

MINUTES - DRAFT

Sports Advisory Committee
Thursday, September 21, 2023

Bohrer Park Activity Center
506 S. Frederick Avenue, Gaithersburg

Board Members: Mary Kate Crawford, Rick James, Doug Schuessler, Max Levitt, Doug Remer, Trish Heffelfinger, Tina Won Sherman, Tom Cove, Princess Clemente, Chris Wajda, Amalia Lopez, Joseph Hooks, Dustin Jeter, David Schardt, Tony Korson,

Ex-Officio: Ryan Denner, Steve Solomon, Darren Flusche, Kathy Green, Rebecca Frece, Nancy Petzold-Earp, Elijah Davis

Staff: Jason Fasteau

Guests: Carl Weber - Athletic Field Coordinator, Park Planning and Stewardship, Montgomery County Parks

6:07 p.m. Welcome and Call to Order

- The meeting started at 6:07 pm
- Introduction at Carl Weber (Athletic Fields Planner for Montgomery Parks)
- A quorum was confirmed after attendance was recorded and the meeting was called to order

6:10 p.m. Review and Approve Agenda

- Motion made by Tony Korson to approve agenda. Seconded. Approved Unanimously

6:12 p.m. Review and Approve July Minutes

- Motion made by Trish Heffelfinger to approve the July minutes. Seconded. Approved Unanimously

6:13 p.m. - Comments by Chair, Tom Cove

- Thanks to the working group leaders
- Charge to think about practical ways to move forward
- Additional comments by Tina - posed the rhetorical question for the group to consider: what is within our control (via the County Council)

New Business

6:15 p.m. Working Group Presentations

6:16 p.m. Recognition (David Schardt)

- Reminder of the initial charge from the Council
- Trish spoke to Councilmember Gabe Albornoz about his vision:

- In the first year, recognize MCPS and Private Schools that earn state and national honors, then expand each year to clubs, etc.
 - Phase 1: Public and Private School Champions
 - Phase 2: Individual athletes who win county or state championships
 - Future: Add in additional age groups (youth, masters, senior) and types of participation (coaches, groundskeepers, other producers of sport)
- Suggestion for honoring: 1 large or 3 smaller events throughout the calendar year
 - Invite the County Council and/or County Executive
 - Proclamation by the County Executive or County Council
 - Social media celebration
- **Scope of Proposal**
 - Public Schools
 - MPSSAA, all schools are divided into 1 of 4 conferences based on enrollment
 - 26 sports and 25 HS
 - County championships as well (7 sports)
 - Private schools
 - 29 schools in 12 different conferences and 34 sports
 - Some conferences include schools from all over the DMV
 - No state championship for private schools
 - No one authority tracking results
 - Difficult to collect this data
 - Recommendation to set up a database to track this data
- **Questions to Consider before moving forward:**
 - Who can handle the task of collecting this data throughout the year (And year over year)
 - Who is going to do the recognition work? (social media, proclamation, public event)
 - What is our role (as the working group) in bringing this to fruition?
- **Questions and Comments from the Committee**
 - Kathy Green: speaking to the existing public school recognition process, MCPS keeps track of teams and players who win championships
 - Tom: Where does this group go from here?
 - Amalia: proposed a nomination form as an alternative to strictly using a database or relying upon athletic directors
 - Tina: proposed an idea to check for other jurisdictions for similar recognition opportunities
 - Kathy: important to also recognize corollary sports, an important population to celebrate
 - Recommendation to look at what the Washington Post has done to recognize all Metro athletes

- Tom: take feedback back to the working group for more planning
- Rebecca: MARPSA - good sports award banquet hosted annually (DMV-wide)
- Doug R.: suggested looking into honors for coaching, sportsmanship which can include programs that don't win but model positivity in other ways
- Tom: motion to provide added guidance of honoring additional athletes, coaches, sportsmanship, etc.
 - Motion unanimously approved

6:49 p.m. - **Doug Remer (Participation Group)**

- Needs:
 - Inclusion (including quality trained coaching)
 - Marketing - effective communication of current programs
 - Funding - are scholarships available?
 - Resources - if we aren't providing programming in neighborhoods
 - Facilities - can miss out on "good facilities" if planning doesn't happen far enough in advance
- Barriers: availability of training for coaches, helping to educate them on opportunities to coach, and breaking barriers to coach (might feel intimidated)
 - Access to participants: marketing beyond word-of-mouth
 - Accessibility: families struggle to get to game/activity sites
- Recommendations:
 - Registering online is challenging
 - Resources: equipment, transportation
- **Bottom line:** marketing is a priority and providing better training for coaches
 - How do we address the disconnect between existing programming and kids who do not know about existing programming
 - Are there opportunities to offer scholarships to underserved communities?
 - Overarching theme: community-based, word-of-mouth work
 - Community liaisons - embedded in schools or lower-income housing communities - someone who knows the landscape of recreation in the county and can advocate for the members of their own community
 - County coaching program - based on child development and not necessarily skill/sport-specific
- **Comments and Feedback**
 - Joe: comments on challenges of coaches, transportation, and affordability - togetherness over profit
 - Max: It's not a lack of programming but a lack of resources.
 - Amy: Important to find grassroots organizations and government agencies to find the kids, and incentivize pay-to-play organizations to bring programming to underserved communities. Also asked about the facility fee assistance program and marketing for it

- Doug: personal anecdote about the permitting process
- Recommendation: Start with teachers in schools, and government agencies as “community liaisons”

7:15 p.m. **Tony Korson (Programs)**

- Best practices: central location/database/directory for all things sports, can be filtered by zip code, indoor/outdoor, sport, etc.
 - Social media marketing
 - Great coaches, they need support
 - Best to overcommunicate with parents (administrators who support them)
- Online registration and field permitting processes should be easier - are an obstacle for many
- Online coaching - Positive Coaching Alliance (National organizations)
- Underserved community:
 - Cross-reference FARM rates with resources (i.e. Montgomery Village Middle School) including facilities
 - Help those interested in starting their own youth sports organizations - how to get started and how to navigate the process
- Recommendations
 - What partnerships can we explore that would be mutually beneficial
 - How can we create an exhaustive list of available programming (i.e. directory)
 - Is there an app that we could create that would make sport accessible on-demand based on location - kids will use an app
- **Comments and Feedback**
 - Can we mimic other public-private partnerships (food access, etc.)? There’s an app to help the food insecure, can we make one that helps provide instant info on sports activities
 - How do we find a way to highlight ALL available programming (formerly known as summer guide - print version)
 - Centralized forum/opportunity for all sports providers to share resources/ideas/etc
 - Rec staff focus 100% on indoor rec centers (22) and drop outdoor field programming
 - Recurring theme: a central database of available programs
 - Kathy: MCPS has provided one-pagers to families of international students (IAE enrollees)
 - NFHS - Level 1, 2, and 3 coaching trainings - most are free
 - Project Play - coaching tool
 - Princess: calendar function to compile from all 22 rec center calendars - one master calendar
 - Repository for coaches as well - webinars, conferences, workshops
 - Learn to play sessions - drop-in play for new participants

7:40 p.m. **Mary Kate Crawford (Facilities)**

- **Vision:** Indoor and outdoor facilities in the county are easily accessible and available to all levels of skill and commitment level for a variety of sports. Facilities are well-maintained, durable, and serve as welcoming gathering spaces for communities. They serve the cultural needs of the communities and promote health and well-being across demographics.
 - Questions we considered:
 - How do we make “generational” change in the county (and not just add a few sports courts)?
 - What limitations exist when building and maintaining high-quality ball fields?
 - Can we afford to develop high-quality, durable fields and keep them accessible (from a cost perspective) to the general county population - who is it for?
 - Facilities to focus on community-based play
 - Multi-purpose facilities
 - Are we maximizing school facilities?
- **Underserved Population:** “recreational/casual sports participants”, which intersects with geography and participant demographics. In other words, competitive/premier-level participants are well-served in the county. Still, casual/novice/beginner participants do not have the same access to sports facilities (quality of facility, proximity of facilities to home, availability of conveniently located facilities).
 - Further, some geographic locations and the communities within them have access to fewer facilities, both as a result of proximity and as a result of existing processes and policies (e.g. historical use permitting)
- **Best practices**
 - City of San Diego - "Performance Audit of Equity in Recreation Programming"
 - Arlington County - Field Utilization Study
 - MD Park Equity Mapper
 - CDC's Equitable and Inclusive Access resources page
- **Barriers**
 - Transportation/Accessibility of facilities (indoor and out)
 - Availability of facilities (permits, high school use, etc.)
 - Types of Facilities
 - Facility/field utilization
- **Needs - 3 areas of consideration**
 - New facility construction
 - Renewal (PLAR funding)
 - Existing policies (e.g. historical use permitting)
- **Target populations/raising awareness**
- **Role of government vs. non-profit entities**
- **Areas of Future Consideration**
 - Permitting Process
 - enforce third-party permit recipients submitting equity-related data and/or

- enforce equity standards
 - Need to be attentive to indoor recreational space/facilities
 - Gymnasiums are important for year-round use - how can we maximize their use?
 - They are located inside schools typically- how does this affect accessibility?
 - What limitations exist when building and maintaining high-quality ball fields
 - Lighting on ball fields
 - When is it appropriate? When is it intrusive to a community?
 - Examples of “Success” in our communities
 - Sport Courts
 - Wheaton sports pavilion (turfed space)
 - Year-round play
 - Germantown Discovery Zone
 - Julius West Middle School - turf lighted field (Adopt-a-Field)
- **Comments and Feedback**
 - Kathy Green - consideration for a large indoor track complex similar to PG County
 - Could support high school graduations (as a revenue generator)
 - Adopt a Field Program

8:15 p.m. **Wrap-Up and Direction**

- Tom - what is the direction moving forward?
 - Rick - Common themes to address
 - Transportation
 - Accessibility of Fields
 - Mary Kate - recommendation to do a case study on one underserved zip code in the county. Take an in depth look into the barriers, needs, and opportunities, in that zip code and make recommendations from the perspectives of all 3 working groups
 - Darren - happy to provide information on specific research questions
 - Kathy - noted a survey went out recently regarding sports popularity
 - Tom: Ask to Jason about what data exists
 - Suggestion for future meeting: Rebecca to present on field and facility permitting
- **Action for Working Groups:** Take the feedback from today back to your working groups and re-evaluate/re-group and condense recommendations to specific items

8:26 p.m. **Administrative Items** – Jason Fasteau

- Reminder of next meetings
 - October 19, 2023
 - November 16, 2023

8:29 p.m. - Motion to adjourn Amy, seconded. Unanimous