



FREDERICK COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

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JEREMY KORTRIGHT - DIVISION DIRECTOR

MINUTES

The Frederick County Parks and Recreation Commission Nov 9, 2023

Parks and Recreation Commission Attendees:

Howard Looney
Charlotte Davis
Harry Lashley
Mary Jo Richmond
Nicholas Augustine

Parks and Recreation Commission Absentees:

Council Liaison-Mason Carter
BoE Liaison – Nancy Allen
Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis
Viktor Kraenbring

Public Attendees:

N/A

Staff Attendees:

Jeremy Kortright
Lin Wang

Voting Legend

For-Against-Abstained-Absent

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APPROVED
January 11, 2024

Call to Order:

Chair Howard Looney called the Nov 9, 2023, meeting to order at 6:50 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes from the October 2023 meeting were presented for approval. Nicholas Augustine and Harry Lashley voted to abstain because they were not in the October meeting. Mary Jo Richmond motioned to approve the October 2023 minutes. Charlotte Davis seconded the motion.

The Motion passed 3-0-2-4

PRC Chair Comments:

Chair Howard Looney had no comments and reserved the balance of his time.

2023 Systemic and LPPI Projects Update

Jeremy Kortright provided a presentation comprising PowerPoint slides featuring before-and-after pictures of the park projects after the group staff photo from the June all-staff meeting was highlighted.

- Pinecliff Park – LPPI funds were used to replace the playground and the bonded rubberized surface. By comparing the before and after pictures, Jeremy Kortright emphasized the aesthetic appeal and the new play features.
- Kemptown – heavily used playground. The new playground features a non-verbal communication board for special needs kids and the concept of a boundless playground with ramps for wheelchair access.
- Othello Shade Structure – Jeremy Kortright explained the addition of shade structure based on the request from constituents. He emphasized the importance of providing shade for parents and kids due to the lack of established trees.
- Green Hill – Jeremy Kortright noted the addition of the fencing after the playground installation providing safety for children. The adjacent road was accessible, posing a safety risk before. Mary Jo Richmond asked about the location, and Jeremy pointed out that it's across from the Carroll Manor Elementary School, and the park will have a parking lot designed in 2027 which may need more fencing.
- Point of Rocks – Improvements were made to the tennis courts and basketball courts using the systemic funds. Jeremy Kortright explained the integration of pickleball into tennis courts and the challenges involved.
- Liberty Town – The tennis court had previously been in poor condition with tar patches, but it was revamped with new asphalt and stone. To address the pickleball lines, a large toolbox was placed near the court containing portable pickleball nets which can be easily set up and allow for six pickleball courts on the tennis court simultaneously.
- Kemptown – The amphitheater underwent significant changes in just two months, with the addition of new mulch and the ongoing process of rebuilding the benches. The recent improvements made also addressed electrical concerns and risks ensuring the safety and longevity of the structure.
- Urbanna Campus Drive Athletic Fields– staircases were added to the campus drive athletic fields as well as an ADA ramp. Jeremy Kortright highlighted the investments in improving accessibility to the fields which not only benefit those attending and watching games but also ensure ADA

compliance and easier emergency access.

- Catoctin Creek – subtle and simple improvements were made such as new fencing.

Charlotte Davis asked about the funding sources for these projects. Jeremy Kortright explained securing LPPI and systemic funding for recent accomplishments including those covered by the previous presentation by Bob Hicks. Other completed projects include Kemptown tennis courts, the addition of a vaulted restroom and amenities at Old National Park, etc.

All commission members praised the Division's work which improves the quality of life for the citizens.

Fee Revision Recommendation

Jeremy Kortright discussed the need for a fee committee to reevaluate the update the reservation fee structure, which hasn't been revised since March 2010. The staff has proposed a five-year and phased approach to increase fees, aligning with surrounding counties and accounting for rising costs. The emphasis is on addressing the impact on out-of-county residents who currently benefit from lower fees. Jeremy suggested implementing the change in July 2024, with a grandfather clause for those who reserve before the fees take effect. The phased approach aims to minimize the impact on residents over five years. The Division plans to engage with the county executive for approval and acknowledges the potential impact on the community and the users.

Mary Jo Richmond raised her concern about the low rental hour rates for the gym and noted that the schools may have higher rates which include custodial fees. Jeremy Kortright acknowledged the concern and confirmed that Montgomery County charges \$40 for residents while the Division proposes to increase the rate to \$25. Jeremy explained that the goal is to cover the costs without significantly impacting the community, especially children. That's why the Division is cautious about raising prices too quickly keeping in mind the potential negative consequences and the impact on residents. Jeremy then expressed the intention to adjust the non-resident fees to prevent them from taking advantage of the County's lower fees and well-maintained facilities. He also mentioned the consideration of increasing alcohol and sales permit fees.

Nicholas Augustine questioned whether the non-resident fees are appropriately structured. He noted that the current non-resident rates match what individuals would pay in their home counties, suggesting that the fees should be higher for non-residents, especially considering the amenities and quality of the facilities offered are usually nicer compared to their home counties. Nicholas advocated for higher fees for non-residents to ensure fairness and sustainability. He provided an example of a sports team that prefers to use Frederick County's park for tournament due to lower costs and the availability of alcohol permit which is more restricted in Montgomery County. Jeremy Kortright acknowledged that while it may not be a major concern for gyms as they are heavily used by residents, it is a significant issue for turf fields. He recognized the high demand from out-of-county groups that may limit access for residents. He then explained the synthetic turf fields' fee structure, highlighting the current rate of \$60 per hour with a minimum booking requirement of two hours. The Parks' approach is different and aims for more daily community usage. Jeremy agreed to meet with staff and set an increased turf field fee, especially for non-residents.

Nicholas Augustine expressed another concern about the impact of fee increases on residents particularly for small and medium shelters often used for family events like birthday parties. He

pointed out that the proposed fee hike from \$55 to \$85 for such family gatherings might be a significant burden on families. To offset this, he suggested exploring increasing non-resident fees to generate revenue from larger events such as corporate gatherings. Nicholas also suggested that the alcohol fee could potentially be increased considering it more of a luxury than a necessity, especially for family events. Jeremy Kortright acknowledged Nicholas' point about increasing alcohol permit fees as he agreed that this is a way to address the specific issues related to alcohol-related events while allowing families to enjoy progressively smaller rate increases. The Division's overall goal is to avoid burdening families and ensure that the park experience remains enjoyable and accessible.

Harry Lashley asked questions about the alcohol permits in the parks in terms of selling and serving certificates. Jeremy Kortright clarified that the alcohol permits are not specifically for selling, instead, it is exclusive to the group's reservation. He explained the process involving obtaining the permits at the county level and the liquor board oversees and approves these permits.

Mary Jo Richmond expressed that she is in favor of not increasing the smaller shelter fees and instead increasing the alcohol permit fees. She suggested keeping the park atmosphere family-friendly.

Harry Lashley suggested that the fees for adult synthetic field usage should increase in the next five years but not youth synthetic field usage.

Nicholas Augustine asked if the Widrick house in Ballenger Creek Park is potentially for rental. Jeremy Kortright explained that the timeline for opening the house is set for 2028, and ongoing design efforts are focusing on preserving the exterior of the house and planning for road, parking, and pathway improvement. He touched on the challenges faced due to floodplain issues and archaeological findings which potentially will influence the development of the area.

Jeremy Kortright suggested applying the same approach for both sales permits and alcohol permits, aiming to decrease the impact on regular shelter reservations while providing flexibility for those who choose add-ons.

Director's Comments:

Jeremy Kortright provided updates for the following items:

- The Planning and Permitting Dept. is having consultants conduct five trails and bikeways feasibility studies. There are opportunities for public input through surveys and public information sessions. Once the studies are completed, they would like to present them to the PRC commission members.
- The clarification on the process for reappointment after one's term has expired. One still needs to submit a letter of interest together with an updated resume to Joyce Grossnickle before the application deadline.
- The Othello shop yard has begun work, and tree evaluations are underway for trails associated with programs to ensure pedestrian safety.
- The studio bathroom in Middletown is nearly finished, part of the transformed concession stand now serving as a preschool learning studio.
- The interior renovations in Middletown's shop are nearing completion.
- The exterior project for Widrick house is expected to finish in December.
- The Farmers Barn and Carrier Museum building is in the final stages of permits, with bidding

anticipated in December.

- The Pinecliff boat ramp project is progressing toward a design phase.
- The Kanode master plan's feasibility study will be available in the next two weeks, with a plan to present it to the Park and Recreation Commission in January 2024. Neighbors and the master plan committee will receive early access to the study.
- In early 2024, there is plan to present the Othello Rec Center design rendering, potentially in February or March. Public input will be encouraged, and the presentation will be available on the website.

Commission Items:

Charlotte Davis asked about the county budget submission and approval timeline as she had concerns about the recreation tax being down due to the slower real estate market. Jeremy Kortright mentioned that the submission due on December 11th. He also had concerns about potential shifts in budget priorities for the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) in the coming years. Charlotte expressed that she hoped the recordation tax fee to maintain at the current level and discussed the possibility of advocating for this during public hearings. At the state level, Charlotte mentioned a possible formula change from the Joint Committee on Program of Open Space from the meeting she was asked to testify. She also considered the timing of making requests during the public hearing process, suggesting that advocating for park could be done in February rather than December. Jeremy Kortright acknowledged the potential impact of the real estate market on funding priorities and emphasized the importance of community support during public input sessions.

Nicholas Augustine raised a concern about the lack of a sidewalk near Ballenger Creek Park's entrance from the road. He discussed the potential safety issues as people walk on the road, especially with the construction of a new gas station at the corner. Nicholas suggested the Division consider adding a sidewalk with the increased traffic expected. Jeremy Kortright indicated that making improvements while ensuring ADA accessibility is challenging due to the trees, fences, and utilities up on the hill. The hope was for people to use the front of the park and the trail for safety. Nicholas suggested to explore the possibility of installing a pedestrian crosswalk light that could flash when someone wants to cross the street, providing access to the trail without relying on the two existing traffic lights. Jeremy Kortright acknowledged it and would further review it once the deputy director is hired.

Harry Lashley raised the topic of the dog park playground. He asked if Frederick County would introduce something like Ocean City's dog park which features water elements and obstacle courses for dogs. Harry suggested the addition of more engaging elements for dogs beyond open land would help puppies and energetic dogs that need additional stimulation. Jeremy Kortright acknowledged that there are large spaces at Ballenger Creek Park and the potential to enhance the dog park experience by creating cost-effective features. Jeremy would inquire further about it with the Ocean City Park Director. Harry Lashley noted that Ocean City charges for access to their dog playground.

Public Comments:

N/A.

Adjourn:

There being no further business, Nicholas Augustine made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m. and Mary Jo Richmond seconded the motion.

The Motion passed 5-0-0-4

Respectfully Submitted,

Lin Wang
Recording Secretary