

**RECREATION AND PARKS BOARD  
OF ST. MARY'S COUNTY  
Meeting of Thursday, April 7, 2011  
MINUTES**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Richard Buckler, Vice-Chairperson; Patrick Dugan, Al Harrison, Sabrina Hecht, Robert Hicks, Julie Lemmon and Tom Nelson.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Lisa Wainger-Rush and David Phalen.

**RECREATION AND PARKS STAFF AND OTHERS PRESENT:** Phil Rollins, Director; Tyrone Harris, Park Operations Coordinator; and Kathy Bailey, Recorder. Clive Graham and Joan Huston, from Environmental Resources Management (ERM) attended to provide a presentation on the Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP). Approximately 10 citizens attended the meeting to hear the discussion on the LPPRP and to provide public input.

**CALL TO ORDER**

The Board meeting was called to order by Rickard Buckler, Vice-Chairperson, at 5:30 p.m., in the Chesapeake Building.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Patrick Dugan moved, seconded by Robert Hicks, to approve the minutes of March 3, 2011; motion carried 7-0.**

**NICOLET PARK SKATEPARK**

Mr. Rollins provided a memo to the Board that detailed proposed policy changes at Nicolet Park Skatepark. The proposed changes would decrease the level of facility supervision; reduce operating costs; eliminate the daily admission fee and reduce seasonal fees; and address declining attendance and budget shortfalls.

Since opening in August 2003, skate park policy required supervision in the park whenever the facility was open. This policy was implemented because of concerns with participant safety and security. To cover that cost, a daily admission fee of \$4 for youth and \$5 for adults was charged; or a half-season pass could be purchased for \$50 (March 1 - June 30 or July 1 – November 1).

Despite collecting a user fee, the skate park experienced deficits of \$15,000 - \$20,000 each year through FY'08 which was a burden on the self supporting Recreation Enterprise Fund. As a result of these losses, the decision was made to reduce the hours of operation in FY09. That change reduced the fiscal losses by more than half, but also reduced the days and times the facility was open. The reduction in hours of operation created major concerns for users and subsequent problems for R&P with unauthorized use when the park wasn't open (by jumping over the fence). Additionally, the reduced hours also significantly impacted attendance at the skate park. Annual attendance dropped from 4,643 in FY08 to 2,414 in FY10, a decrease of almost 50%.

R&P staff has met with concerned skateboarders and BMX riders over the past few months to gather information and suggestions regarding the park. The major concerns of the participants are the cost of admission and the limited hours of operation. Staff researched comparable skate park operations in the region and found that most of these parks are not staffing them all of the time. The Local Government Insurance Trust (LGIT), the County's insurer, informed staff that

the County is not required to have full time supervision at the skate park. There are several other Counties that are operating skate parks without constant supervision.

Staff is proposing not to continue the full-time supervision, but instead to provide periodic supervision by existing park operations staff and volunteers. A set of rules and regulations will be put in place that include:

- A yearly registration fee of \$10 for County residents and \$25 for non-residents.
- All users must complete a liability waiver and registration form. Parents/guardians would complete the forms for those under age 18.
- Registrants will be issued registration stickers to be worn on helmets.
- All participants must wear helmets and will be encouraged to wear elbow and knee pads.
- Unregistered users will be issued one free pass.
- Signs will be posted with the rules and regulations.
- Emergency contact and park maintenance numbers will be posted.
- Skatepark volunteers will be trained to provide monitoring.
- Safety inspection check list will be provided for volunteers.
- Operating hours will be daily from 9:00 am – dusk, year-round.
- Skateboarders and BMX riders will be allowed in the park concurrently.

Tyrone Harris, Special Facilities Coordinator, stated that staff is looking to make the rules and hours of operation more flexible to accommodate the greatest number of users and keep them from skating in parking lots and other areas. Staff plans to spot monitor the facility to check on compliance with safety rules.

**Robert Hicks moved, seconded by Julie Lemmon, to endorse the policy changes for the Nicolet Park Skatepark proposed by staff. The motion carried 7-0.**

## **LAND PRESERVATION, PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN**

Mr. Rollins introduced, Clive Graham, of Environmental Resource Management (ERM), who provided a Power Point presentation on the process to update the County's 2005 Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP). The purpose of his presentation was to review the progress since the 2005 Plan and to gather Board and public input for the update. The Plan serves as the County's master plan for parkland acquisition, recreational program needs, and recreational facility development. The update is required by the State every six years and is a prerequisite to using Program Open Space funds for parkland acquisition and park development. The plan will include three defined elements of land preservation and recreation planning: recreation and parks, agricultural land preservation, and natural resource conservation. The draft plan is due to the State by January 1, 2012 and the final plan is due by July 1, 2012. The plan becomes part of the County's Comprehensive Plan by amendment. The full version of Mr. Graham's presentation will be posted on the R&P website.

Mr. Rollins informed the Board that a survey will be posted on the County website in the near future to obtain public input on experiences, views, and opinions regarding recreation and open space preservation in St. Mary's County.

Alan Terrell, St. Mary's County Tennis Association – Thanked R&P for support provided in improving tennis facilities in the county over the last six years. He cited recent accomplishments of the SMCTA and noted they provided \$600 to help pay for the electricity for lights at Dorsey Park. He would like the County to consider a greater number of courts at one park; fabric and metal enclosures as opposed to a "brick and mortar" indoor tennis facility; consider tennis to be

looked at as an indoor sport along with volleyball, basketball, soccer and racquetball; and pursue options for tennis at the Hayden Farm property. He thanked the County for support; improvements to courts are really paying off; four courts now at Cecil and lights at Dorsey. More good news – USTA Maryland grant money was received to help repair some tennis courts in the County. Praised public and private partnership between the County and the SMCTA. He noted they are able to use the tennis courts at Great Mills High School on a limited basis.

Jason Wynne and Brian Abell, of the St. Mary's County Tennis Association – also attended the meeting in support of tennis.

Mr. Paul Martin of Mechanicsville – expressed the need for “skate spots” in County parks; does not have to be a full size Skatepark, but smaller spots for skateboarding. This would provide other activities for youth who don't participate in organized team sports. He presented a petition with 95 signatures from students at Chopticon High School in support of this. His preferred location is either Wicomico Shores Golf Course or Chaptico Park.

Board member Robert Hicks asked when the LPPRP survey would be posted on the web; Mr. Rollins stated that it would be posted within the next week or two. The survey will be “live” for about 60 days. Julie Lemmon asked that artificial turf fields be added to the survey list of amenities.

Sabrina Hecht stated that her family enjoyed a recent family skate night at Leonard Hall Recreation Center; she noted the skates need new laces and it would be beneficial to offer healthy snacks.

Mr. Graham explained the State requirements for reporting usage and demand for parks and facilities. The plans must incorporate the State goals for recreation and parks, in addition to local goals as appropriate for each jurisdiction.

## **PROJECT UPDATES**

Mr. Rollins provided an update on several R&P Capital Projects.

- The solicitation for construction of the Charlotte Hall athletic fields was put out to bid on March 23<sup>rd</sup>; the pre-bid meeting was held on March 31<sup>st</sup>. Bids are due to Procurement on April 21<sup>st</sup>.
- The request for qualifications solicitation for the design and engineering of Phase VI of the trail is also out to bid; qualifications are due by April 25<sup>th</sup>. The top rated firms will be asked to submit cost proposals for the project.
- Staff anticipates having a ribbon cutting ceremony for Phase V of the Three Notch Trail later this year. It was originally hoped this could be held in May; however SHA staff has indicated the Governor may wish to attend this ceremony and has asked it be moved to late summer or early fall.

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

Mr. Rollins asked members to refer to the draft Annual Report document that was previously e-mailed to Board members.

**Robert Hicks moved, seconded by Patrick Dugan, to approve the Annual Report as drafted and to have staff forward the report to the Board of County Commissions. Motion carried 7-0.**

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

Park and Facility Site Visits - Ms. Hecht asked if the Board could again consider making site visits to various parks and facilities; the consensus was to plan this for the upcoming months. The Board expressed interest in visiting the Newtowne Neck State Park.

Entrance Fee Proposal - Mr. Rollins informed the Board that it is expected that the BOCC will make a decision on April 26<sup>th</sup> on charging an entrance fee at Elms Beach and Myrtle Point parks on weekends and holidays during the summer months. This fee is proposed to pay for supervision and security at these waterfront parks which have seen a significant increase in visitation in recent years.

A citizen provided comments on the fee proposal for Elms Beach and Myrtle Point parks. He did not support fees for County residents to use County parks and thought fees would discourage people from using the parks. He thinks the majority of problems are being created by out-of-County users.

Budget Public Hearing – Mr. Rollins reminded the Board and the viewing public of the Budget Public Hearing on Tuesday, April 26, 2011, at 6:30 p.m., at Great Mills High School.

## **SCHEDULING OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Recreation and Parks Board is scheduled for Thursday, May 5, 2011, at 5:30 p.m., in Chesapeake Building in Leonardtown.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

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Kathy Bailey, Recorder

Minutes approved by the Recreation and Parks Board on June 16, 2011.