

**Recreation and Parks Advisory Board Meeting
Room 003 – County Office Building
May 27, 2009**

Approved Minutes

Members Present: Gary Davis, Chair, Joseph Cook, Colin Furneaux, Bradley Knatz, Jody Ledford, Hernan Padilla, Sue Podobnik, Tom Ronaghan

Members Excused: Sam Case, Jim Rodriguez, Bobbi Tucker

Ex-Officio Member Present: Jeff Degitz

Staff Present: Abby Gruber, Barbara Lages

Chairperson Davis opened the meeting of the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board at 7:30 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The March Minutes were unanimously approved as written with a motion from Tom Ronaghan and seconded by Sue Podobnik.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

- Bark Hill Park – project is 60% complete; grading and seeding of the ball field is completed; work on Peace N Plenty Drive is underway.
- Dog Park status – The committee is working on rules for the park to be located at Bennett Cerf Park and fundraising plans. They will probably work through the summer.
- Hashawha Environmental Center - Hashawha will be recognized by the State for the second time as a Green Center on Monday, June 1, 10 am, at Carroll Community College Scott Center. That afternoon, a tree planting will be held at Hashawha. Colin Furneaux will attend the ceremony at the Scott Center. Swimming pool repairs: During the off season, the pool's coping stones were repaired. When the pool cover was removed this spring, the stones had cracked due to problems with the contractor's work. The pool is closed until the issue is resolved and the problem is fixed. The pool is used by many groups during the summer, including scouts, church groups, youth organizations, reunions, etc. The Department is working with the County Attorney's Office on a resolution.
- Piney Run Park – Work on the boathouse deck is complete and the improvements to the boathouse are underway; work on the gatehouse will follow. Due to the economy, program registrations are down; however, Piney Run attendance has gone up, even with an increase in user fees. A comparison of attendance and revenues for April 2008 and April 2009 were provided: Park visitation – 9,802 to 12,544; Park Revenues - \$31,733 to \$37,948; Nature Center Revenues - \$6,680 to \$12,534; Total Revenue - \$38,413 to \$50,482.
- Cape Horn Park –Field #1 has reopened; contract was awarded for field #3 and work should begin when weather permits.
- Operating Budget – Over half of the County budgets decreased, 25% stayed the same, and some increased, marginally, due to utility costs. The Recreation & Parks' budget remains relatively unscathed largely due to the percentage of revenue generated at park facilities (80-85% for every dollar spent).
- Scout Service Day – Tentatively planned for October, scout troops will be matched up with park sites to work on projects, i.e., trail maintenance, cleanup, etc. If Recreation Councils also have projects and can provide the supplies, the scouts will provide the manpower.

- Bennett Cerf Park – Pavilion is completed and first rental is scheduled for June 13.

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- Discount amusement park tickets are on sale at a great savings; this program helps support the Month of Sunday's concert series.
- PSA's – We are working with the County Commissioners' office on public service announcements on Channel 24 to educate the public on two continuing issues: duck feeding and cleaning up after dogs. Bag dispensers have been put in parks that have paved trails as test cases and have been well received, so this could possibly be expanded to other parks as well. Recommendations were made to request recreation councils to promote cleanup through program flyers and registrations; improve signage; posting it as a violation with a monetary value involved; check to see if the County has a leash law so that information could also be posted and check with Animal Control on whether they provide information to dog owners when licenses are issued.

PARKLAND ACQUISITION:

Mr. Degitz reported that he has looked at a number of parcels in Finksburg, Gamber and Westminster areas for a large regional park; however, none have worked out. He recently became aware of another site, but does not know if the property owner will be interested in selling. We are currently going through the appraisal process. Mr. Degitz has approached the State about possible assistance from Program Open Space stateside funds.

West Carroll – Lehigh Cement Co. may need some property for a rail spur that is currently owned by the Town of New Windsor and the location of Seibel Ballfields. If that is the case, Lehigh may trade other land for the land they need and for the County to take ownership. The land would be developed into a couple of ballfields.

Bennett Cerf Park – We talked with Random House about clean up and possible acquisition or easement of the land that parallels Hahn Road and Route 27 for a biking/walking trail. A draft agreement is being prepared and will be sent to them. Random House pays taxes on this property but can't use it, so we are cautiously optimistic. Mr. Furneaux asked if the County is working with the City of Westminster regarding trails. Mr. Degitz advised that the City plans to extend the Wakefield Valley Trail, which parallels Route 31, to downtown Westminster with assistance from Town Program Open Space funds. This trail will tie in with the County's planned trail system. It was suggested that the Department put together a map of trails jointly with the City of Westminster.

Mason Dixon Trail Proposal – A letter of interest was sent from the Department to Maryland Midland railroad about the possibility of utilizing an unused part of the railroad line as a site for a multi-use trail utilizing State Highway right of way. The four mile stretch from Taneytown north to the Mason Dixon line is currently grown over and road crossings no longer have rails on them. The company responded that they were not interested. Advisory Board member, Sam Case, is friends with a former Maryland Midland Board member and will try and negotiate. The use of rail banking is a possibility that would potentially allow for the development of a trail while also preserving the route for future use by Maryland Midland should it be needed at a later date.

PARKS TOUR:

The Board planned a tour of parks and facilities on two afternoons, June 10 and June 17, 3:30 to 8:30 pm. An email will be sent to the members to sign up for the tour(s).

RECREATION COUNCIL ISSUES:

During the February and March meetings, the Board discussed the issue of recreation councils paying instructors and being responsible for obtaining 1099's, completing them correctly and mailing them out to instructors earning over \$600 in a calendar year. The Department has received direction from the County Attorney and Department of Human Resources to change this practice because of possible liability concerns, worker's comp and tax related issues, and is calling on the Recreation Council Issues Committee to work with Abby Gruber to provide recommendations for the Board's review and approval, followed by review by the County Attorney and Risk Manager.

Ms. Gruber reported that the Department has a system in place to deal with paid instructors and also ensure that proper paperwork is filed regarding insurance and required certification. The Department has begun to handle summer camps this way and there have been no problems. Ms. Podobnik commented that after attending a recreation council meeting where this was discussed, she is unclear if this is really a legal issue. Mr. Degitz commented that there has always been a loose degree of control between the recreation councils and the County, but that relationship has been gradually changing and becoming more structured over the years. The councils legally do not have a separate identity; they are "us".

Ms. Gruber discussed recent developments including County lump sum contracts and a risk analysis policy modeled after Howard County. It was also noted that there are a number of issues leading to these changes and not any single issue. Staff will work with the committee this summer to resolve and make necessary changes.

Mr. Cook inquired about the status of ballfield mix. Ms. Gruber advised that she had not approached the Bureau of Facilities at this time, because they are down 4 staff positions. Mr. Davis has a CDL license and offered to drive a dump truck if Facilities could provide the use of one.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm with a motion from Sue Podobnik and seconded by Colin Furneau.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff R. Degitz, Director

Darlene Rohrbaugh, Secretary