

# BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARKS

CHUCK MUNZERT, CHAIRMAN

## Meeting Minutes

September 12, 2018

The regular monthly meeting of the Baltimore County Recreation and Parks Board was held on Wednesday, September 12, 2018, at 6:00 p.m., at the Cockeysville Community Center, Cockeysville, Maryland. In attendance were Chuck Munzert, chairman, Greg Heitner, vice chairman; board members Leslie Monfred, Eric van den Beemt, Isaac Manjoe, Skip Hammond and Chip Hiebler. Recreation and Parks department staff included Barry F. Williams, director, Bob Smith, chief, Recreation Services, and Chris McCollum, executive director, Agriculture, Nature & Special Facilities.

### Call to Order:

Chairman Chuck Munzert called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Director Barry F. Williams gave welcoming remarks, addressing the many in attendance regarding the Maryland Equine Resource Council (MERC) proposal. Mr. Williams reported on the format of the meeting, and when comments would be received.

### Approval of Minutes:

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

### New Business:

Jeffrey Budnitz came before the board to present the (MERC) proposal. Mr. Budnitz introduced himself as treasurer of the Lake Roland Nature Council, and founding member of the MERC. He introduced a few other MERC board members also in attendance. Mr. Budnitz began by stating that he wanted to reinforce the importance of the mission of agricultural education, and the Maryland Agricultural Resource Council (MARC) toward that educational end. He noted that nothing he has to say tonight has anything to do with affecting or lessening the importance, or the mission of agricultural education, or MARC, and stated that he is a longtime supporter of agricultural education. Mr. Budnitz stated that the mission of the MERC is only equine related. MARC declined being involved in any aspect of therapeutic equine, based at the Ag Center; therefore, Baltimore County needed a volunteer/donor group that would be interested in supporting this program. He referenced a \$1 million commitment by Baltimore County, in support of this program, with the remainder from donor contributions. He stated that Baltimore County is the governing body, and recreation/nature councils assist in the stewardship and mission of those sites in their capacity, as a support resource. This is how the MERC would operate. He mentioned the friction that seems to exist between the MARC board and Baltimore County Government, and stated that he believes the MARC is the contributing factor. He stated that this is a different approach than the MERC would take, stating that a separate council approach would be appropriate. Mr. Budnitz stated he does not want the MERC to be adversely affected by an approach that does not produce positive results. In the spring, he expressed his interest to the chair of the MARC, in forming the MERC [an equine based nature council, to support and raise funds for the equine therapy program], since the MARC had formally declined being involved with the therapeutic equine program. He said the chair stated they did not

believe equine should be at this site, and was opposed to the formation of a new council. Mr. Budnitz said he offered to meet with the chair and/or the MARC board, to further discuss this matter. He did not hear anything more until August, when he received a certified letter stating that the MARC was formally opposing the formation of a new nature council, but would be supportive of the MERC as a sub-committee of the MARC. Mr. Budnitz declined the offer, stating that he could not see this new organization being successful as a sub-committee of the MARC, since the MARC's heart is not in therapeutic equine. The MARC expressed concerns regarding site conflicts. Mr. Budnitz agreed to meet with the MARC to further discuss, and draft a document that would assist in any perceived area of overlap that may be of concern to the MARC. Mr. Budnitz then stated he was told that the MARC had obtained two attorneys to represent them. Mr. Budnitz stated that he believes the MERC can coexist with the MARC, as does a variety of other entities based at the Ag Center. Mr. Budnitz stated that members of the MERC include equestrian competitors, equestrian facility operators, equine ownership, equine rescue operators, and equine related marketing and fundraising. He discussed the therapeutic equine program and what it does for those with PTSD, stating that these individuals have found transformational relief through this program, and ultimately want to volunteer to make the program as successful as possible.

The floor was then open for discussion. Mr. Hiebler asked Mr. Budnitz about the equine group that is part of the MARC, and how the MERC would not compete with them. Mr. Budnitz stated that they would not compete, but rather be supportive. In addition, Mr. Hiebler asked what the MERC adds that the MARC does not. Mr. Budnitz stated that the MERC wants to raise money and fund housing for veterans to participate in the program. Isaac Manjoe inquired about the feedback from the community. Mr. Budnitz stated that there are people that are opposed, and people that are supportive, and stated that the board would hear from people in attendance this evening. Mr. Budnitz stated that the veteran community is supportive. He further stated that he wants to do whatever he can to make the program and the Ag Center successful. Skip Hammond discussed councils, and how they are there to serve the community. Mr. Budnitz stated that they support Saratoga Warhorse, not a separate program. He further stated that a nature council does not have boundaries like a recreation council. They serve all, not one community. Mr. Hiebler questioned what the downside would be of being a program of the existing council, versus their own council. Mr. Budnitz stated that the MARC did not want any involvement in the equine program. He stated that he believed it would be best to surround themselves with others that want this, further stating that the MARC's heart is not in this. With that said, Mr. Budnitz stated he is not comfortable being a sub-committee of the MARC. Leslie Monfred asked how Mr. Budnitz foresees the relationship with the MARC. He replied, stating that he is not worried about the relationship with the MARC. Mr. Hammond remarked, stating that the MERC is not providing an actual service, but supporting this service. Mr. Budnitz replied, stating that Mr. Hammond's comment is correct. Further discussion ensued. Mr. Hiebler asked about other equine groups/projects and questioned the fallout within Saratoga Warhorse. Mr. Budnitz stated that he is not focusing on the fallout within Saratoga Warhorse, but rather what is being done at the Ag Center. Mr. Budnitz stated that MERC is a non-profit, focusing on feeding and housing veterans when they are in town. They would continue towards, and raise money for this.

The meeting was then open to comments by those in attendance. Those choosing to comment were, primarily, either "for" the formation of the MERC, as a certified council, recognized by the Board of Recreation and Parks, or "against." Many in attendance opted not to speak. Please note that spelling of names may be incorrect:

Councilman Wade Kach – against  
Michael McCann – against  
Tom Whedbee – against  
Tom Burden – for  
Andy Gendron – against  
Wayne McGinnis – against

Gene Swackhammer – against  
Bob Stanhope – voiced to keep things transparent  
Katharine Patterson – against  
Devra Kitterman – against  
Chris Downs – attended in seek of information, concerned about transparency  
Ralph Brown – against  
Michael Harrison – against  
William Edelen – against

Mr. Williams announced that all written comments should be submitted to Lisa Winters, by October 3.

**Note: At 7:40 p.m., the board took a brief break to allow the public to exit. The meeting resumed at 7:50 p.m.**

### **Board Member Activities:**

Mr. Munzert reported on the concerns he received regarding the ceilings at Eastern Regional Park. He stated that the council wrote up reports regarding the ceilings that are coming down, and stated that they do not want to use these rooms. Bob Smith asked to have these concerns forwarded to him.

### **Director's Comments:**

Mr. Williams reported that Recreation and Parks is involved with Emergency Management situations. The department made boats available to the Fire Department, for the recent concern of a hurricane. In addition, during these situations, Recreation and Parks centers are open to assist folks.

Mr. Williams announced that Mike Schneider is no longer with the County. All board members had kind words to share about Mr. Schneider, and Mr. Williams stated that he would convey this to him.

### **Old Business:**

Mr. Munzert tabled Standard Operating Procedures for Recreation/Nature Councils, until next month.

Regarding Bengies-Chase Recreation Council concerns, Mr. Munzert reported that this has gone nowhere. He stated that there is enough evidence, and asked what was happening. Mr. Munzert stated that he and Mr. Smith have reached out to the State's Attorney. Mr. Williams replied, stating that he would look into this situation.

Mr. Hiebler informed board members that he reviewed the updated by-laws submitted by the Owings Mills Recreation Council, and confirmed that the changes, requested by the board, were made. See item under "Action."

Mr. Munzert requested that the Gray Charles Recreation Council agenda item be removed, stating that this has been taken care of.

Regarding the Owings Mills Recreation Council concerns, Mr. Williams stated that he would talk to Kara Burman tomorrow and report to Ms. Monfred.

Regarding the meeting with the State's Attorney, Mr. Williams stated that the board needs to determine when they would like to hold this meeting. Eric van den Beemt stated that he would like this meeting to take place

mid-November, between Election Day and Thanksgiving. Mr. Williams asked board members to decide where and when, and get back to him.

**New Business Continued:**

Mr. Heitner reported that he sent board members information from the skateboard group, for review. The group wanted to attend this meeting to present their proposal; however, Mr. Heitner asked them to attend the October meeting. Mr. Heitner stated that he has met with the group and they have done everything requested, over the past year. They are ready to make their presentation. Mr. Heitner reminded all to review the information, prior to the October meeting.

Regarding the MERC proposal, Mr. Williams asked board members to notify him, one week prior to the next meeting, if they wanted any more in person with the MERC, the MARC, Chris McCollum, etc. Board members expressed interest in touring the Ag Center and grounds. Ms. Winters will get a few dates from Mr. McCollum, and coordinate with board members. Mr. Hiebler asked whether there was an appeal process beyond this board; Mr. Williams replied, stating there was not. Mr. Manjoe inquired about whether or not there was a community meeting/discussion regarding the MERC, prior to now. Mr. McCollum replied, stating there was not. Brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Munzert tasked board members with reviewing council executive board member listings, concerning background checks. Ms. Winters has received some updates to the executive board lists. She will make these changes and forward the document to all board members.

**Action:**

Mr. Hiebler motioned to approve the revised constitution and by-laws submitted by the Owings Mills Recreation Council, Ms. Monfred seconded the motion and all were in favor.

**Adjournment:**

There being no further business, Mr. Heitner moved to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Hiebler seconded the motion, and all were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa Winters