

Recreation and Parks Advisory Board Public Hearing
Wednesday, October 16, 2019- 7:00pm
Department of Recreation Headquarters
Conference Room #1, #2 and #3
7120 Oakland Mills Road
Columbia, MD 21046

Members Present:

Sylvia Ramsey, Chair; Ed Coleman, Co-Chair; Dave Grabowski; Daryl Anthony; Anna Boyd; Joanne Kiebler; Tom Franklin; Mavis Ellis

Members Absent:

None

Staff Present:

Raul Delerme, Director and Executive Secretary; John S. Marshall, Bureau Chief of Parks; Laura T. Wetherald, Bureau Chief of Recreation; Robert E. Linz, Acting Bureau Chief of Capital Projects, Park Planning and Construction; Allan Harden, Superintendent of Sports and Adventure Services; Jason Thompson, Park Planner; Anna Hunter Marketing Supervisor; Ryan Etter, Recording Secretary

Call to Order:

Ms. Ramsey called the meeting to order at 7pm.

Public Hearing - Proposed Pickleball Courts- Atholton, Centennial and Rockburn Branch Park:

Mr. Delerme, Director of Recreation and Parks introduced the board and gave an overview of the proposed plan.

Ms. Ramsey stated that all board members have received copies of the online testimony that have been filed. The board will review and take the comments into consideration.

Mr. Linz, Acting Bureau Chief of Capital Projects, Park Planning and Construction along with Jason Thompson, Park Planner gave the Presentation of the proposed Pickleball Courts.

Ms. Ramsey 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:

Vivek Sura Venkata, 8798 Wellford Drive Ellicott City, MD 21042

“Hello my name is Vivek. I'm 14 years old and a freshman in high school. I believe we should get to keep the skate park. Not only is skateboarding a great sport but this skate park gives people a safe place to do it. A skate park gives skaters a safe place to practice their sport. Skateboarding has significant health benefits such as keeping people physically fit. Skateboarding is also an activity that may keep us from doing other more harmful or negative activities. A skate park gives skaters a place to do all of this safely. In most public areas, you are already not allowed to ride your skateboard. And you will get kicked out then. Keeping the skate park would end up saving law enforcement, business owners, and land owners time, money, energy, and other resources that would have been used on kicking skateboarders out of the public areas. Many people say that skate parks are unsafe but some of the most common injuries that I've seen while skateboarding in outside skate parks due to collisions with pedestrians in cars or on surfaces that are not for skateboarding. Skateboards reduce damage to private property such as stairs chipping away, rails getting scratched, or the paint chipping away. The next closest skate park for people around my area which is around Centennial Lane and St. John's Lane is 20 minutes away and that's called Sykesville skate park. Centennial skate park is a much more convenient place. To ride and not having to go 20 minutes every time has been a great benefit to me. And because of this I mean we get more practice.

And if our community does not have a skate park then the community will become the skate park. That's all I'm saying. Thank you.”

Earl Sneeringer, 6183 Wicker Basket Court, Columbia MD 21044

“Hi. My name is Earl Sneeringer. I'm the President of the Howard County Pickleball Association. I often frequent the Atholton Courts. I'm representing the Howard County Pickleball Association and I believe we will have additional people speaking from the Association. I am limited to a

short period of time. I just would like to say thank you very much for considering planning for additional people.

Of course, we have run into a lot of crowds and very limited resources for the number of people we have in our Association as well as the community at large. Our Association represents over 300 people in both our county as well as surrounding counties. But I know that there's a good deal of other players who are not part of the Association. But we get to play with and interact with because Pickleball is a very social game. And let me first of all say that it is a good deal different than tennis even though it looks kind of like we're playing tennis only on a shorter scale. It's a very social game. What we typically do is we have a group of players that come at a certain time and then those players interact and switch out back and forth to play with the various other players. It's not typically a set number that holds the courts for a certain period of time. And so, I have been at Atholton and I know we put our paddles up in line and I've seen up to 16 people waiting to get on and we switch out every so often. So, I'm just saying that knowing that pickleball is a very growing sport and there are a lot of people who are very interested in playing. The aspect of getting these people on courses it's fantastic.

This is also a multigenerational sport. I often play with my family. My daughter plays, my son-in-law, my favorite grandson plays. So, it's one of the few things that I find really rewarding that I can be able to play with my family. I wish my wife would play but I have to keep working on that one. One of the main reasons I play is for health reasons and it's a lot of fun. I'm really excited to see the additional courses in Howard County and I look forward to the results of this session and the outcome. Thank you very much."

Mr. Grabowski asked: "Howard County Pickleball Association, you said 300 members?"

Mr. Sneeringer: "Yes, over 300 members"

Mr. Grabowski: "Is that strictly Howard County?"

Mr. Sneeringer: "Yes, we are organized in Howard County."

Mr. Anthony asked: "What other types of events do you all do to when you get together?"

Mr. Sneeringer: "There are several aspects we work with. One is the drop-in session. Which is we, either formally or informally, set a time to come by and play and people show up. We also have instruction, we offer 3 beginner and intermediate instruction. We also then have tournaments, rather informal tournaments. Thank you."

Linda O'Neil, 3318 Sang Road, Glenwood, MD 21738

"I live in Glenwood in Western Howard County. I've been a resident of Howard County for 56 years. Great county and I just started playing pickleball about two years ago. And a lot of what I'll say I'll probably echo what Earl already said. It's a very social sport and we've met so many people. And it is for all ages. We have kids as young as 10 years old on up to senior citizens and it is getting more and more family oriented as well. We're seeing more and more families come out to play. So, like you said, we lined up at Atholton and getting any more courts in the county would just be fabulous especially in Western Howard County.

One of the things I wanted to say about people, is that it provides the opportunity for a more active lifestyle as well as the social aspects. So, a healthier more active life has a higher quality of life. And from that you get improved productivity and its great exercise as well as the social factor. Thank you for considering your courts for Howard County."

Evan Hossick, 4991 Threshfield, Ellicott City, MD 21043

"My name is Evan Isaac. I'm 27 years old. I have lived in Howard County my entire life. Most of these years I spent skateboarding. During my younger years there were no free year-round skate park options. Me and many others worked very hard just to get this annual skate spot which was the first. Right now, I counted on the website of Howard County Pickleball that there are 11 local courts in this area. Right now, there are only three skate parks in our county that are free for us to use and those are very, very far away from the Columbia area. It's very hard for kids to get out there. It's very hard for kids to get there. You know even sometimes with three skate parks right now. I have nothing against pickleball, but I just think it'd be very foolish to take away this spot that is a haven for so many kids.

I see a lot of kids that come to these state parks and a lot of them are lost. A lot of them are just trying to get away from whatever it is, whether it's a dysfunctional family whether they're having trouble at school and they find a safe haven in these state parks because it's a place where people accept you and they love you just because you love skateboarding. And I think to take away this would be very foolish.

One other thing is the thing about this is that many older people are able to go to these events at these 11 different spots and a lot of the skateboarders don't have that option and Centennial Park is the only option. Thank you, guys. Pickleball will take away skateboarding for a lot of kids in this area. And that's all I have to say. Thank you for listening."

Dave Grabowski asked: "How many are a lot of kids? I mean on average on the busiest day. How many people are there?"

Evan Hossick: "It's a sweet spot in the summer. It depends on the summer usually afterschool. At least throughout the day at least 15 to 20. Any given moment on a good day, they'll be at least five or six kids there."

Dave Grabowski: "How often are you there?"

Evan Hossick: "I go every afternoon. So, one more thing I'd like to point out is there's been zero maintenance to this park since it was built here. There are holes in the pavement. And I don't think that it's fair to take it away when there hasn't even been proper maintenance.

And I think this conversation shouldn't be about taking it away I think the conversation should be improving the park. At the end of the day if the facility was maintained and operational you'd see much more kids there then when it was first built."

Kevin Caffrey, 6626 Windsor Court, Columbia, MD 21044

"I am Kevin Caffrey. I live in Hickory Ridge. And I been going to the Centennial Skatepark since it opened since I was a little kid and everything. I think it really helped shape me into who I am. It's a different kind of extracurricular for the kids in the area. It's not an organized team. You're just on your own you're on your skateboard and you're pushing yourself to be your best. And I think getting rid of the skatepark place just cause there

are no other areas is a bad idea. There're a couple other good spots in the mall area. And if you if you take it away the one that's in the middle of Columbia where everyone can get to I'm having to rely on transit to get me there. I'm not sure how our transit goes to North Laurel and I'm pretty sure it does not get you out to Sykesville.

The skatepark is important I think culturally to Columbia. The pavement is falling apart. But, it's unique. It's something we have that other areas don't have. It just means so much opportunity for kids to just figure out who they are. And just see it over the past years and the one thing I learned is that the skate park is that there's actually girls skateboarding and they're out there. That's all I got to say. All right. Thank you."

Dave Fontana, 4036 Fragile Sail Way Ellicott City, MD 21042

"My name's Dave Fontana and I live in Ellicott City and have been a resident of Howard County for over twenty-six years. I want to thank you again for having us here tonight. I think it is a great forum for people to come in here and speak up about what's important to them personally and sitting here I am very impressed by them. I'm a very proud resident of Howard County and for good reason. We have one of the best counties in the United States where we routinely are voted one of the best places to live in the country. A large part of that is because of the infrastructure that we have in the facilities that we have. I coached in this county for several sports: softball, baseball, and soccer. We have phenomenal facilities. We were able to do tournaments and softball where people from all over the mid-Atlantic would come. Baltimore is always remarking about how great it is to come and play.

Recently I was on a trip and I was out in the middle of nowhere in Ohio. And I was blown away by the facilities in the middle of nowhere that they had. They had dedicated pickleball courts. Played with some gentlemen, they invited me back to a different town 10 miles away and they had another pickleball facility with fully dedicated courts. And I couldn't help but feel that I come from the best county in the country and we don't have anywhere near this, but we have two courts, 11 courts but we have two courts that are free. There are some courts that you could become a member of if you're a Columbia Association member, but most of the people don't belong. And the only place to play for free in the county

they're always overcrowded. We really lack the facilities and I think it's a shame in this county.

There's also some talk about tournaments. I think there's a real desire for a tournament here, but the problem is you need at least six courts. So, I think the demand is here, but the facilities aren't here. I think that given the kind of county that we are, we should have the kind of facilities that I saw out in small towns in Ohio.

The other thing I wanted to just tell you is kind of my perspective of why pickleball is the fastest growing sport. I think I saw some statistics that is roughly 3 million people playing in the country and that year over year is growing at about twelve percent.

And, I just I've only played for eight months. But just the number of people I've seen come into the sport here locally in eight months is enormous and we're reaching every demographic. One last point I want to make is really it's a low cost. It's \$25-30 for a racket and a \$2 ball. Thank you."

Kevin Hall, 417 Overbrook Road, Catonsville, MD 21228

"Hello. My name is Kevin Hall. I have a high respect for the skateboarding community. My son actually does skateboard himself. I just want to start with two things. Firstly, we definitely need to have more typical ball courts in the area. No one use the tennis courts as they are different than pickleball courts. And now my second point is it would be so nice to add lights for the night time when we want to play. Thank you. Thank you."

Rocky Brown, 14812 Carriage Mill Road, Woodbine, MD 21797

"My name is Rocky Brown. I'm a forty-nine-year resident of Howard County. I live out in Woodbine now and currently I am the league director for a group called play Pickleball.org. And, I run a league at Forest Hills Tennis Club here in Howard County which is the private facility where we have six courts to run our leagues which is run two nights Monday and Wednesdays. The league runs in both the fall and the spring. We're about 120 members in that league and we'd love to branch out and have more facilities to facilitate such a league.

We appreciate the fact that you guys are considering building more courts. Off line if you want to know more about tournaments and how to run them, I just played at a tournament group league down in Virginia and I travel the country and play in tournaments. I'm happy to sit down with you offering to help you design something in the future that could bring more people into Howard County to spend money at the restaurants and hotel.

I will say for the skateboarders at Centennial skate spot. I brought my twins to skateboard and left, we believe five minutes later, because of the condition of that facility. You know I hear what they're saying, so if you kept this Centennial skate spot and built the other facilities, maybe that's a nice compromise. Thank you very much. Thank you."

Dan Lesko, 7289 Calm Sunset Columbia MD, 21042

"I'm here on behalf of the advocates for Centennial skate spot preservation. So, thank you very much everyone here for your time. My name is Dan Lesko. I've been a resident of Howard County for twenty-eight years. I previously lived in Dorsey's Search where the existing skate park in Centennial resides. I'm currently a resident at 7289 Calm Sunset around the corner. My understanding of pickleball is that it's like a miniature version of tennis which is great. I'm happy that a lot of people are getting excited about it. But I'd like to talk a little bit more about the skaters. Some of you might know that when I was in high school it was my high school project to plan and develop this Centennial skate spot for the mentorship program at Wilde Lake High School. I actually sat in this portion of the room when it was divided in half and planned the entire skate park with my friends, Gary Arthur, Phil Bryan, and Caryn Lasser. It was one of my biggest privileges that I've had the opportunity to participate in as a member of Howard County.

I wrote my college essays about the skate park. I'm very passionate about the skate park and I'll give you a little bit more history about the Centennial skate spot. When I was 14-15 years old my friends and I used to hang out at the Dorsey Search Village Center and we would hang out and skate around a parking lot and use the ledges there. We got the police called on us constantly, all the time. It was every day. Before I started lobbying Howard

County Parks and Rec I sat in a number of meetings in Linden Hall which is part of the Columbia Association for Dorsey's Search to allow the skateboarders to hang out in the Dorsey Hall pool lot during the off season to skateboard. This was denied. We needed a place to skateboard. The opportunity to present the idea to build a skate park in Howard County came to me by Mary Casey and Gary Arthur. They told me that I had to present this idea to Howard County Government and get money. So that's what we did. And it was awesome. One of the biggest reasons we put the skate park in the Centennial skate park is because it has a central location to all of the other townships in Howard County.

I would also add that at the time of the skate park there was talk about being the first prototype skate park with an additional skate park and ice skate park to be built in Blandair Park. I think that's still in the plans however I'm not sure.

To touch on the issues of the existing skate park I'll start just briefly when we first got the skate park developed someone had mentioned that it was a good idea to allow kids to write graffiti on the skate park. That was not our idea. Someone in our county Parks and Recreation decided it would be okay. And it wasn't okay. It was interesting. It was interesting. However, when it was decided that the graffiti was no longer appreciated they had a large removal effort in which case workers power washed all of the ramps in the skate park. It essentially destroyed the smoothness of the ramps. That happened maybe about five or six years ago and since that happened I've noticed an almost immediate decline in the number of kids that go and skate at that skate park. It's because the asphalt is terrible. It kicked up rocks, it removed the smoothness and natural application that they put on the concrete ramps itself and it's just not fun to skate. While there are still people that go and skate, there was never any additional maintenance or upkeep for that park.

Since then we have two fantastic parks that the county decided to build. We have the North Laurel skate park and we have the Shrimp Town a.k.a. Sykesville skate park and these are fantastic. I can't advocate enough how

much we appreciate how our county Parks and Rec built skate parks. But I'll leave you guys with some conclusions.

I don't think that the Centennial skate spot should be removed until either: a brand-new skate park is built, giving a new centralized location for Columbia skate. Or the existing skate park is repaved and maintained. We'd also like to propose that if you guys still want to put pickleball courts in Centennial, that we would put them off pavilion H or near pavilion H off Woodland Road. There's a basketball court there that is very underutilized. I think that's just about all of it. I'll leave you with one more quote. If your city doesn't have a skate park, then your city is a skate park. Thank you."

Michelle Amaya, 6400 Knighthood Lane, Columbia, MD 21045

"My name's Michelle Amaya. I'm not a skateboarder. I'm a roller-skater. I think you are forgetting it's not just skate boarders but both skaters as well. I'm not on the rails and I'm not doing anything crazy because my skill set is not there yet. But we will use that skatepark and we are part of that community. Most people will see skaters as a problem, whether it's deviants or bad people, the list goes on and on. And because of society they look at us and they get yelled at. Why? Because we have no place to speak. Where do you go with this? Look we know you know other places and we get called on by the cops because somebody doesn't want their concrete messed up. So where do you go? So, you have people who are getting in trouble with the law. Because it's a good place to go. So, I think it's really frustrating that there is a voice that's not being told here because. The younger kids. I'm older. I'm 27. These are kids who are constantly told that their voice doesn't matter. Removing the skate park isn't going to help. It's just going to make the situation worse. And I knew years ago and couldn't get first started it was all about diversity. It was about bringing people together of all different hobbies, nationalities all that together and removing the skate park is really detrimental to a good part of the community.

I mean there are a lot of things that can be done at that skate park. Charm City Skate Park in the city is aware of what's going on here today. They are aware of it. They're aware of you trying to remove that park. What do you

do? They get the word out that you guys are trying to remove it. What do you do? There's no place to go. You have others but honestly when I have a group together and they're like 'hey where you want to skate. Why don't we want to go to Centennial' everyone says? That's because it's not maintained. That's a problem. To be honest. Ever since it was built it was never kept."

Eugene Mason, 13504 Argo Drive, Dayton, MD 21036

"Eugen Mason. I'm from Dayton, Maryland. I guess I'm the lone voice for racquetball in this entire group. I think it's great that Howard County wants to build more pickleball courts. At some point I'm sure I will transition from racquetball but right now Atholton is the only outdoor racquetball court in Howard County. Over the last two years we have consistently played Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Tuesdays from 5 to dark. Thursday at 5. Saturday, 10 to 12:30 or 1. Very rarely have I seen people waiting to play pickleball. And to destroy the one racquetball court and only replace it with one pickleball court? When a bunch of the speakers have said to run tournaments and larger things they need six courts."

Amanda Finnegan, Ellicott City

"I'm for the Centennial skate park. I don't have many points to raise, but I want to reiterate that's a family friendly area all year round. Skaters do skate in 20-degree weather. It's a nice exercise there is no crime activity. It's a great safe place for skateboarders, roller skaters and BMX. Anything with wheels pretty much. It's a nice safe place to go skate and to meet up and relieve stress and just have fun. Otherwise we'll be on public spaces because we have nowhere else to go. It has only been 9-10 years. That is a really short time to have any kind of recreational facilities especially skate park. When you think about the amount of money that goes into developing it and especially with the surplus by donations or grants or whatever. It's almost a waste of money probably.

Oh, and it's a meeting spot for skate jams and informal skate contests. It's really great seeing generations skating together. And it's really an amazing thing. And that's only going to increase. Skateboarding will be in the Olympics next year, so I think. The state parks are only going to get more

crowded, so more places we have the more skaters that come out. Thank you.”

Kerri Bentkowski, 9882 Century Drive, Ellicott City, MD 21042

Hello. My name is Kerry Bentkowski and I live at 9882 Century Drive in Ellicott City. I'm fortunate to live behind the skate park for the past six weeks. We just bought our house about six weeks ago and since then every night at dinner my four-year-old asks, 'Can we go to the state park?' I see we have so many young people here today and are doing a great job advocating for something they love. I think I'm here to tell you that we go there almost every night and there's a whole new generation coming up in that community that is going to utilize that resource. They were there and so with that I think pickle ball is such a great sport. It's the fastest growing and clearly there is a demand for it. So, if there is a way that the council can come up with a compromise, I think you can do that and do that well. Thank you very much.

Robert Simpson, 9800 Woodbridge Court, Ellicott City, MD 21042

“Hello, my name is Robert Simpson. Howard County resident for the past 37 years. I've lived at the community adjacent to the to the park for the last 25 years. I was there when the skate park was gaining some resistance from those of us who lived there. Turns out I bought a new puppy about the time the skate park opened, and I walked past that park practically five out of seven days a week for the last 10 years. I recognized the park doesn't get used. I also noticed that the use of the park has declined significantly in the last four or five years. Based on what I've heard here tonight sounds like for a good reason.

It's not someplace that you really want to skate anymore because of the conditions. I do understand the uniqueness of the facility, the need for it and if you're not going to maintain that park then you ought to put it to better use. But if you're going to keep it. You need to make sure it's kept in a condition that's appropriate for those that do want to use it.

So, the other point I wanted to make was that when I saw the sign go up that there was going to be that opportunity to play pickleball just a short 5

to 7 minute walk from my house, I was very encouraged by that because I would like to have that opportunity to play the athletic part. I was pleased to hear someone throw up the prospect that maybe all is not lost from there being a convenient place in my community to play ball on a regular basis. That area down below the dam at Centennial Park, it does seem to be highly underutilized. I like to think that if you're going to preserve the state park and improve it so that it can get used that you do give some attention to providing some help."

Dennis O'Brien, 10520 Bill Lilly Court, Laurel, MD 20723

"For the past 40 years I've gotten to know the racquetball people pretty well. In fact, the group I play with has been here for more years than I am. I don't play racquetball. At Atholton, look at the tennis courts tearing off the bottom of the picture. You're proposing to knock down three racquetball courts for a pickleball court.

There currently is a playground to the 2 o'clock off of that picture there. There are swing sets across this way from the tennis courts. In the middle is a Pavilion and bathrooms. I see parents when we're playing tennis a lot more often. They have both the children with them. And the kids start on the swings with one child and he wants to go around the building and go down by the woods where the playground is. And the mom can't keep an eye on both kids. There's quite a bit of room around these swing sets. I don't know how much exactly if there's much room for the playground but if the swing sets were moved next to the playground, it would be a win for that mother. You can keep the racquetball courts and you might be able to build a lot more than one pickleball court and you don't have to knock down the racquetball courts."

Lexi White

"Hi, how are you guys today. My name is Lexi White, and I just started working in Columbia probably about a year and a half ago or, so which is actually right around the same time that I started skateboarding. I wanted to kind of share with you guys a little insight as to why skateboarding is such an important thing to so many people and how it really does affect us very personally and very emotionally in these communities.

Previously one of the girls that came out earlier, Amanda came up and spoke. I actually know her solely because I started skateboarding. I started skating with a friend of mine who in this community actually started an organization for all girls in the area to start skateboarding and coming together. She schedules events at all of these different skate parks in the area. So, we went every so often every week or so we would have an event where we would do an all-girls skate session. It truly was something that changed my life. Skateboarding came into my life at a time when I desperately needed it and it was eye opening. It was really such an amazing thing. The community was very accepting, and I felt like I found something I needed for a very long time. I made so many friends and I was going to actually ask for the people who do skate that are here tonight. Did you find out about this meeting solely through the Charm City Post? So that post actually was posted on Charm City because Amanda shared it in her social media because I went to the park and took a photo of the sign that said that there was going to be a meeting for this tonight. So, for me this is a very impactful hearing and I really wanted to make sure that it was clear that this is super important.

I just discovered this park may be a couple of weeks back and I was so excited to find it because every time I find a new park I get excited to try new things there and you know open my eyes to stuff I came back the next day and the sign was there and I was heartbroken.

I can't believe this, I just discovered this park. And now they're going to take it away. Here's something I hadn't even heard of. No disrespect to pickleball. Fantastic sport but you know just on the side of skateboarding I would like to express how important it is to all the children and the youth in the community. And thank you for your time."

Duane St. Clair, 9347 Gentle Way Columbia, MD 21045

"I'm Duane St. Clair. I didn't realize I had signed up but I'm going to take my three minutes back. As you can hear tonight pickleball has created a dilemma for everybody who's involved in the sports or recreation field. The explosion of pickleball in the last five years really has created a real

dilemma as it's grown from approximately five years ago. The U.S. Pickleball Association National Organization estimated that there were about 1 million people playing pickleball. Today the estimate is about 3 million. The way they estimate that is the number of facilities that are playing pickleball across the country on their website. They've tripled in that time so they're estimating there's at least 3 million people playing. That's about 30 percent a year increase. So, if you're looking out five years down the road you're looking at six to eight million people playing pickleball and this is really put a lot of pressure on people who provide facilities for playing different sports. I've advocated for pickleball within Howard County for the last three years. I found the Association here in Howard County about four years ago and it's been a constant issue to have places repurposed for pickleball. We've played on basketball courts, we've played on courts that had no lines. We play on tennis courts, you name it. We try to play on it simply because the sport has grown so fast that it's hard to keep up the facilities that adequately serve this growing population of people playing pickleball. So, repurposing always puts us in a situation of having to have people who don't want to lose that resource that they feel very strongly about.

Trust me we have nothing against skate parks. They're great. We have nothing against tennis players. We don't want to take their courts. We want to keep all the courts that they have right now. But if we're constantly put into a situation of having to say that the only way we can grow our sport in terms of facilities is to take something away from other people, it really puts us unfortunately in a contentious situation. I mean we're not here advocating for taking away any skate parks or any other type of recreational resource from this county. What we really want is to have recognition that this sport is here to stay. It's only going to get larger if in three years you have another hearing we'll have three times as many people here today. And we certainly are open here tonight to see whatever we can do to expand the number of resources that we have for the sport that we love without having to take away anything from anybody else.

But like I said I really want you to come away from this meeting tonight saying that we have this growing sport within our community. It's a valuable resource to a wide range of people of all ages and yet we

obviously don't want to have a situation where the only way we can grow people is to take something away from other people. That's not what we're here for and we certainly don't want to be put in a situation of only gaining if someone else loses. I know there are proposals for 11 courts. There's been some discussion about doing tournaments, regional type tournaments."

Ms. Kiebler asked: "How many pickleball courts would you need?"

Mr. St. Clair: "That's a complicated question. Depends on what you are talking about. We would need 16 for a tournament. I also am a district ambassador for Central Maryland for pickleball and I've worked with the other ambassadors in Maryland to talk about doing a Maryland Open. We would need 16 courses to do a Maryland open.

Now that's not necessarily something that we envision being able to do in any location next year. But if you're talking about a regional turf field like the mid-Atlantic region of the United States you would probably be talking about 16 courts now. That's a very ambitious effort. I think we will get there in the future that we'll need to have that kind of facility. In the meantime, we're probably going to have to use multiple facilities. So, if we have six courts here and three courts here four courts there. We probably would have to work with that kind of arrangements. Not ideal. But it is getting us to the place where we want to be. We'll take those intermediate steps and then I think that's really what we're talking about even with some discussions here that this is the first step. It's a great way of beginning to recognize where we want to get down the road. Because Howard County really wants to be seen as a place that has the venues to play. Think of all we do for other sports and Howard County is certainly a great sport community and we want to add pickleball to the mix in terms of being recognized in the region. Thanks."

Chris

"Hi my name's Chris. I'm sixteen and I'm a junior in high school. Three years ago, when I was here in Howard County I didn't have any friends at all. I think skateboarding helped me when I was at time where I was just kind of lost like a person, I didn't really know what to do with myself. I just moved

from Florida. North Centennial skate park was like five minutes away and I was like all right cool. So, I went to the skate park and I met all these people here. And three years later here I have all these friends. I think skateboarding as a whole just connects everybody. I think it helps everybody just become like better people because skateboarding teaches hard life lessons. Lessons that are really valuable for teenagers in this society.”

Brian Bowman, 2211 John Gravel Road, Unit B, Marriottsville, MD 21104

“My name is Brian Bowman. I’ve been playing pickleball for eight years. I learned the sport from my wife who learned it from her brother in California. I primarily play at Glenwood and I’ve already submitted written comments endorsing and supporting your proposal. However, I was not aware that something was going to be destroyed. Something that is actively used, so I’m reluctant to support. I’m kind of holding back a little bit on my written comments. Which brings me to the question of capacity and what is available. I play at Glenwood, under the office of aging. There are three courts when we started. Twelve people can play, and we have attendance from 30 to 50 people Seniors, average age 65 to 75. How come we can't use the other half of this building? Because the schedule says open basketball for players. But nobody there. It's empty. The entire three hours that we are there. So, we may work out that. So, we can use the other half from 12:30 for the remainder of the time so that we increase from three courts to six.

This location we keep a sign-in sheet for the Department of Aging. They are updated every month. So, if you haven't been there in two months your name falls off. There's over 200 people that use that facility in the course of three months. And yet the other half of the building is empty. So instead of taking a skateboard. Why not use what you have? Now we're playing it at noon. There're no school kids there. Okay, but in the summertime, yeah there is. Then you go outside. There're four huge tennis courts. We can fit eight pickleball courts in that spot. We use portable nets both inside and outside. So, my suggestion for you is what you have and whether it's utilized by. Thank you.”

The board made a motion to continue receiving comments about the proposal until 5pm on October 23, 2019.

Mr. Grabowski made a motion to have a work session at next month's board meeting to come up with a decision to pass on to the department. Mr. Coleman and Mr. Anthony seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Delerme thanked all in attendance for their comments. He explained of a possible site for 6 courts at Western Regional Park, when the new septic treatment system is built. Potential courts at the East Columbia Library area off Cradlerock Road at proposed park.

Mr. Delerme then went on to explain the future at Blandair Park. "All the skaters here tonight, please sign your name and contact information, I am going to need your help on designing the skatepark at Blandair Park. Originally, planned as Phase 6. Hoping to move it up to an earlier phase. Hoping to start designing by early Spring or Summer. Including the skating community is very helpful for working with the designers so to make the park all about the skaters. I will be reaching out to all of you in the near future to get a design team together."

Mr. Delerme explained potential additional pickleball space at Alpha Ridge Park when archery programs were not running. Matt Medicus, Program Coordinator for Archery explained the popularity of archery and the limited times pickleball would have access to the area.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion was made by Ms. Ramsey to approve the minutes. Mr. Coleman and Mr. Anthony seconded a motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Director's Report:

- No report

Bureau of Parks:

- Vivian C. "Millie" Bailey Park ready to begin construction
- Department of Recreation and Parks FY19 Environmental Initiatives Report complete

- Pesticide Use Policy to be signed soon
- Horticulture and Land Management designing a pollinator garden for Headquarters
- Managed hunts have begun
- Archaeologists found a trove of artifacts and an early foundation while monitoring digging for Belmont's fence lighting installation
- The first Sensory-friendly Sunday program was held at Robinson Nature Center with 56 people in attendance. Melissa Rosenberg and several Howard County Autism Society Board members attended along with Raul Delorme and County Executive Ball. Feedback was very positive from attendees and we are looking forward to future events. The program is being submitted by Raul for a MACO award.
- Cheryl Farfaras began working on a new MPEA initiative to support the Bee City USA designation, entitled "1,000 Monarch Waystations for Maryland". This will be an outreach and education program aimed at increasing habitat for Monarch butterflies and native pollinators.

Upcoming Events:

- Bollman Truss Bridge lighting and Savage community tree lighting (12/7)

Bureau of Capital Projects, Park Planning and Construction:

- Centennial Park fiberglass bridge installation should begin the week of October 21, 2019
- Oakland Mills Tunnel drainage renovations have been completed, tunnel wall and ceiling painting and solar lighting to come
- Worthington Dog Park shade structures have been installed.
- Thomas Isaac Log Cabin logs have been replaced, awaiting completed relocation design and building permit
- Blandair Park Phase 3- Playground is progressing nicely, maintenance building complex is moving along well
- We received the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area Use & Occupancy. The contractor is finishing punch list items.

Bureau of Recreation:

- No report

Bureau of Administrative Services:

- No report

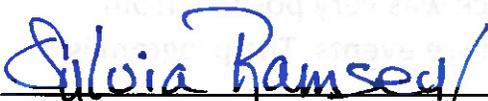
Old Business:

- No old business

New Business:

- No new business

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



Sylvia Ramsey, Chairperson



Raul Delorme, Executive Secretary