

Countywide Recreation and Parks Advisory Board
2425 Reedy Drive, 3rd Floor, Wheaton
Monday, November 18, 2024

Board members present: Delgado, Goettsch, Holeywell, Hudson, Hutton, Jacknis, Krauze, Mullis, Ricci, Sparer

Board members absent: Banda, Stickle, Tasayco,

Staff present: Burnett, Clutter, Fachel, Fasteau

Ex-Officio members present: Derek Ross

A quorum was established, and Ricci called the meeting to order at 6:38 p.m.

The November 2024 agenda was reviewed. Krauze motioned for approval. Hutton seconded. Unanimous approval.

The October 2024 minutes were reviewed. Mullis motioned for approval Goettsch seconded. Unanimous approval.

Fachel provided the Montgomery County Recreation Update:

- Fachel said KSAC will be closed for two years. Wheaton/Glenmont outdoor pool is still being used this fall because it is heated. MLK Outdoor pool is being renovated and the county hopes to have it done by March 1.
- Damascus Senior Center will close by March for renovations.
- MidCounty Recreation Center is serving as an emergency center for an apartment building that's lost power.

Krauze asked if there is any consideration of keeping pools open longer in the season given conversations in the District about extending pool openings later into the year. Clutter mentioned budget realities may make that a challenge.

Clutter said there are lots of fall festivals in the coming weeks and referred the committee to the calendar updates provided via email. Clutter said there were 10,000 fall programming registrations.

Clutter applauded recent collaboration with Montgomery Village Foundation, Identity, Inc., and City of Gaithersburg to discuss level of services in the Montgomery Village area, given its residents' interest in a recreation center. Clutter said the goal of a recent meeting was to share what services were already available in the Montgomery Village area. Mullis thanked Clutter for the county's commitment to making the meeting a success.

Clutter said other upcoming highlights for the department include the forthcoming basketball season and lots of activities focused on seniors and wellness.

She also touted the Soccer4Change program which is a collaboration with the county's Department of Health and Human Services and the cities of Rockville and Gaithersburg.

Mullis asked about challenges with recent online recreation signup. Clutter cited a major glitch that was the fault of its vendor caused headaches.

Hutton asked if some of the issues with overwhelming volume at signup could be addressed by offering classes on a rolling rather than quarterly basis.

Jacknis asked about adding more seats to some recreation programs. Clutter said some programs are oversubscribed and there are often not resources for more. Jacknis suggested that the online registration portal could be used by the county to identify exactly how much demand for certain programs exceeds resources – which would be a useful tool for advocacy.

Mullis cited a desire for more swim lessons and said swim lessons should be core to the department's mission. Clutter said there is a balance between the need to provide swim lessons and the need to provide space for competitive swimming, given finite space available for swimming. Clutter also emphasized the challenge of hiring instructors.

Burnett provided the Montgomery Parks update

Burnett said Strathmore Local Park reopened after a recent renovation, and soccer fields and basketball courts are forthcoming. Hudson said the Oct. 19 opening event was a success. He also highlighted the recent grand opening of Caroline Freeland Urban Park in Bethesda. New, lighted pickleball courts also opened at East Norbeck Local Park.

Burnett highlighted the recent 50th anniversary celebration of the county's Pope Farm Nursery, as well as the urban wood sale.

Burnett referenced his agency's semi-annual presentation to the County Council, which gives the opportunity to highlight budget expectations for the upcoming fiscal year.

He cited an initiative to pursue 10 park renovating along the Long Branch corridor.

Burnett also referenced several upcoming events, including the Winter Ice Show at the Cabin Jone ice skating rink, the Thanksgiving parade, and the Garden of Lights at Brookside Gardens.

The board transition to general discussion at approximately 7:15 pm.

Ricci said there are 8 board nominees being considered and asked members to participate in interviews.

The next board meeting is scheduled for Dec. 9.

Krauze asked a series of questions about MCPS facilities and the challenges some community groups have accessing spaces at schools in the evenings. Clutter suggested it may be possible to have preliminary conversations with MCPS about the topic.

Hudson asked about the process of reserving space at Wheaton Recreation Center after being told it would take 5 days to get a response to a reservation request. She asked if there might be a way to streamline this process. Clutter said some space has limited availability; typically at that location, automated reservations are only available in smaller meeting rooms.

Mullis motioned to adjourn at 8:04 p.m., and Goettsch seconded. Adjournment was approved unanimously.