

**Recreation and Parks Advisory Board
Online WebEx Meeting
February 25, 2021
Board Meeting Minutes**

PRESENT

Board Members: Tom Lynch, George Sushinsky, Chip Boylan, Bob Taylor, Dirk Whatley,
Stephanie Pankiewicz

Absent: Elizabeth Fisher, Maryann Kearns

Staff: Chris Henry, Karla Sheehi, Rob Orndorff

Councilmember: Mark Pierzchala

Guests: No guests

Meeting commencement: 7:04 pm

Re: Approval of January Minutes

The minutes were approved as amended.

Re: Community Forum

No guests in attendance.

Re: Council Report - Councilman Mark Pierzchala

M&C Received the Proposed YF22 Budget

The City's total budget has less than 1% from previous years, with Recreation and Parks taking the biggest hit out of all the departments. The first budget hearing will be March 1, 2021.

Pesticide Policy

The Pesticide Policy Agenda Item will be presented on March 15, 2021. Councilmember Pierzchala has cautioned that the speakers need to watch their presentation time.

Re: City of Rockville's Draft Pesticide Policy – Rob Orndorff

Rob referred to the comments submitted by George Sushinsky, which the board was in agreeance with and supports. Rob began by noting that the ban is only for residents and bans pesticides used on lawns for aesthetic purposes. Rob also advised that the background information in the Draft Policy was not intended to remain as a part of the policy. The points addressed by George, supported by the board are bolded below with Rob Orndorff's feedback noted in the un bolded text.

The Policy to reduce the use of pesticides should include athletic fields, or alternately distinguish fields where access can be closed off temporarily when an application has been made to a park. The County has exempted athletic fields on this ban for some time. There is however nothing in the County ban, banning Roundup. If we want to ban one product, that being Roundup, we would need to do so separate from this effort. Note that organic methods are not a safer method.

Similarly, the use of Roundup and similar non-organic methods should be banned around playgrounds.

In the City's policy it does include that pesticides are not being used around playgrounds. A common threat in our playgrounds are yellow jackets. A pesticide will need to be used to eradicate the yellow jackets from inside the playground equipment.

For insects, what objective measures would be used to identify the need to control them? For example, the upcoming Spring invasion of cicadas? Cicadas are pests you cannot control. They do not feed on anything they only lay their eggs on the small twigs and that damage falls off. The City did include use of pesticides to control the mosquitos after the West Nile virus outbreak.

When non-organic pesticides are used, is their impact on beneficial insects such as bees and butterflies considered on a cost/benefit or other objective basis? All pesticides are labeled and have restrictions and ones that have been proven harmful for pollinators have very strict requirements we would not use.

Is clover a weed that needs to be controlled? Clover is a non-native plant which grows into your lawn and has benefits. In situations like athletic fields, we do not want clover in the fields, so we would like to control it. We look at all options and minimize our risks to achieve our goals.

A one-week warning on the City website is a good step, but is it effective? Rob confirmed that the City follows the State's requirements and post signs prior to an application. But doing so in a more proactive manner by posting the signs *prior* to the application, which the State requires doing so *after* the application. The signs used by The City of Rockville are larger than what is required. According to Rob, the policy followed thus far by the City of Rockville, follows good stewardship. If the board wishes to recommend that The City ban the use of Roundup specifically, they can do so.

Are community gardens plots included in this ban (Stephanie)? According to Rob, they may spray weeds in the parking areas around the garden areas. The plots are treated by patrons who use them.

The limitations on the use of non-organic pesticides on the nine specified areas are so general as to be open ended. The limitation of non-organic use of pesticides is the approach taken by the City. Integrated Pest Management is using the least toxic method to control pests.

George confirmed that he will be drafting up a write up to present to Mayor and Council for the March 15 meeting. Stephanie then captured the following language to be sent to the Mayor and Council on behalf of the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board for the March 15 Pesticide agenda topic:

On behalf of the Recreation and Parks Advisory members voted to present the following recommendations:

- The City of Rockville opting into the Montgomery County ban on pesticides.
- The board recommends using an alternative to using pesticides that have been deemed carcinogenic by the WHO whenever possible except in situations involving human health and wellbeing.
- Discourage and/or minimize the use of pesticides on ball fields and fields.
- Discourage and/or minimize the use of pesticides around community gardens.

The board suggests that pesticide application signage, include product name. This suggestion will be passed on internally to staff, by way of the meeting minutes.

Re: Staff Reports

FY22 Budget Talking Points

The following points were reviewed and discussed during the board's February meeting. The board has the opportunity to present feedback as a board in person or in writing. There is a public hearing on March 1 and also on April 12. The board revisited the following points and discussed the importance of presenting the board's feedback.

Programming

- Due to effects of COVID-19, short term conditions require the R&P budget model to shift from a business/service focus to more of a service only focus. Staff work through an equity lens to ensure that the entire community needs are met. **Revenue decreases throughout the department (P. 251, 257, 261) due to COVID related reductions / capacity restrictions.**
- Maintain equitable access to programs and services, we commend staff for their ability to pivot operations to develop creative concepts that meet the changing needs of the community. Staff need to continue to be provided with the tools and resources they need to provide essential activities to foster physical and mental wellness. **P.350 shows a reduction of 1.0 FTE Recreation Program Coordinator and two frozen positions (Construction Project Manager and Tree Climber) from R&P. Note also regarding position changes on page 242, 256 and 258.**
- R&P have shifted efforts to become even more of a conduit connecting the community with needed resources include coordinating food delivery to seniors, COVID testing sites, meal distribution sites and helping community members locate referrals for services. These essential activities are service oriented and rather than revenue generating actions. **FY21 Accomplishment and FY22 Outlook on P239-240). Senior Services budget on P. 261 has revenue decrease in the 20% range but expense decreases ~5%. The importance of these services is not revenue dependent.**
- While some programs can be delivered effectively via virtual platforms, it is not a total substitute for face-to-face interaction. 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. **Special Events reductions (not obvious in the budget book...the expenditure chart on P. 256 shows 2.3% growth, but \$66,500 has been reduced in this cost center)**
- Park use has increased exponentially, the work of the Parks and Facilities Division to maintain these parks is even more important than ever. **P. 247 shows increased equipment replacement costs for Parks. P. 284 Dogwood Park CIP**
- Temporary budget cuts may have been necessary, these should be recognized as purely a stop-gap measure and **restore funding** as soon as possible so that the R&P can adapt to changing needs. **Decrease in temporary FTEs on P. 242. \$100,600 Capital Outlay reduction on P. 244. Expenditure charts throughout the R&P section show percentage decreases in budgets for FY22.**
- 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. **P. 21 states that the County minimum wage will go to \$15 in FY22, but the City is deciding to maintain the \$14 minimum wage for another year. R&P Staffing chart is on P. 242 with no mention of minimum wage related increases.**

Maintenance and Infrastructure - lasting adverse impacts if funding is cut for city's projects.

Support funding for:

- ADA Transition Plan: Senior Center ADA Improvements and F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre ADA Improvements **Operating: P. 244 note shows Capital Projects outlay decrease by 100K. CIP: P. 285 FST ADA Improvements**
- Implementation of the recommendations in the 2020 Recreation and Parks Strategic Plan and other plans including Swim and Fitness Center Facility Audit, King Farm Farmstead Condition Assessment, Arts and Culture Study, and the Senior Citizen Needs Assessment and Gap Analysis. **KFF Projects on P. 287-288,**
- Rebuild Swim and Fitness Center Outdoor Recreation Pool, the City's most heavily used facility which has been a breath of fresh air for users throughout the pandemic. **Page 290**

- Maintenance Projects: Playgrounds **P. 293**, Roofing **P. 295**, Asphalt/Concrete (path, trails, parking lots) **P.282**, is within the operating budget HVAC, CIP: Promenade Parks Elevator and Park Redesign **on P. 294**
- 6 Taft Court – renovate for City’s Maintenance and Operations Facility Current accommodations at the Rothgeb facility are undersized, outdated, and inefficient. **P. 346**
- RedGate Park – support a future CIP improvement project once park master planning process is complete. FY22 shows additional operating funding for maintenance at the park. **P. 247 \$50,000 additional funding to care for RedGate Park maintenance.**
- The Art projects that have not been fully presented to Mayor and Council and are also currently not in the budget. They are, The Gateway Project, The Swim Center Project, and the Skate Park Project.

The board agrees on the above budget points impacting Recreation and Parks and find it important to present to Mayor and Council at the March 1 meeting. Stephanie volunteered to present these on behalf of the board. George made a motion; moving to allow Stephanie to present the above budget points. All board members voted in favor.

2021 Winter Snow

Parks and Maintenance staff have been very busy clearing away snow and ice from the six storms that have occurred since the 25th of January.

Maryland State Arts Council Grant

The Arts Division received a Public Art Conservation Grant from the Maryland State Arts Council in the amount of \$32,920 for work on “Untitled” by William Calfee in front of the F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre and “Spirit of Rockville” at Courthouse Square Park.

Classes & Programming

Croydon Creek Nature Center launched in person outdoor only programming in February with a weekly outdoor nature club program. Additionally, staff continue to facilitate virtual programs including birthday parties, Facebook live sessions and virtual Environmental Education programs for a local assisted living center. CCNC has also launched an offering of FREE virtual Next Generation Science Standards aligned school programs for teachers and their students.

The Classes Division has been successfully engaging participants both in-person and virtually during the winter season. There are 34 children learning tennis skills indoors, taught by Derrick and Janet, and 41 adults are exercising both indoors and outdoors. Virtual classes keep youngsters engaged in Pom Poms (13), Ballet (30) and Guitar classes (3) while adults have been enjoying Pilates (21), Yoga (36) and HIIT (5) and Ballet classes (18). In March we will also start pickleball and tennis classes for adults outdoors.

Farmers Market

The last scheduled Winter Farmers Market was canceled on Feb. 20 due to inclement weather and will not be rescheduled. The Market will open for the regular season on Saturdays, May 15 – November 20 from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. on the corner of Rt. 28 and Monroe St. in the Jury Parking lot.

Lunar New Year

Lunar New Year was held virtually this year on Saturday, February 20. The event featured a welcome from John Lin, Asian Pacific American Task Force member and Mayor Donnell Newton, along with five performances. The event was held on the City’s YouTube channel and can be viewed [here](#). As of today, the video has had 375 views.

George asked if the City's Track program will be running in the Spring. Chris advised that MCPS is not allowing the use of their facilities as of now. If this changes, the department will proceed with planning for a Track program.

Recreation and Parks has started programs held outdoors, however programs like Dance which take place indoors, are not currently running.

Re: Subcommittee Reports

- a) **Glenview Mansion (Tom)**
No updates
- b) **Swim & Fitness Center (Bob)**
Normally the subcommittee and Swim Center management hold a staff appreciation party. Instead, they adopted doing acts of kindness instead. Staff have also been strategizing on how to get more participants into the pool. It is challenging working with limited space. Hoping for warm weather soon so the outdoor pool can open.
- c) **Recreation and Parks Foundation (Chip)**
Nothing new to report
- d) **Arts**
Gateway Art Project (Tom):
Project is on hold as staff looks into responses from Mayor & Council.
Swim Center Art Project (Bob):
Need to get the funding.
- e) **RedGate Park (George)**
The City Manager will announce at the March 15 meeting, the launch of the Public Engagement via a website where the public can provide comments. This website will also provide information on how things are going with the concepts and overall timeline. It will be called Engage Rockville.

Re: Old Business/New Business

Old Business

No old business

New Business

Stephanie Pankiewicz will be resigning from the board, as she is moving out of the City of Rockville area.

Boards and Commissions policy states that the City cannot allow a non-City of Rockville resident to reside on the board, even if they work in the City of Rockville

There are several reappointments within the board. Dirk Whatley, Chip Boylan and Bob Taylor have submitted their applications for re-appointments.

Re: Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:51 pm

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