

County-wide Recreation and Parks Advisory Board

February 14, 2022, at 6:30 p.m.

Virtually Via Microsoft Teams

Board Members: Karen Kincer, Carl Blake, Dave Pullen, Alison Gillespie, Melanie Stickle, Felecia Wilson, Don Hawkins, Michael Ma, Otto Gonzalez, Myriam Paul, and Mark Pharaoh **Ex-Officio**

Members: Jeneva Stone, Ramona Bell-Pearson Kendell Matthews, and Greg Kellner **Staff:** Robin Riley, Gary Burnett, Adriane Clutter, Melanie Sasse, Doug Ludwig, Michelle Bean, and Janet Dixon

Absent: Marcus Coleman, Traci Anderson, Chris Richardson, Michael Shimoff,

Meeting called to order by Karen Kincer at 6:30 p.m.

- *Quorum by 6:37 p.m.*

Welcome – Chair

- *Karen Kincer welcomed the board*

Review of Agenda

- Reviewed and approved February's agenda
- Motioned made by Dave Pullen and seconded by Carl Blake. Approved

Review and approval of November and December Minutes

- Reviewed and approved November and December's minutes with minor adjustments
- Motion made by Mark Pharaoh and seconded by Dave Pullen. Approved.

Member input on Community Events and Happenings

- John Nissel has retired from the Parks Department. Gary Burnett will be taking over some of John's duties.
- Still have vacancies on the board, and the nominating Committee met with two candidates and recommended to put forward individuals to the Executive and the Council for appointment.
- Thanked Melanie and the whole team at MCRD on a great METROS meet up at Germantown Indoor Swim Center.
- Thanked MCRD for providing free prom dresses. The county is asking residents to donate new or gently used dresses and drop them off at recreation centers throughout the county, including the Potomac Community Recreation Center and the Germantown Recreation Center.
- Thanked the Parks Department for taking care of the Cap Crescent trail.
- I am working on Google communication to resolve distribution issues.
- Carl: The Warner Circle Park in Kensington, the proposal to sell the mansion to Washington landmark properties to preserve the building has passed through the Committee on the County Council. The County Council will vote on approving the sale of the building.
- Melanie: I have been taking my children to some lessons at MLK Swim Center, which has been remarkable. I'm also really excited to go to Montgomery Parks, Acoustics Ales. I plan to attend the one on March 4th, and I'm excited.

Social Media – Carl Blake

- Did research what type of organization we would be on Facebook and what kinds of information we could put on.
- What information should go to the site: some photos, our mission, and who we are in terms of an organization?
- Maybe a different website. Twitter handle that we would actively manage. Our board doesn't have a phone number, you know.
- Have questions about the other members of the board and the roles regarding the site's governance.
- We need an admin for the page, and that's the person who gives out permissions for other people to post, change, and manage the site.
- The second role is a manager, controlling what's placed on the site.
- The third role is the content editor, someone you know about the community event.
- Then, of course, the general public is any authenticated user who can sign in. They would be able to combat like your pages, you know. Send a message.
- Sharing messages to others, so I guess what it comes down to is, you know who on the border of all of us here participating? Whom could we say would be the end administrator who would like to hand out the privileges; know who has the management B and then who would the content editors be? That would be something to figure out.
- Melanie Stickle offers to be a Facebook Administrator.
- Karen suggests having a few people with access and designated to maintain the website.
- Dave suggests having one person serve as moderator of the content on the page, and suggests Karen.
- Melanie added that the moderator gets the alerts and decides what posts to keep and remove.
- Otto volunteered to be a moderator for the social media site and get alerts.

CWRPAB Job Description – Don Hawkins / Dave Pullen

- We took the comments and issued a revision and a red line version so those who already commented could see exactly the changes.
- We are almost at the end of that part of the project, and welcome comments.
- The board ultimately has to decide whether this is heading in the right direction. Is this something we self-execute? Is this something that requires some other review/approval? Or are we allowed we go ahead and publish whatever we want? I think that's something Karen you and the Exec Committee probably need to think about. The last piece involves the benchmarking process, and I'll turn that part over to Don.

Ex Officio Reports

- Commission on Aging – Kendell Matthews
 - The Commission on Aging has been busy this month of writing letters in support of various bills presented to the delegates and senators.
 - Some examples are of hearing aids for older adults and dental health.

- Continuing the SNAP program
- We implemented a number for mental health calls; instead of calling 991, the designated number is 988.
- **Community Action Board – Myriam Paul**
 - If you know anyone from Cook County residents making less than \$58,000, send them to the Vitale program, offering appointments **between January 18th and April 18th**. This is a great program to complete their tax preparation this year for free.
- **Montgomery County Public Schools – Greg Kellner**
 - Spring season is just around the corner. We're going to be there **on March 1st** when tryouts start. We have updated the Return of R.A.I.S.E protocol with MCPS.
 - MCPS is now accepting requests for religious exemptions from the vaccination requirement because the COVID-19 community transmission rate is decreasing.
 - High vaccination rate within the county?
 - Registration is open for the athletes to start signing up for that facilities within MCPS will still remain at a 50% capacity.
 - For ticketed spectator events within the buildings and overnight trips for teams if they have to compete outside of the area can resume February 18th. All of this information for athletics is up on the website.
- **Commission on People with Disabilities – Jeneva Stone**
 - The Commission on people with Disabilities was highly grateful. The January meeting for the Montgomery Parks Community Engagement presentation for parks projects.
 - Wheaton stables issue is settled. The stables will continue operating the way they had before, and the CURA Personalis project will continue in place along with therapeutic riding. We're grateful that those programs continue to access.
 - We have then considered the Bicycle Lane issue in Silver Spring, and I know that Seth provided comments on that to the appropriate planning Commission.

Active Montgomery – Michelle Bean, IT Specialist

- The New ActiveMONTGOMERY Registration System which represents Community Use of Public Facilities, Montgomery Parks, and Montgomery County Recreation
- Review the logistics for the Customer Experience Splash Page on the website which consists of facilities, leagues, memberships, rentals, gift cards, financial assistance, and special events, and the program guide.
- Ramona mentioned while Parks and Recreation have gone live, CUPF is delayed until May 1st. Introduction page showing on the screen is same one that can be accessed your old account through Active until May 1st and so if you're interested in getting a room or a facility in a school or a field or a county building, that's all CUPF and that you would still use Active log on that until May 1st, but after that will be live with everybody else.
- CUPF didn't go live with their items, but we were able to manipulate our system so we can click on the facilities through the new Splash Page.
- The (CUPF) school fields and recreation fields are still going to be done in the old activenet and the Montgomery parks fields will be done in VSI.
- Use the following methods to get this communication out: Email blasts from VSI directly as well as ActiveNet, Blog (How To, FAQs, How to Video), How to Flyer / Infographics, Center Poster, Individual Agency Websites, Social Media, and Website Landing (Splash) pages.

- To date approximately 534,000 customers have been registered into the system
- Today was first day of registration and approximately 1,329 registrations have been processed
- Questions:
 - Jeneva: How would I be able to contact someone to inquire about how my disability could be accommodated.
 - When the account is created, that is one of the questions asked and your answer will be added to the account that you need assistance.
 - Robin: There's generally a report that runs that gets emailed to one of our therapeutic recreation staff. An Excel spreadsheet tells us the customer's name, contact information, any questions they have, type of support that they might need in terms of mainstreaming taking the class itself, sign language interpreter. And then there's staff reach out.
 - Jeneva: If I couldn't be accommodated, would my money be refunded.
 - Yes, or maybe a credit on the account.
 - Otto: Is there an opportunity when making payment to also donate to the Rec department? I have other specific issues and will call you directly.
 - Melanie Stickle: When we run into issues with a new system, is there a general email that people should reach out to you? Is the infoactivemontgomery.org?
 - Yes

Recreation – Robin Riley

- We have submitted our budget to the County Executive. We have a follow-up for a couple of items on Friday and that will close out our budget presentation with him.
- Our camp registration starts on February 22nd – which was split from Spring registration this year.
- We have a virtual meeting this Thursday night to update the community on Long Branch and Coffield. Shelters are still in place at both locations. We remain committed to staying connected to the community with regular updates. We will be present with the Department of General Services and HHS on Thursday evening. If anybody wants the link, please reach out.
- We had a couple of great meetings with DGS (Department of General Services) telling us about the progress at the Nebel St. We have a timeline established provided they get their occupancy permit, which is March 3rd.
- ·Thanked Otto for his assistance with the Soccer4Change program.
- We are working with a group of public health analysts from Stanford University in California and another from the University of Maryland, for the awesome youth soccer program called Soccer4Change. It connects youth who might not otherwise have a competitive opportunity to play soccer both at the middle school and high school level, and it gives them access to play and uniforms. Coaching clinics have a high level of participation with nice fields. We are working with a group in Africa, Kenya to participate in games of Soccer4Change. We've connected through the public health team with a group of about 1000 kids that are running a soccer program in Kenya, Africa.
- Max Levitt has a program called Level the Playing Field, where he collects used and new sports equipment. We have collection boxes for athletic shoes that will be going to our recreation center, these items will be given to those who might not otherwise have access.

- Max is going to work with us on collecting soccer equipment, supplies, uniforms and shipping them to the team in Kenya.
- Two news sites have been included in this year's early voting: Bauer Drive and White Oak.
- Winter basketball program started with approximately 600 teams with 6000 participants. We were delayed making sure COVID was going well.
- We had the METROS on Saturday night. It was awesome.
- Piney Branch Pool, it's located in Piney Branch Elementary School. It has been closed because of COVID. It's a pool that's owned by the public school system. We oversee the operations of it through Adventist Community Health. They have a grant. The health inspector identified some structural issues that would not pass the inspection. We reached out to public schools and a structural engineer come in to reexamine this, sealing the concrete erosion in the pump room. It's going to be another 4 to 8 weeks for them to do the concrete work.
- Silver Spring Regional Aquatic Center is going well. Our target open date is still Spring of 2023. If anybody wants to go on a tour, we can probably arrange that.
- Summer Camps registrations opens on February 22nd.
- We created an opportunity where young people to attend summer school. Summer School will operate between 8 am and 1 pm. We would have summer camp programming from 1 pm to 6 pm at 20 sites, with most being title one schools.

Parks - Gary Burnett

- Gary introduced himself as the acting Deputy Director of Operations of Montgomery Parks.
- An in-depth look at the web page for pickleball, from Montgomery Parks. The link included in the chat.
- We have 12 parks with active pickleball courts and 42 courts within those parks, and Bauer Ave is the first dedicated Pickleball site recently opened.
- The public interest is skyrocketing. Have a few additions coming in this fiscal year and beginning next fiscal year. We're hoping to have on-line five additional sites. Four sites will be shared areas, which means they've painted lines over the top of tennis courts. One will be a new dedicated pickleball site located at Columbia Local Park—eventually having an additional 20 sites.
- This study has an interactive map showing where the locations are now known. The five additional ones we have are for this year as we move forward. We also have more in the planning stages that were explained in this in this study. I'm looking for sites in additional sites that are still a priority for us, and we have set aside a committee to keep actively working towards finding locations to increase our pickleball. The link will be included in the chat.
- We had our CIP meetings for the FY23 to 28 CIP funding cycle. The recommendation was for a \$19.4 million reduction.
- There were about 75 testimonies in public hearings, and half of those supported the Parks CIP budget and wanted a total return of funding or most of that funding back to the Parks for CIP.

- Our advocacy these days is impressive. The support they give us and people coming out to testify for us and being there to assist and, you know, tell our story. Hoping the outcome will provide some of the CIP money restored for 23 to 28. This could potentially push many projects back and delay projects.
- Operations budgets is coming up in March.
- The Pros plan and the pros are Parks and Recreation, outdoor spaces, planets administered through the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.
- It is a five-year cycle. We're in the process of having to final finalizing our pros plan and move forward with it.
- It gives an idea of where we are in the county as far as the recreational opportunities and available park facilities where we want to be in five years and how we're changing and adapting to making sure that we continue to provide those resources for the citizens of the county and how that all comes together.
- Dave: Is there an opportunity for public comment?
 - Yes.
- Michael Ma: The distribution of the three courts is either Down County or Easy County but no Up County. I want to make sure your department planning for the future distributes to Up County. I think are parks suitable for building that, especially when they do a refresher project.
- Michael Ma: Probably is a good opportunity to work with work a developer or third party to make the changes rather than build all tennis court. Maybe half Pickleball and half tennis court.
- Gary: Absolutely, I agree with that. It's much more difficult to produce a dedicated CT from scratch as opposed to a shared court. The reason we were working so hard don't getting shared courts is obviously that it's quicker and it's less expensive and it's something we could do very quickly as we move forward. Park refreshers such as to Colombia or others coming up. It is definitely a consideration.
- For adding dedicated pickleball courts and underutilized tennis courts are being totally repurposed, we're looking at all those opportunities as they arise and including working with developers and developer-built parks to try and include these opportunities for pickleball courts, a dedicated court as we move forward.
- We have definitely accelerated the opportunities for pickleball in the county.
- Michael Ma: I appreciate that. I just want to emphasize that because I represent our county areas and make sure our county will get their fair share.
- Dave: Is there coordination between what you're planning and what MCPS may be able to do on school courts with respect to pickleball.
- Gary: I know we have had communication with MCPS as far as pickleball, especially when there is a close location between Up court that we're considering and the one that they have to see because obviously we don't want to duplicate effort if at all possible, so.
- Greg: MCPS is adding pickleball court lines with middle school tennis courts. As new middle school courts are being billed, refurbished, reconditioned; pickleball lines are being added to those courts.
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Budget Advocacy – Karen Kincer

- March Elrich will release his budget on March 15 to the County Council.
- As of date, the Council does not have any public hearings posted.
- Alison Gillespie: I gave testimony last week during the first hearing with County Council. I was one of the halves of 75 in support of replacing the full funding and I also organize a lot of people to come out for weeks ahead of that. One of the key messages in terms of want to get if you want to advocate for funding is ...
 - The next two or so weeks are overly good time to email County Council members about the CIP because even though testimony happened, that work sessions with council members are coming up.
 - Send a simple message about whatever part of the CIP that you care about.
 - Send it before next Tuesday, is probably the best timing, sending it directly to each Council member.
- As a group, we submit some testimony, which is usually received and powerful, as a countywide organization.
- Our next scheduled meeting is March 14th, which is an inconvenient given the budget schedule, suggest the next meeting for March 21st, which the following Monday.
- We are going to have to spend some time working together as a group and over email to prepare for testimony whenever the dates are released.
- We may have attendance issues for the April 11th meeting as people are trying to be out of town. We may need to meet on April 4th in order to pulled together and organized for testimonies.
- Alison Gillespie: Thursday is the testimony in front of the County Council for the Downtown Silver Spring Final Plan. Downtown Silver Spring Master Plan has a much fancier name but is the DTSS plan. I have signed up to testify about a particular park item. I to say that there is a tremendous amount of creativity and innovation in that master plan regarding an increase in urban parks and throughout downtown Silver Spring. So even if you don't live in downtown Silver Spring, if you ever go out to dinner in downtown Silver Spring, enjoy going to recreational programs and downs over spring, or be interested in planning. For me, it's a matter of making sure that each neighborhood all over the county has access to parks.
- If anyone is interested in state advocacy, Delegate Eric Luedtke from the East County area has been spearheading with some people from up in Baltimore to look at how state parks are transit, acceptable or innovative way to approach thinking about park access. I believe it is essential for everyone, but I think it will be particularly impactful for seniors.
- Low-income families who don't have access to cars and the disability community because I think it will refocus how people can get to some of the best parks around the state. I can send information to Karen, and we should invite people to write to their delegates.

Review of Action Items – Carl Blake

- Karen and Robin meeting on equity issues surrounding availability of classes and programs.
 - Still need to meet
- Back in November there was talk about circulating a Long Branch community letter to the executive
 - It was posted to the board.
- Melanie Sasse was going to look into bike parking.
 - There is outside bike parking available.

Dave Pullen made a motion to adjourn and seconded by Otto Gonzalez. Approved.

8:12 pm ADJOURN

