

**RECREATION AND PARKS BOARD
OF ST. MARY'S COUNTY
Meeting of Thursday, March 5, 2009**

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Robert Richardson, Vice-Chairperson; Richard Buckler, Al Harrison, Sabrina Hecht, Robert Hicks, Thomas Nelson and David Phalen.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Patrick Dugan and Lisa Wainger-Rush.

RECREATION AND PARKS STAFF AND OTHERS PRESENT: Phil Rollins, Director, Recreation and Parks (R&P); Arthur Shepherd, Recreation Division Manager; and Kathy Bailey, Recorder. Mr. Don DeGraves, American Legion Baseball, was also present.

CALL TO ORDER

The Board meeting was called to order by Robert Richardson, Vice-Chairperson, 5:31 p.m., in the Chesapeake Building in Leonardtown.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Thomas Nelson moved, seconded by Robert Hicks, to approve the minutes of February 5, 2009; motion carried 6-0.

RECREATION DIVISION REPORT

Arthur Shepherd, Recreation Division Manager, provided an update on the following Recreation Division activities, programs and events.

- The average per night attendance for Family Skate on Saturday evenings at the Leonard Hall Recreation Center is about 190.
- Swim lessons at the Great Mills Pool are up by 63% this season; this can be attributed to the addition of a new instructor.
- The Recreation Division will host a summer program open house on March 26th at the Carver Recreation Center.
- Planning for the summer camp season is well underway; Camp Inspire - a new camp for children with Autism, will be offered this season.
- The Will Smith Youth Basketball Leadership awards were presented Friday, February 6th at Great Mills High School. The program recognized eleven R&P Youth Basketball participants that demonstrated excellent character and leadership skills.
- The Carver Recreation Center Open House will be held on March 11th; new programming at the Center includes boxing, after school programs and computer labs for children and adults.

R&P FY2010 BUDGET UPDATES

Mr. Rollins reported that the BOCC began work sessions on Tuesday, March 3rd regarding the FY2010 operating budget. Beginning next week, more in-depth discussions will be held regarding the departmental budgets. This is a tight budget year and department's were asked to submit fiscally conservative requests.

Mr. Rollins reported last month that the department's request includes a \$50,000 subsidy to the Great Mills Pool to help cover the shortfall in the Enterprise Fund. The Recreation Enterprise Fund FY2010 requested budget is \$2,683,234 and the Wicomico Shores Golf Course requested budget is \$1,872,660. This represents a total Department request of \$8,480,185 for FY2010.

Robert Hicks asked about the status of SB163 regarding Program Open Space funding. Mr. Rollins stated that he has not received a recent status report, but will follow up on the proposed DNR legislation to clarify/specify that POS development funding can be used for indoor recreation facilities, as well as

outdoor parks and facilities. There is discussion going on within the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee to amend this bill to prohibit POS funds being used for indoor recreation facility development. There is also an amendment is being considered that would prohibit POS funds from being used for any impervious surface in a park or facility development project. That means POS funds couldn't be used for park/facility entrance roads, parking lots, picnic pavilions, tennis courts, restroom buildings, etc. An e-mail was sent to Senator Dyson and the Committee urging them to support original SB163.

PROJECT UPDATES

Chancellor's Run Regional Park – Proposals have been received to replace the aging playground at Chancellor's Run Regional Park (CRRP); a contract will be awarded in the near future and the playground is expected to be ready for use this summer. Also, work has been completed on the improvements to the 90' baseball field at this park. Grass infields, a batting cage and pitcher's mound were installed, as well as improvements to drainage areas.

Mr. Don Degraeves was present and read aloud his letter to the Department and R&P Board regarding the request to name the 90' baseball field Veteran's Field. This is being recommended due to the strong ties the community has with Patuxent River Naval Air Station and the presence of American Legion posts in the area. If the request is approved, he would like to have a dedication ceremony for the field during a tournament to be held at the field on Memorial Day weekend.

There is a specific Board policy for naming parks and recreation facilities, but it doesn't address amenities within parks. Mr. Rollins noted his only concern was the precedence this would set for other requests. However, this has been done in the past at Baggett Park with the Francis Wathen Trail and the proposal to name the pavilion at Elms Beach Park after Denis Canavan.

Robert Richardson expressed concern over the precedence this might set for other requests. He noted that Calvert, Charles and Frederick counties have no fields that are named. Sabrina Hecht agreed with Mr. Richardson. Mr. DeGraves feels that the precedence has been set with the examples noted above, along with parks being named after the former Parks Director and a former County Commissioner. He stated that veterans certainly fall into the category of worthy examples for naming of parks and amenities.

Robert Hicks moved, seconded by Richard Buckler, to table the discussion on naming park facilities until the next meeting. Mr. Rollins stated that this proposal should also be presented to the BOCC for consideration.

Disc Golf – Mr. Rollins informed the Board that the BOCC and grantor approved using some surplus grant funding to install a disc golf course on the Lancaster Park south parcel. Staff has been in contact with a disc golf course designer and anticipates the equipment will be bid in the spring and installed by summer 2009.

Carver Heights Park and Lancaster Park South Parcel Master Planning - The Board of County Commissioners allocated funding in FY09 to develop two concept plans - one for the Carver Heights Community Park and the other for Lancaster Park South Parcel (formerly part of Lexington Manor). The May 7, 2009 R&P Board meeting will be held at Carver Recreation Center to gather community input and view preliminary concept drawings.

The Carver Heights Park project is an outgrowth of efforts to preserve a former African American USO building that was located on the site. Board members will remember that the County determined that the USO building would be demolished as it was cost prohibitive to renovate the badly deteriorated building. The County decided that a community park would be established on the property and a memorial constructed to commemorate the significance of the USO building and the contributions of the African American community during the WWII era. Also, through the efforts of another group, the Unified Committee on African American Contributions (UCAC), Carver Heights Park is proposed as the home of a military memorial for African Americans from St. Mary's County, particularly the contributions of two Medal of Honor recipients during the Civil War.

The concept planning for the South Parcel will take into consideration the significance of the former Lexington Manor Navy housing area; one home was preserved and the exterior restored. There is an easement with the Maryland Historic Trust that requires interpretation of the house and neighborhood. The will be used for park purposes such as storage and possibly be renovated to serve as a restroom facility. The property also consists of a network of former streets that will be used to expand a park pathway system for walking and bicycles. This is the site of the new disc golf course.

Three Notch Trail Phase IV-A - Construction work on Phase IVA of the trail (from Wal-Mart to Chancellor's Run Road) is now underway and it is anticipated that the work will be finished later this spring, weather permitting. Delays have been experienced with wet weather conditions and in dealing with Washington Gas on the relocation of a gas line.

Three Notch Trail Phase V - Design and engineering for Phase V of the trail is moving forward and is approximately 95% complete. This three-mile section will run from John V. Baggett Park in Laurel Grove to MD 5 in Mechanicsville. It is anticipated that the project will be advertised for construction in spring 2009.

Elms Advisory Committee Report – The Elms Advisory Committee is working on the group's annual report for the 1020 acre State-owned site. The property was acquired as a future power plant site by the State in 1975. Since that time, the property has been used for environmental education, recreation, wildlife management (hunting), and forestry management. An Elms Advisory Committee consisting of representatives from state and local government agencies and two citizen representatives assist DNR's Power Plant Research Program in managing the property.

An Elms Management Plan was approved by the BOCC in March 2003 following public discussion and recommendations by the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board, Board of Education, and Planning Commission. The Management Plan placed emphasis on environmental education and recreation and led to a new, 25 year lease between the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the County. The new lease became effective on June 1, 2004. The adopted Management Plan resulted in the County lease area increasing in size from about 230 acres (75 acres for Environmental Education; 80 acres for Elms Beach Park; and 75 acres for hunting safety zone) to about 476 acres. The State managed property, on which hunting is conducted, was reduced from 790 acres to 544 acres. The reduction led to concerns from several hunters and a neighboring property owner about the loss of land for hunting and other public access.

The BOCC has asked the Committee to work on a compromise to resolve issues with the lease line. Mr. Rollins will present the Elms Advisory Report to the BOCC on behalf of the Committee on March 31, 2009.

Charlotte Hall Athletic Fields – Concept planning continues to move forward for the Charlotte Hall Athletic Fields. Mr. Rollins informed the Board that the original fourth field originally shown closest to the transfer station has been take off the plan and fields two and three were moved closer to the park property. Though ample parking will be available in the park, there are still some concerns about adequate parking near the new fields. Al Harrison asked if the area previously identified as field four could be used for parking; Mr. Rollins will look into that. The concept plan will be presented to the Board of Education in the near future. The plan will then be presented to the Board of County Commissioners for concurrence.

SCHEDULING OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Recreation and Parks Board is scheduled for Thursday, April 2, 2009, in the public meeting room of the Chesapeake Building, at the Governmental Center. Subsequently, the meeting was rescheduled to Monday, April 6, 2009.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Kathy Bailey, Recorder

Minutes approved by the Recreation and Parks Board on April 6, 2009.