

COUNTYWIDE RECREATION AND PARKS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Monday, September 14, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.
Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams
Minutes

Present Board: Carl Blake, Karen Kincer, Chris Richardson, Melanie Stickle, Michael Shimoff, Michael Ma, Safiatou Barry, Bradley Ryan, Felecia Wilson **Ex-Officio:** Rodrigue Vital, Benjamin DuGoff and Jeff Sullivan. **Staff:** Robin Riley, John Nissel, Adriane Clutter, Doug Ludwig, Sandra Samuel, Traci Anderson, and Trish Walsh

Absent: Lyle Ganz, Mark Pharaoh, Isaac Osei Asare, Stephanie Edelstein, Melanie Sasse

Meeting started at 6:33 pm, Quorum present

Welcome and Announcements – Chair

- Karen Kincer welcomed the board

Review of Agenda

- Motion made by Michael Shimoff and seconded Felecia Wilson. Approved.

Review and approval of June minutes

- Motion made by Bradley Ryan and seconded Carl Blake. Approved.
- Karen Kincer – Vacant seats on the board are available. Seeking candidates
- The current board members' term has expired and will need to apply for reappointment.
 - Karen will send information to all that apply.
- Michael Ma asked what area the board should recruit members?
 - There is a good number of vacancies in Mid-County.
- Felecia Wilson – How long will the announcement be available this time around?
 - Robin Riley – The announcement will be available for three weeks. If necessary, we can ask for an extension.
- Felecia Wilson – How many terms have expired.
 - Karen Kincer – 6 board members

Reports

Officers and Committee Reports

Ex Officio Reports

Community Use of Public Facilities – Rod Vital

- Fields will be opened for permitting starting today
- Child Care in 58 schools started today

Commission on Aging – Stephanie Edelstein

- No Report

Community Action Board – _____

- No Report

Montgomery County Public Schools – Jeffrey Sullivan

- Schools are virtual.
- Hoping to return to in-person operations in the 2nd semester.
- Conducting three virtual seasons (Fall, Winter, and Spring) HS sports
- Today started our fall season.
- Spring semester, we are planning to run all three seasons (Winter, Fall, Spring)
- The state has released tentative dates.
- We will need access to the Parks field.

Commission on People with Disabilities – Benjamin DuGoff

- Getting presentation from different groups (Buses, Bike lanes, Crosswalk)

Recreation Report - Robin Riley

- Rec staff helping with Board of Elections and helping with Covid Testing Sites
- Staff is delivering 700 Senior meals a week
- 30-40 staff helping with food and rental access line
- Fall Programs have started
 - Classes launching virtual and outdoors
 - Soccer and softball leagues
 - Human foosball
 - Rec Without Walls
 - Build project with kits, birds houses and airplanes
- Packing for new Wheaton Building move in 10/14
- Outdoor Pools will extend until Oct.
 - Indoor pool open for RMSC and Lap Lanes will open for some rec swim
 - MLK Pool renovations hopefully open end of Oct
- Working to open new Silver Spring Center
- OLO did a study on youth sports may add funding. May reach out to MCPS for assistance.

Parks Report - John Nissel

- Huge uptick in Parks use this summer
- Soccer was reclassified from high risk to medium risk sport, which triggered all the leagues to submit permits.
- Thanked CUPF for the extra time
- Many amenities are open in Phase 2.
 - archery, driving range, ice rinks, tennis, picnic pavilion, outside restrooms, playgrounds, dog parks, and event centers
 - Black Hill Boats at Little Seneca Lake
 - Micro -Weddings 2020 at Seneca Lodge and Rockwood Manor
- One of the amenities, Wheaton Miniature Train and Ovid Hazen Wells Carousel and Cabin John Miniature Train, was opened for a month was shut down by Health Dept. This was considered as an amusement ride. It could not be permitted.
- Hoping to have the *Haunted Train Program* – It is a considerable revenue for our Enterprise Division.
- Into our fiscal year 6 % saving Plans - \$6,000,000
 - Abbreviated work schedule for labor staff
- Negotiating with the union, continue to meet with MCGEO on a monthly, updating the MOU
- Working with the county on restrictions (change midstream)
- Working on next year's budget
- Open Street Initiative expanded – Street close for bikes trails.

- Portions of Sligo Creek Parkway in Silver Spring, Little Falls Parkway in Bethesda (1.3 miles), parts of Beach Drive in Kensington (2.7 miles), and Sligo Creek Parkway (2.6 miles)
- Open for pedestrians and bicyclists every weekend from Friday 9 a.m. through Sunday at 6 p.m.
- Popular Attractions
 - Black Hill Boats at Little Seneca Lake
 - Little Bennett Campground is opened, still in Phase 1
- Partner and Tenants on Parks property, 115 tenants, running an abatement program for tenants that need the help, will continue to do this on month-to-month basis.
- We have officially moved into Wheaton HQ. It is the first net-zero building.
- Montgomery Parks has adopted a protocol to get staff back to the workplace as pertaining to office staff. Montgomery County is still in Phase 2, and we will continue to promote teleworking until we enter Phase 3. Maybe until January.
- I have been appointed President of MRPA this year, State Agency – MRPA, Appointment President,
 - MRPA Bike Ride for Social Justice & Racial Equity was on September 12th
 - All the money raised will go to a minority scholarship for MRPA programs
 - We had 40 riders, 66 registered, and get a free t-shirt
 - **Karen Kincer:** Is the Garden of Lights happening this year?
 - MRPA Bike Ride for Social Justice & Racial Equity was on September 12th
 - Michael Ma – In terms of using a Parks facility, Are back at 50%?
 - John well above 50%
 - Doug Ludwig – From early April to early August, the usage has increase 50 to 75%, sometimes double the use
 - Never seen parks so crowded before
 - **Michael Ma:** Received a Foundation letter with the old address. Please correct to the Wheaton HQ's address.
 - **Robin Riley:** Shout out to Cliff Driver on a fabulous job on White Oak Soccer Field.
 - A new technique called Drill and Fill
 - **Michael Shimoff:** Appreciate all the hard work done by Park and MCRD – no complaints.
 - **Carl Blake:** Question about the Rain and Flooding that hit one the stream valleys. It was amazing how quickly the streets were cleared on Beach Drive. –What the impact on Parks staff to do the cleanup?
 - John – It requires much overtime.
 - Parks benefited from the Emerald Ash Program. Not one of the ash trees came down doing the storm.
 - Preparation for the storm is a must.

Board Discussion

6 questions posed by Karen Kincer on the Agenda:

1. With the current COVID opening schedule/restrictions how do you think the Recreation and Parks Departments can better serve our constituents from a programmatic standpoint?
2. What is your vision for the Board and how can it is members better serve the community as a whole? What do you see as your role and purpose in serving on this board?
3. How do you think the COVID Pandemic will affect our Parks, programs and facilities long term and how can this Board assist in messaging out our vision for the future? Do you have ties to specific organizations, media, or community groups with which you could share information?
4. Given the economic crisis created by the pandemic, we are experiencing operating and CIP budget cuts --funding gaps which could be for an extended period of time. How can you as a Board member help us in reaching out to both our elected officials and constituents to

support our budget needs? Do you have a relationship with certain elected officials? Are there community groups that you could reach out to for support of our budget needs?

5. Please list some way you as a Board member could better advocate for Our Recreation and Parks programs, services, facilities, and Park amenities.
 6. How do you utilize the services of both the Recreation and Parks Departments? Do you take part in programs, classes, or events, or access certain facilities on a regular basis? On a scale of 1 through 10 what value do you place on our Parks, facilities, programs, and services?
- Karen Kincer expressed the urgency to increase the board's effectiveness for both departments, starting with increasing the presence in the board
 - Citizen Advocacy for MCRD/Parks support
 - Are we effective? Right now, we listen to the report.
 - We need to be more involved.
 - Mark Pharaoh could not be with us today as he is a part of the Budget Forum in Eastern County tonight on Zoom.
 - Karen sent out all the budget forum dates to the board. Maybe tune in to the one in your area.
 - Do stuff in Parks at the Rec. Centers to be better advocates with an understanding of what it takes.
 - John Nissel kicked off the discussion with examples.
 - Volunteer work with our trails program
 - Advocacy to reach out as a constituent /Parks user, talking to your elected officials about how we can better fund the Parks and MCRD programs. Discuss some of the benefits the program has done for them in this virtual world.
 - Community Outreach Meeting: Our first meeting will discuss the new master plan for Wheaton Regional Park.
 - **Felecia Wilson:** Need a schedule/list of activities and events so that the board can attend; Karen sent a listing of the virtual Budget Forums dates to the committee yesterday.
 - **Karen Kincer:** John, if you have a list of virtual meetings, please provide it. As a board member, do you have any relations with the elected officials, groups help us reach out to advocate.
 - **John Nissel:** All Parks Public meetings are on the Parks website. I will get the information to the board more directly. We will note priorities to focus on now.
 - **Karen Kincer:** If you have specific priorities, that would be helpful. Robin Riley, besides the budget forum, do you have similar needs or feedback.
 - **Robin Riley:** Attending the Citizen Advisory groups? The board could host a town hall to solicit
 - What will/should MCRD/Parks look like when reopen – Starting Plan
 - **Melanie Stickle:** Questions like what you are considering changing and community input, those would be helpful to know so the board could reach out to the network we have; for instance, I am in a variety of mom groups.
 - **Adriane Clutter:** What are board members passionate about and willing to share?
 - **Chris Richardson:** “How to” is essential; use social media better to push info out.
 - **Carl Blake:** Social media is highly informative; Park and MCRD have adopted those initiatives.
 - **John Nissel:** We monitor all of our hits on social media, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and we reply to all comments. One avenue of advocacy, the more you get on social media and reply and like and talk about your social media experience, the better it is. As a board, maybe start a Facebook Page and Twitter.
 - John Nissel will invite Montgomery Parks Social Media Manager for training to the board.
 - Bigger picture? Systemwide? Citizens can advocate for Parks’ needs.
 - Invite Councilmembers to board meetings to discuss issues.
 - Substitute board meetings with attending other meetings with county input
 - Regional Town Halls – What outcomes can we provide?
 - Advisory Board vs. Agency/Department
 - Need Specific framework

- Citizens more open/honest with the advisory board
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Takeaways – Karen Kincer

- Focus on Dept. Covid-19 successes (mention during the budget process)
- Feedback for new Rec. Facility
- Build grassroots networks through social media – build advocacy
- Being active in meeting outside advisory board
- Karen will email a list
- Need to get involved, really need feedback when asked
- Need timelines for action items – (Karen, Robin, John)
- Meeting adjourned by 8:06 pm, motion by Michael Ma and seconded by Michael Shimoff.