

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARKS

COREY JOHNS, CHAIR

Meeting Minutes

June 5, 2023

The regular monthly meeting of the Baltimore County Recreation and Parks Board was held on Monday, June 5, 2023, at 6:00 p.m., at the Historic Courthouse – Room 118. In attendance were Corey Johns, Chair; Phil Davis, Vice Chair; and board members Brooks Paternotte, Pat Roddy, Chuck Munzert, Dana Jackson and Desiree Mundell-Collins. Recreation and Parks Department staff included Director Bob Smith; Cortney Weinstock, Deputy Director of Administration; Dan Carpenter, Chief of Administration; Drew Emmer, Chief of Capital Planning and Development; Ben Porter, Chief of Nature, Environmental, Agriculture and Programming Centers; and Amy Vagnoni, Chief of Recreation Services.

Call to Order:

Chair Corey Johns called the meeting to order at 6:12 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

Pat Roddy motioned to approve the May meeting minutes; Chuck Munzert seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Board Member Activities:

Brooks Paternotte was scheduled to attend the Lake Roland Nature Council meeting but had a conflict. However, he is on the list to be updated regarding their meetings. In addition, Mr. Paternotte is planning to attend the Greater Pikesville Recreation Council meeting tomorrow evening. He attempted to attend the Owings Mills Recreation Council meeting twice now and the date on the monthly council meeting schedule was incorrect. Mr. Paternotte stated that what is more concerning is that he walked into a high school without identification and was able to walk around without anyone saying a word. Director Bob Smith replied, stating that we would pass this on to BCPS. In addition, Mr. Paternotte reported that he reached out to Liberty Road Recreation and Parks Council (LRRPC) to offer help on their bylaws and reported that he has not heard back.

Mr. Munzert reported that with most of the meetings he attended he only had one issue. He stated that he was invited to a meeting on Wednesday and was asked for clarification on the Bowley's Quarters property, further stating that he was working with Councilman David Marks. Mr. Smith replied, stating that we researched this property and it is not Recreation and Parks property, it is County surplus property.

Mr. Roddy reported that most of what he did in May was prior to the May board meeting. He is planning to attend the Bengies-Chase Recreation Council meeting next week.

Dana Jackson attended the Essex-Stembridge Recreation Council meeting, along with Mr. Munzert. She reported on the concern they had regarding the portable toilet at Renaissance Park, indicating that it is too far from the field. The Council wanted to see if they could get this unit moved, but were told no. The Council also reported that the unit is not being cleaned. Mr. Smith commented on the current vendor, stating that it is a challenge getting the units cleaned. Ms. Jackson attended the Middle River Recreation Council meeting. She

reported that she has been bringing up AED's and how the County is putting together an application to let people know where they are located. She stated that many councils had no idea where these are, and many found that during evening programs they don't have access to the AED's. They discussed the idea of looking at grant funding to get more units. Mr. Smith commented that if a council wants to get portable units for their programs they can. He further stated that we are working on getting the AED's located in the Park Finder web tool, and trying to identify where else we can put these. Ms. Jackson also attended the Gray Charles Recreation Council meeting, stating that they were a little hostile with the change-over of members. However, she was able to obtain their taxes and additional information and reported that they are good to go. Ms. Jackson stated that she and Mr. Munzert attempted to attend the Watersedge Recreation Council meeting, but reported getting conflicting information regarding this meeting. However, she spoke with them and was able to get all of their necessary information. Board members discussed conflict with meeting information provided on the monthly council meeting calendar. Lisa Winters stated that staff have sent her council meeting information and she will compile for distribution to all members. Ms. Jackson stated that it seems as though not all councils are abiding by this schedule. Mr. Johns had been working on compiling this information as well. Ms. Jackson reported that Bear Creek Recreation Council asked for help with their bylaws. Mr. Johns referenced the Bylaws Committee to work with them.

Desiree Mundell-Collins reported that she attended the Arbutus Recreation and Parks Council meeting and stated that things are moving along nicely there.

Chairman's Report:

Mr. Johns reported that he is excited that the Baltimore County Council made no cuts to the Department of Recreation and Parks during their final budget deliberations, and stated that the commitment this administration has to this quality-of-life Department has truly been fantastic. He further stated that members saw last month in Mr. Smith's presentation how far behind Baltimore County had fallen when it comes to funding Recreation and Parks compared to other counties not only in Maryland but around the country. Mr. Johns stated that it is going to be a long road to get to comparable numbers, but clearly there is a commitment to the belief that Recreation and Parks makes life better for the residents of Baltimore County.

Mr. Johns announced that he is excited about the advancements we keep seeing from the Department. He explored the Park Finder web tool and commented that it is great. Next month, Molly Pickel will attend the meeting to present more about the tool.

The County also helped work with the Baltimore County Horse Council to bring in the statue of Secretariat to the Ag Center for a short time. Mr. Johns commented that this was a great draw. He went and visited, as did many others, and stated that it was bigger, more impressive, and more detailed than he ever imagined. He stated that he thinks it was very cool we got to be the home for that statue for a while.

While he was unable to attend the Oregon Ridge Master Plan Meeting on May 24, Mr. Johns did speak with Ralph Brown about it, and some others who attended, reporting that it was very positively received. This process has been better than he thinks many imagined. When we were first getting into it there was some feeling from people that they should proceed with caution and should temper their expectations, but Mr. Johns stated that he thinks it's proven itself to be a great and open process that is taking the public's voice and input very seriously. He received a response from Mr. Brown stating, "The meeting went well. All parties were gracious and open. I think people left with a positive feeling. Ms. Lardner and Ms. Weinstock are pros at making people feel that they are being heard."

Mr. Johns was able to attend a few council meetings. He joined the Baltimore County Sailing Center, and stated that they are doing great work. They have a variety of offerings to include Special Olympic training, partnerships to help at-risk youth, programs that focus on helping recovering addicts, and programs that provide struggling families with shelter, food, and clothing to help them get back on their feet. Mr. Johns stated that it is

truly a tremendous council we have here in Baltimore County. Mr. Johns reported that they are missing out on some grants because they don't have an MOU; they are looking forward to this.

Mr. Johns attended the Parkville Recreation Council meeting and stated that things are going very well there. He also joined the Greater Loch Raven Recreation Council meeting. That council has done well to really rebuild itself since the pandemic led to them losing some programs and having a council leadership change. Their one major concern is the state and future of Loch Raven Center. As it is a historic building, they are limited in what can happen there, but the state of the building and maintenance cost of the building leave them concerned about how long the site is useable.

The Greater Loch Raven Recreation Council did express some thoughts about the regional map that our Board draws. Mr. Johns stated that this has been brought up by other councils and is something he believes we do need to look at – as time goes on and councils grow and shrink and change, we need to make sure those boundaries for facilities still work. The big issue right now is the rebuilding of Towson and Dulaney High Schools, which will force those high school programs to move to other fields. Mr. Johns stated that we don't have all the information about where they are going yet so it's hard to look at the map now without knowing what is going to be available. Mr. Johns reported that he is honestly not sure when the last time the Board looked at the map and adjusted it, but stated that we will certainly address it.

Mr. Johns stated that he thinks it is important to discuss with Board of Education in advance of the September meeting, about high school teams being able to practice during the summer – councils will definitely be concerned about when and where they can go. Mr. Smith replied, stating that this was a MPSSAA decision. Mr. Johns stated that communication with Recreation and Parks about field access is important. Mr. Roddy suggested writing a letter, subject to the Board's approval. Ms. Jackson suggested sending the letter once the new superintendent takes position.

Director's Comments:

Mr. Smith reported that the Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan has been accepted by DNR; we will be eligible for Program Open Space funding again. Mr. Smith referenced an exciting new playground renovation, announcing that tomorrow is the Hamiltowne Park Playground Replacement and Park Enhancements Ribbon Cutting. In addition, Mr. Smith announced that we are planning for a summer groundbreaking for Sparrows Point Park. This weekend the Department will host the Third Annual LGBTQ+ Pride Festival at Oregon Ridge. In addition, the Department will host the Third Annual Juneteenth Celebration on June 17 at Benjamin Banneker Historical Park and Museum, from 11 AM – 4 PM.

Mr. Smith reported that Jeffrey Budnitz, Executive Founding Board Member and Treasurer, Lake Roland Nature Council, was awarded the 2023 Robert M. Artz Advocate Award, one of the highest awards a volunteer could receive from the National Recreation and Park Association. Mr. Roddy suggested sending a letter of congratulations to Mr. Budnitz. Mr. Paternotte volunteered to take care of this. Mr. Smith stated that this is a huge accolade and well deserved.

Ms. Mundell-Collins asked about how capital projects work, i.e. Halethorpe. She stated that they had scope and timeframe, but would like to know how this evolves. Drew Emmer replied, stating that we have started giving realistic timelines. We provide a realistic timeline for this project and have stayed on track. He discussed steps taken and reiterated that we are on schedule.

Committee Reports

Financial Review Committee: Regarding Prettyboy Recreation Council, Mr. Munzert reported that all information he received is good. Regarding Towson Recreation Council, Ms. Jackson attended their meeting and stated that it was very disorganized, with no agenda, no minutes, no financial report, and no taxes,

which they were supposed to provide her with. She was told they sent taxes to Ms. Winters; however, Ms. Winters stated that she has not received this information. Ms. Jackson referenced Towson and Towson Towne Recreation Councils working together regarding space, but reported that Kelly Post is showing up on any field they want, including trying to kicking off high school teams. They are not permitted, but going in and playing wherever they want. Ms. Jackson referenced the before and after school programs and further stated that no one knows how they are being paid. Mr. Smith replied, stating that we knew they were paying them directly and knew they were not submitting a financial report. Discussion ensued regarding paying people directly with no record of employees pay. Ms. Jackson and Mr. Munzert told Towson Towne Recreation Council what they needed and asked when the next meeting was scheduled. The Council told them they did not have this meeting scheduled yet. Ms. Jackson and Mr. Munzert reported that they met members of the Council board. They also reported that the Council referenced giving the County money and not being able to use the site. Mr. Smith mentioned the in-season sports policy. Discussion ensued regarding personal credit card use with reimbursement, and length of probation. Ms. Jackson wants to request to meet with the Council and show them exactly what is needed/expected from them. Mr. Roddy said the Board needs to put in writing what we want from them and needs to establish a firm deadline (with the thought of registration/permits issued in mind). Mr. Johns requested they put in writing what they want with the deadline of the July 12 meeting of the Board of Recreation and Parks, and if not, no permits to be issued. Mr. Johns and committee members to meet after this monthly meeting to discuss and draft letter. Mr. Johns commented that the recertification process needs to be a lot cleaner moving forward.

Governance Committee: Vice Chair Phil Davis did not attend the Prettyboy Recreation Council meeting. He spoke with Mr. Munzert briefly regarding the issue with the previous president voted out. He stated that they are a recertified council and will likely elect a new president soon. Mr. Munzert is planning to attend their next meeting.

Legislative Committee: Mr. Paternotte stated that the Board sent a letter to County Council and it seems to have worked. He stated that he has a few things on the to-do list, including the Budnitz award letter and the letter to Board of Education regarding use of fields for off season practice. Mr. Johns motioned to send a letter to Board of Education regarding this policy, to ensure they recognize that councils/community utilize fields, too. They should look at these groups also and work together as a partnership. This is a plea to stop planning in a vacuum and establish ourselves in equal posture. Board members to review the letter before sending. See item under "Action".

Bylaws Committee: Ms. Jackson to work with committee for Bear Creek Recreation Council. Mr. Paternotte made himself available to LRRPC and stated that he would ping them again.

Old Business:

Regarding recertification, Mr. Johns stated that the Board will start looking at this paperwork in September for the next go around. Ms. Jackson motioned to recertify the Watersedge Recreation Council, indicating that they submitted all necessary information. See item under "Action".

Mr. Roddy reported that the Center for Hope is scheduled to attend the October meeting of the Board of Recreation and Parks.

The Department is working on identifying locations for upcoming board meetings, starting in October. Halethorpe was suggested as a possible meeting location.

New Business:

Mr. Smith announced that the Department is currently reprocessing and recalculating Group Leadership balances and will let board members know which councils owe money. The team will be reaching out to councils directly.

Mr. Johns asked about the Background Check Specialist position. This hasn't posted yet. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Johns asked about the MOU process and putting together a committee. Mr. Smith said he would let him know when he would like to have a conversation about this; Mr. Johns replied stating that he is ready.

Action:

Mr. Johns motioned to send a letter to Board of Education regarding policy surrounding use of fields for off season practice; Mr. Roddy seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Ms. Jackson motioned to recertify the Watersedge Recreation Council; Mr. Paternotte seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Adjournment:

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa Winters