

**Baltimore County
Board of Recreation and Parks
January 12, 2011 Meeting Minutes**

The regular monthly meeting of the Baltimore County Recreation and Parks Board was held on Wednesday, January 12, 2011, at 6:12 p.m. at the Department of Recreation and Parks administrative offices, Towson, Maryland. In attendance were Vice Chairman David Smylie; board members Mike Milani, Dunbar Brooks, Mike Weber and Jacob Smith. Recreation and Parks department staff included Barry Williams, director and Bud Chrismer, deputy director. Also in attendance were Councilman David Marks, and from the Kingsville community, Paul Muller, Mike Boyer and Ken West.

Approval of Minutes:

Dunbar Brooks motioned to approve the November board meeting minutes, Jacob Smith seconded and all were in favor.

Announcements:

Mr. Brooks announced that he loves the work that is being done at Fleming Community Center and appreciates all that the County has done.

In regards to the recreation councils, Mike Weber reported that one council officer offered to assemble a band of officers to offer their services to the other councils, in the event that the councils could not afford an audit. This would allow councils to learn best practices and would now give the Board of Recreation & Parks help that they can offer. Mr. Weber stated that this assistance would initially be at the request of the councils.

Councilman David Marks introduced himself to the board and thanked them for their service.

Deputy Director Bud Chrismer announced that the Baltimore County Agricultural Resource Center is looking to change their name to Maryland Agricultural Resource Council. The board stated that the council could submit this request in writing.

Old Business:

Vice Chairman David Smylie stated that the board is going through a little flux at this point and has some vacancies. Mr. Smylie stated that he is looking forward to getting these positions filled as well as discussing the role that this board serves. Board members have been debating this for the past year, and Mr. Smylie stated that he would like to define this role over the next couple of meetings.

Mr. Brooks stated that, according to the county attorney, the Board of Recreation and Parks is a policy board that oversees activities of the department and advises the department and the director. Mr. Brooks reported that clearly their job is the recreation councils and making sure they function properly. Mr. Brooks further stated that in the early 2000s, their role was redefined as an advisory board, leaving their authority very unclear. With this re-defined role, the board was still requested to take on the activities of the councils. Mr. Brooks spoke on behalf of the board when he stated that board members are concerned that things are done properly. The actions the board has had to take

have been in the interest of the citizens of Baltimore County. Mr. Brooks stated that the board has never received clear direction or, in some cases, no response at all to inquiries made. Mr. Brooks stated that this needs to be cleared up and assumes this resolution would come from the Law Office.

Mike Milani inquired as to who is in charge of the recreation councils, in particular, and whether or not that person is Mr. Chrismer. Mr. Chrismer responded stating that he was always told that the board is advisory to the department and policy making to the recreation councils but further stated that he has never seen this in writing. Mr. Smylie replied stating that the board can act as such but this needs to be definitive. Director Barry Williams responded stating that lots of things happen as a result of practice. Mr. Williams suggested instead of the board waiting for the Law Office, the board should identify what type of board they are and present this to them. Lengthy discussion ensued, and Mr. Williams suggested having a couple of board members work on putting something together to present to the Law Office.

Mr. Williams addressed board members by stating that they know their limitations and they should spend some time getting all the particulars together. Mr. Williams would then approach the Law Office with this and request a response. Mr. Williams stated that there is a new administration, and a new director for the Law Office, Susan Dubin, whom he met with recently. The boards' quest to have their authority defined was briefly discussed. Mr. Williams stated that Ms. Dubin was willing to help with this.

In regards to coverage, Mr. Smith inquired as to whether volunteers are covered by County insurance; Mr. Chrismer responded stating that volunteers are covered but officers are not. Volunteers are not covered for transportation but are covered when functioning within the scope of their volunteer position. Discussion ensued amongst board members in regards to coverage for volunteers.

Mr. Milani stated that he believes the board is doing a disservice to the councils, to staff, to everyone. Mr. Smylie stated that because the County will only cover volunteers in some capacity on a case-by-case basis, the volunteers, if they can afford to, should be proactive and obtain their own insurance. Mr. Williams informed board members that the Law Office has agreed to meet with the councils in March, however, this does not negate the need to put things together and establish a set of guidelines.

Mr. Williams stated that there should be clear guidelines in regards to insurance liability and inquired as to whether or not the department has something they are to share with the recreation councils. Mr. Chrismer responded stating that the Law Office presented something early in Bob Barrett's tenure. Mr. Smith stated that volunteers have the understanding that if they are volunteering their time, they are covered. Mr. Smith further stated that small councils might not be able to afford their own policy to cover their volunteers. Mr. Williams suggested that Mr. Smith and Mr. Milani come up with questions regarding insurance and get these to Lisa Liupaeter.

In regards to honoring Helen Anderson, Mr. Brooks informed those in attendance that he spoke to Joyce Sparwasser in December. The board discussed this and took a vote.

Mr. Smylie stated that he has nothing to report on the football program complaint. Mr. Chrismer stated that the turf field at Lansdowne was offered and further stated that Steph Murphy would know the outcome. Mr. Smylie stated that he would call Ms. Murphy and report back to the board.

Mr. Brooks reported that the issue presented to the board by Theresa Webb has not been resolved. Mr. Brooks stated that a number of these children are now club players. Ms. Webb would like to come back, once again, before the board.

New Business:

Paul Muller, Mike Boyer and Ken West, attending on behalf of the Kingsville community, introduced themselves to the board. The gentlemen stated that they are here because they feel it is very important to come before the Board of Recreation and Parks. The gentlemen informed board members that Marty Stoelting told them that the board was a policy making group and thus, they are here before the board with a capital request. Their basketball programs have no ideal access to facilities. There are some elementary school facilities, which are sub standard to players past the 9/10 yr. old age group, and there is no middle or high school access. It has been this way for a very long time; the community needed a building before and they need one now. The gentlemen stated that they know it is a horrible time to ask for something like this but the community really needs this. The gentlemen further stated they regret not coming before the board 14 years ago.

Kingsville currently has ~250 boys and girls, and they cannot take any more. Furthermore, they do not have 13/14 yr. old boys in the program; they are sent to another area. The gentlemen stated that they do not want to turn children away due to lack of facilities; when funding is available, they would like to be first in line. The gentlemen also made mention that the Mt. Vista site could accommodate a building. Mr. Milani inquired as to whether or not this was on the capital wish list. Mr. Chrismer responded stating that he is not aware of this being on the list, but the department is aware of the need/desire of the community.

Mr. Muller stated that there was a community input meeting and Mr. Barrett attended. Mr. Muller stated that they would continue to attend meetings the board thinks they should attend and to tell whomever they need to about the needs of their community. Mr. Boyer stated that they appreciate the facilities they currently have but there has been a lot of growth in the area. Mr. Boyer stated that it is easy to keep volunteers when you give them facilities and times. Honeygo is nice but is shared with White Marsh, Kingsville and Perry Hall; this limits the programs they can offer. Kingsville currently has many young children in the program, which is wonderful, but as they move up in age they will need a facility to accommodate them.

Mr. West informed the board that they started with one softball field for many children; politicians got involved, and they got more. Now they have expanded beyond this. They had no gyms so there were no girls' basketball teams; the girls were playing with the boys' teams. They have tried to get times at Perry Hall High but have not been successful. Mr. Boyer pleaded to the board not to forget them and requested the board help them move forward.

Mr. Weber stated that Judy Sibol had come before the board regarding the needs of the community and Mr. Weber himself has been vocal in this matter. Mr. Weber stated that they need to look outside the box. Mr. Weber understands they cannot build a facility just because the community wants one. Mr. Weber suggested looking into facility usage. Mr. Milani questioned this statement by asking whether or not this was a staff issue. Mr. Chrismer responded stating that it is and there are policies staff is to follow.

Mr. Muller stated that Vincent Farm Elementary, in the Bengies-Chase area, has 30-40% of their attending population living within the Kingsville recreation area. This gym is fantastic; a middle school sized gym. Shawn Spole called the first year it was open, and they were given 5 nights in November/December and then nothing. In regards to facility usage, Mr. Milani stated that they should be working with Mr. Spole to find facilities to utilize in neighboring council districts. Mr. Muller stated that Mr. Spole has requested time at Vincent Farm Elementary again and was told no both last year and this year. With that said, Mr. Muller stated that the folks at Essex lost their building and were then able to utilize Vincent Farm Elementary; these folks have other facilities. Mr. Muller stated that he feels their community should be able to utilize Vincent Farm Elementary; 30-40% of the children attending this school are in their recreation council area.

Mr. Williams responded stating that he is committed to really looking into this; he really likes to find solutions. Mr. Williams stated that he understands the need for a facility but, given there is no funding available, Mr. Williams stated they should figure out alternate ways of accommodating their needs. Mr. Weber thanked the gentlemen for coming before the board and reiterated that he understands the needs of the community. Mr. Weber further stated that Mr. Spole is frustrated; he can only do so much. The gentlemen stated they would like to be granted use of facilities, including Vincent Farm Elementary. They further stated that when the boundaries were written back in the 50's, no one could imagine the growth that has happened, and maybe the boundaries don't provide sufficient use of facilities for today. Mr. West thanked the board for their time and further stated that they are not trying to take facilities away from others but are asking to be considered for use of those facilities that are available.

Mr. Muller stated that he believes there will be a building built in Kingsville and facility issues will be met sooner rather than later. Mr. Muller further stated that he has a meeting with Councilman Huff next week and has already spoken to Councilman Marks. Mr. Williams responded stating that he spoke to Councilman Huff and mentioned this issue. Mr. Williams stated that he is careful about promising things; when he does, he wants to make sure he can deliver. Mr. Williams stated that he believes they can come up with a solution, and he is committed to working towards this. Mr. Smith inquired as to whether there was any chance of contacting Harford County regarding facility use for Kingsville, Mr. Chrismer and Mr. Williams responded stating that we don't know unless we check.

Mr. Smith informed the board about a program in Reisterstown (Sacred Heart School) that has used Franklin High School for 20 years and was just informed that there has been a change in policy; since the program is not part of the recreation council, they can no longer use the high school facilities. Mr. Smith stated that he believes Steven Gravelle said this. Mr. Smith stated that the permit was run through the recreation council. Mr. Chrismer responded stating that we no longer put in permits for non-profit groups; they need to contact the school themselves. Mr. Milani mentioned St. Marks, and Mr. Chrismer stated that a group doesn't need to become a recreation council program to use the fields: As soon as the council's needs are met and the neighboring council's needs are met, and if field time is available, we will issue a permit. Mr. Milani responded stating that there was no extra time available so the group went through the recreation council to ensure use, now they have priority over neighboring councils. Mr. Smylie mentioned the baseball program at Liberty Road and stated that the affiliate was the only one who wanted to run the program; there are cases when affiliates are good. Mr. Smith ended the conversation by stating that some groups will not become part of a council.

Mr. Smylie distributed the map of the newly configured regions and discussion ensued.

Director's Comments:

Mr. Williams began by stating that this is his first board meeting with Recreation & Parks. Mr. Williams stated that he has had a chance to meet some of the board members but went on to introduce himself, providing some background and brief history and informed the board that he has a good understanding of the relationship between schools and Recreation & Parks. Mr. Williams further stated that he has seen in the last month that there are very smart, dedicated individuals within the department. Mr. Williams stated that he always asks whether or not things make sense to the Baltimore County community at large and encourages everyone to stay focused on that.

Mr. Williams suggested that the minutes get sent to all board members prior to the meeting; this would be a time saver.

Mr. Williams reported that he is still in listening mode, to see what is going on. Mr. Williams attended the recent workshop and stated that Mr. Weber did well. Mr. Williams stated councils should have audits conducted. It is costly to bring someone in however; it is not necessarily beneficial to perform this in house. This helps with transparency and provides good feedback.

Action:

Mike Milani motioned to name a field at North Point Village Park in honor of Helen Anderson, Jacob Smith seconded and all were in favor.

Dave Smylie, Dunbar Brooks and Mike Weber volunteered to work on information to present to the Law Office.

Adjournment:

There being no further business, Mr. Weber moved to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Smith seconded the motion, and all were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa Liupaeter