

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARKS

GREG HEITNER, CHAIRMAN

Meeting Minutes

November 9, 2022

The regular monthly meeting of the Baltimore County Recreation and Parks Board was held on Wednesday, November 9, 2022, at 6:00 p.m., at Oregon Ridge Park and Lodge. In attendance were Greg Heitner, Chairman; Corey Johns, Vice Chairman; and board members Eric van den Beemt, Brooks Paternotte, Chuck Munzert, Dana Jackson, Phil Davis and Desiree Mundell-Collins. Recreation and Parks Department staff included Director Roslyn Johnson; Bob Smith, Deputy Director of Recreation and Facility Operations; Cortney Weinstock, Deputy Director of Administration; Ben Porter, Chief of Nature, Agricultural, Environmental and Programming Centers; and Annie Sanchez, Park Manager.

Also in attendance: Jarod Picone, Carroll Manor Recreation Council; Ralph Brown, President, Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council; Michael Ruby, Country Chronicle.

Call to Order:

Chairman Greg Heitner called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Board Member Activities:

Chuck Munzert reported on his attendance at the Cal Ripken, Sr. Youth Development Park at Fields at Renaissance Park groundbreaking.

Dana Jackson informed board members that she is still working on recertification with councils in her area.

Eric van den Beemt reported that he attended the Oregon Ridge Regional Park Master Plan Public Input Meeting and stated that it was very clear that attendees wanted a pristine nature park with expanded nature center, and nothing motorized, nor bikes on trails. He stated that he thought it was a good meeting. Mr. van den Beemt also attended the Belfast Road Property Public Input Meeting. He stated that he has been to a number of these meetings and there is usually a divided crowd. However, he said he thought this was civil and very much one sided, reporting that the community wants this now. Mr. van den Beemt stated that there were a few in attendance that voiced objection to lights. Bob Smith replied, stating that we received some good input, and he agreed that it was ~90% in favor of the project.

Brooks Paternotte reiterated on feedback he is getting on Oregon Ridge. He also reported that he is working on recertification with councils in his area.

Vice Chairman Corey Johns has been working with the Baltimore County Sailing Center (BCSC), updating their bylaws. The BCSC has not yet approved the revisions; their Council meeting is scheduled to take place in a few days. In addition, Mr. Johns reported that he spoke to a soccer coach with Towson Recreation Council about field access, proposing a few things. He submitted this item under "New Business", but would like to hold off on discussing until next meeting. Mr. Johns stated that before discussing, he needs to make sure he has all his ducks in row.

Phil Davis informed board members of a complaint he received from a parent. Mr. Davis stated that the complaint is regarding a coach who assaulted a parent and was allowed to continue in the coaching role. Mr. Davis stated that this was only sent to him and he then brought before the Board. Mr. Heitner replied with direction to table the conversation. He will have a conversation with Mr. Smith after this meeting, and if needed, we can place this item on the agenda for December.

Mr. Heitner attended the Cal Ripken, Sr. Youth Development Park groundbreaking and stated that it was very cool. He loves seeing partnerships and stated that he thinks this is a great way for the community to work. Mr. Heitner reported that he also attended the ribbon cutting for the Destination Playground at Northwest Regional Park, stating that this was another top notch event. He added that there were Ravens players on site and it was a lot of fun. He encourages everyone to attend these events.

Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Johns moved to approve the September board meeting minutes; Mr. van den Beemt seconded; and all were in favor.

Mr. Paternotte moved to approve the October board meeting minutes; Mr. van den Beemt seconded; and all were in favor.

Chairman's Report:

Mr. Heitner reported that he knows everyone is working hard regarding recertification and thanked all. He reminded everyone on the Board that when speaking, your words carry a significant amount of weight behind them. Board members should not use the term decertification as we are in the process of recertifying, not decertifying councils.

Director's Comments:

Director Roslyn Johnson reported that public meetings has been our work lately, in between ribbon cuttings and groundbreakings. Ms. Johnson stated that she thought the Belfast Road Property Public Input Meeting went really well, with ~150 people in attendance. She stated that this was a really good crowd, with positive discussion, and with more in favor of lights. She reported that we are still receiving input from the community. In addition, Ms. Johnson stated that the Destination Playground ribbon cutting at Northwest Regional Park was excellent, and thanked all for attending. She announced that we have four more destination playgrounds (to include Banneker and Oregon Ridge) on the horizon, and we are slated to build a universally accessible playground at Gwynn Oak Park and Sparrows Point. The Cal Ripken, Sr. Youth Development Park groundbreaking was a great event. This nearly \$2.3 million partnership project is being funded by a variety of funding sources deriving from the County, the federal American Rescue Plan Act, the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, and the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation. The groundbreaking for Rosedale Recreation Activity Center (RAC) officially rolled out RACs. Ms. Johnson reported that these Centers are no longer referred to as PAL Centers; the police were not running programs. At the RACs, you will see variety of programs for various ages, and each will have a theme. The theme for Rosedale is Esports. Next week we have a groundbreaking scheduled for the Middle River RAC. The theme at this RAC is aeronautics. There are two upcoming meetings scheduled for the Oregon Ridge Regional Park Master Plan. There will be an in person meeting scheduled on November 12, at the Oregon Ridge Nature Center, and a virtual option scheduled for November 16 via WebEx. Ms. Johnson reported that Senator Sydnor would like to see a RAC at Western Hills, but this would need funding. In addition, Ms. Johnson reported that we held an All Staff meeting in September, which was the first time brining everyone together since COVID. At this meeting we shared the Department's vision, goals, and direction, in addition to unveiling the new Department logo.

Old Business:

Regarding recertification, board members reviewed those ready for vote; see item under “Action”. Mr. Heitner stated that after the last meeting, he sent Ms. Johnson an email with the recommendation that board members have come up with. The Board recommends that no additional permits be issued to delinquent councils, after November 1. In addition, any council that is delinquent after December 1, the Board is asking the County to pull their permits. Ms. Johnson stated that this message would not be sent until after this week. We will coordinate with our team and get this message out to them. We will use information provided in Mr. Heitner’s email to convey this. The Board has requested they are copied on the letter that goes out to the delinquent councils.

Board members continued their review and discussion regarding recertification. Desiree Mundell-Collins will follow up with the Arbutus Recreation and Parks Council and Mr. Davis will follow up with Baltimore Highlands Recreation Council. Regarding Towson Recreation Council, Mr. Paternotte reported that they sent some documents today; they are working on this. Mr. van den Beemt requested Lisa Winters forward him the Hereford Zone Recreation and Parks Council documents for review. Regarding Prettyboy Recreation Council, Mr. van den Beemt stated that he has spoken with the Council multiple times and reported that they have a new president that this was dumped on. In addition, the Council is dealing with a theft issue and have been in touch with Adam Lippe for assistance. Mr. van den Beemt stated that he thinks they are moving in the right direction. Ms. Jackson reported that she is working with Colgate and Gray Charles Recreation Councils. Ms. Jackson requested that Ms. Winters resend Edgemere-Sparrows Point Recreation Council documents for her review. Board members requested that the following councils receive the letter from the County, reporting that they are delinquent: Greater Pikesville, Owings Mills, Towsontowne, Carroll Manor, Bear Creek, Dundalk-Eastfield, North Point Village, and Watersedge.

Ms. Jackson asked for clarification regarding taxes that are acceptable. Mr. Heitner replied, stating that the Board would accept 2019 accompanied by a letter verifying the council has received an extension. Mr. van den Beemt asked if the Department has heard of councils having a hard time renewing sales tax exempt. Mr. Smith replied, stating that we have not. Mr. Heitner stated that this is usually tied directly to 501(c)3 status. Mr. Heitner further stated that there are resources out there; if any board members run into issues with their councils, feel free to reach out to him.

New Business:

Mr. Johns requested to defer State Fair to next month’s agenda.

Regarding the Arbutus football appeal, Mr. Heitner reported on the accusation of one coach assaulting another in the same program. The assaulted coach had a hearing and was suspended for two weeks and the one that assaulted the other was not suspended. The coach appealed to the Arbutus Recreation Council and they upheld the suspension. This individual is unhappy with this decision and is appealing to the Board. Mr. Heitner stated that he would like to have a discussion with Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith is unaware of this situation. In addition, the football program has concluded. Mr. Heitner stated that this sounds like a legal issue due to assault. Mr. Heitner stated that he is not sure what happened, and there are no addition documents aside from the appeal request, nor a police report. Mr. Heitner stated that he does not think the Board can make a decision regarding this situation. Mr. Smith replied, stating that the County can suspend people as well. Mr. Heitner stated that he thinks it is best to let the County handle this.

Mr. Heitner discussed assigning a Nominating Committee for upcoming elections and asked if anyone was interested in this role. Mr. Davis and Mr. Paternotte agreed to lead this committee. Mr. Heitner instructed board members to reach out to the Nominating Committee if they would like to run for chairman or vice chairman, or nominate another member for these roles. Mr. Heitner reminded board members that no elected officer can serve more than two consecutive terms.

Action:

Mr. van den Beemt motioned to recertify Catonsville, Bengies-Chase and Overlea-Fullerton Recreation Councils; Mr. Johns seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Comments By Individual Citizens:

Ralph Brown addressed the Board regarding questions he had about the event to take place at Oregon Ridge Nature Center this Saturday. He voiced concern regarding parking, further stating that parking lots are usually filled on a nice day. Ms. Johnson replied, stating that we could have vans on standby to transport people to the Center. Mr. Brown stated that he suspects there will be more than 60 people in attendance. Ms. Johnson stated that this was the only space available and we did not want to change the date. She further stated that we will figure this out, and if need be, we will hold two sessions. Ms. Johnson reiterated that there is also a virtual option.

Jarod Picone addressed the Board as a volunteer with the Carroll Manor Recreation Council. Regarding recertification, he stated the Council is trying to get tax returns. He reported that he is here to advocate again for Carroll Manor. He attended the Belfast Road Property Public Input Meeting and hopes Carroll Manor could be next. Mr. Picone stated that the Council is active and thriving. He stated that they do not have access to a middle school. However, they have recreation programs comparable to Cockeysville and Hereford, with 640 kids registered in the soccer program, and he invited the Board to Jacksonville ES tomorrow night to witness 13 of the 18 teams practicing. He would love to see what he saw at Belfast, and having the opportunity for a turf field with lights. Ms. Johnson replied, stating that Belfast was many years in the making. She stated that we have been looking for land, and commented that we are tied to paying the appraised value. She stated that if Mr. Picone was aware of any leads on land, to please let us know. She stated that we looked for additional land in Hereford and there was none. Ms. Johnson encouraged Mr. Picone to attend the budget forums to advocate to the County Executive. She stated that we will put the request in, too, but it is helpful to attend all budget forums. Mr. Picone mentioned Sweet Air Park and suggested retrofitting the lower area (which retains water) of the park with a lit turf field. Ms. Johnson replied stating that we can look at this, but again, we are not funded for this or lights, which would cost ~\$2 million.

Adjournment:

There being no further business, Mr. Davis moved to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Paternotte seconded the motion, and all were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa Winters