

12.12.22

CWRPAB Attendance

Aravind Banda

Brenda Bonazelli

Gary Burnett

Adriane Clutter

Darren Flusche

Alison Gillespie

Yolanda Goettsch

Steffany Hamlet

Michael Jacknis

Greg Kellner

Kendell Matthews

Chris Nasti

Myriam Paul

John Plate

Kessia Prather

David Pullen

Robin Riley

Michael Ricci

Melanie Stickle

Felecia Wilson

MINUTES

Countywide Recreation and Parks Advisory Board

2425 Reddie Drive – 3rd Floor

Monday, December 12, 2022

6:30 pm Welcome and General Announcements - Robin Riley

6:32 pm Attendance to establish quorum - Janet Dixon

6:35 pm Review and Approve Agenda

MOTION TO APPROVE: APPROVED (UNANIMOUS)

6:37 pm Vote to confirm Board Leadership

MOTION TO APPROVE SLATE OF THREE BOARD MEMBERS: MOTION APPROVED (UNANIMOUS)

6:40 pm Review and Approve June, September and October minutes

MOTION TO APPROVE MINUTES: APPROVED (UNANIMOUS)

6:45 pm Introductions

7:15 pm Member input/updates on Community Happenings and Events

Kudos on the new “Fitness Pass” program allowing free use of the fitness centers at Recreation centers. This does not include aquatic facilities, which has presented some questions, but despite that, the program encourages the use of fitness centers, game rooms and gym activities, and has been very well received by neighbors and community members. Pools and aquatic centers are the main source of revenue, and also include different levels of liability and oversight of use, which is why they were not included. The fitness centers have had low occupancy, so this program should drive participation up, as well as eliminate an equity issue related to access. Proof of residency is required for sign up.

Brookside Gardens winter lights programs has been opened to cars and bikes in addition to the normal walk-through event. It is a great event and show, and the addition of the ability to access it from the Shorefield side of Wheaton Regional Park, with lighted paths is appreciated.

7:25 pm Ex-Officio Reports

- Community Use of Public Facilities – Ramona Bell Pearson NOT PRESENT
- Commission on Aging – Kendell Matthews NOT PRESENT
- Community Action Board – Myriam Paul
- Montgomery County Public Schools – Greg Kellner

Quince Orchard and Damascus HS both won State Championships in the 4a and 3a football.
Walt Whitman girls’ soccer team also won State as well.

- Commission on People with Disabilities – Tonya Gilchrist NOT PRESENT

7:40 pm Parks Report – Gary Burnett

Montgomery Parks is working to convert all gas-powered equipment to battery/electric. There is a county mandate coming in the future, but the organization has already started the conversion process. There are over 2300 pieces of equipment, so this is a large undertaking and is also very expensive.

Conversion has started with trim equipment, converting from 2-cycle gas to battery operated trimmers/edgers, etc. Trim Crews are being converted one by one and have completed 4-5 with entirely outfitted enclosed electric trailers. Trailers house the battery powered mower, trimming tools, chargers and the trailer as a whole can be plugged in each evening to charge all the equipment at once.

Electric equipment purchases to date have included mowers, trim equipment, chainsaws, trailers, athletic chalk/paint strippers, and even an electric Zamboni. There has been overall very positive feedback. There has only been a hardship with the electric leaf blowers, as they are mostly residential level that is available for purchase to date, and commercial level is needed to achieve the power to be equivalent to the gas version. Blowers are being designed and tested at the commercial level but have not been widely available as yet. Electric Chainsaws up to 18-inch bars have been utilized for specialty cuts and can even be used indoors (unlike their gas equivalents) which has created efficiencies. The chainsaws tested thus far have performed equal to their gas equivalents up to the 18 bar.

Vendors have been working with the Commission to provide information and to test out tools. A Fall Equipment Forum was held this fall, which included many vendors who provide electric equipment to demonstrate tools. Vendors recognize the level at which the organization is going to purchase these tools and have been very willing to work with us to purchase and test the tools, including taking back equipment that has any issues, even if not under warranty.

Some comments/questions for the electric equipment presentation:

Melanie Stickle:

- *When allocating and outfitting teams with new equipment how is it determined which teams/regions get the new equipment. Are the teams based in a certain area of the county? (Answer: each division is converting one trim crew team at a time as budget allows – not concentrated to a specific area of the county).*

Michael Jacknis:

- *What was the traditional total daily gasoline use for equipment?*
- *Some equipment like the jackhammer uses impulses of energy.... only when actuated by the operator.... wouldn't gasoline be superior? We should keep statistics to justify this initiative.*
- *Is there a collaboration between Parks and MCPS with respect to equipment changeover? MCPS has their own major parallel operations. It would be useful for knowledge sharing and expertise exchange.*
- *MCPS uses loud mowers. On another note, they also spread way too much salt in winter. Can you work with them?*

Allison Gillespie:

- *Thanks for doing this. I think it is great both from a climate point of view and from a citizen who really hates the noise pollution!*
- *This is in keeping with Thrive and climate goals, too.*

- *Can we collect some data on the decibel ratings of gas-powered equipment in a specific park vs. electric equipment? The reduction of noise will be well received by many in the community, and it would be great if we could share data on the decibel level reduction.*

7:50 pm Recreation Report – Robin Riley

Montgomery Recreation Department has rolled out the “Rec Assist” program, which is a financial assistance program for lower income families. Families are able to sign up 8-9 family members once they provide some documentation of their residency and participation in public assistance programs such as after care programs, rental assistance, SNAP, WIC, and other similar programs. Once they’ve been admitted to the program, each family member will receive \$200 in “rec bucks” to be able to sign up for after school programs, classes, etc. offered by the rec department. It was suggested that this program be made more available through more accessible social media notifications – more simplified language is needed to enable better understanding from non-English speaking members of the community. It is also suggested that the information be sent out through PTA organizations through schools to reach more people, and to have staff attend after school programs where parents will be present to directly communicate the program to them and assist them in getting signed up.

Winter registration for basketball is underway, after wrapping up a successful fall season. On January 17th, summer camp registrations will open. Montgomery Rec is preparing for this now.

A number of holiday related events have been ongoing at all the rec centers. There are 5-6 coming up this weekend alone. There have still been some difficulties as the department still has 15 vacancies, from a division chief position to recreation specialist positions. These vacancies have proved challenging, but they have managed to overcome them and provide programming throughout the holiday season.

Melanie Stickle: I’d love to share the rec assist info with local families and my school networks. Has this info already been shared with PTAs ? Is there language or talking points board members can share?

7:58 pm Action Items

Please send any topics or requests to Janet Dixon.

8:00 pm Adjourn