

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

Meeting of Thursday, May 6, 2004

MINUTES

Board members present: Robert Harper, Chairperson; Coleman Hillman, Vice-Chairperson; Kaki Burruss, Jody Payne, Robert Richardson and Andrew Roper.

Board members absent: Greg Hambright, Sam Brown and Dorothy Gass.

Recreation and Parks' staff and others present: Phil Rollins, Director of Recreation, Parks & Community Services (RP&CS); Arthur Shepherd, Recreation Division Manager; and Kathy Bailey, Recorder. Also in attendance were Trude Kemp, St. Mary's Pigskin Football and Cheerleading; Gary Durdock, St. Mary's County Youth T-Ball League; and Megan Shelton, St. Mary's Youth Soccer League.

CALL TO ORDER

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Kaki Burruss motioned, seconded by Robert Richardson, to approve the minutes of March 4, 2004. Motion carried 6-0.

Kaki Burruss motioned, seconded by Robert Richardson, to approve the minutes of April 1, 2004. Motion carried 6-0.

Kaki Burruss thanked all the vendors who donated prizes and services for the Carver Recreation Center Grand Opening Ceremony; she won the JC Penney gift certificate.

SPRAYGROUND AT NICOLET PARK OPENING

Director Phil Rollins informed the Board that the Sprayground at Nicolet Park, an interactive water playground, will open within the next few weeks. He provided a handout on sprayground operations, hours, fees and rules. Proposed daily admission is \$1; individual season passes - \$20; and family season passes - \$50. The hours of operation will be noon until 6:00 P.M., seven days per week. The facility is designed for children ages 2 through 12.

Ms. Burruss indicated she thought the statement "Ages 8 and under must be accompanied/supervised by a parent or guardian at least 13 years of age" needs to be clarified regarding who is actually allowed to bring a child to the sprayground. Mr. Rollins stated that a friend, caregiver, neighbor, brother or sister may bring children to the facility in addition to parents. Staff will monitor the supervision of children at the facility. She also asked staff to consider allowing babysitters to be included as part of the family season pass.

Andrew Roper motioned, seconded by Kaki Burruss, to endorse the proposed operating procedures and fees for the Sprayground at Nicolet Park. Motion carried with all in favor.

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR – TYRONE HARRIS

Mr. Rollins announced to the Board that Tyrone Harris, Special Facilities Coordinator, was recently recognized by the Board of County Commissioners as County Employee of the Year. He was nominated by fellow employees and the nomination was evaluated by a panel who selected him for the award. Mr. Rollins congratulated Tyrone again on the

great job he does for the Department.

REVIEW OF DRAFT REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR INDOOR SPORTS FACILITY

Mr. Rollins informed the Board that the draft Request for Expression of Interest (REOI) was recently forwarded to the BOCC for review and will be formally presented on May 18, 2004. On February 17, 2003 the Board requested that staff prepare the REOI as a result of the RecPlex group's presentation and proposal to the BOCC to partner with the County to build an indoor recreation center. The BOCC would like to see if there are other groups that would be interested in providing a proposal for a similar facility.

The draft REIO outlines the intent of the solicitation, provides background information, lists the requirements for submission, and includes criteria that will be used to evaluate proposals. The REOI does not commit the County to selecting any proposals for further consideration or awarding a contract. The Department would like to advertise the REOI in the Enterprise, Washington Post and Baltimore Sun sometime next month.

Kaki Burruss motioned, seconded by Andrew Roper, to endorse the Draft Request for Expression of Interest for an indoor sports facility. Motioned carried 6-0.

FY2005 BUDGET UPDATE

Mr. Rollins informed the Board that the BOCC hosted a public hearing on April 27, 2004 on the FY05 Recommended Budget; Coleman Hillman attended the public hearing on behalf of the Board. Two citizens were present and informed the BOCC that the new Girls Lacrosse League has had more than double the anticipated first year participation. Finding practice areas has been a challenge for the new league; Kenny Sothoron, Sports Coordinator, has worked closely with the league to schedule practice and game fields. The group asked the BOCC to consider building designated girls lacrosse fields at Myrtle Point Park. Mr. Rollins believes that by working closely with the soccer programs, additional space can be found at existing parks and school facilities to address the leagues short term needs. In the long term, fields will need to be identified for this program.

Mr. Rollins reported that there have been no significant changes to the Operating or Capital Budgets as they pertain to the Department since last month's budget discussion.

DRAFT RAISING COMMUNITY STANDARDS IN YOUTH SPORTS INITIATIVE

Staff provided a PowerPoint presentation on the draft Raising Community Standards in Youth Sports Initiative. Mr. Rollins stated that over 30 million young people participate in youth sports today. Unfortunately, across the nation, reports of unsportsmanlike behavior and physical altercations have dramatically increased. Locally, St. Mary's County has approximately 10,350 youth participating annually in youth sports. The County has a very dedicated group of volunteers who do a good job of administering youth sports leagues. The Department wants to be proactive in minimizing negative behaviors of some participants, spectators and coaches.

The National Alliance for Youth Sports "Recommendations for Communities" were developed in 2001 as a result of outcomes from the National Summit on Raising Community Standards in Youth Sports. Recreation and youth sports professionals from around the nation, including St. Mary's County's Sports Coordinator, Kenny Sothoron, participated in the process. The recommendations are based on changing the culture of youth sports through reform, education and accountability. The key strategies for the program are: 1) communities should have a trained professional youth sports administrator; 2) communities should require training for league administrators, coaches and parents; and 3) communities should require an effective screening process for volunteers.

The planning process/timeline for the program:

- BOCC notified of the intent to develop a plan in December 2003.
- R&P endorsed the concept of the plan on 12/4/03.
- Staff held meetings with youth sports leagues on 1/13/04, 2/17/04 and 3/23/04 to present information and gather league input.
- Staff presented the draft plan to the BOCC on 4/27/04.

- Presentation to R&P Board tonight, 5/6/04, for comment and league input.
- Final draft plan anticipated to be forwarded to BOCC for consideration and possible action (and possibly a topic for the BOCC public forum of June 8, 2004).
- Draft target date for implementation – Fall 2004.

Current Standards - St. Mary's County Recreation, Parks and Community Services is currently responsible for providing general oversight, providing safe playing fields and offering NYSCA training. Leagues are responsible for securing liability insurance, implementing a fee reduction/waiver policy, requiring NYSCA or similar training, submitting league rules to the Department, accepting all participants, providing safe playing equipment, and ensuring that all coaches and volunteers refrain from using alcohol, tobacco and drugs during league play.

Proposed Initiative – Arthur Shepherd, Recreation Division Manager, briefed the Board on the Proposed Initiative and provided copies of draft forms which may be used to implement the program. Forms include User Group Application, Liability Waiver, Verification Acknowledgement, Crisis Intervention, Sale of Merchandise and Training Documentation forms (some are already required).

- Youth sports user group application – annual in Fall 2004
- Training – Administrators – NYSCA training; 2 per league in 2004
 - Coaches – NYSCA training (or equal); 2 per team in 2005
 - Parents – Sign Code of Ethics in Fall 2004
- Coaches' screening – MD State Sex Offenders Registry 2004/2005
 - Criminal background checks in 2006
- Smoking policy – prohibit smoking in parks within 150' of athletic fields beginning Fall 2004
- Crisis intervention plan – steps for minimizing violent behavior in parks in Fall 2004
- Liability insurance – required for all leagues by 2005

Program Costs – estimates based on a 40 team league with 500 participants; training & liability insurance only for leagues not currently providing that service.

- Coaches' training - \$28 per coach; 80 coaches (2 per team); \$2,240 or \$4.50 per participant.
- Coaches' screening - \$14 per coach; 80 coaches; \$1,120 or \$2.25 per participant.
- Liability insurance - \$70 per team; (only 2 leagues affected), \$2,800 or \$5.60 per participant.
- Administrator training - \$25 per administrator; (2 per league), \$50 or .10 ¢ per participant.

Implementing the Program

- Kenny Sothoron, Youth Sports Administrator
- Continue meeting with leagues
- Finalize application and guidelines for leagues that use County fields
- R&P Board endorsement of program
- Prepare draft resolution for adoption by BOCC
- Begin program in Fall 2004 and phase through 2006

Mr. Rollins noted that one issue that was expressed in meetings with leagues was that the County should cover some or all of the cost of implementing the program; Mr. Rollins stated that the BOCC is aware of this issue. The R&P Board could make a recommendation to the BOCC regarding funding for the initiative.

Robert Richardson asked how other counties fund their programs. Mr. Shepherd stated that Charles County tax dollars pay for background checks for the basketball program; for other sports, Charles County residents pay a franchise fee that helps subsidize the cost of background checks, field lining, park attendants, etc. Some of the leagues mentioned the issue of "too much government involvement;" one league had an issue with the name of the program, "Raising Community Standards in Youth Sports," since they are already doing some of the items proposed.

Staff and the R&P Board will review comparable training programs provided by the leagues. The Board will also review league facility and field use on an annual basis. Chairman Harper asked that the R&P Board be notified, along with the

Department and Sheriff's Office, when No Trespassing Notices are issued.

At this time the Chairman opened the floor to public comment.

Trude Kemp, St. Mary's Pigskin Football & Cheerleading - provided and read aloud a letter written by Don Kemp, President, St. Mary's Pigskin Football & Cheerleading, to the R&P Board. The letter is on file at the RP&CS main office. Ms. Kemp also read a letter from herself to the R&P Board. She stated that, "in theory, we are not against the Raising Community Standards program; however, we are against how the Department of Recreation and Parks is utilizing the program to mandate to the leagues." She also stated, "St. Mary's County does not have the problems that many inner city areas have, however, we must maintain the standards that we now have and safeguard against any negatives that may arise." Her letter is also on file with the RP&CS main office.

Gary Durdock, St. Mary's County Youth T-Ball League – Mr. Durdock stated the reality is the proposed costs will double t-ball fees. It's difficult to get parents to help out as it is; more requirements will make the administration of the program that much more difficult.

Megan Shelton, St. Mary's Youth Soccer League – She stated that if RP&CS is going to require the training and screening then the County should pay for it through tax dollars; that's their job. We are all volunteers in the organizations. She does not see the major problems experienced in more urban settings here in St. Mary's. If a league has a problem, it may be one person. If the Department is going to identify offenders, then all leagues should be made aware of that person's offense. Her league does have a parents' code of ethics.

Robert Richardson asked for clarification on the Management Plan, under the Communication heading, as it relates to the Sports Coordinator attending at least one meeting per league per season. Mr. Shepherd stated this means that Mr. Sothoron would attend at least one meeting to answer questions on training, field scheduling, or on any new park project and will solicit direct input from the leagues on the program and other issues.

Chairman Harper stated the proposed standards should also apply to other programs, such as gymnastics and swimming. He suggested that staff research the current standards of each league to determine if what they are currently doing is equivalent/comparable (parent code of ethics, training, etc.) He stated that some of the leagues are affiliated with national organizations which have high standards.

Mr. Rollins stated that part of the process in implementing the program would be to ask each of the leagues to provide the Department with their training program and staff would examine it and bring it to the R&P Board for consideration. The Department is not saying that because this is a good program that leagues have to do this program; other programs can be evaluated.

Andrew Roper stated that even though the feeling in the community might be that there aren't a lot of things happening here that need to be addressed, do you wait until something happens to implement the background checks? Until you implement the program, you don't really know what impact the program will have on participation. Mr. Rollins stated that it comes down to how comprehensive we want to be in checking backgrounds; do we just check the sex offender registry or do we conduct the full background check to list felons or others with possible backgrounds that we wouldn't want to have working with youth.

Mr. Shepherd noted that by implementing the program, the Department is looking at groups which may propose to use County facilities in years to come that should operate with high standards; the Department is not saying current leagues don't have those standards now.

Chairman Harper asked that in implementing this program, what is the extent of the Department's responsibility? Mr. Rollins stated that the program will clarify the Department's role; currently, there's no structure in place for RP&CS to ask the league to address a situation and resolve a problem. For this to happen, the BOCC would have to endorse the initiative and sign a resolution for the program.

Mr. Harper stated that, conceptually, he is in favor of the program; we need to conduct more analysis and do more homework. Mr. Rollins reiterated that the leagues are doing a great job and they spend a lot of time and effort in their

dedication to youth and the Department is willing to work with them to improve where needed.

PROJECT UPDATES

Chaptico Park – Most of the soccer complex has been constructed and seeded; however, some field construction is continuing. As two growing seasons are needed for the turf to be established on the fields, some of the soccer fields will be opened in spring 2005, while some will not be available until fall. The contractor continues to work on construction of the restroom building

Three Notch Trail – The Groundbreaking Ceremony for Phase I of the Three Notch Trail will be held on Tuesday, June 1 at 4:00, in Charlotte Hall, near the entrance to the Charlotte Hall Veteran's Home.

Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) – Mr. Rollins informed the Board that the process has begun to update the County's Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan. New policy directives from Governor Ehrlich and from the General Assembly regarding land conservation programs to protect the Chesapeake Bay Watershed have resulted in significantly revised state guidelines for counties' updated LPPRPs. In particular, the new guidelines place greater emphasis on a more integrated approach to open space, agricultural land preservation and natural resource preservation than in past plans. A kick-off meeting for the plan is scheduled for June 21, 2004, at 7:00 P.M. in the Central Hall at the Southern Maryland Higher Education Center in California.

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, July 1, 2004 in Room 14 of the Governmental Center in Leonardtown.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Kathy Bailey, Recorder

Minutes approved by the Recreation and Parks Board August 5, 2004.

A tape recording of the meeting is kept on file in the Recreation and Parks' office for one year.