

**RECREATION AND PARKS BOARD
OF ST. MARY'S COUNTY**

Meeting of Wednesday, March 12, 2003

Minutes

Board members present: Andrew Roper, Vice-Chair; Cheryl Blazer, Coleman Hillman, Jody Payne, and Kaki Burruss.

Board members absent: Gary Bell (resigned in March 2003), Robert Harper, Richard Smith and Robert Richardson.

Recreation and Parks staff present: Phil Rollins, Director of Recreation and Parks (R&P); Arthur Shepherd, Recreation Division Manger; and Kathy Bailey, Recorder.

CALL TO ORDER

The Board meeting was called to order by Andrew Roper, Vice-Chair, at 5:30 P.M. in Room 14 of the Governmental Center in Leonardtown.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Jody Payne motioned, seconded by Coleman Hillman, to approve the minutes of February 6, 2003.

Cheryl Blazer asked for clarification on the FY2003 Capital Budget discussion, regarding the ADA Improvement Project, as described on page 3 of the minutes. Mr. Rollins stated that ADA Improvement Project funds not encumbered to date have been deferred until FY2005. Ms. Blazer stated that she finds it disheartening that a project of such importance has been deferred, especially since the Americans With Disabilities Act has been in effect for over thirteen years.

THREE NOTCH TRAIL UPDATE

Mr. Rollins provided a brief update on the Three Notch Trail Project. The Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) gave direction on January 14, 2003 to begin the trail at Route 236 in New Market and proceed north to the new Northern County Senior Center in Charlotte Hall, or farther north as available funding will allow. The trail will provide a connection between the Southern Maryland Regional Library, the St. Mary's County Farmers' Market, Charlotte Hall Veterans' Home and the new Northern Senior Center and connect the villages of New Market and Charlotte Hall. Development of the trail in this area will provide a safe, alternative transportation route for Amish farmers, who travel by horse and buggy, to get to the St. Mary's County Farmers' Market. The site plan and engineering for phase one is now being developed with assistance of the Department of Facilities Management. Construction is anticipated to begin this summer. Staff will work with

SMECO on trail construction as it pertains to utility easements. Meetings will be held with Veteran's Home staff and with adjacent property owners with regard to the effects the trail will have on adjacent properties.

Staff is still evaluating the best surface to use on phase one of the trail. It was originally thought that a crushed stone surface would be best for this section; however, after some joint research with the Department of Public Works, other surfaces are now being evaluated to accommodate the increased wear on the trail from horse and buggy use. Staff is also researching road intersection barriers that will keep motorized vehicles off the trail but allow horses and buggies to pass through.

Mr. Rollins also reported that a proposal for funding the Three Notch Trail rails-to-trails project was forwarded to Congressman Steny Hoyer for possible inclusion in his request for future federal Transportation Equity Act (TEA) funds. TEA funds are scheduled for reauthorization this year for the next six years. This funding would be specifically earmarked for this project and would not require a local match.

Ms. Blazer asked if it had been determined that Recreational Trails Program funding could be used to construct a parking lot. Mr. Rollins reported that, according to State Highway Administration representatives, funding could be used for informal trailside parking, but not for a major parking lot project. Staff is working with the Office of Facilities Management to coordinate adequate parking for the trail, Library, and Senior Center.

FY2004 R&P PROPOSED BUDGET

Mr. Rollins referred to the Capital Budget handout previously provided to Board members regarding projects currently recommended for FY2004 funding and projects that have been deferred. Funding to complete Nicolet Park has been split over two fiscal years; contracts will be structured to allow part of the construction to be funded with FY2004 funds and part to be funded with FY2005 funds. Funds are currently recommended in FY2003 and FY2004 to complete phase one of Chaptico Park. The update of the 2000 Land Preservation and Recreation Plan will be funded by Program Open Space. The Three Notch Trail project is recommended for funding with \$50,000 in County funds and \$100,000 in grant funds.

Mr. Rollins referred to Operating Budget sheets previously e-mailed to Board members. He noted that as of the last BOCC budget work session, the draft budget does not include the requested \$110,000 in General Fund support for the Great Mills Swimming Pool. The preliminary pool budget was estimated at \$280,752 and revenue was projected to be about \$140,000, under the proposed fee schedule. R&P requested \$110,000 in general funds to help offset the costs of operating the pool and proposed to use \$30,752 from the Recreation Enterprise Fund. Since that time, R&P has reworked the proposed fee schedule and projected revenue to request a General Fund contribution of only \$55,000.

Funding was also not recommended for the Chancellor's Run Teen/Activity Center. R&P has received \$20,000 for the past several years from the General Fund to operate programs at the Teen

Center. Mr. Rollins will provide additional information, revised proposals and concerns to the Finance Department for consideration for the pool and the Teen Center funding. If General Fund support is not included in the budget, options may include limiting hours of operation of the Pool (summer operations only) and the Teen Center and cutting funds from Park Maintenance Division (possible areas to cut include reducing frequency of grasscutting and eliminating portable toilets). Mr. Rollins will provide an update on the Recommended Budget, which should be approved by the BOCC by the end of this month, during the Board's meeting of April 3, 2003.

Ms. Blazer expressed concern about not operating the pool on a year-round basis. Swim teams, schools, seniors and Special Olympics all require year-round aquatic services.

Kaki Burruss asked if the Teen Center would lose any outside grant funding if the County appropriation was eliminated. Mr. Rollins indicated that two years ago, the Department of Social Services expressed concern about contributing funding to the Teen Center if there was no County match. She also asked if reduced hours of operation would have an effect on recruiting staff for the pool. Arthur Shepherd, Recreation Division Manager, noted that reduced hours of operation would pose a challenge in hiring individuals to work at the pool and at the Teen Center.

Ms. Burruss added that she routinely volunteers with the Parks Division. The Parks employees work very hard in maintaining the County parks and public landings; she does not personally know where cut backs would come from. Mr. Rollins stated that would be difficult to determine; the only area identified for reductions at this time is the frequency of grasscuttings and elimination of portable toilets.

BMX TRACK SITE

Mr. Rollins informed the Board that on Tuesday, March 11, 2003, the BOCC approved siting the BMX Track at Chaptico Park. Mr. Rollins provided a brief overview of the proposal to lease about 3 acres of County-owned land for the Southern Maryland BMX Corporation to develop and operate a BMX bicycle track. The group has been looking for a suitable location for a track since a private track in Budd's Creek closed about eighteen months ago. He provided a sample License Agreement to the Board as an example of the agreement, which will be developed between the County and the BMX group for the land to locate the facility. The BMX group will construct, operate and maintain a track for bicycle motorcross racing; construct a concession facility; install utilities; install vinyl coated fencing around the track; and construct a parking lot for the activity. Once the License Agreement is executed and the Chaptico Park construction project is underway, the BMX group should be able to begin construction on the BMX track.

Mr. Rollins presented a concept plan of Chaptico Park which outlined the location of the BMX Track. The track will have no impact on the future equestrian riding rings and trails or any other amenities planned for the park.

RECREATION DIVISION REPORT

Program Guide - Mr. Shepherd provided copies of the new Spring 2003 Recreation and Parks'

Program Guide for Board members. The guide was delivered to schools and libraries this week. The guide is also available via the County website, under the Recreation and Parks' homepage. Registrations can be mailed in, faxed or walked in; R&P staff and the Information Technology Department are working to provide the option of on-line web registration for future seasons. Registration for summer camps begins on Saturday, April 5 at the R&P main office.

Weather Cancellations - Challenges were experienced this winter with many weather cancellations due to school closing for snow days. Credits to accounts were issued for Before and After School care for programs cancelled for three consecutive days in February.

Youth Basketball - The Youth Basketball program is nearing the end of the season with playoff games beginning next week.

Gymnastics Center - Gymnastics Center spring session registration is progressing; staff anticipates approximately the same level of participation as last season.

Disability Awareness Day – “High Hopes for Everyone” Disability Awareness Day is scheduled for Saturday, March 22, 2003 at 1:00 p.m. at Leonard Hall Recreation Center. Activities include a petting zoo, face painting, hay rides, roller skating, games, contests, raffles, crafts and disability awareness activities. Staff from the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission will also be available to assist with the celebration.

Verbic Golf Tournament – The Scott Verbic Memorial Golf Tournament is scheduled for June 6, 2003 at the Wicomico Shores Golf Course. R&P holds the tournament each year in memory of Mr. Verbic who was a past R&P Board member, coach and advocate for youth. The proceeds fund a scholarship program for youth who otherwise might not be able to participate in programs due to financial need. Board members are invited to participate in or help with the event.

Easter Egg Hunt and Festival – The East Egg Hunt and Festival is planned for Saturday, April 19 at the Governmental Center Grounds.

Turtle Race – The Turtle Race will be held on Friday, June 20 at the Leonard Hall Recreation Center. Pony rides and free skate night for participants will be provided.

Pavilion Rentals – Pavilion rentals begin in April; call R&P to reserve pavilions at Elms Beach Park, Dorsey Park, Fifth District Park, Cecil Park and John V. Baggett Park at Laurel Grove for parties, picnics and reunions.

PROJECT UPDATES

Mr. Rollins provided the following updates on R&P projects.

Chaptico Park – The specifications for phase one of Chaptico Park will be out to bid in the next few

weeks, with construction to begin in May. Phase one includes a nine-field soccer complex, restroom/concession building, road, parking and infrastructure on about 50 acres of the property.

Nicolet Park – Mr. Rollins reported that the past fall and winter season have been very difficult for outdoor construction. Staff still anticipates that the park, including the skatepark, will open in late spring 2003.

Great Mills Swimming Pool – Adverse weather conditions have also delayed the pool project. It is possible that the pool will still open by mid-summer, if no further delays are experienced. If the pool doesn't open for the summer season, then a fall opening, with the air-supported bubble, is planned.

Elms Management Plan – The BOCC adopted the Elms Management Plan on March 11, 2003. The plan is expected to serve as the foundation for a lease renewal between the County and the State for the Elms Beach Park and Elms Environmental Center properties. The acreage of the County leased portion of the property will increase to about 400 acres. Master planning for improvements and expansion of Elms Beach Park has been deferred until FY2005.

Wicomico Shores Golf Course Clubhouse – Mr. Rollins reported that the BOCC toured the existing Wicomico Shores Clubhouse on March 4, 2003. Questions were raised about whether privatization of the Golf Course and the food and beverage operation had been explored. The possibility was explored about six years ago, with the BOCC deciding at that time to maintain self-management by County Government.

Vice-Chair Andrew Roper asked for clarification of the fact that no County General Fund dollars are proposed to be used for the new Clubhouse Project. Mr. Rollins stated that the new Clubhouse is proposed to be paid for entirely through the Golf Enterprise Fund with no tax dollars requested. The proposal calls for \$250,000 to be used from the Golf Enterprise Fund and approximately \$1,250,000 to be borrowed through exempt financing (no impact on County borrowing capacity) to be repaid in fifteen years by golf user fees.

OTHER BUSINESS

Maryland Day Ceremony - The Board is invited to celebrate Maryland's 369th birthday at a presentation and commemorative wreath laying ceremony at the St. Clement's Island – Potomac River Museum at 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, March 25, 2003. Staff will also unveil a new exhibit at the Little Red Schoolhouse. Lunch is available after the ceremony for a fee of \$10.

SCHEDULING OF NEXT MEETING

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Recreation and Parks Board of St. Mary's County will be held at 5:30 P.M. on Thursday, April 3, 2003 in Room 14 of the Governmental Center in Leonardtown.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 P.M.

Kathy Bailey, Recorder

Minutes approved by the Recreation and Parks Board on April 24, 2003.

A tape recording of the meeting is kept on file in the Recreation and Parks' office for one year.

cc: Board of County Commissioners
Alfred A. Lacer, County Administrator
St. Mary's County Department Heads
Recreation and Parks Department Division Heads