

**RECREATION AND PARKS BOARD
OF ST. MARY'S COUNTY
Meeting of Monday, January 7, 2008**

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Patrick Dugan, Chairperson; Robert Richardson, Vice Chairperson; Richard Buckler, Robert Hicks, Coleman Hillman, Thomas Nelson, David Phalen, Andrew Roper and Lisa Wainger-Rush.

RECREATION, PARKS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES STAFF AND OTHERS PRESENT: Phil Rollins, Director, Recreation, Parks & Community Services (RP&CS), and Kathy Bailey, RP&CS, Recorder.

CALL TO ORDER

The Board meeting was called to order by Patrick Dugan, Chairperson, at 5:35 p.m. in Room 14 of the Governmental Center in Leonardtown.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Richard Buckler motioned, seconded by Robert Hicks, to approve the minutes of December 6, 2007. Motion carried 8-0; Andrew Roper abstained since did not attend the December meeting.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW BOARD MEMBER

Mr. Rollins introduced new Board member Mr. Thomas Nelson who was recently appointed by the Board of County Commissioners. Mr. Nelson has lived in the County for more than twenty years; he has served as a coach and an umpire for youth sports.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

David Phalen, Dick Buckler and Lisa Wainger-Rush previously volunteered to serve as the nominating committee for 2008. Mr. Phalen reported that the committee would like to nominate Patrick Dugan as Chairperson and Robert Richardson as Vice-Chairperson. **Robert Hicks motioned, seconded by Andrew Roper, to approve the slate of officers as presented; motioned carried with all in favor.**

COMMUNITY STANDARDS IN YOUTH SPORTS

As a follow-up to last month's discussion, Mr. Rollins provided the Board with a draft memorandum to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) summarizing the status of the Community Standards in Youth Sports program and staff's recommendation that beginning in fall 2008, leagues must be in compliance with the program to be authorized to use County parks and facilities. As members will recall, the BOCC adopted this initiative in March 2006 to address child safety and positive youth development. Participation in the program includes mandatory background checks for volunteer coaches; coaches training; and a code of ethics pledge that parents must sign which outlines the parent's role in creating a positive youth sports environment.

The BOCC approved funding for a Sports Coordinator position to implement the program and appropriated funding to cover the cost of conducting background checks for up to two coaches per team. The program officially started in fall 2006. A review of the past year shows that more than 1,000 coaches had background checks and almost that many participated in training. Only eleven (11) coaches (or 1%) were disqualified because of the results of their background checks.

While significant progress for compliance continues, there is room for improvement. RP&CS administered leagues such as basketball, indoor soccer and roller hockey had 100% compliance for background checks and 97% compliance for coaches training. Some of the volunteer leagues fell short of meeting program requirements. Approximately 67% of the volunteer league coaches had background checks and 69% of their coaches received the required training. RP&CS

staff will continue to work with the individual leagues in an effort to help them meet the requirements for each season; it's the Department's goal to have them all in compliance.

Mr. Rollins stated that staff is doing several things to inform parents about the program. The Community Standards Guidelines have been placed on the Department's website along with a brochure describing the program. The brochure will also be placed in recreation centers and be distributed at league meetings. In the future, the web page will also feature a listing of coaches who have completed background checks and attended training for each sport season.

Staff plans to send the Department's recommendation to the BOCC in the near future that beginning in fall 2008, leagues must be in compliance with the Community Standards in Youth Sports program to be authorized to use County parks and facilities. Arthur Shepherd, Recreation Division Manager, and Todd French, Sports Coordinator, plan to attend league meetings to work with the leagues and assist them in submitting the required forms. Staff is confident that with cooperation from the leagues, that compliance can be increased for next season.

Robert Hicks asked if some of the reasons for getting the background forms turned in late are related to timing of meetings, personal schedules, etc. Mr. Rollins stated yes, that is correct; it could also be because of difficulty in finding coaches to volunteer.

Coleman Hillman asked if there might be some writers on the Board that would be interested in submitted an article to send to the papers about the need for youth coaches in the County. Lisa Rush added that maybe this idea could be pitched to reporters. Mr. Phalen noted that he sees league announcements in the papers from time to time; but supporting volunteerism is always a good idea.

Robert Hicks motioned, seconded by Richard Buckler, to endorse staff's memorandum with the recommendation to the BOCC that leagues must be in compliance with the Community Standards in Youth Sports program to be authorized to use County parks and facilities. Motion carried 8-0; Lisa Rush abstained from voting.

ELMS BEACH PARK

Mr. Rollins provided some background information on some of the park management issues at Elms Beach Park. This waterfront park on the Chesapeake Bay has received increased usage over the past few years. The increased use and overcrowding has caused several management issues. Parking at the park is limited to only 60 – 75 cars. Increased use has also caused conflicts between park patrons and those renting the picnic pavilion. Only portable restrooms are available at the site. Generally, the Department does not have funding for park supervision at parks.

To help monitor the issues with overcrowding, a park attendant was stationed at the park on weekends this past summer. For the coming pavilion rental season, staff is proposing to continue supervision for weekends; if there is a large pavilion rental another attendant would be at the gate letting the general public know the park is full. For the future, is considering setting a maximum patron capacity at the park or no longer renting the picnic pavilion for large gatherings.

Chairman Dugan asked why the user fee wouldn't be feasible at this time; Mr. Rollins stated that having an attendant at the gate every Saturday and Sunday to collect the user fee might not pay for itself. Chairman Dugan asked if boaters access the park from the beach. Mr. Rollins replied they generally do not.

Mr. Phalen asked how the Department lets the public know when the pavilion is rented. Mr. Rollins stated that patrons call the RP&CS office or see the website for the rental schedule; a sign could also be posted at the park.

Mr. Buckler asked if use of the pavilion by small groups significantly impacts the park; Mr. Rollins stated that a small group shouldn't, but that will have to be looked at. Part of the problem is that people sometimes underestimate the number of attendees in the group.

FY09 CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE

Mr. Rollins referred to the Capital Budget handout previously provided to the Board. He outlined the new projects for

the Board. The requested Capital Program will be presented to the BOCC later this month.

Chancellor's Run Baseball Field – The County received a request from American Legion Baseball for the construction of a 90' field at Chancellor's Run Regional Park for teens and adults. The cost estimate takes into consideration the location of available land at the leased park, additional infrastructure is needed including extending the park road, a 75 car parking lot and a restroom facility. The recommendation at this time is for design and engineering in FY09 and construction in FY10. Mr. Buckler asked about ownership of the property; Mr. Rollins stated that the property is leased to the County from the State of Maryland.

Mobile Entertainment Stage - This project will provide a mobile entertainment stage in FY13 for outdoor events sponsored by the Department and the BOCC including musical performances, special events, plays and governmental ceremonies. The Parks Division currently sets up an uncovered, makeshift wooden platform for the many Department and County events held each year.

Museum Collections Storage Facility – This project will construct an environmentally controlled 30' x 50' storage facility for museum collections at St. Clement's Island Museum (SCIM) in FY09 and FY10. The pre-engineered building will house existing collections as well as new items of historical significance for both SCIM and Piney Point Lighthouse Museum.

Recreation Facility Improvements – This project will address capital maintenance and enhancements at various indoor recreation centers including Leonard Hall, Margaret Brent, Carver and Hollywood Recreation Centers and at Great Mills Pool in FY09 through FY13. Interior and exterior painting and an enclosed shelter for the back-up generator at the pool are priorities over the next few years. FY13 includes a recommendation to replace the flooring at Leonard Hall Recreation Center.

St. George's Island Pier Replacement – The FY09 request includes \$99,000 in Waterway Improvement Funds to replace the pier at St. George's Island public landing.

Mr. Hicks asked if the County was still interested in hearing from citizens on whether the Northern County Pool or an indoor recreation center should be a priority. Mr. Rollins stated that since the Northern County Pool is currently included in the CIP for FY13 that the Commissioners would probably be interested in hearing from folks when that timeline gets closer. Mr. Hicks recommended studying the feasibility of combining the pool and the Gymnastics Center projects as a possible cost saving measure. Mr. Rollins agreed that should be looked into; but also stated that indoor aquatics facilities typically have a high price tag.

Mr. Hillman expressed support for the Mobile Entertainment Stage to support theatrical events in the parks. Tom Nelson asked if RP&CS had data on the costs and manpower hours associated with setting up the stage for events; Mr. Rollins stated that we have information on the man hours but not the costs, but that could be gathered.

Lisa Rush motioned, seconded by Coleman Hillman, to support moving up the timing to FY11 for the Mobile Entertainment Stage since it could save money in the long run. The motion carried 9-0.

Mr. Rollins noted that the Charlotte Hall Athletic Fields project calls for construction of five multi-purpose playing fields and a restroom facility on approximately ten acres of County property at the Charlotte Hall Convenience Center adjacent to Lettie Dent Elementary School and Fifth District Park. The project is contingent upon the MTA park and ride project being constructed at the site to enable shared parking with the athletic fields. There have been some issues with whether the park and ride project will move forward.

CAPITAL PROJECT UPDATES

Three Notch Trail – Mr. Rollins reported that Phase II, from the Northern Senior Center to just past the County line, is under construction and should be completed by summer 2008.

Chancellor's Run Ballfield Lighting – The contract for this project was recently awarded and is expected to be completed by spring. As part of this project, all lighted fields will be automated.

Lancaster Park Picnic Pavilion and Pathway – The pre-engineered pavilion has been ordered and is expected to be

constructed this spring. The pedestrian pathway plans are currently being reviewed by local agencies and are expected to be approved within the next few weeks.

Seventh District Park – The restroom building is nearly complete and the park paving is expected to be done this spring.

Cecil Park Tennis Courts – A contract has been awarded to American Tennis Courts to construct two new courts and renovate two existing courts; the work is expected to be done this spring.

Potential Parkland Acquisition – Appraisals have been ordered on several properties the Board has discussed in Executive Session of the past few months.

Chapico Park Parking Lot Expansion – The plans for this project have been submitted for February's Technical Evaluation Committee review; staff hopes to be under construction on this project this spring for fall use.

Public Landings - The new pier at Tall Timbers public landing is now complete; permit modifications have been submitted for the pier at Paul Ellis landing; and staff recently received notification that the County will receive grant funds to construct a new floating pier at Elms Beach Park.

Mr. Hicks asked about the Myrtle Point Park gate being closed from December through March. Mr. Rollins stated that it has been Department policy for several years to close the gate at the park during the winter months; this is partly because manpower constraints and there are no portable restroom facilities at the park during this period. Citizens can still park their cars at the park entrance and walk in during these months. Mr. Hicks noted that on a recent visit to the park he saw some overnight campers in one of the barns on the property; Mr. Rollins will have staff check into this.

OTHER BUSINESS

Robert Richardson stated that 15 year old Lindsay Graves won the regional Punt, Pass and Kick competition and will be going to the national competition during the playoff game this weekend. She received a trip for three to the Indianapolis football game and will be on television on Sunday. This is the first time a contestant for our region has gone on to the national competition.

Mr. Hillman asked everyone to go out and visit and enjoy our County parks.

SCHEDULING OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Recreation and Parks Board is scheduled for Thursday, February 7, 2008, at 5:30 p.m., in Room 14, of the Governmental Center, in Leonardtown.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Kathy Bailey, Recorder

Minutes approved by the Recreation and Parks Board on February 7, 2008.