

**RECREATION AND PARKS BOARD
OF ST. MARY'S COUNTY
Meeting of Thursday, July 6, 2006**

MINUTES

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

Board members absent: Jody Payne.

Recreation, Parks and Community Services staff and others present: Phil Rollins, Director, Recreation, Parks & Community Services (RP&CS); Arthur Shepherd, Recreation Division Manager; Katie Keen, Brian Abell and about 50 members/supporters of the St. Mary's County Tennis Association; Trude Kemp, Pigskin Football and Cheerleading, and several Pigskin Football supporters; Charles Pauley, 35th Infantry Division, 134th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Battalion "I" Company; 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 Robert Richardson, to approve the minutes of June 1, 2006. Motion carried with all in favor.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION REGARDING TENNIS FACILITY NEEDS

Mr. Rollins introduced Katie Keen, of the St. Mary's County Tennis Association (SMCTA), who presented the Association's report on tennis facility needs in St. Mary's County. The SMCTA was established in 1997 to develop the growth of tennis in St. Mary's County; the Association currently has a membership of about 365. They have strong partnerships with RP&CS, St. Mary's College of Maryland, St. Mary's County Board of Education and the Breton Bay Golf and Country Club.

Ms. Keen provided a presentation outline to the Board members. St. Mary's County has eleven parks with one or two tennis courts each, which meet the needs of unorganized tennis play. Since more organized play requires four or more courts at one site, some St. Mary's County players are traveling out of the County to play tennis. Local tennis programs managed by RP&CS and SMCTA have been held at high schools but they lack basic amenities such as restrooms, water, benches, shelter and spectator seating. They are used by the school varsity teams, which makes scheduling a problem in the spring and fall.

The SMCTA feels that the County needs a park with at least four courts to keep residents who play organized tennis in St. Mary's (Dorsey Park was studied as a site for the four courts, but due to the heavy use of the park and the topography of the land, that park was ruled out as a potential site for the additional courts). The project would be eligible for tennis court construction matching grants. The SMCTA strongly supports the County's Tennis Court Replacement Project, included in the Capital Improvement Program. The County is losing one tennis court at Wicomico Shores and two courts at Leonardtown Elementary School due to the school expansion.

Ms. Keen stated that there are several grants available for renovation, reconstruction and new construction of tennis courts and facilities.

- Grants are available for renovation (Fix-a-Court grant program) to repair cracks and to do basic resurfacing up to \$10,000 per year;

- Reconstruction or expansion of existing facilities, 25% matching funds are available if expanding an existing park site to at least four courts, for a total award of up to \$100,000 per year;
- New construction, 25% matching funds are available for projects providing four or more courts at one park site, for a total award of up to \$200,000 per year.

The SMCTA also described their envisioned seven-court Tennis Center project to the Board. They proposed a Tennis Center as a way for tennis to become a significant revenue producing sport and to provide expanded tennis opportunities for all ages. A Tennis Center would bring together players who are willing to pay fees to use the Center's courts. Suggested phases for the Center might be:

1. Seven or more outdoor courts at one park;
2. Facility enhancements to attract fee-paying users;
3. Lighting;
4. Enclosure of 3-4 courts with fabric & metal structure;
5. HVAC system; and
6. Opportunity for outdoor court expansion so the Tennis Center reaches 12 or more total courts.

SMCTA representatives will work closely with RP&CS to develop specific tennis plans and help prepare grant applications. The Association is dedicated to promoting tennis growth in St. Mary's County, particularly youth tennis. While they prefer a central location, they are willing to consider any sites that will accommodate the tennis center. Mr. Rollins stated that there are several park locations that can be explored for location of the tennis center.

Mr. Richardson asked if the requested seven courts would be permitted exclusively to the SMCTA or would they be open to the general public. Ms. Keen stated that would certainly be open to the general public.

Chairman Andy Roper asked if SMCTA's requests would result in additional County funding needed. Mr. Rollins stated that yes, the requested additional courts would need to be requested as part of the Department's capital program and be partially funded through grants.

Robert Harper stated that he believed the Board supports the basic concept of the proposal; Coleman Hillman stated he likes the SMCTC's vision and Chairman Roper wished the SMCTC success in the plan. Ms. Keen thanked the Board and the Department for giving them the opportunity to present their recommendations. She also thanked the tennis advocates who attended the meeting in support of SMCTA's recommendations. Mr. Rollins thanked Ms. Keen and Brian Abell, also of the Tennis Association, for all their work in putting together the presentation on tennis facility needs, grant information and recommendations for the future.

BOARD DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON IMPLEMENTING RAISING COMMUNITY STANDARDS IN YOUTH SPORTS INITIATIVE

Mr. Rollins reminded the Board that during the June Board meeting, staff presented information related to the implementation of the initiative, information on coaching disqualifiers, and expectations with regard to administrators, coaches, parents and spectators. The Board has been asked to take action on staff's plan for implementation and the list of disqualifiers.

The minimum standards proposed are:

- Two youth sports league administrators must be certified in the National Alliance for Youth Sports (NAYS) Administrator program;
- Head coaches and assistant coaches (2 per team) serving as coaches in a youth sports program must have RP&CS background checks and participate in a coaches training program;
- All parents must sign a Parental Pledge (code of ethics) prior to their child participating;
- Smoking will be limited to beyond 150' of playing fields.

Ms. Trude Kemp of the Pigskin Football and Cheerleading League attended the meeting to propose that the Pigskin League conduct their own background checks rather than have RP&CS conduct the background checks. Ms. Kemp provided several pages from the Pop Warner rule book outlining the background check requirements that the league must follow. She previously provided a letter to the Board outlining the league's position regarding background checks.

She stated that the league had been doing background checks prior to discussion of the Raising Community Standards in Youth Sports initiative. She stated that leagues with a national affiliation shouldn't need RP&CS to conduct their background checks.

Pop Warner requires that *all* volunteers have background checks, not only the head coach and one assistant coach. The league would sign an affidavit certifying the background checks were done in accordance with Pop Warner's standards. She stated that the league will issue ID cards once backgrounds have been checked. If they have coaches that are noncompliant, they will not coach. The league does not think it's financially prudent to duplicate background checks. She stated that compliance with Pop Warner is first and foremost and their second priority is to the privacy of the volunteers. They will gladly share the results of the background checks with RP&CS in a confidential manner.

Mr. Richardson asked if Pop Warner would accept the background checks conducted by the County. Ms. Kemp stated that Pop Warner has their own volunteer form that needs to be completed. If a disqualifier comes back, the organization that Pop Warner has contracted with will notify the league and the volunteer. The County would have a similar form, with much of the same information as the Pop Warner form. Ms. Kemp stated that she may need to keep two sets of forms - one for the County and one for Pop Warner. She doesn't know if Pop Warner will accept the County's background checks, but will check into that.

Mr. Rollins stated the Department's concern is with making an exception for one league and that the basis for the initiative is full accountability for all leagues. When the program was first discussed, the Department felt there was insufficient manpower to monitor the background checks portion of the initiative; since then BOCC has funded a position in FY07 to handle the administration of the program and that is no longer an issue. The BOCC also included \$15,000 in the FY07 budget for a scholarship fund for families that may not be able to pay the full cost of registration (it was anticipated that registration fees would increase if leagues had to pay for the background checks). After talking with the volunteer youth sports leagues, it was determined that most leagues already have scholarship programs. Staff plans to request approval to use the funds to pay for the background checks since most leagues have scholarship programs in place.

Mr. Shepherd stated that the Department has been doing background checks for about 15 years for all the enterprise fund full and part time employees; he doesn't recall any breaches in security of the information. They are handled in the main office and kept in a locked file cabinet, in a locked office.

A Pigskin Football League member asked what would happen if a coach resigned during the season and how long it would take to obtain a background check on a new coach. Mr. Shepherd stated that the background check results are received within 3-5 working days. Southeastern Security Consultants (SSC) will be doing the background checks for RP&CS. This is the same company which processes the background checks for St. Mary's County Government. If a background check comes back with a disqualifier, it will be reported to the coach and the league; individuals may appeal directly to the SSC.

Ms. Kemp shared the Department's concern over making exceptions to the rule, but stressed the need to keep the information secure that the volunteers provide. She indicated that she does not have total confidence that will happen with the County administering the program. She was also concerned that the County is only proposing to do background checks on two coaches per team.

She stated that she knows of at least five cases of County employees who have had background problems and they were allowed to coach or allowed to work with children. Mr. Harper asked if she reported those cases to the appropriate staff or authorities; she stated that she would report those types of things in the future.

For clarity, Mr. Harper recommended that the first page of the recommendations be changed from:

- The head coach and an assistant coach serving as coaches in a youth sports program must have a background check completed and also participate in a coaches training program, to
- The head coach and at least one assistant coach, if more than one coach is assigned to a team, must have a background check completed and also participate in a coaches training program.

A Pigskin Football League member asked if the program is implemented, would the County be responsible to police who

is on the sidelines. Mr. Rollins stated the Department still expects that the leagues will make sure that those who are not qualified do not coach.

Coleman Hillman motioned, seconded by Patrick Dugan, that the Board accept staff's recommendations for the Raising Community Standards in Youth Sports Initiative and recommend that the County conduct the background checks for the program. Bob Harper amended the motion to include the amended text recommended for page one, paragraph two, bullet two, to differentiate between the requirement for background checks for a single coach and multiple coaches when a team only has one coach. Motion carried with all in favor.

PROPOSAL FOR USE OF CHAPTICO PARK FOR WORLD WAR II RE-ENACTMENT

Mr. Rollins briefed the Board on the request from Charles Pauley of the 35th Infantry Division, 134th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Battalion "I" Company to use Chaptico Park for a WWII Re-enactment of the Normandy Break Out Battle. His Battalion is requesting use of the park from July 12-15th, 2007. He would prefer the fall season, but due to the heavy usage in the fall by youth soccer programs, this is not feasible.

The event, for the most part, would be private; however they would like to open it to the public on Saturday. The public would be invited to witness the battles as well as the encampments with guided security, which they would provide. They would have displays, vendors and a booth for local veterans. They would be bringing in armor for the show. He is hoping for 250 Allied soldiers and 250 Axis Resistance fighters and civilian WWII re-enactors. He feels this event would be a tourism draw and provide economic benefits to the County.

Mr. Rollins stated that after review of the Chaptico Park site plans, it was determined that most of the area the re-enactors would like to use is in the park's Forest Conservation Area. No vegetation, brush or trees can be destroyed in the area, therefore the park probably would not be suitable for an event of this size. There is also an issue with liability insurance for such an event. Mr. Rollins informed Mr. Pauley of these developments a few days ago. Mr. Rollins will talk to the County's property manager to determine if there is any other County property available for this event.

Lisa Rush asked if any live ordinance would be used during the event; Mr. Pauley stated that no live ordinance would be used for safety reasons; they use real rifles that have been modified with blanks. The vehicles and equipment include armored cars, jeeps, wagons, canons, and self-propelled guns.

Mr. Harper asked if he had explored having the event at Greenwell State Park or Harry Lundeberg Schools of Seamanship. Mr. Rollins stated the he talked to Robin Melton, Park Manager, at Point Lookout State Park, and she stated that state parks usually support re-enactment events if the engagement is related to the history of the park. Mr. Pauley stated there is some WWII history associated with Solomon's Island since it was a practice campaign site; WWII torpedoes were manufactured at Harry Lundeberg. A private landowner may also be willing to host the event; he provided his phone number and e-mail address in case a private landowner may be interested in contacting him.

PROJECT UPDATES

- Mechanicsville Volunteer Fire Department (MVFD) Request for Land Donation at Chaptico Park – Mr. Rollins informed the Board that he continues to have discussions with MVFD regarding their request for land at Chaptico Park for a substation. The Board previously sent a letter to the BOCC expressing concern with the request.
- Patuxent River Public Landing – Staff recently briefed the BOCC on the potential opportunity to purchase the Town Creek Marina property for a public landing. The BOCC decided not to pursue this property, primarily due financial constraints and the desire to examine some other possible acquisition projects.
- Hollywood Recreation Center Parking Improvements – Mr. Rollins informed the Board that the parking lot improvement project at the Hollywood Recreation Center is under construction and should be completed this summer.

Mr. Hillman stated that he attended the community CSAFE event at Nicolet Park; some attendees parked at Millison

Plaza since the park parking lot was full. He asked if additional parking is planned for Nicolet Park. Mr. Rollins stated that there are no current plans to expand parking at Nicolet Park. Originally, the main entrance to Nicolet Park was planned from FDR Boulevard; that didn't happen since that section of FDR Boulevard is a private road and the County would have had to upgrade the private road. A pedestrian access at FDR may be explored; staff needs to discuss this with Millison Development to see if the property owner is agreeable to having park patrons park in the private lot.

Dorothy Gass announced that she would be resigning for the Board as she has enlisted in the Army National Guard and needs to report for basic training at the end of August. The Board congratulated her and wished her well in future endeavors.

Mr. Rollins announced that the Department is planning to reschedule the Freedom Fest fireworks presentation since the event was rained out on July 4 and 5th. The public will be notified of the new date as soon as it is selected.

SCHEDULING OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the R&P Board of St. Mary's County will be held on Thursday, September 7, 2006 at 5:30 p.m., in Room 14 of the Governmental Center in Leonardtown.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Kathy Bailey, Recorder

Minutes approved by the Recreation and Parks Board on September 7, 2006.