

**Recreation and Parks Advisory Board
Online WebEx Meeting
April 22, 2021
Board Meeting Minutes**

PRESENT

Board Members: Tom Lynch, George Sushinsky, Chip Boylan, Bob Taylor, Maryann Kearns,
Elizabeth Fischer

Absent: Dirk Whatley

Staff: Chris Henry, Karla Sheehi, Rob Orndorff

Councilmember: Mark Pierzchala

Guests: Alan Vinh, Linda Vinh, Kirsten Kaplan, Jonathan Weiss

Meeting commencement: 7:01 pm

Re: Approval of March Minutes

The minutes were approved as presented.

Re: Guest Forum

Mr. and Mrs. Alan Vinh are in attendance to present a Tree Planting appeal at their residence. Mr. and Mrs. Vinh have been City of Rockville residents since November of 2020 as renters and purchased the home 1909 Rockland Avenue in April of 2021.

Jonathan Weiss and Kirsten Kaplan are in attendance as applicants of interest for this advisory board and will speak as part of the “Applicant of Interest” agenda topic.

Re: Applicant of Interest – Jonathan Weiss

Mr. Weiss and his wife have lived in the City of Rockville for 20 years and were attracted to this area as the city has a large parks network. Mr. Weiss and his family are members of the Rockville Swim Center. Their children have grown up in this area and have enjoyed taking part in the many recreational programs offered and are now in high school. The City of Rockville has so many amenities. Mr. Weiss has contacted City officials in the past and found them to be very responsive to their citizens. Mr. Weiss has a particular interest in fitness programs it offers. With his children now in high school Mr. Weiss would like to give back to the City and learn more about it.

Re: Applicant of Interest – Kirsten Kaplan

Ms. Kaplan moved to Rockville twenty years ago from San Francisco with her newborn daughter and has loved living here. Ms. Kaplan’s motivation for wanting to volunteer and give back has been the experience that her family has had with the new trails in College Gardens watershed area behind her neighborhood and the community involvement. Ms. Kaplan is concerned about the underserved areas within the City, that do not have many parks and do not have much access to nature. That would be one of the areas of interest for her and how the City can make the kind of experiences that have been transformative for her family’s access. She would like everyone, regardless of the type of neighborhood they live in Rockville to have that same experience. Ms. Kaplan’s daughter is 18 years old and has special needs. So, through the years she has participated in dance and theatre classes, activities at the Thomas Farm Community Center as well as the Glenview Mansion. She has participated in just about everything offered for kids. Her family has also taken advantage of the Swim Center fitness classes. Her daughter has also volunteered at the Rockville Senior Center teaching seniors how to play chess.

Re: Tree Appeal – 1909 Rockland Avenue

Mr. and Mrs. Vinh are presenting their written request for a tree planting appeal at their home at 1909 Rockland Avenue. Mr. and Mrs. Vinh are objecting to the City's plan to plant a Hedge Maple tree on the front yard right-of-way of their residence. Their presentation explains why they do not want the tree planted at their address and included numerous photographs of their yard and other sites in their neighborhood. The Vinh's reasons for objecting to the tree planting are summarized as follows:

- 1) It is not appropriate to plant trees under the power lines in front of their home.
- 2) The Vinhs have health conditions that make the addition of a street tree a burden.
- 3) Tree maintenance costs for the Vinh's and the City
- 4) The tree will provide unwanted shade on the Vinhs yard and interfere with other yard plantings.

After Mr. and Mrs. Vinh presented, the board asked Rob Orndorff, City Horticulturalist, to weigh in on the appeal. Rob explained that the tree was to be planted at their address in accordance with the City's Master Street Tree Plan. Rob also explained that the Hedge Maple with its typical growth height (30 to 35 feet) is appropriate for planting under power lines. PEPCO, which does a significant amount of tree trimming to protect power lines, has commended the City for its Master Street Tree plan.

George explained that the board will discuss the appeal at the end of the meeting and then follow up with a written recommendation agreed upon by board members. Mr. and Mrs. Vinh's thanked everyone for their time and allowing to present. The board continued with the remainder of the meeting agenda to return to discuss this at the end.

Continued discussion: The board discussed what was presented by both the Vinh's as well as City Horticulturalist Rob Orndorff. Rob shared with the board that a letter was mailed to the residence in February informing the resident that a tree planting was taking place. On March 25th Rob's contractor confirmed the tree planting had been completed. Rob later followed up and went to the address with the contractor and the tree was missing. Rob spoke with the Vinhs who informed Rob that they found a hole there with burlap and therefore they planted boxwood bushes there. According to the Vinh's they did not even open the letter mailed by the City as it was addressed to the resident.

After the tree planting appeal was heard the board discussed their points and views and made voted, making the decision to recommend that the City plant the Hedge Maple tree at the Vinh address as planned. Chip Boylan volunteered to draft the response memo on behalf of the board for presentation to the Recreation and Parks Director and appropriate City staff.

Re: Council Report - Councilman Mark Pierzchala

Resident Companies

Performing companies at the F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre; Victorian Lyric Opera Company, Rockville Little Theatre, Rockville Musical Theatre had come to Mayor and Council asking for a different arrangement with the City. Then the Pandemic hit which hurt the performing arts terribly everywhere. So, the City has agreed to give them a one-year grant of \$49,150, approach it as a bridge year and see how things look after the pandemic.

King Farm Farmstead

Councilmember Pierzchala has asked City Council for a way to get the King Farm Farmstead horse barn reconstruction into the budget in the next five years. It will not likely be part of the upcoming budget but looking to start the conversation on this topic. We would look at reconstructing the horse barn which has been shored up as of one year ago. The horse barn has significant indoor space which could have numerous recreational community benefits.

City of Rockville 2040 Master Plan

This was transmitted to Mayor and Council a month ago and we have to pass it by the state deadline in July or August. There is a chapter on Recreation and Parks and encourage this board to read it. This is looked at as the City's vision for the next 20 or so years and will have ramifications beyond 2040.

Re: Staff Reports

FY22 Budget

Thank you to councilmember Pierzchala, Mayor and Council as well as Park Board, especially Chip Boylan and George Sushinsky for presenting at the public hearings for Mayor and Council. We thank you for your support of the Recreation and Parks budget. Mayor and Council were interested and considered the Recreation Program Coordinator position that has been on hold – great news! This position has been put back into the budget. The budget will not be adopted until May 10. We still have a Tree Climber and Senior Construction Project Manager position that are frozen.

City Plantings

Kudos to Rob Orndorff and his team as our City is in full bloom making our city colorful and beautiful.

Veterans Park Flag

The flag at Veterans Park was broken and Rob Orndorff fixed this and having it repaired and back up was much appreciated.

Parks and Shelters

Parks and shelters are being de-winterized and being prepared for our activities.

Farmers Market

The Farmers Market starts Saturday May 15 and will be open Saturdays from 9am until 1pm.

Community Centers Re-Opening

Community Centers are now open with limited times and days. They are currently open to members and City residents.

Croydon Creek Nature Center

The Nature Center will be reopening this Saturday April 24.

International Night

Our International Night team and Rockville 11 will be presenting a Virtual International Night to be aired on Friday April 23rd at 8:00 PM. Our pre-recorded presentation produced by Chanel 11 will air on Chanel 11's YouTube Chanel: YouTube.com/CityofRockville. There will also be a live broadcast with our pre-recorded presentation on Recreation and Park's Social Media.

Summer Programs

We have 97 different camps and programs. Registration opened April 6 and we are already 62% filled. Our staff are excited to get folks back into our programs safely and re-engaging with them. The numbers are reduced to keep everyone safe.

Skate Park Project

Our Skate Park progress is coming along great as it now looks like a Skate Park.

Hillcrest Park

The athletic courts are being renovated/ and or repaired. A message will be going out tomorrow about the work being done and will also see notices posted on the fence. The work will start mid to late next week. Bob commented that he has witnessed firsthand the condition of the park and its community use. The cooperation of City staff and making it look great is very much appreciated.

Senior Center ADA Project Phase II

Phase II of the Senior Center ADA project is progressing along.

Pedestrian Bridge Repairs

There are 7 pedestrian bridges being repaired that you may see as you walk through the parks. Some may be out of commission. Rose Hill Fall is the first one being worked on.

2040 Master Plan – Recreation and Parks Chapter

On May 3rd as part of the 2040 Comprehensive Master plan discussion we will be discussing the Recreation and Parks Chapter if you are interested in listening and understanding where we are going. It will be online so you will be able to see this.

Re: Subcommittee Reports

- a) **Glenview Mansion (Tom)**
No new updates
- b) **Swim & Fitness Center (Bob)**
- c) Bob was not at the last Swim Center meeting. Some of the swim center board members recently testified at a Mayor and Council meeting.
- d) **Recreation and Parks Foundation (Chip)**
No new updates for the Foundation, however anyone is still welcome to donate on our website.
- e) **Arts**
Gateway Art Project (Tom):
The site is not viable as a result of a gas pipeline easement through the original location of the sculpture.
Swim Center Art Project (Bob):
The Art in Public Architecture selection will be brought to Mayor and Council on May 10th
- f) **RedGate Park (George)**
George had the pleasure of volunteering with the City of Rockville's Cross-Country program and spent a few hours at RedGate Park in the rain. Kudos to Jordan Perry for running an excellent track meet in the rain as well as the Civic Center yesterday, in the wind. Despite the environmental issues, both meets were done very efficiently. Kudos to Jordan and his team.
The Park around the RedGate Park building looked nice. The RedGate Park community input Survey recently closed on April 16 that hopefully everyone had the opportunity to provide their input on future amenities at RedGate. Looking forward to better weather to bike and walk in.

Re: Old Business/New Business

Old Business

Spring Stream Cleanup took place at the stream behind Glenview Mansion on Saturday, April 17.

We had a few members show up to volunteer. George pointed out that the bags from the stream cleanup were still at the drop off location when he was at Glenview the other day.

Karla to follow up as the stream cleanups are coordinated through the Environmental Management group.

New Business

George advised that a new board chair will need to be identified and asks that members consider volunteering as George's time is limited and ask members who have been here a while as well as members who have just joined us to think about chairing meetings. This is a good group to work with.

Monday April 26th Mayor and Council Meeting there are a few topic items of interest to The Recreation and Park Advisory Board; the Deer Culling Program and Proposed building on the billiards Lot.

Re: Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:22 pm

The next meeting: May 27, 2021 at **6:30 PM** at RedGate Park