

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARKS

COREY JOHNS, CHAIR

Meeting Minutes

July 12, 2023

The regular monthly meeting of the Baltimore County Recreation and Parks Board was held on Wednesday, July 12, 2023, at 6:00 p.m., at the Center for Maryland Agriculture and Farm Park – Arena Classroom. In attendance were Corey Johns, Chair; and board members Danielle Bassett, Pat Roddy, Chuck Munzert, Dana Jackson, and Desiree Mundell-Collins. Recreation and Parks Department staff included Cortney Weinstock, Deputy Director of Administration; and Ben Porter, Chief of Nature, Environmental, Agriculture and Programming Centers.

Call to Order:

Chair Corey Johns called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Recreation and Parks staff member Molly Pickel came before the Board to provide a demonstration of the new Park Finder tool, an interactive search tool of the 360 parks in Baltimore County. The Board members were very excited about the new tool and all the features that are offered in real time. Molly Pickel is recognized nationally as the “30 Under 30” doing exemplary work in the Recreation and Parks industry.

Approval of Minutes:

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

Comments By Individual Citizens:

Andy Bolton of the Ruxton Ridge Community Association was present to discuss the defacto takeover of the courts by pickleball players. The Association does not have a problem with sharing the court with the pickleball players but the players are very loud, a bit aggressive and have defaced the court with chalk and tape without returning the court to its original condition when finished playing pickleball. Corey Johns commented that the County is currently investing in additional pickleball courts/area. Pat Roddy recommended using the Park Finder as a perfect tool for locating additional pickleball courts. Suggestions were made for a dedicated pickleball court at Oliver Beach Elementary School in addition to pickleball players doing a better job of self-regulating so that the county or other stake holders would not have to become involved.

Keith Marin and Jarod Picone of Carroll Manor Recreation Council (CMRC) were present. Concerns were addressed regarding protocols for permitting and equipment.

Jesse Scordo of Cycling was present in addition to Catherine Whitt from Maryland Interscholastic Cycling League to discuss interest from the cycling community in forming a Cycling Council. There was much discussion around the absence of sanctioned bike trails and bike parks in northern Baltimore County. A suggestion was made by Corey Johns that they look into the Budget Town Hall Meetings held by the County Executive each year to request funding for such endeavors. Hans Gillian of the Maryland High School BMX—Founder Academy Foundation was present to discuss greater awareness of the Mountain Bike BMX and would like to find a permanent structure to build a pump track.

Board Member Activities:

New board member Danielle Bassett, representing District 1, was welcomed and introduced herself as an experienced Recreation and Parks professional with over 17 years of experience, currently living in Catonsville. She shared that she works in Howard County but has always lived in Baltimore County and utilized recreation and parks and is excited to join the board.

Pat Roddy: Will present “Volunteer of the Year” proposal under New Business.

Chuck Munzert: Will present issues under Financial Review/Committee Reports.

Dana Jackson: Will present report under Financial Review/Committee Reports.

Desiree Mundell-Collins: Attended Arbutus Recreation and Parks Council Meeting. Council preparing for the Fourth of July, Parade, and 5k Run and Parade.

Chairman’s Report:

Corey Johns stated that over the past few months our board has made a great commitment to not only continuing increased communication with recreation and nature councils, but also our partners in government. Last month we had a productive meeting with the County Executive and members of the County Council. Already, some of those conversations are leading to action. On July 5, Councilman Mike Ertel and Delegate Carl Jackson called with community members and stakeholders regarding the future of Loch Raven Center. We shared the issue with buildings falling behind, particularly Loch Raven Center, and they are working on a plan to bring new life back to the failing building. While the meeting was called in short order and the recreation council president was unable to make it, Corey Johns did attend, shared how that community and recreation council relied on the location for recreation, and both Councilman Ertel and Delegate Jackson shared their understanding and commitment to ensuring it remains a space for recreation. Corey Johns made sure to connect the Greater Loch Raven Recreation Council President to the community members working together on this project. Corey Johns stated that he is very encouraged that in exactly one month after naming the issue with Loch Raven Center, there was a meeting called to figure out a plan. He stated that he thinks the moral of that story is clear. He encouraged board members to communicate with their council members about issues and suggested bringing them to this board meeting. The Department works hard but can only work within the means they have. We saw how historical underfunding has left the current administration playing catchup, even with the commitment for funding they have shown.

The ribbon cutting at Hamiltowne Park was another great example of the success of this process. The park was incredible, truly a massive upgrade over what was there, and a gem in the community. It was made possible by the Department, County, and state all working together to make a plan and bring the necessary funding for a project that increases the quality of life in that community.

Corey Johns attended the council meeting for the Overlea-Fullerton Recreation Council. He also made sure they were aware, and had a representative, for a walk through at Holt Park that was attended by County and state representatives. Holt Park has a lot of money coming to it and Corey Johns stated that he is very excited about how that site is going to be improved.

Oregon Ridge had their annual meeting. It was a big party before the business meeting. WYPR’s Tom Hall was the emcee for an award ceremony where the Council gave gifts to their wonderful volunteers. Another night where many different elected officials were working together with the Council for the benefit of the program they provide the County.

A major topic of conversation at each Oregon Ridge Recreation Council Meeting is their focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Cromwell Valley Park Nature Council has also really been working hard to make

sure their park is reaching out and serving everyone in Baltimore County. To help this, Corey Johns reached out to Baltimore County's Immigration Affairs Outreach Coordinator to start a conversation about how these councils can be more inclusive. At this meeting, also attended by Brooks Paternotte, Giuliana Valencia-Banks said she was willing to go to every recreation and nature council's meeting to give them information and share ways they can be more inclusive. Corey Johns stated that he felt making Giuliana Valencia-Banks attend meetings for 44 different councils wasn't the best use of time or the most efficient way for this. He and Brooks Paternotte were wondering if the Department could work with Giuliana Valencia-Banks to schedule a type of "presidents meeting" for all councils where they are invited to send representatives for her presentation and discussion on DEI.

Lastly, while there is no council focused on cycling, the Department has worked hard to accommodate this type of recreation for our residents. In his opinion, Corey Johns stated that he thinks it may be time to work to bring all of the groups and voices in cycling together in a type of council similar to the Baltimore County Skateboard Council. Chief of Capital Planning & Development Drew Emmer actually shared with him that he'd love to see a cycling council because of how easy it has been to work with a centralized voice like the Skateboard Council. On July 23 at the Panera Bread on Campbell Boulevard, Corey Johns will be meeting with some of those in the cycling community that he has heard at County Town Halls or the input session on cycling, to discuss the possibility of creating a cycling council and what creating a council entails. He invites other board member to attend.

Director's Comments:

In the absence of Director Bob Smith, Deputy Director Cortney Weinstock addressed the Board and shared Director's Comments as follows. July is Recreation and Parks Month, and to celebrate, the Department is hosting and highlighting programs, staff, and Department services in the following ways:

- Staff highlights on social media
- Hosting three community activities: Paint in the Park, July 7 at Holt Park; Pops in the Park, July 15 at both Benjamin Banneker Historical Park and Museum and Marshy Point Park; and Physical Therapy in the Park, July 27 at County Home Park
- Continuing to host Screen on the Green outdoor movies in the park
- Bob Smith and Courtney Weinstock will be touring facilities to personally thank staff next week as well as highlighting the fact that July 21, is Park and Recreation Professionals Day.

The Department will not fill the currently vacant Deputy Director position, formerly held by Bob Smith. Moving forward the Capital Planning and Development division will report to the Director with Deputy Director Cortney Weinstock now overseeing Recreations Services, NEAP and Administrative Services. The Department is in partnership with community organizers as well as Delegate Jackson in the creation of a Summer Basketball League. While the league will not officially take place until 2024, a kickoff event to build awareness and enthusiasm around this initiative is being planned for the end of August.

Committee Reports

Financial Review Committee: Chuck Munzert reported that Prettyboy Recreation Council is solid and the new Board is in place as well as recertification. The Edmondson-Westview Recreation Council financial issues are currently being investigated and will hopefully be concluded by September, with solid evidence to sustain mismanagement of funds. Gray Charles Recreation Council is currently receiving restitution from a rogue council member, with a warrant for arrest of another council member who misappropriated council funds. Towsontowne Recreation Council is still not in full compliance with the stipulations regarding the extensions or the requirements regarding their recertification or probationary period. There was much discussion from board members Chuck Munzert, Pat Roddy, Corey Johns, and Desiree Mundell-Collins regarding the status of Towsontowne. Beginning on April 17, 2022 the Towsontowne Recreation Council has been given numerous

opportunities to comply with recertification. The Board has extended the due date for recertification completion on numerous occasions. In addition, the Board has reached out to Towsontowne Recreation Council board members by phone and email but to no avail. Unfortunately, the Towsontowne Recreation Council has failed to communicate with the Board in a responsible manner regarding the recertification process and is not in compliance. Corey Johns stated that Matt Nuzzi's first reply after he emailed him following the June meeting was on Monday, July 10. He mentioned that he informed him that he had his 2021-22 fiscal year taxes and he delivered them to the Department. He also followed up with an email sharing that soccer and field hockey were preparing their budgets but he could not have them set until he knew if he had to rent fields or if they were going to be allotted enough space by the Department. Corey Johns shared that he told him that Towsontowne's five biggest programs were soccer, field hockey, before and after school clubs, tennis, and basketball. He said in the email that each program submitted a nominee to join the Council's Executive Committee by August 15 and they could be voted on at their September meeting. He stated by phone that the council resolved the unclaimed funds, but no documentation was shared. There still was never an in-person meeting set between the treasurer and the financial review committee. The Board has made numerous attempts to stress to Towsontowne Recreation Council that noncompliance could result in the loss of field/facility permits via Baltimore County Recreation and Parks. At the July 12, 2023 meeting the Board of Recreation and Parks (Board), voted to have the certification of the Towsontowne Recreation Council (Council) expire. The Board has instructed the Department of Recreation and Parks (Department) to no longer consider the Towsontowne Recreation Council a Council of Record as of August 1, 2023. This means the Council will no longer be covered by County insurance nor have its volunteers indemnified by the County. The decision does not impact the Council's ability to operate as its own 501(c)3, or act as an independent recreation council with its own insurance and request for rental of fields in Baltimore County through the Department.

Governance Committee: Corey Johns stated that there was nothing to report.

Legislative Committee: Pat Roddy updated the Board of the new law regarding cannabis. It is illegal to smoke cannabis in a public park. If you smoke cannabis in a public park you can be fined \$250.

Bylaws Committee: Pat Roddy said he is assisting in re-draft the Bear Creek Recreation Council Bylaws. He was going to review them after they were written and submit them to the Bylaws Committee.

Old Business:

See notes under Financial Review Committee, regarding the Towsontowne Recreation Council.

Regarding communication with Board of Education, Corey Johns talked with representatives from the Baltimore County School Board regarding field access and equity partnerships rather than sending a formal letter. Corey Johns felt a phone call first would be the most appropriate means of forging a relationship regarding these ongoing issues.

New Business:

Pat Roddy presented a draft to the Board for a proposed "Volunteer of the Year" program. The draft included a fact sheet with objectives, format coordination and logistics regarding the proposal. The proposal to be reviewed and discussed at the next Board meeting in September.

Adjournment:

There being no further business, Chuck Munzert moved to adjourn the meeting, Dana Jackson seconded the motion and all were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Desiree Mundell-Collins