

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARKS

ERIC VAN DEN BEEMT, CHAIRMAN

Meeting Minutes

February 8, 2017

The regular monthly meeting of the Baltimore County Recreation and Parks Board was held on Wednesday, February 8, 2017, at 6:00 p.m. at the Department of Recreation and Parks administrative offices, Cockeysville, Maryland. In attendance were Eric van den Beemt, chairman; board members Mike Milani, Isaac Manjoe, Greg Heitner, Brian Weir, Chip Hiebler and Lexie Lieberman. Recreation and Parks department staff included Barry F. Williams, director; Behta Davis, chief, Recreation Services, Kris Mervine, regional coordinator, Region 2, and Michael Schneider, community outreach liaison.

Call to Order:

Chairman Eric van den Beemt called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Comments from Individual Citizens:

Lee Ann Sugarman and Bob Morrow came before the board to discuss the lack of 90' diamonds in the central region of Baltimore County. Ms. Sugarman stated that she is a parent, associated with both Carroll Manor and Cockeysville Recreation Councils. Mr. Morrow stated that he is a parent and a coach with the Cockeysville Recreation Council. Ms. Sugarman referenced the recent meeting held to discuss the lack of 90' diamonds in the area, and the number of children this impacts. She stated, that historically, this has been an issue. Kris Mervine replied stating that he was at the meeting, referenced by Ms. Sugarman, and reported on the discussion to convert two middle school diamonds: Hereford and Cockeysville. Hereford seems to be a viable option; however, there are numerous concerns regarding Cockeysville, which makes this site unfeasible. Mr. Mervine reported that they are looking into Campus Hills, Hydes Road and Sparks Parks, all of which are under consideration. Brief discussion ensued regarding the time of year to perform a diamond conversion. Ms. Sugarman inquired into why children are permitted to practice at Cockeysville MS, but due to safety concerns, the existing diamond cannot be converted to a 90' diamond. Behta Davis responded stating that Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) has a full explanation as to why this would not work. This information will be given to Bryan Sheppard to relay/distribute to those who attended the meeting. Ms. Davis stated that Dan Farlow and Matt Alsip were in attendance on behalf of all interested parties; they will obtain this information from Mr. Sheppard. Ms. Davis stated that there is a whole process for conversion, which would result with an estimated completion date. Mr. Morrow inquired about road blocks. Ms. Davis stated that the conversion has an effect on use of facilities. In addition, cost is another factor. Director Barry F. Williams discussed priority as a factor, and referenced what is currently the main priority for BCPS – air conditioning. Ms. Davis briefly discussed shared use of converted diamonds. She informed Ms. Sugarman and Mr. Morrow that they are on the right path, working with the council and identifying possible sites for the conversion. Ms. Sugarman and Mr. Morrow went on to discuss their lack of use of Dulaney HS, stating that they are only permitted to use the site on Sundays because of club team use. Ms. Davis replied stating that she would look into this and this issue would be addressed/resolved. Mr. Williams commented on the 2018 election of the Baltimore County Executive, and suggested getting on their schedule to find out what their intentions are with regard to recreation and parks. Ms. Davis stated that she would share the information regarding the Cockeysville MS conversion issue once she receives this from BCPS.

Mr. van den Beemt introduced Mr. Mervine to board members. Mr. Mervine stated that he has never heard complaints, regarding lack of 90' diamonds, from Cockeysville Recreation Council; the complaints are usually from Hereford Recreation Council. Brief discussion ensued.

Colleen Baugher from Back River Recreation Council was in attendance to observe. She briefly addressed the board, reporting on the council's elections, and inquired about term limits, particularly what would happen if running unopposed. Ms. Davis replied stating that this information should be in the council's by-laws.

Approval of Minutes:

Greg Heitner motioned to approve the January board meeting minutes, Chip Hiebler seconded, and all were in favor.

Board Member Activities:

Mr. Heitner reported that he received numerous calls regarding regional park permits. In addition, he inquired about Kingsville previously not having a lacrosse program, but now having one team. Mike Milani replied stating that it sounds like a club team looking for practice fields. Mr. Heitner agreed. Mr. Heitner then inquired about the policy for use of regional parks. Mr. Williams replied stating that we are enforcing department policy.

Brian Weir briefly discussed the suspension of the individual that sold Ravens tickets, stating that the council is still discussing legal charges against him. In addition, Mr. Weir discussed a situation where a parent is trying to obtain a refund, in the amount of \$800. He suggested she take this to small claims court, stating that the board cannot make a council issue a refund. There were several issues raised by the parent, regarding the chairperson of the program, who has several judgements against them (according to the Maryland Judiciary Case Search). With that said, this individual passed the background check as the judgements were civil, not criminal. Mr. Weir stated that he looked into the Gray Charles Recreation Council's Profit and Loss Statement and stated that the program is \$10,000 in the red. He spoke with the council president, who stated that he has no issues with the chair of the program. Mr. Weir reported that the parent plans to attend the Region 4 President's Meeting in an attempt to obtain a refund, and to discuss her concerns regarding the chair. Mr. Weir further discussed the refund request, and what the \$800 was used for (i.e. competitions, uniforms, etc.). On another note, Mr. Weir announced that Cliff O'Connell put the county on a 30-day notice, arguing that children should not be put out. Mr. Weir relayed that Mr. O'Connell stated that he is in favor of air conditioning in schools; however, this should not impact the use of facilities. He also reported that Mr. O'Connell plans to invoke motorcycle gangs to remove drug dealers. Brief discussion ensued.

Chairman's Report:

Mr. van den Beemt informed board members that he continues to receive emails from Rosemary Nicholas. She is asking the county executive, the county councilman and the board, to decertify the Friends of Benjamin Banneker Historical Park and Museum. Mr. van den Beemt stated that he thinks the council is digging a hole by not acting/running the council the way that they should. Mr. Williams reported that Cynthia deJesus held a conference call, instead of a meeting, which was also done last year due to inclement weather. However, this time it had nothing to do with the weather. Mr. Williams stated that Ms. deJesus should have provided Ms. Nicholas with the call-in number, further stating that this should have been published, but was not. Mr. Milani replied stating that he thought the council was told they could not hold a meeting via conference call. Mr. Williams stated that he is correct in his recollection. Mr. van den Beemt discussed various issues Ms. Nicholas referenced in her email. Mr. Milani stated that there are procedural things that the council should have done differently; however, this is not worthy of decertification. Mr. Williams suggested that Mr. Milani and Mr. Hiebler remind Ms. deJesus of proper operating procedures. Mr. Milani then inquired about their next council meeting.

Director's Comments:

Mr. Williams informed board members that the budget was submitted in January, and the Budget Message will take place in April. He noted that they made a number of capital requests. Brief discussion ensued.

Regarding Angel Park, Mr. Williams announced that it would be turned over once the comfort station is complete; the county has already taken over some of the maintenance. Discussion ensued. Mr. Heitner encouraged board members to visit the park, stating that the park is amazing!

Mr. Williams reported on the wonderful partnership with US Lacrosse. Ms. Davis relayed that the Hereford Recreation Council lacrosse program will be able to use the artificial turf field when it is not in use. She then discussed the Baltimore County Play Day, for children 12 and under. In addition, US Lacrosse will be sponsoring a new lacrosse program in all 9 PAL Centers, and those elementary and middle schools surrounding these sites. The high schools in Baltimore County will also be playing on this field. Ms. Davis told board members that they could host a meeting at this site; Mr. van den Beemt suggested the May meeting.

Old Business:

Lisa Winters provided an update on those councils who have submitted recertification paperwork, and those who have requested an extension. She will send this information to board members, in addition to the list of councils within each of their districts that have not yet complied. Board members plan to contact non-compliant councils within their representative districts, with the at-large members available to assist.

Board members inquired about the policy at Eastern Regional Park that prohibits children over 12 from using the facility. Mr. Williams and Ms. Davis are to get this information to the board.

New Business:

Mr. van den Beemt announced that the board needs to form a nominating committee. Mr. Milani volunteered to chair the committee and Isaac Manjoe offered to assist. Mr. van den Beemt agreed to chair the board for another year. He commented that it would be likely that the vice chair would be elected the following year.

The next meeting is typically the Annual Dinner Meeting with the County Council. The date is currently to be determined.

Adjournment:

There being no further business, Mr. Hiebler moved to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Milani seconded the motion, and all were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:13 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa Winters