

**RECREATION AND PARKS BOARD
OF ST. MARY'S COUNTY**

Meeting of Thursday, February 3, 2005

MINUTES

Board members present: Dr. Andrew Roper, Chairperson, Coleman Hillman, Vice-Chairperson, Sam Brown, Chris Brugman, Greg Hambright, and Robert Richardson.

Board members absent: Robert Harper, Dorothy Gass and Jody Payne.

Recreation, Parks and Community Services staff present: Phil Rollins, Director of Recreation, Parks & Community Services (RP&CS); Dave Woodcock and Bill Oosterink, from the St. Mary's Youth Soccer League; Barry Lewis and Ed Emery, from the Northern Soccer League; William Ball and David Guyther, Parks Division, RP&CS; Arthur Shepherd and Kenny Sothoron, Recreation Division, RP&CS; and Kathy Bailey, Recorder. Commissioner President Thomas McKay also attended the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

The Board meeting was called to order by Dr. Andrew Roper, Chairperson, at 5:30 P.M. in Room 14 of the Governmental Center in Leonardtown.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Robert Richardson motioned, seconded by Coleman Hillman, to approve the minutes of January 6, 2005. Motion carried 6-0.

ST. MARY'S COUNTY EMBRACING PROGRESS VIDEO

Chairperson Andrew Roper introduced Commissioner President Thomas McKay who was present to show the St. Mary's County Embracing Progress video to the Board. Commissioner McKay thanked Board members for their dedicated service to the County and for allowing him time on the agenda to show the Embracing Progress video. The video highlights the County's strengths and successes and is a great marketing tool for the County to help support the County's position with the upcoming Base Realignment and Closure Commission process.

ST. MARY'S YOUTH SOCCER LEAGUE (SOUTH SOCCER)

Mr. Rollins informed the Recreation and Parks Board (R&P) that youth sports leagues have been invited to make presentations to the Board over the next several months to highlight league accomplishments and challenges and to provide input to the Board on league operations.

Mr. Rollins introduced Dave Woodcock, President, and Bill Oosterink, Business Development Manger, from the St. Mary's Youth Soccer League. Mr. Woodcock reported that St. Mary's Youth Soccer is a non-profit volunteer organization providing soccer activities to approximately 1,500 youth in the southern portion of St. Mary's County. The recreational division enrolls approximately 1,200 players per season from age 4 through high school. The select travel division has about 300 players that participate in five leagues in the metropolitan Baltimore-Washington region. The "rec-plus" program provides an opportunity for higher level competitive soccer without the additional travel and cost associated with travel programs. The league maintains an interactive website with on-line registration. The new Kiddie Kick program is specifically designed to introduce the rudimentary skills of soccer to younger children. The league sponsors two annual tournaments – a recreational Maryland State Youth Soccer Association tournament and the Crabknocker tournament for the travel teams. The league has a nationally recognized referee mentoring program. Soccer enrollment across the country has grown over the past ten years; enrollment in the SMYS recreational program peaked in fall 2002 and has leveled off slightly. This can be attributed to the popularity of the travel program, some may be playing for the Northern Soccer League and other sports continue to expand.

Mr. Oosterink highlighted the following challenges for the league.

- The league would like more lighted fields (possibly light fields #2 and #4 at Chancellor's Run Regional Park as well as explore additional lighting at Lancaster and Dorsey parks).
- Availability of practice fields – (example: losing the Leonard Hall practice field put the league "in a bind").
- The fields at Hollywood Soccer Complex need to be taken out of play for a while and re-seeded to allow time for sufficient regrowth; the league would also like to see irrigation at this complex.
- Field maintenance in general – would like to see the irrigation systems at Lancaster and Chancellor's Run parks used more often. If paying the water bill is an issue, the league offered to share the cost of watering the soccer fields. He felt the league could assist more if needs were identified in advance.
- The league would like to continue to use Carver Recreation Center for FAST soccer.

Mr. Woodcock stated he feels the league has a wonderful relationship with RP&CS. They understand the Department's restrictions, both fiscally and with manpower. He stated the league's "goal has always been to continue to promote youth soccer, but even more, youth sports within St. Mary's County."

Sam Brown asked how large a practice field needs to be. Mr. Oosterink said that practice fields should be about 30' x 50'.

William Ball, Parks Manager, stated that the biggest issue is that fields need to be worked on in the spring and fall; unfortunately that's when soccer is played. He felt it would be beneficial if fields could be rotated out of play in order for proper maintenance to be done. Staff has sodded portions of fields to help with the problems (it costs approximately \$40,000 to sod an entire soccer field), but that is also expensive.

Greg Hambricht asked, from a business standpoint, what is needed. Mr. Oosterink stated that if the league had a plan of what was needed in advance to maintain the fields, then they could assist with additional financial support. Mr. Hambricht stated that he sees an opportunity here for a revenue stream to assist with the maintenance and long-range planning for facilities. Mr. Rollins stated that the Department is very open to meeting with the leagues to make the facilities the best they can be with available resources. He thanked the St. Mary's Soccer program for their dedication to providing a fine soccer program to the citizens of St. Mary's County.

NORTHERN SOCCER LEAGUE

Mr. Rollins introduced Barry Lewis, President, and Ed Emery, Vice-President, from the Northern Soccer League (NSL). Other NSL board members and parents also attended the meeting. Currently, the league uses the fields at Fifth District Park for all games (practices are held at Fifth District and at other park and school locations). The league has approximately 1,000 participants. Recent accomplishments include the implementation of a Friday night adult league, a high school league, a select league, and a four-year old instructional division. He noted overwhelming support from teens and young adults for the new leagues. Friday night and Saturday game day concession revenues enabled the league to light one field at Fifth District Park and they hope to light another field shortly. They have recently partnered with SMYSL for the adult league.

Mr. Lewis stated the league is very grateful for the new park at Chaptico. However, the league expressed concern with the following issues and concerns regarding moving their operation to the new park.

- Issue with the additional time it takes to drive from Fifth District Park to Chaptico Park (many players live in Golden Beach, Laurel Ridge and Charles County).
- Concern about travel on Route 236, "a winding two lane road that experiences heavy Amish buggy traffic on Saturday mornings."
- Convenience concerns with Board members needing to make multiple trips to the park during the course of the week and for game days; they won't be able to make as many trips due to the distance and overall service to the league will diminish.
- There are few stores and no restaurants in the area of the new park.
- The layout of the new park is quite long from end to end, making it difficult to get referees to games.
- The park will be locked at night; if patrons leave their cars at the park after games they will need to make

sure they come back for them before the park is locked for the night.

- The park is located in a remote area.

During upcoming registration, the league will solicit input from parents via a survey. The survey will ask if parents agree that NSL should move operations to Chaptico Park; if they are neither for or against moving to Chaptico Park or if they strongly disagree with moving to Chaptico Park. He indicated that most feedback received so far has been negative regarding the move to the new park; he feels membership may drop if the move occurs. Chris Brugman asked if the survey could have space available for patrons to indicate which community they live in. Mr. Lewis stated they will include that on the survey.

Mr. Rollins stated that he recently drove from the intersection of Route 5 and Route 236 to Chaptico Park via Route 236 and it took approximately 12 minutes (8.8 miles); he drove to the park via the alternate route, Mechanicsville/Chaptico Road, and it took him 13 minutes (10 miles). The league is concerned about the increased traffic on the rural roadways on Saturday mornings.

Chairman Roper stated that this is the first he's heard about these issues and he thought the league had requested the additional fields. Mr. Rollins stated that the league was not involved in the site selection of the new park. The Department did a master plan for Fifth District Park in the late 1990's which recommended park expansion and additional soccer fields. Three properties (two adjacent to the park) were appraised for possible acquisition; unfortunately the landowners weren't willing to sell for what the County could afford to pay. Also, other properties in Mechanicsville were explored as well as land at the County-owned Transfer Station as possible sites for a new park. In 1999, the BOCC was involved in the search for parkland in the northern end of the County and a site was identified in Chaptico. He noted the league did express support during a budget hearing in 2002 for the Chaptico Park Capital Project.

Mr. Richardson asked if it was possible to schedule a game weekend at the new park to see how people feel about using the new park. Mr. Lewis stated that was a good idea and the league will plan on doing that. Coleman Hillman asked how many participants live in Country Lakes; Mr. Lewis did not know at this time, but indicated the survey would provide that information. Mr. Hillman stated that the County has provided a beautiful new park and if the NSL chooses not to use it, then another league probably will. Mr. Rollins stated the Department will work with the league to help facilitate the move. The facility will be open for practice on March 1 and open for games on April 2.

Maggie Labaugh, NSL board member, stated that the new park is absolutely gorgeous but the distance is a problem for her. She works concessions has to get to the park early in the morning and is uncomfortable with the remote location.

Mr. Rollins informed those present that Fifth District Park plans have included construction of a new playground at the park for several years after the new soccer complex at Chaptico Park was completed. With Chaptico Park ready for use this spring, the playground was scheduled for construction. Recently, the Department has received several requests from the league and parents expressing concern about installation of the new playground near the picnic pavilion in an area that is currently used as a soccer field. He stated that staff is now proposing that the new playground be installed at Chaptico Park instead of Fifth District Park.

Chris Brugman motioned, seconded by Robert Richardson, to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners that the funds previously allocated for a new playground scheduled for construction at Fifth District Park be used instead to install a playground at Chaptico Park. Motion carried 6-0.

Mr. Rollins thanked the NSL board for their presentation and feedback.

US SOCCER FOUNDATION OPPORTUNITIES

Bill Oosterink made a short presentation to the Board regarding opportunities for partnerships and grants through the U.S. Soccer Foundation. The foundation offers a grant program, a Partners Discount Program field development initiative, a lighting finance program, and a 24-7 Turf Field building starter kit. Mr. Rollins noted that staff submitted a grant application in 2002 to the Foundation for irrigation of the fields at Chaptico Park; unfortunately, due to the large

number of nationwide applicants, the County did not receive the grant funds. Mr. Hambright recommended that Mr. Oosterink meet with staff from RP&CS to explore identification of a possible 24-7 Turf Field project site.

FY2006 RP&CS CAPITAL BUDGET

The discussion on the FY2006 RP&CS Capital Budget was deferred until next month.

OTHER BUSINESS

Three Notch Trail - The bid opening for construction of Phase I of the Three Notch Trail was held earlier today with four bids received for the project. Staff is now waiting for a letter of concurrence from SHA on the selection of the contractor for the project before official announcement of the award; this is required since the project received federal funding for construction. Phase I of the project should be completed by summer 2005.

SCHEDULING OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Recreation and Parks Board of St. Mary's County will be held at 5:30 P.M. on Thursday, March 3, 2005 in Room 14 of the Governmental Center in Leonardtown.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 P.M.

Kathy Bailey, Recorder

Minutes approved by the Recreation and Parks Board on March 3, 2005.