

**RECREATION AND PARKS BOARD
OF ST. MARY'S COUNTY
Meeting of Thursday, September 1, 2005**

MINUTES

Board members present: Andrew Roper, Chairperson, Coleman Hillman, Vice-Chairperson, Sam Brown, Patrick Dugan, Dorothy Gass, Robert Richardson, Jody Payne and Lisa Wainger Rush.

Board members absent: Robert Harper.

Recreation, Parks and Community Services staff and others present: Phil Rollins, Director, Recreation, Parks & Community Services (RP&CS), Arthur Shepherd, Recreation Division Manager, David Guyther, Parks Manager and Kathy Bailey, Recorder.

CALL TO ORDER

The Board meeting was called to order by Andrew Roper, Chairperson, at 5:35 p.m. in Room 14 of the Governmental Center in Leonardtown.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Sam Brown motioned, seconded by Dorothy Gass, to approve the minutes of July 7, 2005 and August 4, 2005. Motion carried.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW BOARD MEMBER

Director Phil Rollins introduced new Board member Patrick Dugan to the Board.

RECREATION DIVISION REPORT

Arthur Shepherd, Recreation Division Manager, provided an update on the following projects and programs for the Recreation Division.

- Program Guide – The RP&CS Program Guide of leisure classes, programs and events was recently advertised as an insert in the Enterprise newspaper, delivered to schools and libraries and was posted on the Department's website. Registration is now open; new offerings include a class on investment opportunities and parenting workshops.
- Fit for Life 8k Run/Walk and Fall Festival – The Department will sponsor an 8K Run/Walk as part of the "Fit for Life" Fall Festival to be held on Saturday, October 8, 2005 at the Governmental Center in Leonardtown. All proceeds from the 8K Run/Walk and the Fall Festival will go toward the Department's scholarship program. The program allows those experiencing financial difficulties the opportunity to participate in Department sponsored programs and activities.
- Great Mills Swimming Pool – The pool will be closed from September 6th through 18th to drain the water and do routine maintenance prior to refilling the pool and installing the bubble for the winter months.
- Sprayground – Party rentals are still going strong at the water sprayground.
- New Infant and Toddler Program – A new Infant and Toddler Program began at Hollywood Recreation Center on August 29, 2005. The program is a collaborative effort between the Department, St. Mary's County Public Schools and the Southern Maryland Child Care Resource Center. The program will serve fifteen children from 6 weeks to 3 years of age. The center will be open from 6:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- Amusement Park Tickets – Mr. Shepherd reported that Friday, September 2, 2005 is the last day to purchase amusement park tickets for this season.

- Summerstock Musical – Chairman Roper congratulated the Department on the very successful Summerstock production of Beauty and the Beast.
- Leonard Hall Recreation Center Ventilation Issue – This issue of ventilation problems at LHRC was discussed. Mr. Rollins stated the County has made improvements to the building over the years. In 1995 the Department requested funding to renovate the entire building, but that project was not funded. In 2000, a project to put in air conditioning in a couple of the offices and meeting rooms and to replace lighting was accomplished. Staff will talk to Building Services to consider alternatives for the ventilation project.

PARKS DIVISION UPDATE

Mr. Rollins introduced David Guyther as the new Parks Division Manager for the RP&CS Department. Mr. Guyther has 17 years of experience with the Department as a Supervisor and Foreman. He provided an update on park issues and challenges.

- One of the greatest difficulties facing the Parks Division at this time is recruiting and hiring qualified staff.
- The aging equipment fleet is also a problem. The four Parks Division trucks are 19, 17, 14 and 13 years old respectively; the tractors are aging also. Funding was allocated in the FY06 budget to purchase a new dump truck.
- Pavilion rentals are up significantly over last season. This is a challenge to staff in making sure the pavilions are ready for use and for clean up.

Coleman Hillman asked if volunteers and community service workers could help keep the parks clean. Mr. Guyther stated that the Division currently works with the R.S.V.P. (retirees) program and with the Detention Center for volunteers. Sometimes the volunteers work out well, but sometimes they do not. It was also suggested that staff explore the possibility of implementing an "Adopt a Park" program.

PROJECT UPDATES

Mr. Rollins provided a brief update on the following projects.

Draft Myrtle Point Park Master Plan Presentation – Mr. Rollins informed the Board that he and Sue Veith, Environmental Planner, with the Department of Land Use and Growth Management, presented the draft Myrtle Point Park draft master plan to the BOCC for consideration on August 23, 2005 and the BOCC expressed general support for the plan. One of the Commissioners asked staff to look into the feasibility of extending the gravel roadway system and adding parking further into the interior of the park to provide easier vehicular access for citizens wishing to use the beach area. Staff contacted Washington Gas regarding the possibility of extending the roadway along the 25 ft. wide utility corridor. Washington Gas indicated that the request may be permitted but they would need to view a site plan for the improvements before any decision could be made. There is also a C&P Telephone easement in the corridor that would need to be considered.

Chairman Roper stated that he was not in favor of extending the gravel roadway and felt that the park should be promoting walking for fitness. Mr. Hillman and Sam Brown also indicated that extending the roadway did not fit into the overall master plan for the park; the walk to the beach and the enjoyment of nature and the health and fitness it promotes is part of the beauty of the park.

Dudley Lindsey, a representative from the Friends of Myrtle Point Park, expressed concern for extending the gravel roadway nearer to the waterfront. She stated that visitors at Flag Ponds Nature Park in Calvert County have about a ½ mile walk to the beach and that wagons and carts work very well to transport picnic gear to the beach area. Mary Piotrowski, also a member of the Friends, commented that there are two beaches at Myrtle Point Park and one is more accessible for those not wishing to walk a long distance and for those with accessibility issues.

Sam Brown motioned, seconded by Patrick Dugan, not to recommend extending the gravel roadway to enhance beach access since it would not be compatible with the overall concept for the park master plan. Motion carried with all in favor.

Wildlife Management Agreement - Mr. Rollins informed the Board that the current Wildlife Management Agreement for

Myrtle Point Park between the BOCC and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has expired. Staff has proposed that the agreement be renewed in order that DNR may continue to manage and issue permits for duck hunting off shore of Myrtle Point Park. DNR also manages duck hunting off shore at several other public properties in St. Mary's County under the Managed Hunt Program; these properties include the Elms property and Point Lookout and Greenwell State Parks.

Under the terms of the Agreement, individuals are required to make reservations with DNR and get permits ahead of time. Hunting would be allowed on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, during the "third split" December – January, of the established waterfowl season.

It was recommended that signage should be placed at the park letting patrons know of the hunting arrangement. It was noted that school trips should not be scheduled on designated hunting days; Mr. Rollins stated that the schools may want to set a policy for that, though most outdoor field trips don't occur in the December-January time frame.

Sam Brown motioned, seconded by Jody Payne, to recommend that the County continue to partner with DNR to ensure that hunting off shore of Myrtle Point Park is managed in a fair and professional manner. Motion carried 7-1; Coleman Hillman was opposed.

Draft Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan - The plan is expected to be presented to the Planning Commission for endorsement on September 12, 2005 and will be presented to the BOCC early this fall. Once adopted, the LPPRP becomes part of the County's Comprehensive Plan.

Three Notch Trail - Phase I construction began the week of August 29th; staff expects that construction of Phase I will be completed by late fall. Phase I of the trail begins at Route 236 in New Market and proceeds approximately one mile north to the new Northern County Senior Center in Charlotte Hall. Phase two of the trail will begin at the new Northern County Senior Center in Charlotte Hall and proceed north to the St. Mary's County line for a distance of approximately two miles. The design and engineering for Phase II is currently underway.

Charlotte Hall Property Master Planning – The Board hosted a public input meeting at the Northern Senior Center on June 2, 2005 on the Charlotte Hall Property Master Plan with approximately 100 citizens in attendance. The two prevailing themes of the 25 speakers who addressed the R&P Board were the need for senior housing and need for additional recreation facilities (soccer fields, indoor recreation facility, pool, skatepark and additional recreational amenities in general) in the Charlotte Hall area. Mr. Rollins briefed the BOCC on the public input meeting on July 12, 2005. He specifically asked the BOCC for direction on the site concept and if they support senior housing and/or other amenities on the site. He explained that the existing forest conservation easement on the property may need to be relocated if the designated area is to be developed for uses other than passive recreation. He also made the BOCC aware that development of the balance of the property may require looking at an alternative traffic access off of Whalen Road.

The BOCC asked staff to look at all the County-owned properties in the Charlotte Hall area to see if some amenities could be located on other properties. He displayed a map of other County-owned properties in the Charlotte Hall area for the Board. Properties included the future Charlotte Hall Visitor's Center, Fifth District Park, convenience center/transfer center site, a small property just west of the Charlotte Hall Library and a small property just north of the library.

Mr. Rollins met with the Directors from the Departments of Land Use and Grown Management, Department of Aging and Public Works and Transportation to examine the possibilities for these properties. There have been discussions held over the years about options for the convenience center property which is adjacent to Lettie Dent School and Fifth District Park. Several years ago the property was examined for possible athletic practice areas and soccer fields, but was not pursued due to site limitations and other issues. There is the potential to use about ten acres of land at the site

for additional athletic practice areas. Parking and the distance to walk to the new fields would be an issue to address. A park and ride lot is now being constructed on a portion of the property.

Staff determined it was logical to consider senior housing for the Northern Senior Center property. Senior housing would not be feasible on the other County-owned properties in Charlotte Hall. Staff also determined it would be logical to keep the plan for an indoor recreation center and possibly a swimming pool on the site, while retaining as much of the natural area as possible. Staff plans to present information and ask for direction from the BOCC on the County-owned sites in Charlotte Hall sometime in October.

College of Southern Maryland Wellness Center Planning - Mr. Rollins informed the Board that he and Coleman Hillman have been attending the planning meetings for the College of Southern Maryland Wellness Center. The new Wellness Center is intended to include a swimming pool (including a therapeutic pool) and space for various wellness activities.

PUBLIC LANDINGS

Wicomico Shores Public Landing – A ribbon cutting ceremony for this project is scheduled for Tuesday, October 25th (the ceremony was rescheduled to November 1st due to inclement weather). Phase I involved marsh creation, revetment and the construction of a break water structure; phase II included dredging a channel to improve boating access; phase III included replacement of the boat ramp and step down pier; and phase IV included the replacement of most of the large fishing, crabbing and boating pier.

Forrest Landing – The improvement project to replace the boat ramp and install a new pier with ADA enhancements at Forest Landing is hoped to be completed in late fall. The floating pier has been backordered due to manufacturing problems.

OTHER BUSINESS

Alcohol Consumption Permits

Mr. Rollins informed the Board that applications for Alcohol Consumption Permits were received for the following:

- The Friends of the Museum Dinner Theatre fundraiser at Piney Point Lighthouse Museum Grounds to be held on September 9, 2005.
- The 7th District Optimist Club Blessing of the Fleet event to be held September 30 through October 2, 2005.

Sam Brown motioned, seconded by Patrick Dugan, to approve the Alcohol Consumption Permits.

PUNT, PASS AND KICK

Bob Richardson informed the Board that the local Punt, Pass and Kick competition was held on Saturday, September 10, 2005 at Fifth District Park. Approximately 70 young people participated in the event.

SCHEDULING OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Recreation and Parks Board of St. Mary's County will be held on Thursday, November 3, 2005, at 5:30 p.m., in Room 14 of the Governmental Center in Leonardtown. The October 2005 was cancelled.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Kathy Bailey, Recorder

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