

Countywide Recreation and Parks Advisory Board  
2425 Reedy Drive  
Monday, April 15, 2024

**Board members present: Banda, Beal, Delgado, Holeywell, Hudson, Hutton, Jacknis, Krauze, Mullis, Plate, Ricci, Stickle, Sparer, Tasayco**

**Board members absent: Goettsch, Horton, Tasissa**

**Staff present: Burnett, Coppola, Clutter, Dixon, Fasteau, Riley**

**Ex-Officio members present: Gilchrist, Kellner**

The meeting started at 6:32 pm. Quorum established.

Stickle proposed additional items to the agenda:

- June election and nomination process for officers
- Park and Rec staff awards

Reviewed and approved April 2024 agenda. Mullis motioned. Plate seconded. Unanimous.

Reviewed and approved March 2024 minutes. Mullis motioned. Sparer seconded. Unanimous.

Budget Timeline Update:

- Stickle mentioned three advisory board members provided live testimony and encouragement of increased budget for Parks to close \$4 million gap.
- Riley said the first committee session was held 4/15, and the department received positive feedback on advocacy. Riley stated anything new to the budget that's considered an 'enhancement' goes on the 'reconciliation' list for further budget sessions.
- Clutter said testimony had a real impact, for the first time. She said "future fiscal impacts" are in a separate list for budget consideration. Riley said anything that's not an enhancement has been approved by the committee.
- Stickle asked about the possibility of increasing the Recreation budget. Riley said the likelihood is that it will be held, with a few enhancements, including several smaller neighborhood senior centers.
- Riley mentioned that finding lifeguards and pool operators is a challenge. Younger teens come with limits of how many hours they can work.
- Burnett said the first committee meeting for the Parks budget is 4/24. The \$4 million shortfall includes \$1 million for major known commitments - items that the department knows will be increasing (electricity, gas, etc.) He says it found \$1.8 million in reductions that can be taken by transferring money within the budget, deferring some spending to next year's budget, etc.

- Jacknis asked about recruitment. Clutter, Riley, and Burnett all emphasized challenges with recruiting and the nationwide struggles parks and recreation departments have had hiring staff. Burnett emphasized that low pay relative to other jobs in food/retail are a hurdle to recruitment.
- Sparer advocated for hiring young immigrants from Afghanistan and said she will provide additional information about resettlement agencies.
- Clutter, Riley and Burnett also emphasized that some types of positions involving safety require a drug test, which is a barrier to hiring.
- Tasayco asked if justice-impacted people are eligible for hire. Clutter said it depends on the position. Burnett and Clutter said the departments do hire people with criminal backgrounds, depending on the role and whether that background is disclosed by the candidate upfront.
- Hutton asked about the capital budget. Burnett said those hearings happened several weeks ago. Burnett said in July, the department begins work on the following year's capital budget, with submission of CIP in the fall to the planning board. Hutton said when she testified about specific parks, councilmembers appeared more engaged. She sought information about more specific information around advocacy.
- Krauze sought information about economic forecasts. Clutter said the budget gap is expected to continue next year.

#### Ex-Officio Reports

- Commission on People with Disabilities – Tonya Gilchrist
  - The Commission held a meeting in March about DOT's Accessibility Design Guide that is in development. Gilchrist mentioned a conversation about accessible trails, communication boards in accessible programs, and accessible boat launches at Seneca Landing. Her group is working on budget priorities for FY 25.
  - Riley said the new pool in Silver Spring lacks some features that are not required by ADA but nonetheless are requested, including an access panel to open a locker room. She sought more information about how to balance those needs.
- Montgomery County Public Schools - Greg Kellner
  - Kellner said MCPS finished its turf projects at Paint Branch H.S, Gaithersburg HS and Wootton HS will happen after Memorial Day following spring sports seasons. There will be an impact on community use/rentals.
  - MCPS is in the design/permitting phase of relocating the Sherwood HS softball field.
  - Several tennis court and track projects will undergo work over the summer.
  - Stickle sought a list of MCPS fields maintained by Parks. Burnett said most elementary and middle schools are under Parks maintenance.
  - Krauze requested future information about MCPS facilities that are retracted from CUPF. Fasteau said school use will always take precedent.
  - Kellner shared information about its urban farm grand opening April 22 at Loiederman MS.

#### Recreation Report - Robin Riley

- Riley said the prom dress giveaway was well received, with another one scheduled for 4/16.
- Primary elections and early voting will mean many gyms are off-limits soon.
- Kennedy Shriver Aquatic center will soon close for up to 27 months, and the county will rent space elsewhere to accommodate swim teams.
- The department recently launched a new podcast.
- The county got a state bond bill for \$1.4 million for playgrounds, starting in East County.
- There will be a 3-on-3 basketball tournament Friday in East County, in collaboration with county police.
- Riley highlighted an employee who is teaching cricket at East County.
- Camps will be starting soon and staff will soon begin training.
- Fasteau said the department just began flag football registration, with Wheaton alone having 200 participants.
- Tasayco asked about camps wait list. Clutter talked about challenges with managing it. Holeywell suggested creating a camp directory to make residents aware of options beyond the county.

#### Parks Report - Gary Burnett

- Sligo Creek Fest happening May 4 - two stages with bands, food trucks, etc. Burnett said Parks has reached out to all the user groups to let them know about impact. He anticipates it being the department's large, signature annual event. There will be an area for folks to bypass it if they want to ride through.
- Other upcoming events:
  - May 5 - Every Day is Earth Day at Brookside Gardens
  - May 5 - With Parks in Mind mental health awareness event in Germantown
  - May 18 - Soft opening of SEED classroom at Black Hill Regional Park
  - Royce Hanson Conservation Park at broad run will have ribbon cutting in May. An augmented reality tour at Oakley Cabin opens in June.

#### Other items:

- Stickle agreed to send an email to council staff advocating for the budget. Stickle said she would send this email to the board for edits/review.
- Stickle said at the board's May meeting, there will be a need to make nominations for the June officers election.

Mullis motioned to adjourn. Sparer seconded. The meeting adjourned at 8:14 p.m.