

COUNTYWIDE RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

June 2, 2014
MEETING NOTES

Present: Joy Barrow, Renee Katz, James Krzyminski, Paul Lofgren, David Magill, Vernard McBeth, Mark Pharaoh, Ingrid Pufahl, Chris Richardson, Felecia Wilson, Gabe Albornoz [Rec], Mary Bradford [Parks], Christine Brett [Parks], Morton Davis [Commission on Aging], Susan Hartung [Commission on Disabilities], Ursula Hermann [MCPS], Susan Hoffmann [Rec], Robin Riley [Rec]

Absent: Wesley Japp, Erik Johnson, Myron Johnson, Ron MacNab, Sean Thomas Smith, Michael Waters, Steve Beach [CUPF], Jeff Bourne [Rec], Tony DeVaul [Park Police]

Guests: Marybeth Dugan [Parks], Trish Heffelfinger [Maryland Soccer Foundation], Keith Miller [Revenue Authority], John Nissel [Parks], Mike Riley [Parks], Dean Turnbull [Montgomery Soccerplex]

Chair Richardson called the meeting to order at 6:25pm.

The Agenda and the May 5, 2014 meeting notes were approved unanimously, with one correction.

Dean Turnbull, South Germantown Recreational Park manager, presented an overview of the park and distributed an informational brochure.

Rec Update – Gabe Albornoz

- Gabe thanked the Countywide Recreation Advisory Board for their service this past year. He also thanked Mary Bradford, Parks Director, and Chris Brett, Enterprise Fund Manager, upon their retirements, for their many valuable contribution to Montgomery County over the years.
- All of the Montgomery County Recreation outdoor pools opened last weekend on time. Thanks to Park Police for helping to facilitate the openings and some issues that arose at one pool.
- Camps will open in two weeks. We cancelled later in the year than we have in the past in order to give the public more time to register.
- Montgomery County Recreation has been approached by Washington Sports and Entertainment Commission to discuss use of our aquatics facilities for the 2026 Summer Olympics. They are looking at an existing or new facility as we make plans for the Clarksburg facility.
- Montgomery County Recreation was also approached by NCAA for use of our aquatics facilities. They are currently located in Omaha, but looking to relocate.
- Robin Riley
 - We are offering an informal one day drop-in at four Community Recreation Centers, Longwood, Lawton, Good Hope and Germantown, on June 16 from 8am-6pm to provide an opportunity for parents to have coverage, if their children's camp was cancelled on June 16. The cost per child is \$25.

Parks Update – Mary Bradford

- Upper County Master Plan in Clarksburg is 20 years old and Parks wants to update to more of a full service park. There is much activity in the Upper County.
- Fields are extremely wet due to lots of bad weather and rain.
- Christine Brett – Enterprise Fund
 - All funds improved over last year except the skate park.
 - Chris thanked the Board for their support and commitment and wished them well. She is retiring in August
 - Mary thanked Chris.

Revenue Authority – Keith Miller

- Keith provided an update on Montgomery County’s nine golf courses: four belong to Parks and five belong to Revenue Authority, but all are operated by the Authority.
 - In 2012, 393,000 rounds of golf were played. 2013 saw a decrease of 4.5% to 375,000 rounds. 2014 is not likely to be any better, but the season is stable. National trends show courses closing, but the industry message is optimistic thanks to their new program, “Get Golf Ready.”
 - The Authority is involved with Junior Golf – getting kids involved. The program is serving 190 youngsters this spring. The 7-9 year-olds are at Needwood, while the 10-13 year-olds travel to area courses. The goal is to have 250 participants by the fall.
 - Needwood is a certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary.
 - Golf is a \$1.3 billion industry in Maryland.

Local Board Reports

- Eastern County, Mark Pharaoh – there were two similar events on the same day at White Oak Community Recreation Center and East County Regional Center. Would like to see better coordination on calendars to avoid conflict.
- Mid County, Paul Lofgren – no report. Made a suggestion to get links added on to information we put out and be able to file things to customer service. Discussion will be continued offline.
- Upper County, Vernard McBeth – no report

- Ex Officio Reports
- Community Use of Public Facilities, Steve Beach – absent.
- Commission on Aging, Morton Davis – his staff is working with Phil Smakula at Senior Centers on “Keeping Seniors Safe” presenting information on scams. Police are ticketing for failure to wear seatbelts and texting while driving.
- MCPS, Ursula Hermann – no report. Ursula is retiring and this is her last meeting. She will be recommending her successor.
- Commission on People with Disabilities, Susan Hartung – Montgomery County’s Nancy Greene keeps the Commission informed.
- M-NCPPC Police, Chief Tony DeVaul - absent

Old/New Business – Chris Richardson

- Good Hope Sprayground – Pls see addendum below.

- Appointment of Nominations Committee – elections of officers and the Executive Committee will be held at the September 8 meeting. Volunteers Chris asked for volunteers to serve on the Nominations Committee. Paul Lofgren and Felecia Wilson volunteered to serve. Chris will reach out to the Board for a third member. The Committee will present the slate of officers by email over the summer.
- A question arose regarding the Employee Excellence Awards for next year. It was decided that the awards would be presented again, and that volunteers would be eligible and Parks would participate, as well. The process will begin earlier in the year.
- Following the meeting, a tour of the facility was made available to the Board.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:50pm

ADDENDUM – Renee Katz

Regarding Good Hope Sprayground and possible water features at Montgomery County parks:

I didn't have a yes or no answer last night to Director Albornoz's question about whether I thought Good Hope Sprayground should remain after the renovation of the community center because, although the sprayground is not the most modern looking, and I can imagine that it takes a lot of coordination by Recreation for something that is only open about one and a half months of the year, it is a unique recreation feature for East County, so without plans for it to be renovated or for another splash pad (or full service splash park) to be installed elsewhere in the area, whether operated by Recreation or Parks, I'm reluctant to support its removal. I am just guessing that the reason it can't be opened until late June is that it is staffed by high school students, although I do not know that for a fact. These sentiments about the no-frills yet still enjoyable nature of the sprayground are echoed in this blog entry reviewing the sprayground: <http://montgomerycountymyplayground.com/2013/07/26/good-hope-local-park/>

I did another Google search this morning and the results had changed! The Recreation Dept. link is now on the first page of results for "Good Hope Sprayground" (it's the fourth result). I wonder if its webpage has been getting more hits recently and that bumped it up! At any rate, from what I understand, the hours and days of the week that it is open do not change from year to year, but with the opening and closing dates being listed from 2012, it could make visitors wonder about whether it is still open. Maybe something like "The sprayground is open from late June to mid-August, Mon. - Sat., 11 - 4." and when opening date isn't determined yet, "check back for 2014 opening and closing dates." (I was told it's open this year from June 23 to Aug. 9.) A description of the sprayground and a picture (probably better to have one while it's being used) would be helpful to add to the webpage, and a facebook and/or twitter post would be great too. -

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/rec/thingstodo/aquatics/sprayground.html>

Back in February, Director Bradford sent some very helpful responses and information regarding the possibility of a splash park or water play feature being built or included in a park in the eastern

part of the county. A parent of young children and resident of Silver Spring originally asked that I request this information. One of the responses from a staff member was, "If we do want to consider water play elements in our playgrounds, it may be good to talk to the Rec Dept. about their costs/experience with the Good Hope Splash Park ... my brief discussions with the County on that seemed like it was a lot of work for minimal usage." The reaction of the Silver Spring resident to the point that the sprayground receives minimal usage is that in a more frequented location like Silver Spring (as she says, on the other side of the ICC), which is still not too far from the most eastern parts of the county, the water fountain at Ellsworth is packed in the summer, so much so that it becomes dangerous. She points out that the surface is slippery and there is nowhere for kids to change. She says, let's properly plan for a local splash area that families can enjoy. I think the rules posted at Good Hope Sprayground and staffing provide a good model for any future water play sites, and of course, we have the wonderful Splash Park at South Germantown Recreational Park as a model as well. I would personally add that the availability of a no-depth water play area equipped with changing rooms would be a great service to the segment of the eastern part of the county aged zero to 5 and their caregivers, for whom a trip to South Germantown may be possible, but probably as a once or twice per summer type of trip.

Another response from Parks staff said "Park Planning is looking at the master plan for Wheaton Regional Park (if that's considered east county) [Note from Renee Katz - it's close enough in my opinion!], and a splash park may be an appropriate activity for a regional or recreational park. In Arlington County and DC, many of their small playgrounds have water elements (not formal splash parks). If we wanted to consider something like this, we may be able to come up with a site – possibly an urban park. Woodside might be a possibility, since we have an upcoming design project. We already had some water elements incorporated in the plan, but not a formal splash park...." The Silver Spring resident who originally inquired about a splash park responded to this by saying "I would be more than satisfied with incorporating water play into a playground/regional park. Do keep in mind, as my earlier comments state, it WILL draw a crowd and should be sizable enough to accommodate all the children who do come to play."

Thank you for being so receptive to my comments at the meeting last night, and for all the work that you all do for our county. Also thanks for the great bus tour. Looking forward to seeing many of you in the fall. Since I am unable to make it to Director Bradford's retirement party tomorrow, let me say thank you to both Mary Bradford and Christine Brett for their service, and it was an honor to be on the board with you.

Renee Katz+