the South East.

We'd like you to prioritize purchase of this parcel for future low impact use as an opportunity for interactive learning about the environment and the history of the area. By low impact we mean maintaining the natural environment with minimal disturbance and with minimal cost installations. In fact we'd like to see the Department of Recreation and Parks begin to prioritize Parks over land-stripping Recreation! The owner currently seems willing to sell. We've begun discussions with and have interest expressed by our local schools and the Savage STEM Library to establish authentic learning opportunities here within walking distance of all three.

You will hear from another speaker tonight about our desire to acknowledge the Little Patuxent River shed's role in the industrial revolution. Designating a Savage-Guilford Industrial Historic District which encompasses the public lands from the Bollman Bridge in Savage to the Pratt Truss Bridge in Guilford is desired. Pathway and trail improvements will provide greater continuity and access in what we refer to as "Between the Bridges" (see attachment of exhibits from Savage Historical Society calendar). The County Executive is familiar with this effort. An additional source of potential funding for this endeavor may be the Transportation Infrastructure Act of 2019 which greatly expands the earlier efforts on 'Rails to Trails'.

On a different note, we would strongly like to see construction begin on the pool at the North Laurel Community Center. This is a true 'shovel ready' project and one many arthritic senior citizens like myself are hoping will occur in our lifetime."

Erik Pelleck, 3201Climate Place, West Friendship, MD 21794

"I am here representing the Columbia Baseball League, founded just about 7 years ago. Six years ago, I was in a meeting in this same room about the East Columbia Library fields we discussed earlier, and my son was 6. It breaks my heart that he will never see those fields because I know there was a plan and it fell apart, got lost somehow. I was at an awards banquet in 2016, there was a big sign that said that the fields would be open in 2019. I have players who still play here who will never see these fields. Maybe they will be lucky enough to have their siblings see these fields.

We are a new league; this is just our seventh year. We are the third largest rec baseball league in the county. We play at the school fields. There is not even a park dedicated field in Columbia. We play our games at Jessup and Savage. We use these fields all year long. We start April 1st and don't stop until the end of October. We have a Spring league. We have All Star teams use the field for summer tournaments.

Our enrollment in 2016-2017 was over 300 kids. In 2018-2019, we were down to 296 mostly in part we do not have the facilities. It concerns me, I know it is in the budget in years to come, but it keeps getting pushed back. It doesn't seem to be a top priority. We'd like to have a place we can call home. Something we may consider in the future, maybe taking existing park space and putting turf on those fields, so they can be usable with rain. Something to consider, you wouldn't have to make a new park, but use existing parks. Thank you very much for your time."

Wayne Davis, 9731 Early Spring Way, Columbia, MD 21046

"I have been a Howard County resident for 27 years and found the Department of Recreation and Parks to be a great example of how Howard County government departments can cooperate and openly work to the benefit of Howard County residents. I support the many important programs, and proposed funding, for the Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks. Of course, I wish they could be better funded as they carry a large burden of critical outreach for Howard County residents that make this such a great place to live and raise families. I also offer the following budget comments highlighting a few specific needs.

Where possible, I strongly support additional funding and consideration for Historic Preservation (N3958) and Pathway and Trail Rehab (N3963) particularly in the area "Between the Bridges" where a citizen led effort will be proposing a local, and possibly national, Savage—Guilford Industrial Historic District.

I also support the Parkland Acquisition Program (N3978) which provides unique funding to ensure critical historic structures are maintained and improved, such as the historic B&O Ellicott City Station Museum.

The “Between the Bridges” proposed historic district is intended to bring economic development to Savage Mill through improved pathway connections and the marketing and education along the historic Savage-Guilford Patuxent Branch corridor. Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks should leverage existing programs and funding, as well as provide additional funding, to begin the long-term support for improving this important historic corridor to, at a minimum:

- 1) Work with the community to provide for additional interpretive history signage along the Patuxent Branch Trail “Between the Bridges” along the former Patuxent Branch Railroad, Wincopin Trail,
- 2) Continue the planning and construction needed to re-pave the extent of the Patuxent Branch trail between the Guilford Pratt Truss Bridge and Vollmerhausen Road including additional rest areas and interpretive history and directional signage,
- 3) Begin a formal assessment of pathway improvements along the Patuxent Branch Trail to more directly connect the Vollmerhausen Road trail head to the River Trail by Savage Mill including a pathway on the east side of the bridge along the path of the sewer line construction,
- 4) Begin a formal assessment for installing two foot bridges to connect Wincopin Trail to the Savage Park River Trail and Savage Mill Trails across the Little Patuxent and Middle Patuxent Rivers, respectively,
- 5) Use of the Parkland Acquisition Program (N3978) and other programs as appropriate to protect Savage Mill woodlands by acquiring the Savage Mill Remainder property,
- 6) Use the Parkland Acquisition Program (N3978) and other programs, as appropriate, to secure and preserve the Guilford Quarry Cemetery, a pre-civil war cemetery containing over 80 burials of enslaved and free people that can be used as an accessible and unique educational opportunity as part of the proposed historic district, and
- 7) Use the Parkland Acquisition Program (N3978) and other programs, as appropriate, to secure access to the Guilford Quarry (Maryland Granite Company) that gave new life to the town of Guilford and ceased operations 100 years ago. This quarry also

provides an accessible and unique educational opportunity as part of the proposed historic district as one of two accessible granite quarries in Howard County, both of which are in the proposed “Between the Bridges” historic district. With increasing development encroaching on our historic places, and the loss of so much knowledge and experience as generations pass away, we should do what we can to recognize our history, protect our remaining open spaces, and make these areas accessible to teachers, students, researchers, and our communities.”

Director’s Report:

- Inquiries about sharpshooting for deer management
 - Groups want more, but there are a lot of restrictions currently
 - Had meeting with legislators to discuss
 - Looking to expand

Bureau of Parks:

- Cheryl Farfaras completed 6 more Monarch Waystation certifications on County parkland bringing the total to 16.
- Katie Peet coordinated the installation of the new RNC planetarium. Installation is to start mid-December.
- Brian Campbell conducted a Family Volunteer Day event at Robinson Nature Center where volunteers planted 3,017 bulbs on the Green Roof.
- Meagan Downey and Robinson’s Sensory-Friendly committee met this month with Matt DeGrouse from Harkins builders. Environmental Educator, Kendra Bierman, presented concept sketches formulated from input by committee members that will be used by Harkins to help Robinson create a “sensory village” play area off their Sycamore Stroll trail. Harkins has donated \$770 towards the cost of materials for the project. The project is tentatively scheduled for the last weekend in March 2020.
- The annual Holiday Model Train Gardens is open at the B&O Ellicott Mills Station Museum
- Staff planted 1,075 trees in parks and along stream banks in November
- Staff planted 10,000 daffodil bulbs in parks and rights-of-way in November
- Current deer count is 76

Bureau of Capital Projects, Park Planning and Construction:

- The red bridge at Centennial Park has been replaced by in house staff
- Oakland Mills Tunnel has been power washed, painted and will add mirrors for bikers and solar lighting
- New Disc Golf areas at Rockburn Branch Park
- Started fixing drainage issue at Toll House Road
- Fields #11, #12, and #15 are being re-sodded at Rockburn Branch Park
- Building fiberglass bridge at the Howard County Conservancy
- Cricket Pitch expansion is happening at Schooley Mill Park. We are planning on doubling the size.

Bureau of Recreation:

- Award winning Knitting and Crocheting group released calendar highlighting their projects
- Started several new committees for the department strategic plan
 - Trends Committee
 - Evaluation Plan Committee
 - Gold Medal Committee
- Reading Club at Roger Carter Community Center
 - Owner of Busboys and Poets read in November
- Staff involved in making Maryland Public Television video about pickleball
- Wine in the Woods will now offer a Premier Tent

Bureau of Administrative Services:

- Nothing to report

Old Business:

- No Old Business

New Business:

- Working with Maryland Cricket League to bring an 8-day tournament to Howard County
- There is proposed legislation trying to stop funding for synthetic turf and on how to dispose of the turf

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


Sylvia Ramsey, Chairperson


A. Raul Delerme, Executive Secretary