

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

Meeting of Thursday, November 6, 2003

Minutes

Board members present: Robert Harper, Chairperson; Andrew Roper; Vice-Chairperson; Cheryl Blazer, Sam Brown, Kaki Burruss, Coleman Hillman, and Richard Smith.

Board members absent: Robert Richardson and Jody Payne.

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

CALL TO ORDER

The Board meeting was called to order by Robert Harper, Chairperson, at 5:35 P.M. in Room 14 of the Governmental Center in Leonardtown.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Kaki Burruss motioned, seconded by Sam Brown, to approve the minutes of October 2, 2003. Motion carried 7-0.

PROJECT UPDATES

Great Mills Swimming Pool - Director Phil Rollins reported that the Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the Great Mills Swimming Pool was held on November 4th and was attended by the BOCC (present & former members), County staff, R&P Board members, Board of Education members and St. Mary's County Public Schools' staff, all three public high school marching bands and the general public. The pool opened to the public for open swim on October 25th; swim lessons and aqua aerobics classes began the week of October 27th.

Chaptico Park - Construction continues at Chaptico Park but excavation and site work have been hampered by rain and wet conditions. It is expected that seeding of the soccer fields will be done in late November; however, because of the delay in seeding the fields, it is uncertain whether the fields will be ready for use by fall 2004. Mr. Rollins spoke with representatives for the Northern Soccer League and they understand the situation. Staff met on-site with representatives from the Southern Maryland BMX group on November 4th to discuss progress on the plans for the non-motorized BMX facility to be constructed at the park.

Wicomico Shores Golf Course Clubhouse - The revised Wicomico Shores Golf Course Clubhouse plans were made available to interested contractors on October 28th; a pre-proposal meeting will be held on November 12th; the proposal deadline is scheduled for December 11th. So far, six contractors have requested copies of the plans and bid documents. Construction should begin by late winter or early spring and the project is expected to be completed during spring or summer 2005.

Wicomico Shores Golf Advisory Board - Mr. Rollins informed the R&P Board that bylaws were drafted according to the instructions given by the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to re-establish the Wicomico Shores Golf Course (WSGC) Advisory Board; they will be reviewed and considered by the BOCC within the next few weeks. Mr. Rollins plans to ask the BOCC to reconsider having staff (R&P Director and Golf Course Manager) serve as voting members on the WSGC Advisory Board. The R&P Board had several concerns with the direction provided by the BOCC and sent a letter to the Commissioners on September 4, 2003 regarding those concerns. The R&P Board was concerned that establishment of the new Advisory Board will take golf related issues "off the plate" of the R&P Board. Cheryl Blazer suggested having a member of the R&P Board serve on the WSGC Advisory Board; Mr. Rollins will suggest that to the BOCC.

ELMS PROPERTY HUNTING ISSUE

Mr. Rollins introduced Sandra Patty, MD DNR Power Plant Assessment Division, and Brian King, MD DNR Wildlife Management Division, to the Board. Ms. Patty, Mr. King and Mr. Rollins, along with representatives from the Forest Service, St. Mary's County Public Schools, the Power Plant Research Program, St. Mary's College, R&P Board members and two citizen members, served on the Elms Management Committee, which drafted the Elms Management Plan. The plan was prepared to set the organizational framework and responsibilities for managing the 1,020 acre site over the next 10 - 25 years. The property was purchased in 1975 by the State as a potential future location for an electrical generating power plant. Users of the Elms property include St. Mary's County Public Schools, Elms Beach Park operated by R&P, recreational hunters through DNR's Wildlife Heritage Division, and biology students from St. Mary's College. A revised boundary line was established as a result of the adoption of the plan. The plan defines two broad use areas for the property; the 543-acre DNR area would contain the future power plant site, forest preservation areas, and wildlife habitat areas. The remaining 476 acres will be leased by DNR to the County for the Elms Beach Park and the Elms Environmental Education Center (a new combined lease is being developed at this time). The following Boards have endorsed the plan: R&P Board - October 3, 2002; Board of Education - November 22, 2002; and Planning Commission - December 9, 2002. The Elms Management Plan was adopted by the BOCC on March 11, 2003.

Chairman Harper noted that Board members and Mr. Rollins have received feedback from several recreational hunters on the impact of the new lease area as it relates to hunting. Chairman Harper stated that the R&P Board endorsed the plan based on the fact that the needs of hunters would be met and not adversely affected by the new lease area. Ms. Patty provided a map that showed the old lease area and the new lease line. Ms. Patty and Mr. King referred to the map that was displayed at the entrance of the Wildlife Management area showing the safety zone for hunting. The map is erroneous and does not correspond with the old lease line or the proposed new lease line. Ms. Blazer asked why the new hunting line is being enforced since the new lease has not been signed. Mr. King stated that since the Management Plan was adopted his staff thought it was already in place and the new safety zone was posted. He stated that the Wildlife Division does not like to see hunting areas shrink just as the hunters don't wish to see opportunities for hunting decrease. His office is working to address the issue. Mr. King will have staff go back and post the previous safety zone for this season; the boundary will shift when the County signs the new lease and a new safety zone will be

posted at that time. Ms. Blazer stated that she was unaware during the presentation of the plan that the hunting area was being decreased by so much.

Mr. Rollins reported that the priorities for the new plan (page 18 of the plan) were established to: 1) to protect the Elms property as a power generation site; 2) protect the environmental and cultural resources of the property; 3) encourage and support the use of the property for environmental education; and 4) encourage and support the use of the property for recreation (this includes hunting). The nature of these uses has caused conflicts in the past between hunting and the Environmental Education Program. He suggested that the Elms Management Committee review this issue again at its next meeting.

Coleman Hillman asked how the safety zones are posted. Mr. King stated that signs are placed along the edge of safety zones marked with red signs; managed hunting area signs are white. Flyers are provided at the entrance describing the rules and regulations and include a map. Mr. Hillman suggested that the signs should have pictures in addition to words for those who cannot read, such as young children. Mr. King stated that information could also be posted at the Education Center regarding the rules and hunting safety zones. Chairman Harper stated that the County has recently lost several privately owned properties which were leased for hunting, making the reduction of the hunting area at the Elms even more significant. Mr. King noted that DNR is interested in providing wildlife management for other publicly or privately owned lands that may be available for recreational hunting.

Citizens present interested in the hunting issue provided their names and address for future updates. Mr. Rollins will provide Board members with copies of communication to hunters.

Chairman Harper opened the floor for comment to hunters present. A citizen asked if additional parking could be provided to those hunting at the Elms property; Mr. King noted that a parking area is being constructed on Route 235 near the State Highway Administration salt storage area. Mr. Steve Riley stated that he has been hunting at the Elms property for 8 years and it has been getting smaller and smaller. He stated that the previous boundary was more than adequate for hunting; he asked if the present boundaries could stay after the new lease is signed. Mr. King stated that would be examined by the Elms Management Committee after the lease is signed.

RECREATION DIVISION UPDATE

Great Mills Swimming Pool - Ms. Blazer commented that it is wonderful that the entire aquatic facility is fully accessible and usable from its opening. Arthur Shepherd reported that approximately 420 people have used the pool so far; 9 annual passes have been sold to date; about 60 people are utilizing the pool for lap swimming; and over 90 individuals have enrolled in swim lessons and aqua aerobics. Mr. Shepherd also provided a handout on lane rentals, space rental for private programming, party rentals and other fee options. Patrons may now register at either the Recreation and Parks main office in Leonardtown or at the Great Mills Swimming Pool.

Ms. Blazer expressed concern with out-of-county schools having the same opportunities and fees at the pool as in-county schools. Mr. Shepherd suggested having different

open registration seasons/times for in-County and out-of-County groups, as is done at Leonard Hall Recreation Center. If there's space after citizens of St. Mary's County register, then it's opened up to citizens from other counties. Mr. Rollins noted that this may be the time to address the issue of non-resident fees for all R&P programs.

Carver Recreation Center – Mr. Shepherd informed the Board that Recreation and Parks began programming on September 22nd at the former Carver Elementary School gymnasium. The Adult Volleyball League is now using the facility; others to be held at Carver Recreation Center include Wednesday/Saturday night open gym basketball, teen dances, and youth basketball practices and games. Staff is working with St. Mary's Youth Soccer for possible use of the gym.

Skatepark – Attendance has decreased since school started and the weather has gotten cooler. The daily October attendance average is about 6 and the weekend average is about 20. Staff plans to operate the facility on weekends only effective December 1, 2003 through February 2004, weather permitting.

Youth Sports and Facility Use Report – Mr. Shepherd stated that staff has completed the annual Youth Sports and Facility Use Report. A copy of the report was provided to members during the October meeting. The report is used to make decisions regarding field scheduling, park maintenance and capital improvements. Mr. Shepherd noted that from FY2002 to FY2003, the County experienced a 4% growth in youth sports participation.

Mr. Shepherd introduced Kenny Sothoron, Sports Coordinator, who referred to the page two summary of the report. Over 11,000 young people participate in youth affiliated and sponsored leagues in St. Mary's County (11,000 registrations for the year; one child could register in one or more sports and sign up for spring and fall sports). The Youth Basketball program has increased 10% from 2002 to 2003; over 100 teams are registered in the program. The St. Mary's County Public Schools have been very accommodating in using the Public Schools to add practices and games. He noted the recommendation for another 60 ft. field for baseball, softball and t-ball; fields have recently been lost at Hollywood Elementary School, the old Hollywood Elementary School and the grounds at St. John's Catholic School. Kaki Burruss asked if youth teams could use Tippett Field in Hollywood; Mr. Sothoron will check into the availability of that field. Ms. Blazer asked why Cecil Park is not fully utilized by youth football. Mr. Sothoron stated the younger age divisions may use the field at Cecil Park; the small field size is prohibitive for older youth.

Raising Community Standards in Youth Sports

Mr. Rollins provided copies of a handout titled, "Raising Community Standards in Youth Sports." Mr. Rollins stated that staff feels it's time in St. Mary's County to change the "culture" of youth sports. We have a wonderful network of volunteers that manage affiliated sports leagues in the County, but nationwide there's been an epidemic of violence and unsportsmanlike behavior associated with youth sports. Locally, from time to time, coaches, parents, participants and league administrators have displayed inappropriate behavior. By working with the National Alliance for Youth Sports, staff recommends implementing the recommendations outlined in the handout.

Mr. Shepherd reported that the recommendations include mandatory coaches and league administrator training, background checks for all youth coaches, parent

orientation and league administrator and coach accountability. The first step in implementing the program would be to meet with the sports leagues to discuss the issues and recommendations. Staff would then report back to the R&P Board and finally develop a BOCC resolution outlining the recommendations and desired outcomes. The current Youth Sports Agreement (revised in 1999), which outlines field use and responsibilities, needs to be modified and strengthened.

Mr. Sothoron has been providing Nation Youth Sports Coaches Association (NYSCA) training workshops to coaches and league administrators for the past ten years (approximately 200 individuals per year). The program concentrates on the rules of the particular game, proper sportsmanship, keeping winning and losing in perspective, dealing with parents, child abuse, and drug, alcohol and tobacco use. Most leagues are participating in the training program; three leagues are not. Staff would like to have 100% participation and institute the NYSCA parents' training program. He noted that some jurisdictions require that parents attend the training or sign-off on a code of ethics before registering in a specific sport.

Chairman Harper stated that the Department needs to keep in mind that these are not all County sponsored leagues, but affiliated leagues, and all may not come on board. Staff plans to meet with leagues and hopes that all the leagues will voluntarily participate in training programs. The National Alliance for Youth Sports has found that when training programs are made mandatory that most parents, coaches and league administrators see the benefits of the program. The training has actually increased the number of volunteer coaches in some areas.

Andrew Roper stated that he supports the efforts of staff in bringing this issue forward. The State Athletic Association has explored this issue and has expressed concern, not only with coaching, but with the behavior of parents and spectators at sporting events. Ms. Burruss also supported the recommendations and noted that in addition to violence in sports, the lack of respect for coaches and referees needs to be examined also. Mr. Sothoron noted that it's becoming increasingly difficult to find referees for games due to this problem.

Punt, Pass & Kick - Mr. Sothoron reported that 38 children competed in the NFL/Pepsi Punt, Pass & Kick competition held on Saturday, September 6th (staff had anticipated a higher turn out; but unfortunately, due to weather conditions, Pigskin Football cancelled their opening day ceremonies which would have drawn more participants). Nine St. Mary's County youth competed in the Sectional competition on Friday, October 24th at Kellum Field in Calvert County. The three Sectional first place winners from St. Mary's County have been invited to compete in the Washington Redskins Team Championship competition to be held Sunday, November 9th during the Washington/Seattle game at FedEx Field.

FY2005 BUDGET DISCUSSION

Mr. Rollins referred to the FY2005-2010 handout previously e-mailed to Board members. He outlined changes to the current FY2004 Capital Improvement Program as recommended for FY2005.

Margaret Brent Community Space - staff recommends deleting this project in FY2005 since the Board of Education has the project in their budget as well.

Piney Point Lighthouse Museum Renovation - the BOCC has endorsed a plan for improvements to the former Steuart property purchased by the County last year to expand activities at the Piney Point Lighthouse Museum and Park. The FY2005 budget listed \$575,000; staff will reduce the request to \$475,000 for the project; additionally, \$100,000 is being requested for each of the next five years for improvements at the site (1/2 is proposed to come from County funds, the rest would come from State and Federal grants).

Drayden African-American Schoolhouse - deferred from FY2005 to FY2007.

Cecil Park Improvements - deferred from FY2005-07 to FY2006-08 timeframe. Chairman Harper stated that he doesn't remember doing any improvements at Cecil Park since he's been on the Board. Ms. Blazer stated that the area is growing and the park needs to be improved and suggested "fees in lieu of" to accomplish that. Mr. Rollins stated that four park projects were originally scheduled for master planning in FY2005: Cecil Park, Seventh District Park, Elms Beach Park and Myrtle Point Park. Due to budgetary constraints, staff recommended Elms Beach Park for master planning in FY2005 since it's heavily used and is one of the County's only waterfront parks.

Cheryl Blazer motioned, seconded by Richard Smith, to recommend that Cecil Park not be deferred and should included in the FY2005 budget for master planning. Motion carried 6 - 0; Andrew Roper abstained.

Cheryl Blazer motioned that Cecil Park be a priority for FY2005 for master planning and that \$95,000 listed in FY2007 be moved to FY2006 and \$750,000 listed in FY2008 be moved to FY2007 in the recommended submission to the CIP group. The motion was not seconded and did not pass.

Elms Beach Park Expansion - staff recommends no change to the approved budget for Elms Beach Park (master planning in FY2005 and construction in FY2006-08). Ms. Blazer noted that both Cecil Park and Elms Beach improvements are important but Elms Beach Park is seasonal and Cecil is used on a year-round basis for youth sports.

Myrtle Point Park - master planning deferred to FY08 from FY05 and design/engineering and construction to FY10 and beyond from FY08/09.

Seventh District Park - master planning deferred to FY07 from FY05 and design/engineering and construction to FY09 and beyond from FY06/07.

Land Preservation and Recreation Plan - Chairman Harper inquired about the status of the plan update. Mr. Rollins stated that the plan will be updated in FY2004/05 and staff is waiting for State guidelines on the process. This will provide the demographics and information needed for future park planning.

Piney Point Lighthouse Museum Expansion - deleted and incorporated in the Piney Point projects listed above.

Central County Park - staff recommends deferring this acquisition project from FY06 to FY08.

Chancellor's Run Regional Park Expansion - staff recommends deferring the master planning until FY09 from FY06.

Tennis Court Replacement Project - based on BOCC direction, staff is recommending replacing two courts at Wicomico Shores Golf Course. Chairman Harper asked if the tennis courts were taken out of the master plan for Chaptico Park since the courts would be replaced at Wicomico Shores; Mr. Rollins stated the courts were not moved out since they were planned in a future phase of development which may not happen for several years. Chairman Harper asked Mr. Rollins to convey the R&P Board's recommendation to the CIP group to take \$50,000 out of phase two for tennis courts from Chaptico Park since tennis courts are being replaced at Wicomico.

Colton's Point Park - deferred to beyond FY2011 for park planning and construction from FY06 and FY09.

Second District Community Park - staff is recommending combining the Central County Park and Second District Community Park acquisition projects to serve both the Leonardtown and Second District areas (between Leonardtown and Callaway).

Hiker/Biker Trail for Lancaster Park - staff is recommending reducing the amount from \$100,000 in FY07 to finish a sidewalk along Willows Road and perimeter trail around the park to \$85,000 for a dog park and the sidewalk. Ms. Blazer expressed support for constructing the hard surface trail around Lancaster Park for seniors, those with disabilities and youth. Mr. Rollins stated that he has received several requests for a dog park in the County, which would consist of fencing off an area in the existing park. Also, the BOCC has indicated that the Three Notch Trail is the priority for asphalt trail construction at this time.

Kaki Burruss motioned, seconded by Cheryl Blazer, that the Board send a letter to the BOCC that the paved trail around the perimeter of Lancaster Park be retained in the FY07 CIP budget. Motion carried 7-0.

Lexington Park Recreation Center - staff is recommending the construction funding be split between two fiscal years, FY09 and FY2010.

North County Outdoor Pool - staff is recommending that the funding amount be changed to add an additional \$500,000 in FY10 since it's now known it costs more to construct an outdoor pool similar to the Great Mills Swimming Pool.

Public Landings - Fox Harbor is recommended to be deferred until FY06 from FY04; Bushwood and Wicomico Shores have been added as new projects in FY05 due to damage from Hurricane Isabel; Piney Point Landing is being deferred until FY07 since State funding was not received in FY04; Patuxent River Public Landing acquisition project is recommended to be moved up from FY09 to FY06.

SELECTION OF NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Cheryl Blazer motioned, second by Andrew Roper, to nominate Sam Brown and Kaki Burruss as the Nominating Committee for the election of officers to be held in December.

OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Burruss stated that she would like to discuss the following at the next Board meeting: the possible impact of the proposed extension of FDR Boulevard on the Three Notch Trail, if the Board would like to take a position on the impact of the Hughesville bypass on the trail, and review the signage for public landings. Mr. Rollins provided a handout to Board members on the signage issue.

Mr. Hillman suggested holding a party at Wicomico Shores Golf Course Clubhouse before the building is demolished for the new Clubhouse. As an action item from the last Board meeting, Mr. Rollins reported that the tennis courts at the Golf Course are not located in the privately owned right-of-way.

Mr. Rollins stated that the Room 14 reservation request has been submitted for calendar year 2004; the room is not available the first Thursday in January. The Board requested to meet on Thursday, January 15, 2004 if the room is available.

SCHEDULING OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Recreation and Parks Board of St. Mary's County will be held at 5:30 P.M. on Thursday, December 4, 2003 in Room 14 of the Governmental Center in Leonardtown.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 P.M.

Kathy Bailey, Recorder

Minutes approved by the Recreation and Parks Board on December 4, 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
County Administrator
St. Mary's County Department Heads
Recreation and Parks Department Division Heads