

**Recreation and Parks Advisory Board
Online WebEx Meeting
September 24, 2020
Board Meeting Minutes**

PRESENT: Board Members: Tom Lynch, George Sushinsky, Maryann Kearns, Dirk Whatley, Rob Harriman, Chip Boylan, Stephanie Pankiewicz
Staff: Tim Chesnutt, Karla Sheehi
Absent: Bob Taylor
M&C Liaison: Mark Pierzchala
Citizen: John Becker

Meeting commencement: 7:02 pm

Re: Approval of July Minutes

The minutes were approved as amended.

Re: Citizens Forum

John Becker was attendance for tonight's meeting. Mr. Becker wanted to thank the R&P department for all of the work done at RedGate Park. Mr. Becker is also a member of the Boards & Commission taskforce, so he wanted to listen in on the board's comments with regards to the Boards & Commission Task force. Mr. Becker also inquired later in the meeting about the status of the work being done at Monroe Park. The update was not available during the meeting, but was obtained the following morning from Rob Orndorff: Work is progressing nicely in James Monroe Park, the contractor has completed the grading, installed 90% of the sidewalk, removed the compacted and contaminated soils, and spread 4 to 12 inches of topsoil. A pre-planting meeting has been scheduled for Monday, September 28 and installation of the landscaping should begin shortly thereafter.

Re: Council Report - Councilman Mark Pierzchala

- **Senior Services Rec Guide**
Councilman Pierzchala shared that he has already sent an email out to Senior Services, but also wanted to express to The Board the great job done by Recreation and Parks on their 60+ Rec Guide. The colors of the graphics and overall mood, fits the year perfectly.
- **State of the Budget**
The City remains in a strong financial position. The R&P department is seeing less revenue; however The City is able to handle this. Despite the situation at hand, the COVID-19 updates shared with Mayor and Council by Recreation and Parks clearly shows how well the department grasps this opportunity to stay active and keep as many staff as active as possible.

George Sushinsky inquired as to how a 60+ senior gets on the mailing list.
Karla will look into this and follow back up with George.

Re: Staff Reports

- **R&P looking forward**

- We are looking carefully at what lies ahead, at what things would look like and be prepared for a 2021 reopening. We are also trying to determine what of these changes will be permanent. For example, the Senior Services division has become a food distribution network and this role will eventually lessen as the pandemic passes, but this may become a part of the long-term services.

- **Parks & Maintenance**

As a result of increased use of parks, the Parks and Facilities Division increased trash collection to include a weekend route.

- **Recreation Services**

The City's annual **Rocktoberfest** event is being held virtually this year. The event was filmed outdoors at the Croydon Creek Nature Center and will be posted online Saturday, October 3rd

The video featured beer tastings, musical performances and cooking demonstrations. Participants were also given the opportunity to order a variety pack of beers from True Respite Brewery to have delivered days prior to the airing of the event.

The Farmers Market

Continues to collect food for the Senior Food Distribution.

Fall Programs

The City is offering 899 Fall program options for our customers, of which 332 are virtual classes.

- **Swim & Fitness Center**

The Rockville Swim and Fitness Center continues to operate for limited programs and reservation-based visits. Both outdoor pools remain open through the month, as well as the indoor complex. Montgomery County's Department of Health and Human Services has approved a waiver to their one person per lane rule ONLY for supervised, competitive swim team practices as the coach will be present to ensure that swimmers are appropriately distanced from each other within the lanes and during arrival/departure to the facility.

Comment: Chip pointed out that because of the community center closures due to COVID-19, the Swim Center extended their fitness amenities to Seniors Center fitness members to use, which he really appreciates.

- **Senior Center**

Senior Services continues to provide 7 lunches per week, a supplemental bag of shelf stable food and fresh fruit and produce, every other week. To date, they have distributed 4500 pounds of fresh fruit and vegetables, 33,285 meals, and 4755 supplemental shelf stable food bags.

Thanks to the contributions of many Rockville residents, the Senior Assistance fund has received 13,000 in donations, and to date we have spent \$9000 of those contributions to purchase additional shelf stable food.

Fall virtual programs are going extremely well. Senior Services is currently hosting 198 classes and events, with 1900 seniors participating in classes. One particular fitness class has 83 people registered. Staff continue to reach out in many different ways to seniors, including one on one calls, the pen pal program, porch and driveway visits, and our new effort of "flocking" seniors yards with flamingos and a sign that says "Rockville Senior Center misses you."

- **Community Centers**

While the **Community Centers** may not be able to offer traditional in-person programming at this time, staff continues to offer important services and outreach to our community's youth. During this time of separation, it is essential to engage, support, and celebrate the youth who call our centers home and rely on staff for encouragement. The centers are offering more than (40) programs this fall, and highlights include:

Virtual Book Clubs for ages 6-15 provide a great way to discover books, share new stories, and explore important topics. This program will offer age appropriate discussions and plenty of inspiration for exciting group conversations.

Afterschool Buddies for ages 6-11 provides an opportunity for participants to unwind, work on schoolwork, and participate in fun games and activities. It is also an opportunity for students to seek support from their peers and our experienced staff. Sessions include small break-out groups for certain activities to offer more individual attention.

Teen Scene Club for ages 12-14 provides an opportunity for teens to join staff to work on their homework, catch up with their peers, and participate in small group activities. Importantly, this program will provide an opportunity for teens to seek support from their peers and our staff.

Playing It Safe for ages 3-5 and 6-14 provides children and families time to safely play outside through physical distancing and facilitates in-person engagement to help with development and growth.

Croydon Creek Nature Center has been providing meaningful environmental education programming to area residents in several ways during the pandemic through a variety of in-person and virtual programs, as well as daily outreach via CCNC's Facebook page. Here is a summary of the Nature Center's education and interpretation plan for the fall:

Daily posts on social media that focus on local environmental issues, activities to do at home or in a nearby neighborhood park, and collaborations with the city's Environmental Management Division to highlight their work on sustainability and climate change issues that impact Rockville.

Weekly and bi-weekly interpretive signs and environmental education exhibits have been on display in the Nature Center windows and trailhead kiosk since the onset of the pandemic. Current topics include bird migration, the monarch life cycle and forest scavenger hunts.

There are **several in-person options** being offered with limited group size and appropriate safety procedures including Family Nature Hikes, Parks in Person, Fall Bird Walks, and Volunteer Trail Clean-up events.

Virtual programs include outreach to the senior community through several programs with the Senior Center like a Virtual Campfire and the Seniors Understanding Nature monthly series (S.U.N.). Additionally, we are offering Crafternoons with Croydon, live readings with a children's book author, and live virtual programs that focus on birds of prey like Owls Up Close and Meet Gillis the Black Vulture.

Finally, Nature Center staff have developed **virtual options for birthday parties and virtual school field trips** that will launch later this fall.

Comment: (Maryann) commented that there is not enough gratitude given to the department for everything that staff is doing and having to rework everything that we normally do. It's an amazing feat!

Question: (Maryann) Is there a plan for people to have access to drinking water in the parks? From a health and wellness perspective as people are more outdoors than indoors.

Tim advised that we have had requests for park goers to have access to bathrooms, however, not access to drinking water.

Re: Subcommittee Reports

- a) **Glenview Mansion – (Tom)**
A couple of maintenance items to be done, had to be placed on hold. It may be due to COVID. Tim advised that all expenditures have to be reevaluated to determine how essential they are, unless they are tied to safety.
- b) **Swim & Fitness Center (Bob)**
Nothing else outside of what was discussed early on.
- c) **Recreation and Parks Foundation (Chip)**
The Golf Tournament took place August 31st. It was very successful with 77 golfers, which was good considering how the year has been. The weather held out until lunchtime which worked out well. Chip manned the hole in one hole and got to witness all players trying to win a car. The money raised was around \$20K.
David Skull Art Project/Carving (Stephanie):
The Red-Tailed Hawk that went it was completed at David Skull Park.
Thomas Farm Art Project (Tom):
The final recommendation was made of a unicycle mad of metal at the hilltop of the Thomas Farm grounds; a theme of transportation. This is art project is ready to go to Mayor and Council and are awaiting a date to present. The funding does not come out of the general fund.
Swim Center Art Project (Bob):
The final selection for the art project is ready to go to Mayor and Council and are awaiting a date to present. The funding does not come out of the general fund.
- d) **RedGate Park (George)**
The Project Team for “Reimagining RedGate Park” is hard at work to come up with and finalize additional the process to gather additional community input working from the Strategic Master Plan and the unsolicited comments that were received by Mayor and Council. It is still early in the process.
Comments: Stephanie and Rob commented how well the grounds are being maintained.

Re: Old Business/New Business

- **Old Business**
 - **Boards & Commissions feedback.** Comments were submitted in by the board.
Chip had an additional comment regarding the input from previous board members. Chip recalls how in the past other board member’s shared perspectives and views have aided in Chips input and decision as a board member.
Therefore, it’s important when vetting interested applicants. It’s important for the existing board members to all provide their feedback and weigh in on the applicant and share the feedback to the City Clerk’s office as par to a vetting process.
John Becker expressed that this scenario is supported by the Boards and Commissions Task Force and agrees with Chip’s comment.
George expressed that he too expressed this concern and sent in his comments related to this. Stephanie expressed that all applicants need to ensure that they are on a board of their interest.
Maryann asked how we tackle the issue with applicants who may have a language barrier while still being inclusive.

Chip commented that there was a comment made by the B&C task force about the R&P Advisory board's role being unclear. What do we need to make our role clear?

John Becker shared that when you look at each boards and commission's webpage, it should on a standard template that identifies why this board exists and identify what they are doing.

John emphasized the feedback given by the Boards & Commission Task Force applies to all Boards and Commission.

- **Rockville Sports Safety guidelines.**

George pointed out that the staff COVID updates sent out by Karla & Tim addresses the safety concerns and continuing to receive this would be helpful. The update on the sports would be extremely helpful and is interested in other youth sports as well.

Stephanie inquired as to whether R&P will sponsor any Halloween activities while still being responsible and safe. Tim advised that this is still in the works. Any other inquiries can be sent directly to Karla.

George wanted to ensure that the enforcement of the safety guidelines be addressed, even with non-city programs taking place at City Parks.

- **New Business**

- Fall Stream Cleanup

Proposed for either Saturday October 3 or Saturday October 10. Karla will solicit a vote from the board to determine the best date.

- Our R&P Advisory Board will have two vacancies. Rob Harriman is moving out of the area and will be resigning with tonight being his last meeting.

Re: Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:31 pm

The next meeting: October 22, 2020 at 7 p.m. Via Webex