

## **AGENDA**

Countywide Recreation and Parks Advisory Board

2425 Reddie Drive, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Wheaton

Monday, April 14, 2025

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| 6:30 pm | Welcome – Michael Ricci  |
| 6:33 pm | Roll Call to establish quorum  |
| 6:35 pm | Review and approve agenda  |
| 6:37 pm | Review and approve minutes from March 2025   |
| 6:40 pm | General Board Updates – Michael Ricci and Hannah Hutton <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Letter to MCPS update</li><li>• Budget advocacy update</li><li>• CUPF Fee Structure Changes – Derek Ross</li><li>• Upcoming board engagement opportunities</li></ul> |
| 7:00 pm | Montgomery County Recreation Update – Robin Riley  |
| 7:30 pm | Montgomery Parks Update – Gary Burnett   |
| 7:55 pm | Administrative Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May Meeting date and location</li></ul>   |
| 8:00 pm | Adjourn  |

Countywide Recreation and Parks Advisory Board  
Monday, March 24, 2025  
2425 Reddie Drive, 3rd Floor, Wheaton

**Board members present:** Mullis, Ricci, Holeywell, Zarubin, Sparer, Flores, Hutton, Ryan, Bentley, Banda, Hudson, Bentley, Goettsch, Royster, Jacknis

**Board members absent:** Krauze, Delgado, Tondo

**Staff present:** Fasteau, Burnett, Riley, Clutter, Fachet, Samuel

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

Michael Ricci called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. A quorum was established.

Sparer motioned to approve the March 2025 agenda. Mullis seconded. Approval was unanimous.

Hutton motioned to approve the February 2025 minutes. Goettsch seconded. Approval was unanimous.

Ricci introduced a conversation about several previously discussed topics.

Clutter and Riley described recent meetings with CUPF and MCPS leaders and staff and said MCPS recognizes the need for adjustments and re-education about the need to follow community use processes. Ricci said he received no response from MCPS to the board's previous letter outlining its concerns. Clutter said MCPS leaders said there would be an annual letter to MCPS principals about community use. Clutter said the summer has been particularly challenging for community use given staff turnover at MCPS. Clutter said she felt confident about the meeting and is keeping the issue on the minds of MCPS leaders.

Hudson asked for clarification about education efforts. Clutter said operations manager Ron Maxson has pledged to share previous education materials. Kellner said there have been miscommunications from MCPS to principals in the past about dates and timelines. Kellner pledged to keep the board updated on progress.

Clutter said she raised to MCPS issues about summer camp plans and bumping of programs. Clutter said 700 families will be affected by adjustments to camp locations, and some may not be able to make it to their new locations. Clutter described 2025 as the 'bumpiest' year yet for summer camps. Solutions may include moving camps to nearby schools or moving camps around within the school building to avoid construction projects.

Ricci said he'd provide an update at the April board meeting.

Mullis provided an update on staff recognition. He said he recently met with staff to solicit ideas about the concept, and he proposed Monday, Dec. 8 at 2425 Reddie as the event location. He said the group plans to recognize 8 people and provide department leaders with the opportunity

to highlight 2025 successes. He said the plan would be for elected officials to join the event. Mullis invited board members to join a group doing further planning of the event.

Bentley motioned to approve the date. Zarubin seconded. It was unanimously approved.

Ricci began a discussion about the budget, beginning with timelines:

- March 24 the board receives briefing from agencies
- April 7 to 8 the County Council receives testimony from the public, including the board
- The board will also submit a letter to the County Council
- By Memorial Day the County Council takes final action

Burnett shared budget information, calling it a “tough budget year.” Parks requested a 7.2% budget increase but only received a 3.2% increase, leaving a nearly \$5 million shortfall. He said Parks would need to make up \$3.5 million to \$4 million just to be able to do what it did this year. “We’re in a very tight spot this year,” Burnett said.

Burnett said his department is compiling a list of potential cuts and that it will “cut deep.” He noted the county’s proposed budget will make it difficult to pay for major increases in utility costs and doesn’t fully cover staff compensation COLA increases.

Additionally, Burnett said, Parks was told it would receive \$1.5 million in CIP cuts, including to projects that are already in the works. He said Parks is activating its advocates and drafting talking points for them. “It’s going to take a lot of strategy to get to the point where we can say in good conscience ‘we can maintain services and provide what we’ve provided in the past,’” Burnett said.

Riley provided an update on the Recreation budget. She said the department was, at one point, asked to examine what a 6% budget cut would look like. Some of those cuts were ultimately included in the proposed budget but not all of them. Riley said Recreation didn’t ask for new or additional funding, stating “we did well in this year’s budget - we’re doing okay.”

She warned that changes could still be coming, based on the forthcoming state budget.

She described new budget changes affecting Recreation’s ability to be self-sustaining. In the future, Recreation revenue has to be allocated and appropriated.

Riley expressed concerns about rising construction costs’ impact on the CIP budget at a time when many older facilities need a refresh.

Hutton outlined the board’s advocacy processes. She encouraged members to sign up to testify to the county council on April 7 and April 8. Ricci will testify as the board’s president; others can testify in their individual capacity.

Holeywell agreed to draft a letter to be sent from the board to the council and have it available for review by the board at its April 14 meeting.

Hutton and Ricci also reminded board members that if they don't want to testify in person, they can submit testimony online, email [county.council@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:county.council@montgomerycountymd.gov), or email individual councilmembers. Holeywell suggested board members may want to post messages to their online community groups encouraging neighbors to message the council.

Board members discussed themes they'll emphasize in their messaging: that cutting recreation and parks isn't cutting an "extra," it's cutting an important part of our community. They also emphasized themes of access, support, opportunities, health, creating memories, the value of these amenities to seniors, and the idea that parks and recreation are a reason people move to and stay in Montgomery County.

Ricci announced the next board meeting for April 14, tentatively scheduled for the Jane E. Lawton Community Recreation Center.

Royster motioned to adjourn, and Mullis seconded. It was unanimously approved. The board adjourned at 8 p.m.



## Updates for the CWRPAB – April 2025

Damascus Senior Programs have moved to Damascus Recreation Center and are back to its full complement of programs for older adults.

The Youth Development team hosted an **Afterschool Programs Mini Conference** on March 8 with more than 100 department staff members (both seasonal and full-time) in attendance.



The **Fashion Boot Camp Finale** was held on Friday, March 28 and had a great turnout. This year 26 Seniors participants were also able to join in the fun.



TeenWorks staff supported the **Twinbrook Community Cares Day** on March 31 helping beautify school grounds and engaged youth and families through community service.

The Communications and Public Outreach team worked with they Countywide Programs team to produce a **Therapeutic Recreation video feature**: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11nPtQFNFPw>



The teams are also working together to survey the community to get feedback on what programs they would like offered for individuals with disabilities and their families.

The **Prom Couture Closet Giveaway Event** was held at Marilyn J. Praisner CRC. The event aims to eliminate the financial barrier many students face in attending prom. Photos: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/mocorec/albums/72177720324974924>



In coordination with TEBS (Countywide IT) with support from a Maryland Emergency Education Relief (MEER) grant, REC IT will be able to loan out laptops to patrons of community centers during their visits.

Countywide Programs launched the **Women's Adult Basketball League** at Wood Middle School, tipping off with over 60 players on the court! From fast breaks to fierce competition, the energy was electric all throughout. This program is a powerful example of how the Countywide Programs Team continues to innovate and respond to the growing demand for inclusive, competitive adult sports opportunities—particularly for women athletes seeking community and recreation.

**Cricket Expansion Welcomes Girls to the Field:** Building on the success of our growing youth cricket program, the Countywide Programs Team introduced a dedicated girls' component this spring. On opening weekend, 10 girls came to participate—marking a meaningful step toward gender equity in emerging sports. The enthusiastic turnout highlights the importance of representation and access, and sets the stage for future recruitment, skill development and expanded programming.

#### **Key Upcoming Dates:**

April 15-16: The MCR Facilities Team is hosting the annual spring break basketball tournament at Gwendolyn E. Coffield CRC, with 18 teams across Varsity, JV and middle school divisions.

April 17, 12:30 - 3:30 p.m.: TeenWorks Networking Event at East County CRC

May 3, Noon – 3 p.m.: Rec Regatta at Olney Swim Center

May 4, 3 p.m.: Recreation partners with the Montgomery County Sports Hall of Fame to host their annual induction ceremony at the Silver Spring Civic Center. This year, the ceremony will also feature the presentation of the Montgomery County Sports Advisory Committee's inaugural Unsung Sports Hero Awards.

May 5, from 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.: Long Branch Recreation Center is hosting a Community Resource Day

May 13, 6:30 a.m.: Summer Program Registration begins for County residents, 9 a.m. for senior programs.

May 18, Noon - 2:30 p.m.: Lawton Recreation Center is partnering with the Town of Chevy Chase to host their Spring Festival

May 24 (Memorial Day Weekend): Outdoor pools open for the summer



## MONTGOMERY PARKS

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

2425 Reedie Drive | Wheaton, MD 20902

# Montgomery Parks Updates- April 2025

[www.montgomeryparks.org](http://www.montgomeryparks.org)

## Montgomery County Council Public Hearings

We thank everyone who signed up to testify and submitted written statements. Your dedication and efforts in advocating for Parks are genuinely appreciated. Special thanks to those who testified in person, including Yolanda Goettsch and Robin Sparer, for their written statements. Your support is more crucial this year than ever as you share your stories with the County Council during their deliberations on the County Executive's proposed FY26 budget. Thank you for your unwavering support of Montgomery Parks!

## Wheaton Carousel Opening

On Saturday, April 5, 2025, Montgomery Parks celebrated its opening of a new carousel at Wheaton Regional Park by offering half-price rides on opening day.

- The new carousel features colorful, hand-painted, fiberglass horses and zebras and two bench-like chariots. One of the chariots is ADA-accessible. The new carousel is located near the Shorefield Road entrance to Wheaton Regional Park, next to the miniature train station.
- The carousel will be open weekends through October, with expanded operating hours on holidays and during Montgomery County Public Schools' spring and summer breaks. The carousel and miniature train webpage provide full details on the operating hours.



## New Art Installation at Gene Lynch Urban Park

Montgomery Parks has announced a new permanent art installation titled "Synesthesia" in downtown Silver Spring, located at Gene Lynch Urban Park. Created by Baltimore-based artist Becky Borlan, this sculpture features a series of stainless-steel frames holding glass panels that display a graphic film, producing a kaleidoscopic effect in vibrant colors. The panels extend from the park's central pergola structure and are illuminated by LED lights, creating a captivating presence at night.



Synesthesia was chosen as the winning entry for the park art installation from over 100 submissions. An artist selection panel narrowed the submissions to four finalists. The winner was determined through a public voting process.





## MONTGOMERY PARKS

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

2425 Reedie Drive | Wheaton, MD 20902

### Montgomery Parks Unveils Accessible Viewing Platform at Brookside Gardens

Montgomery Parks is excited to announce a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate opening a new inclusive and accessible viewing platform. This event will take place on April 15, 2025, at 10 a.m.; everyone is welcome to attend. The new platform, located at Brookside Gardens and overlooking the Gude Garden, will provide an accessible way for guests of all abilities to enjoy close-up views of the large pond and the stunning gardens surrounding the Japanese Tea House. This enhancement was made possible through a generous gift from a long-time friend and supporter of the gardens, the late Joan O'Rourke.



### Upcoming Events

- Sunday Serenade - [Sunday Serenade - April 13 - Montgomery Parks](#)
  - Date: April 13
  - Time: 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM
  - Location: Cabin John Regional Park
- Earth Day Family Celebration - [Earth Month Family Celebration - Montgomery Parks](#)
  - Date: April 26, 2025
  - Time: 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM
  - Location: Brookside Gardens
- Sligo Creek Fest - [Sligo Creek Fest - Montgomery Parks](#)
  - Date: May 3, 2025
  - Time: 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM
  - Location: Sligo-Dennis Avenue Local Park
- The Butterfly Experience - [The Butterfly Experience at Brookside Gardens - Montgomery Parks](#)
  - Date(s): April 10, 2025, to September 21, 2025
  - Time(s): 10 am to 4 pm daily
  - July 1 – August 31, 2025: 10 am to 1 pm weekdays, 10 am to 4 pm weekends
  - September 1–21, 2025: 10 am to 4pm daily

<https://montgomeryparks.org/special-events-festivals/>

## Information regarding [CUPF's Simplified Fee Structure](#)

CUPF has not increased facility use fees since 2009, expenses to operate the program, including energy costs and staff costs at host sites, have increased significantly.

In 2024, a fee study was completed by an outside contractor to determine how Montgomery County fees for community use of public facilities compared to other jurisdictions and what changes CUPF needed to make to serve its customers best while being able to maintain operational costs.

- Simplified fee structure for public school facilities
- Spread out fee increases over multiple years with an annual review before implementation
- Alignment with Montgomery Parks hourly fees for natural grass athletic fields at public schools and recreation centers
  - Natural grass athletic fields increased by \$5.00 per hour to align with Montgomery Parks athletic field rates for non-profit groups
  - Synthetic turf athletic fields increased from \$125.00 to \$138.00 per hour for non-profit groups
- The cost of auditorium facilities for weekend use by non-profit organizations increased from \$160.00 to \$176.00 per hour



Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich  
cordially invites you to his

**2025**  
**State of the**  
**County Address**

**Thursday, April 24**  
**6 p.m.**

Isiah Leggett Executive Office Building  
Terrace Level  
101 Monroe Street  
Rockville, MD

The Executive Office Building is two blocks  
from the Rockville station on Metro's red line.

Parking is available in the lot at the corner  
of Monroe & Jefferson St. and the  
Council Office Building garage.



Michael Ricci &lt;michael.ricci@gmail.com&gt;

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## Letter from Countywide Recreation and Parks Advisory Board

5 messages

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**Michael Ricci** <michael.ricci@gmail.com>

Mon, Feb 10, 2025 at 9:30 AM

To: Essie\_Mcguire@mcpsmd.org

Cc: "Riley, Robin" &lt;robin.riley@montgomerycountymd.gov&gt;, "Burnett, Gary" &lt;gary.burnett@montgomeryparks.org&gt;, ramona.bell-pearson@montgomerycountymd.gov

Good morning, Essie. I hope you're doing well. I'm reaching out to share a letter from the Countywide Recreation and Parks Advisory Board, which is both attached to this email and embedded herein.

We would welcome the opportunity to explore ways to better collaborate with the school district on these issues. Please let me know if there's a time that works for a conversation or if there's someone on your team we should connect with.

Looking forward to your thoughts.

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February 10, 2025

Ms. Essie McGuire  
Chief of Staff  
Office of the Superintendent  
Montgomery County Public Schools  
15 W. Gude Drive, Suite 400  
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Ms. McGuire,

We write to you today on behalf of the **Countywide Recreation and Parks Advisory Board**, which works on matters relating to recreation and park programs and services.

First, we would like to express our sincere appreciation for the strong partnership between Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and Montgomery County government. Together, we have worked to create safe, accessible, and functional spaces that enrich the lives of our residents. As we continue to collaborate in service to our community, we would like to explore opportunities to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the school facilities usage process.

Montgomery County Recreation, along with other county departments and agencies, shares a mission closely aligned with that of MCPS: fostering the physical, social, and emotional well-being of our residents, particularly our youth.

We recognize the importance of a fair and transparent process for managing facility usage through the Community Use of Public Facilities (CUPF). However, occasional challenges—such as double bookings, and last-minute cancellations—can significantly disrupt programs and have a profound impact on the community. When programs are delayed or canceled, participants and their families are directly affected.

Many caregivers depend on these activities for their children's enrichment, safety, and well-being. These disruptions undermine trust in the reliability of community services and reduce the effectiveness of the programs designed to support vulnerable populations.

To better address these concerns, we propose the following:

1. **Increased Accountability:** Strengthen accountability within the historically agreed-upon CUPF process by implementing improved and ongoing training for school administrators and ensuring administrators recognize and are held responsible for their actions and decisions related to the CUPF process.
2. **Strengthened Collaboration:** Foster regular communication between the leadership of Montgomery County Recreation, CUPF, MCPS, and other relevant county agencies to proactively address scheduling challenges and avoid conflicts.
3. **Community Impact Emphasis:** Reinforce the importance of reliability in facility scheduling, emphasizing the essential role these spaces play in creating safe environments for residents and fostering trust in our community institutions.

Additionally, we respectfully request that school administrators be reminded of why priority consideration for the use of school facilities during non-school hours is provided to the County Government, particularly Montgomery County Recreation, whose mission aligns with that of MCPS. By prioritizing programs that directly support our shared objectives, such as structured activities for youth and teens, MCPS can help maximize the impact of these initiatives and better serve our community.

In addressing these issues and ensuring a reliable, accountable process for all users, MCPS will further strengthen its bond with the community. These measures will highlight the school system's role as a vital hub for community engagement and support.

We, and the board, would welcome the opportunity to discuss these proposals further and work together on actionable solutions. Thank you for your attention, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Michael Ricci & Hannah Hutton  
Board Chair & Vice-Chair

CC: Ramona Bell-Pearson, Community Use of Public Facilities  
Gary Burnett, Montgomery Parks  
Robin Riley, Montgomery County Recreation



**CWRPAB letter to MCPS-Feb 2025.pdf**

239K

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Michael Ricci <michael.ricci@gmail.com>

Tue, Apr 8, 2025 at 10:20 AM

To: Essie\_Mcguire@mcpsmd.org

Cc: "Riley, Robin" <robin.riley@montgomerycountymd.gov>, "Burnett, Gary" <gary.burnett@montgomeryparks.org>, ramona.bell-pearson@montgomerycountymd.gov, Hannah Hutton <hannah.hutton89@gmail.com>

Good morning, Essie. While it's disappointing that eight weeks have passed without response or acknowledgment, my highest priority is to get some kind of update to the board at our next meeting next Monday evening, April 14th. Given that they took the time to discuss and put together this thoughtful letter, they merit a response from you or whomever you designate. Thank you.

[Quoted text hidden]

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**Riley, Robin** <Robin.Riley@montgomerycountymd.gov>  
To: Michael Ricci <michael.ricci@gmail.com>

Tue, Apr 8, 2025 at 3:19 PM

Thank you Mike for this work, your testimony and continued advocacy! Appreciate it !!

Robin Riley  
Director, Montgomery County Recreation  
240-777-6824 desk  
240-876-0134 cell

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From: Michael Ricci <michael.ricci@gmail.com>  
Sent: Tuesday, April 8, 2025 10:20 AM  
To: [Essie\\_Mcguire@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Essie_Mcguire@mcpsmd.org)  
Cc: Riley, Robin; Burnett, Gary; Bell-Pearson, Ramona; Hannah Hutton  
Subject: Re: Letter from Countywide Recreation and Parks Advisory Board

[EXTERNAL EMAIL]

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Additionally, we respectfully request that school administrators be reminded of why priority consideration for the use of school facilities during non-school hours is provided to the County Government, particularly Montgomery County Recreation, whose mission aligns with that of MCPS. By prioritizing programs that directly support our shared objectives, such as structured activities for youth and teens, MCPS can help maximize the impact of these initiatives and better serve our community.

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Sincerely,

Michael Ricci & Hannah Hutton  
Board Chair & Vice-Chair

CC: Ramona Bell-Pearson, Community Use of Public Facilities  
Gary Burnett, Montgomery Parks  
Robin Riley, Montgomery County Recreation

[<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcg/Resources/Images/Cybersecurity-footer1.png>]

For more helpful Cybersecurity Resources, visit: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cybersecurity>

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**McGuire, Essie** <Essie\_Mcguire@mcpsmd.org>

Tue, Apr 8, 2025 at 8:22 PM

To: Michael Ricci <michael.ricci@gmail.com>

Cc: "Riley, Robin" <robin.riley@montgomerycountymd.gov>, "Burnett, Gary" <gary.burnett@montgomeryparks.org>, "ramona.bell-pearson@montgomerycountymd.gov" <ramona.bell-pearson@montgomerycountymd.gov>, Hannah Hutton <hannah.hutton89@gmail.com>

Good evening,

Let me start by apologizing for not responding to this letter. I certainly do not mean to communicate any disrespect for the board or for the issues outlined.

As you may know, MCPS has experienced significant change in our leadership spaces in the past year, and we continue to work through an internal restructuring of many of our divisions across the organization. This work has on the one hand inhibited our ability to attend effectively to all of the matters that require our collaboration and partnership; on the other hand, completing these transitions I believe will position us to be the community partner that we would like to be and that our community deserves.

I can assure you that MCPS, beginning with the Superintendent and myself, share the concerns and objectives that are outlined here. We have had meetings recently with CUPF and Recreation leadership to begin the process of rebuilding the structures and relationships that will facilitate a better partnership around space use. We also know that more in depth and specific work needs to be done going forward in this process, and we are committed to working with our partner agencies in this effort.

At this time, we are continuing to hire and complete our organizational change. We will identify points of contact to move this work forward and are happy to be in ongoing dialogue at that point. I will follow up by the end of this month with additional information on next steps in this discussion.

Again, I am very sorry to have dropped the thread on your earlier communication. I look forward to working together in the future.

Thank you,

Essie McGuire

Chief of Staff