

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARKS

COREY JOHNS, CHAIR

Meeting Minutes

June 3, 2024

The regular monthly meeting of the Baltimore County Recreation and Parks Board was held on Monday, June 3, 2024, at 6:00 p.m., at the Historic Courthouse – Room 118. In attendance were Corey Johns, Chair; and board members Danielle Bassett, Brooks Paternotte, Jon Marsalek, Isaac Manjoe, Pat Roddy, Chuck Munzert, Dana Jackson, and Desiree Mundell-Collins.

Also in attendance: Jeffrey Budnitz, Lake Roland Nature Council; Michael Ruby, Country Chronicle; and Mia Walsh, Cromwell Valley Park (CVP) Nature Council.

Call to Order:

Chair Corey Johns called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

Isaac Manjoe motioned to approve the April meeting minutes; Pat Roddy seconded the motion and all were in favor. Jon Marsalek motioned to approve the May meeting minutes; Brooks Paternotte seconded the motion, Mr. Roddy, Desiree Mundell-Collins and Danielle Bassett abstained, and all other members present were in favor.

Director's Comments:

Director Bob Smith reported on staff movement, announcing the retirement of Cindy Jeannetta. In addition, Baltimore County Recreation and Parks (BCRP) has hired a Naturalist II at Oregon Ridge Nature Center, and a Bilingual Park Ranger, who started this week. The Department is still hiring seasonal positions. A Planner II candidate has been selected and we are working through the hiring process. Further, interviews are scheduled for the Community Supervisor II openings. Mr. Johns mentioned the recent promotion of Jessica Jeannetta, to Regional Coordinator, and asked what position she took over. Mr. Smith replied, stating that this was a reclassification of an existing vacant position, to interface between the Chief of Nature, Environmental and Agricultural Programs and the nature centers.

Mr. Smith announced that BCRP has posted several new items to the website, including the new public policy regarding permitting, park naming and renaming. We are in the process of editing the answers to the FAQs from the Open House Listening Sessions, and will post these to the website as well. Mr. Smith reported on the Capital Projects page that is scheduled to launch early next week, to include project information available to the public.

BCRP received a request regarding the naming of a current unnamed park in Towson. We are working with the Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the Maryland Lynching Project, to name this site Truth and Community Remembrance Park. Mr. Smith stated that he thought this was good synergy, and he wanted to present this to the Board. Mr. Johns stated that there is a naming that has been in the works for a few years. He has still been working on this, trying to get the exact name requested. Mr. Smith asked Mr. Johns to notify him once he has this information.

Mr. Smith reported that he is going before County Council to request approval for the approximately 8.57 acres of land (21 tax parcels) and 0.62 acres of roadbeds for \$2,247,150 to serve as a waterfront park in the Millers Island community.

A ribbon cutting has been scheduled for Monday, July 8, for the Essex Field at Renaissance Park. Lisa Winters will send the invite to board members. In addition to this ribbon cutting, BCRP will be planning several other ribbon cuttings for the following projects: Middle River and Rosedale RACs, Meadow Creek Park and Hazelwood Skate Park. Upcoming projects include: cricket pitch, Belfast Road, Days Cove, and Bedford Road, which have not broken ground.

Upcoming events include Drag Bingo & Brunch at Holt Park and Center for the Arts, this Saturday, and the Juneteenth Celebration, scheduled on June 15 at Benjamin Banneker Historical Park and Museum.

Mr. Smith reported on the Department's request for input, reporting that BCRP is beginning to work on redrafting the Joint Use Agreement, which includes drafting the processes for which programs gain access to sites. We have met with BCPS to develop an "express lane" access to the permit process for recreation programs, which would bypass some of the steps deemed unnecessary. BCPS is open to this; staff are currently working on this. Mr. Smith asked the Board to notify the Department if they hear of any issues. Mr. Johns asked board members to forward concerns to him, and he will relay to the Department.

Mr. Marsalek asked if the councils were notified of the updated policy procedures. Mr. Smith replied, stating that those that are public will be posted on the live webpage. Mr. Johns asked Mr. Smith to email those to the Board.

Mr. Roddy asked if Mr. Smith was aware of any conversation regarding assigning a County attorney to the Board. Mr. Smith stated that he had not, but will follow up at his next meeting with the Office of Law.

Board Member Activities:

Mr. Marsalek reported that his son had a field trip at CVP; Mia Walsh gave him a tour, in which he learned a lot. In addition, Mr. Marsalek reported that it seems there are still lots of concerns regarding Reimagining Recreation and Parks.

Dana Jackson reported that Essex-Stembridge Recreation Council is having issues with a school site and voiced their concerns to her. They are not getting approved time at Kenwood High School. The school got a turf field and the Council has not received approval to use this site at all. Ms. Jackson wanted to report this issue. In addition, Ms. Jackson heard from the Edgemere-Sparrows Point Recreation Council president regarding issues. A football chairperson asked for clarification on how to remove a chair from a program, reporting that they are running football blocks. The president was not aware of this, parents are wanting to know where their money went, it was not run through the recreation council, and totaling as little as \$5,000 or as much as \$11,000. Ms. Jackson contacted Mr. Johns and reached out to Chuck Munzert to make sure she gave the right advice. She would like to reach back out to the president to see how this went. Mr. Johns asked to discuss this under "New Business."

Mr. Johns reported that a recreation council was approached by a school to pitch in for a turf field, to get access; they do not get access, and his recommendation was to tell the school they will not pitch in.

Ms. Bassett announced that Catonsville Recreation Council is still looking for new council members. She stated that she is going to recommend going to the Open House.

Mr. Paternotte reported that he is listening to nature councils about the MOU. He received feedback/draft and is working on this.

Mr. Munzert reported that Towsontowne Recreation Council had one meeting in seven months according to his records. He went to the meeting last month and stated that it was good – since he was the only one there. He received an email that evening that the meeting was canceled. Mr. Munzert stated that the Board needs to look into this. In addition, he reported that Colgate Recreation Council has the record for fouls out of all the soccer teams that play at the arena. Further, the coach went after a 14-year-old when threatened. The police were called but no report filed; they spoke with the referees and determined that the coach didn't physically touch him. Further, last week at Parkville, the team attacked the parents of the other team and police were called. Mr. Munzert stated that he is not sure if any of this was reported back to the office. He stated that they are going to get thrown off the soccer league, further commenting that part of the Board's job is to look at what the problem is. On another note, at the Rosedale Recreation Council meeting, they discussed the County dress code. It was stated that Pete [last name not provided] at Ballestone stated that there is no dress code; only a shirt is issued to staff. A staff member showed up in pajama pants and flip flops and people had a problem with this. This is someone representing the County, and public facing. Ben Porter replied, stating that it was the overnight park attendant at the gate house during the Faerie Fest. Mr. Munzert wanted to make sure the Department was aware. Mr. Munzert also mentioned Mount Carmel, requesting that BCRP hold a meeting to discuss the procedure on how things will be done at this site because there is already arguing going on there and it is not even open yet. Mr. Johns shared that at The Fields at Renaissance Park, Mount Carmel has first priority of use for school events, but he fears they will partner with a program that will pay the school, and Mount Carmel will submit the permit. Mr. Roddy requested additional information about this agreement/MOU. He is very familiar with the site and thinks the Board needs more information. Ms. Jackson stated that this would be helpful to her as they are battling about use in her area. Mr. Munzert stated that Mount Carmel has teams and has an athletic association that has teams as well. Mr. Johns would like a briefing at a future meeting.

Chair's Report:

Mr. Johns reported that it has been an eventful month. He sent an email about attending the Turner Station Recreation Council meeting. This was the first meeting Deborah Green attended since the Board heard about her situation. The interaction between Ms. Green and Maurisha White did not go the best. Mr. Johns sat with them for two hours after the meeting. He reported that at times he thought the meeting was productive, but at other times, he did not. He reported that they are currently working together to develop a program for Turner Station that they can present together at the next meeting. He has been included in some of the email exchanges. The next meeting is September. He is in communication with the bylaws committee and will be helping them with their revisions.

Mr. Johns has been meeting with nature councils regarding the MOU, which is ~85% complete. There have been lots of improvements. All are committed, and it has been productive, with all working together. Mr. Johns has had some other communication with recreation councils. He received a call from Stephen Giordani, with Towson Recreation Council, who came up with a good solution to partnering with a club team but not inappropriately. Mr. Johns spoke with Mr. Smith and Cortney Weinstock and they think it sounds good. He explained, that there is a pipeline of players sponsoring Towson, which is getting the financial benefit, and when the players get above what the Council can support, the Council would then direct the players to the club team. This is very preliminary. They will not be putting in permits for them. He stated that he thinks this is something we could see around the County.

Committee Reports:

Financial Review Committee: Mr. Munzert reported that he is planning to attend a meeting on Wednesday night to find out where some money went; Ms. Jackson may also attend. Mr. Johns reported that the County Council approved staffing for the State's Attorney's office. He spoke with Scott Shellenberger and was told they will be able to move people back to the financial crimes division who will be able to work with the Board.

Governance Committee: Mr. Johns reported that Phil Davis has been out for a couple of months with a lot going on. He spoke with him and reported that Mr. Davis will be emailing the committee soon to get back in the swing of things, including updating the recertification process.

Legislative Committee: Mr. Paternotte reported that the Board submitted their letter and obviously it worked.

Bylaws Committee: Mr. Johns stated that the meeting on Thursday is more for the boiler point, but regarding Turner Station, he stated that they will loop in Ms. Jackson. He did ask if she was available this Thursday at 10:00 a.m. but she is not. She can meet in July. The committee will discuss and can meet with Ms. Jackson in July. Whatever is discussed on Thursday they will report back to Mr. Johns and Ms. Jackson.

Old Business:

Regarding Rebecca Reynolds and the Bear Creek Recreation Council, Mr Johns reported that at the last meeting, board members heard from both the council president/dance chair and Ms. Reynolds, but did not have a quorum so they were not able to vote. At this point, Mr. Johns thinks the Board needs to decide what they want to do as Ms. Reynolds has an indefinite suspension. He thinks you cannot really have an indefinite suspension as you are speaking for all moving forward. There needs to be a timeframe and Mr. Johns recommends a 1-year suspension going back to September 2023 when the motion was made for the indefinite suspension. He further stated that it must be made clear to both that if any issues occur, they need to submit an incident report. Board members will stand by and make sure it is a safe environment for all, and if there are issues, they will take action to make sure a suspension is enacted. Discussion ensued. Mr. Marsalek deferred to Ms. Jackson to make a motion, and board members can take a vote. Ms. Jackson stated that she doesn't think the Council will be happy with anything the Board decides. See item under "Action."

New Business:

Mr. Johns raised the question of whether the Board should be handling recreation and nature council appeals, referencing the appeal process and noting that every council has a different policy. He stated that at the very least, the Board needs to, through the bylaws committee, have some sort of uniform process that each council has in place, or, questioned if the Board should be overseeing these. Mr. Roddy stated that in the Board bylaws and guidelines there is nothing regarding authority that states the Board has to hear the appeals they have recently heard. He further asked members if this Board wants to serve in a judicial role of hearing the appeals of 45 independent organizations, and if so, identify the procedure we will follow. If we do then we need a process of how we handle these appeals. Ms. Bassett stated that she thinks the councils need a nonbiased party, further stating that it is the Board's job to make sure process is being followed, and to make a decision. See item under "Action."

Regarding the earlier discussion of football pools, Ms. Weinstock reported that Amy Vagnoni was involved last week in the discussion. Ms. Weinstock stated that she has to review documents prior to taking action on behalf of the County. The Department did not file a police report. Mr. Roddy stated that gambling is illegal in Maryland period, and if the Board was told of an illegal activity that the way to handle is to report to the police. Ms. Jackson replied, stating at the time, the council president did not have proof, only hearsay, and she directed her to contact Ms. Weinstock or Ms. Vagnoni. Ms. Weinstock stated that they will discuss with the Office of Law tomorrow. Ms. Jackson stated that board members should let councils know not to do this, recognizing that

these pools are done frequently amongst people. Mr. Johns stated that if board members hear about this, they should direct the councils to contact Ms. Vagnoni.

Ms. Mundell-Collins asked Drew Emmer if there was any movement on the kitchen and other items at Halethorpe. Mr. Emmer replied, stating that it is in the que. They are working on other sites and don't have a timeframe for this work.

Mr. Johns discussed filling the student member position. See item under "Action."

Comments By Individual Citizens:

Kate Joyce, executive director of Talmar, attended this evening to follow up on the October conversation that the lease is still outstanding and expired in 2020. She provided background on Talmar and what they do. She stated that the original lease was 15 years and they have been operating on continued lease for the past four years. She has heard that the new lease will go from \$1 to \$5,000, further stating that the 5-year term of the lease is too short to pursue funding. There needs to be 15 years remaining on the lease for the funding she is seeking (USDA funding). Ms. Weinstock stated that Ms. Joyce has the most recent version with regards to the lease and we are waiting to hear from her. Ms. Joyce said they submitted this back in February. Ms. Weinstock stated that a meeting was requested.

Jeffrey Budnitz addressed the Board stating that if they have a chance, they should go to Talmar. In addition, he stated that Beahta Davis, as a facilitator of the County, stated that the Board would hear appeals. Mr. Budnitz stated that he is not saying this is documented, but guidance provided. He referenced the appeal discussion and encouraged the Board to think about guardrails when laying out the process.

Ms. Walsh stated that the Board's relationship with each council is now being included in MOU's. The first draft was very open and blank, a one-sided document benefitting the County. It has to go through the process of writing. Ms. Walsh stated that the Board has a very important part with the councils in the MOU.

Action:

Ms. Jackson motioned to lift the suspension against Ms. Reynolds as of September 2024, allowing her back in programs, but if there are any additional issues, Bear Creek is to report and further action to be taken; Mr. Marsalek seconded the motion, Mr. Roddy abstained since he was not present at the May meeting to hear both parties, all other members were in favor.

Mr. Marsalek motioned to send the issue of appeals to the Governance Committee to assess, make a recommendation, and report back to the Board; Mr. Munzert seconded; Ms. Jackson halted the motion stating that there are two questions here. She asked if the Board wanted to handle appeals and stated that if the Board does want to handle the appeals, then Mr. Marsalek's motion would be possible. Mr. Roddy stated that he thinks the Board should think about this and decide if they want to hear these appeals and he can then draft what the consensus is. Ms. Mundell-Collins questioned that if the answer is no then what does that mean to the councils, further questioning who would handle the appeals if the Board doesn't. She stated that she thinks the Board should think about this. Members decided to table the discussion until the next meeting. Mr. Munzert withdrew his vote to second the motion and no other board member seconded the motion. Ms. Bassett motioned to table the discussion and Mr. Paternotte seconded; and all were in favor.

Mr. Johns motioned to send a letter to all council presidents publicizing the student member position on the Board; Mr. Roddy seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

Adjournment:

There being no further business, Mr. Roddy moved to adjourn the meeting; Mr. Manjoe seconded the motion, and all were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa Winters