

RECREATION AND PARKS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

March 27, 2024

Charles Carroll Community Center

Unapproved Minutes

Members Present: John Woodley, Nadine Rosendale, Michael Duffy, Kristin Darby, Austin Johnstone, Meghan Vaughn, Anita Taylor

Members Excused: Gary Davis, Donal Gerkin, David Ferguson

Ex-Officio Member Present: Bob Hicks, Director

Staff Present: Brad Rogers, Steve Aberts, Dawn Harry, Stacey Widener, Myiah Seymour, Ashley Caltrider

Esteemed Guests: Commissioner Rothstein, Deborah Effingham

The Recreation and Parks Advisory Board met on, March 27, 2024, in the Meeting Room at the Charles Carroll Community Center. The meeting was called to order at 1:00 pm by Ms. Vaughn.

Welcome and Introductions:

Welcome and Introductions were exchanged around the room.

Approval of Minutes:

The motion to approve the February minutes was made by Ms. Darby, it was seconded by Mr. Johnstone, the vote was unanimous.

Commissioner Rothstein Comments

“There is an article in the newspaper today regarding taxes and leaders understanding revenue. I initiated these conversations with agencies because of the challenges that we are facing with the current budget. We are currently looking at a thirteen-million-dollar deficit, if we add in the agency requests from yesterday, we are looking at about an additional thirteen-million-dollar deficit. Twenty-six million dollars is a lot, and by law we are required to have a balanced budget by midnight May 31st to enact on July 1st. Carroll County does not plan for one year, we go out six years. This process is very challenging.

Services may be impacted. Revenue has not been adjusted in about 12 years. Actually, the last two adjustments were tax reductions. In this situation, innovation matters. A sense of community and volunteerism is imperative. If you are in a park, or a member of an organization or a member of that park and you see trash, please, as a patron, pick it up. When leaders like yourselves consistently demonstrate this, it leads to cost reductions. That allows us to save services. Every dollar counts, this affects schools, safety, security, and quality of life in some instances.

Right now, this is heavy on my mind. I am reachable, and consistent with responding and sharing the feedback received. Please feel free to reach out.”

Director's Report- Mr. Hicks

Staff Introductions: A few of our staff members are here today.

Steve Aberts is the new Community Parks Maintenance Foreman. Steve started this role on December 7th. He is a seasoned veteran to the department after many years at Hashawha. Steve's team consists of two current specialists and a third is scheduled to start tomorrow. This crew is already on a roll getting out to the various parks, learning the territory, and getting things done.

Stacey Widener is the face of the office. She is the first person you see if you come to visit us. Stacey started as the Office Associate on January 4th.

Myiah Seymour has been with us since December 7th. You will see Myiah out in the community and assisting with Programs. Myiah is the Program Coordinator.

Along the same lines, we are not only introducing staff, but we are also losing some. Ashley Caltrider has accepted a position with the Comptroller's office as the Financial Systems Specialist.

Gina Porter the Super Intendent at Piney Run has accepted a position as the Director of Recreation in York County. She is a resident of York County, so this is much closer to home. She is certainly going to be missed.

Current Projects

We are currently working with GIS and See Click Report. Eventually, you will be able to download an application and report maintenance concerns for the parks. There will be data mapping trails. Brightly and ARC View trails at Piney Run and Union Mills are in test models now. Getting this up and running is essential for maintaining inventory of assets to track replacement schedules and plan budgets.

On May 18th there will be a ribbon cutting for the National Blue Star Garden at Westminster Veteran's Memorial Garden. Recreation and Parks Chair will be invited. This is expected to include a band, and more.

Maryland State Board of Public Works approved Cape Horn Phase Two. The infrastructure was established in Phase One, hopefully, they can quickly hook into that and we will have those lights ready to go.

Freedom Park pavilion number two is well on it's way.

Piney Run Park pavilion number two is just as far along. (Referencing the image shared) The openings in the back will be grills. This is directly off the main parking strip, we have some re-prooing to do with the tree and have redone the retaining wall.

Bear Branch nature Center pavilion number two just had a pre-bid meeting. This bidding will open on May 3rd.

Needs Assessment- Commentary Analysis

Mr. Hicks introduced the survey response. There were 1126 responses, 481 comments, and within those comments there were 605 specific comments. Those comments were broken down to look at the commentator's inference, 17% Independent Usage (ie a trail user), 45% Organized Usage (ie programming & staffed parks), and 37% observational feedback (indirectly actionable). An example of observational feedback is "Keep on improving what we have. Build our base, better. Quality is better than quantity."

Ms. Caltrider went into commentary details (Slide show is attached to these minutes).

For the 17% of comments that were related to Independent Usage, the activities most frequently repeated were Biking, Walking, Walking & Biking, Non-Specific (playgrounds/trails without specified usage, and amenities), and Disc Golf. The items most commonly referenced were trails, activity space, and amenities. To break down these items by the commentator's description, Trails mostly referenced biking, then walking and biking, and lastly solely walking. Trail commenters had repetitive motivation of safety and connecting trails.

Of the 45 % of comments related to organized usage, the most common activity description was non-specific (unspecified activity space, unspecified programs, nature centers, adaptive rec, EPIC, or Policy), followed by pickleball, lacrosse, aquatics, and cultural programs. The most common items referenced were activity space (specifically for pickleball, lacrosse, basketball, and multi-purpose), programs, amenities (indoor swimming and splash pad).

The 37% of observational feedback was predominantly non-specific (opinion, habitat, hours, marketing, restrooms), walking, equestrian, aquatics. The items referenced were non-specific (see prior list), activity space for aquatics and pickleball, policy for kayaking, equestrian, and walking, trails for walking, equestrian, and biking, and programs.

The majority of the motivation of the comments was accessibility, secondly was competitive advantage, positive feedback, youth activities, and safety. The most common specifically mentioned parks were Krimgold, Piney Run, Hashawha/ Bear Branch Nature Center, and Freedom Park. Of the participants who cited an area in their comments, about 57% were in the South Carroll area, 28% were in the North Carroll area, and 15% were central in Westminster.

Commissioner Rothstein, "Something to keep in mind as you look at this, we have our Capital budget and our Operational budget. The Capital budget is more or less "one-time" expenses- or expenses that will not be reincurred for many years. Many items here will be a one-time installation expense, then annual increases to an operating expense for regular maintenance. It's great to see the trails information broken down like this, we have a project coordinator, Claire, with Public Works working on a master plan for bike trails. Now there are two things that we need to figure out. One, how to share this information publicly. Two, how to make this actionable.

Upcoming Events

There is an upcoming 1st Annual Recreation and Parks Car Show. Currently, we have met and exceeded our capacity for vehicle registrations. Commissioner Gordon has agreed to judge the show.

Commissioner Rothstein, “We have another important event coming up May 5th. The 3rd Annual Veteran’s Event at the Farm Museum. They have activities, food trucks, a helicopter, and more. This event is a Veteran’s Event. However, it truly is a family oriented event for everyone.”

Elections of Chair and Vice Chair

Nominees from the February meeting were Meghan Vaughn- Chair, and Gary Davis- Vice Chair.

Mr. Johnstone made the motion to elect Ms. Vaughn to Chair. Mr. Woodley seconded this motion. The vote was unanimous.

Mr. Johnstone made the motion to elect Mr. Davis to Vice Chair, Ms. Vaughn seconded this motion. The vote was unanimous.

Commissioner Rothstein, “Are there any vacancies currently?”

Mr. Hicks, “There is one pending acceptance.”

Commissioner Rothstein, “I want to extend thanks to the people who are reviewing these applications. I know that it’s a lot of work.”

Public Comments:

There were no public comments.

Adjournment:

The next meeting will be held May 22, 2024 at 7:00 PM, location to be determined.

Motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Darby, it was seconded by Mr. Johnstone, the vote was unanimous. The meeting was adjourned, time not recorded.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Hicks

Bob Hicks, Director

Ashley Caltrider

Ashley Caltrider, Secretary