

**Recreation and Parks Advisory Board  
Online WebEx Meeting  
January 28, 2021  
Board Meeting Minutes**

**PRESENT**

Board Members: Tom Lynch, George Sushinsky, Chip Boylan, Bob Taylor  
Elizabeth Fisher, Dirk Whatley  
Absent: Stephanie Pankiewicz, Maryann Kearns  
Staff: Chris Henry, Karla Sheehi  
Councilmember: Mark Pierzchala  
Guests: No guests

**Meeting commencement:** 7:04 pm

**Re: Approval of December Minutes**

The minutes were approved as presented.

**Re: Community Forum**

No guests in attendance.

**Re: Council Report - Councilman Mark Pierzchala**

**Budget Process for FY22**

The budget process is in progress. There are more Capital Improvement projects than what The City can fund for next several years. Projects include 6 Taft Court, City Hall upgrade, King Farm, RedGate and Swim Center. The Board may have input as to how the capital funds should be spent as it relates to Recreation. The budget is submitted to Mayor and Council at the February 22, 2021 meeting. Thereafter, Mayor and Council will hold budget meetings in the next couple of months to review and discuss the presented budget.

**Re: Staff Reports**

**FY22 Budget**

Chris reviewed the following programs and department initiatives that are important in the FY22 budget: February 22<sup>nd</sup> The City Manager will present his proposed budget to The Council. Then March 1, 2021 is a budget public hearing as well as a work session. March 22, 2021 will also be a work session only meeting. On April 12, 2021 there is another budget public hearing if the board wants to present any recommendations.

**Programming**

-Due to effects of COVID-19, short term conditions require that Recreation and Parks' budget model shift from a business/service focus to more of a service only focus, with less emphasis on cost recovery. Staff work through an equity lens to ensure that various segments of the community have their needs met.

- In order to maintain equitable access to programs and services, we commend staff for their ability to pivot operations to develop creative concepts that meet changing the needs of the community. Staff need to continue to be provided with the tools and resources they need to provide these essential activities to foster physical and mental wellness.
- Recreation and Parks Staff have shifted their efforts to become even more of a conduit connecting the community with needed resources. Examples include coordinating food delivery to seniors, COVID testing at Recreation and Parks facilities, hosting MCPS meal distribution sites and helping community members locate other referrals for services. These essential activities are service oriented and rather than revenue generating actions.
- While some programs can be delivered effectively via virtual platforms, it is not a total substitute for face-to-face interaction. R&P should be encouraged to facilitate in person programming when appropriate and safe, as well as a hybrid model of virtual programs for those unable to join in person. The cost of providing service has increased due to more stringent staffing and cleaning requirements as well as the need for individualized equipment for participants. Capacity and group gathering sizes are restricted, so economies of scale are limited regarding increased volume of users per activity.
- Park use has increased as residents prefer to stay close to home and take advantage of outdoor amenities in their neighborhood. The work of the Parks and Facilities Division to maintain these parks is even more important than ever before. Workforce reductions should not be considered in this area.
- Recognizing that the short-term financial forecast may mean that temporary budget cuts are necessary, these should be recognized as purely a stopgap measure and funding restored as soon as possible so that the Department can adapt to changing needs.
- Match Montgomery County's minimum wage (\$15 per hours on 7/1/21). Stay competitive in the marketplace for the 500+ temporary employees who are the face of the organization.

**Maintenance and Infrastructure** - Projects are important investments in our future and cannot be put on hold. There will be lasting adverse impacts by not moving forward on caring for our infrastructure.

- In continuing to make progress on City-wide compliance with the ADA, projects at the Senior Center and F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre are put forward to remove access barriers and improve the facilities.
- Implementation of the recommendations included in the 2020 Recreation and Parks Strategic Plan as well as other recent plans and assessments such as Rockville Swim and Fitness Center's Facility Audit, the ADA Audit and Transition Plan, the King Farm Farmstead Condition Assessment, Arts and Culture Study, and the Senior Citizen Needs Assessment and Gap Analysis should continue where possible.
- Long term planning is underway for major renovations to the Outdoor Recreation Pool at the Swim and Fitness Center, the City's most heavily used facility which has been a breath of fresh air for users throughout the pandemic.
- There is an ongoing need of maintenance projects for the City's inventory of playgrounds, roofing, path/trail paving, HVAC and building systems and parking areas.
- 6 Taft Court – the future home of the City's Maintenance and Operations Facility and other City offices – is a top priority to move across the finish line. Current accommodations at the Rothgeb facility are undersized, outdated and inefficient. This multi-use site at 6 Taft Court will benefit many City Departments, and in turn improve service delivery to City Residents.

## **King Buick Development**

Karla Sheehi shared on behalf of Chris Henry, the Development Application Map, which was distributed in the City's Development Newsletter, in preparation to discuss at our January 28 meeting. This map shows the proposed redevelopment of a partially developed site with a variety of new residential units. The proposal includes 15% MPDU units. The proposed development borders Mattie Stepanek Park and the King Farm Farmstead.

Two important points considered regarding this development; Mattie Stepanek Park was built a future location for a middle school. Also, the existing dog park based on the development map, will be right next to the units and is very active.

Stephanie shared her feedback prior to tonight's meeting, that the homes appear to be very close - right next to the Farmstead based on the blueprints. The closest home lot is five feet to the Farmstead, according to information shared with Councilman Pierzchala, when he too had expressed his concern.

George Sushinsky: asked what is being proposed for green space? Chris shared one of the development maps showing plantings as well as green space within identified open space. There will be a pool amenity adjacent to the green space.

Bob Taylor: asked what is the required set-back between a building and residential area. Chris pointed out that there are guidelines on development buffers; it differs between 20 feet and 100 feet depending on whether it backs to an active and passive park.

Councilman Pierzchala: shared that he has expressed his concerns about the location of Pleasant Drive and suggested to route pleasant drive to be right next to the development and move the Dog Park so that it is an integral part of Mattie Stepanek. He also suggested that the development build their community center in the horse barn.

Chip Boylan: pointed out that a Mayor and Council would benefit from a citizens forum where residents come to weigh in their vote on a potential for a performing center next door to their residence or the future use of this park space. Developing this number of units for families will likely raise the need for a future school, which will then impact the use of this park.

The Board can provide feedback on this development proposal and Chris or Karla will share information on public hearings on this topic.

### **Re: Subcommittee Reports**

- a) **Glenview Mansion (Tom)**  
No updates
- b) **Swim & Fitness Center (Bob)**  
Committee recently met and discussed concerns surrounding the challenges impacting the reopening of the outdoor pool. The outdoor pool was able to stay open longer and hope that the reopening can happen quickly and safely as possible.
- c) **Recreation and Parks Foundation (Chip)**  
The foundation's main funding resource has been the annual Golf Tournament. The volunteers who make up the committee infrastructure who coordinate this event have moved on, so we are not planning on holding the Golf outing. Other sources for funding are participating at City

Events; HTH and Car Show and these events are likely not going to happen, therefore impacting the foundation's ability provide future funding.

d) **Arts**

***Gateway Art Project (Tom):***

Some work needed to be done around the easement at Falls Grove prior to moving ahead (Chris)

***Swim Center Art Project (Bob):***

Not sure when this will be taken to Mayor and Council. We need to be considerate of such expenses while the City is still impacted by COVID-19 (Chris)

e) **RedGate Park (George)**

The Reimagining RedGate project has our City's project team working internally. A consultant was hired to come up with design concepts, based on community feedback. It will be important for our board to help us get the word out in the coming months about a survey being put out on the proposed design(s) that requires citizen participation on our Project Website. The consultant will build a map with layers of information which will help us in the development stage. More information to come as we move forward.

**Re: Old Business/New Business**

**Old Business**

George inquired as to when the Deer Culling report will be out. Chris explained that the plan is to go back to Mayor & Council. Reports need to go to DNR for their review, as we are part of the of National Parks Services on Wildlife Management group. We are scheduled to go to Mayor and Council on April 26, to provide a report.

**New Business**

**Re: Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:49 pm

**The next meeting:** February 25, 2021 at 7 p.m. Via Webex