

**RECREATION AND PARKS BOARD
OF ST. MARY'S COUNTY
Meeting of Monday, September 3, 2009**

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Patrick Dugan, Chairperson; Robert Richardson, Vice-Chairperson; Richard Buckler, Al Harrison, Sabrina Hecht, Robert Hicks, Thomas Nelson, David Phalen and Lisa Wainger-Rush

RECREATION AND PARKS STAFF AND OTHERS PRESENT: Phil Rollins, Director, Recreation and Parks (R&P); Arthur Shepherd, Recreation Division Manager; David Guyther, Parks Manager; and Kathy Bailey, Recorder. Patrick Murphy, Director of Southern Maryland Youth Football League (SMYFL); Chris Pixton, President, Pax River Raiders; Don and Trude Kemp, St. Mary's Pigskin; and three interested citizens.

CALL TO ORDER

The Board meeting was called to order by Patrick Dugan, Chairperson, at 5:30 p.m., in the Chesapeake Building.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Robert Hicks moved, seconded by Richard Buckler, to approve the minutes of August 3, 2009; motion carried 7-0 (Thomas Nelson abstained).

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Richard Buckler motioned, seconded by Lisa Wainger-Rush, to meet in Executive Session to discuss matters of property acquisition as provided for in Article 24, Section 4-210(a) 11. Motion carried 8-0.

Authority: Article 24, Sections 4-210(a) 11.

Time held: 5:35 p.m. – 5:55 p.m.

PARKS DIVISION REPORT

David Guyther, Parks Division Manager, provided an update on Parks Division projects.

- Cecil Park Tennis Courts – staff made some drainage improvements around the tennis courts at Cecil Park to alleviate some “bubbling” under the Premier court surfacing.
- Disc Golf Course – The disc golf course has been installed on the Lancaster Park south parcel. Disc golf is similar to regular golf, except it's played with Frisbee like discs.
- Lancaster Park Pathway – The pathway around the perimeter of Lancaster Park is nearly complete. One of the former “flat tops” homes on the Lancaster Park south parcel will be renovated for storage and restrooms; another home at the site could not be stabilized and a pavilion will be installed there. The Unified Committee for African American Contributions (UCAC) memorial for

Civil War veterans has been approved for the site. The UCAC will be doing fundraising for the project.

- Chancellor's Run Regional Park Playground – The installation of the new playground and picnic pavilion is now complete.
- Paul Ellis Landing – The pier replacement project at Paul Ellis public landing in Avenue is now complete.
- St. Inigoes Landing Repairs – The repairs at the St. Inigoes boat ramp have also been completed.
- Miscellaneous Repairs – Repairs and roof painting projects at various park restroom buildings have also been completed.
- Athletic Fields – Staff has prepped 22 athletic fields for fall use.

PROJECT UPDATES

- Budget Cuts – Due to the current fiscal situation, staff has been asked to trim funding from Departmental operating budgets. Staff is currently working to identify those reductions. Mr. Rollins will keep the Board informed on the situation.
- Three Notch Trail Phase V - Design and engineering for the project is now complete. The Department is working to address comments from the State Highway Administration to obtain approval to advertise the project. This is needed as the County plans to utilize federal Transportation Enhancement Program funds to assist with construction of the project. It is anticipated the project will be under construction next spring.
- Charlotte Hall Athletic Fields – It is anticipated that the contract for design and engineering for the three additional practice fields will be awarded in the next few weeks.
- Carver Heights Community Park – The new playground should be installed this fall. Minor improvements to the parking lot and walkways will also be done this fall.

RECREATION DIVISION REPORT

Arthur Shepherd, Recreation Division Manager, provided an update on Recreation Division activities, programs and events.

- Carver After School Program – The after school program at Carver Recreation Center is scheduled to open on September 28, 2009 for youth in the Lexington Park area. This program is being offered in cooperation with SMC Public Schools, Recreation and Parks and the 21st Century grant program.
- Great Mills Swimming Pool – Total attendance for August was 3,445; the daily average was 119. July 2009 experienced the highest attendance numbers on record for the pool. The pool bubble will be re-installed on Saturday, September 12th.
- Gymnastics Center – Total registrants for this session's recreational program is 419. To date, the total number of gymnasts on the competitive team is 61; last year this time saw 51.

- Before and After School Centers – On August 26th 9 B/A programs opened. Current enrollment for the 2009-2010 school year is 162 participants, which is down 54 from the close of the previous school year in June 2009. This is also down 40 from the start of the last school year in August 2008. Mr. Shepherd attributed the enrollment decrease to the current economic conditions.
- Community Standards Program – Staff continues to post all certified coaches on the County’s website. Some leagues have included the Community Standards link on their websites.
- Fall Festival – Planning continues for the Fall Family Fitness Festival scheduled for October 24th at the Leonard Hall Recreation Center. Activities planned include wellness walks, children’s races, golf lessons, fitness courses, goal kicks, basketball shoot outs, amusement rides, free health and wellness screening, flu shots and more.
- Information Technology – Staff is working with the County’s IT Department and software supplier to enable citizens to register on-line for programs this winter. Citizens can sign up for e-mail lists and can soon enroll for automated text messages when programs are cancelled.

YOUTH FOOTBALL UPDATE

Director Phil Rollins provided a Power Point overview of the current situation with youth football in St. Mary’s County and Recreation and Parks’ recommendation for the future. Highlights of the presentation included:

<u>St. Mary’s Pigskin</u>	Not operating for 2009 Season
<u>Pax River Raiders</u> (Participates in Calvert County P&R Football League)	18 Teams/365 Players (+100 Flag Football) 100 Cheerleaders
<u>SMYFL</u>	27 Teams/580 Players 125 Cheerleaders

The total number of players in the two programs for 2009 is 945; total number of cheerleaders is 225. By comparison, in 2008 Pigskin Football had 920 players and Pax River Raiders had 260 players for a total of 1,180 players. That is a drop off of 235 players which is about 25%. In 2008, there were 312 cheerleaders in both programs and in 2009 225; a drop off of about 40% (87 fewer participants). The decrease in numbers may be related the confusion with football management in the County.

Southern Maryland Youth Football League (SMYFL) – 27 Teams

	Mech. Braves	Hollywood Raiders	Lex. Park Hornets	Total Teams
Age/Weight/League				
Ankle Biters (5/7 yrs.)	4	2	2	8
70 lbs. (7/9 yrs.)	3	1	1	5
80 lbs. (8/11 yrs.)	3	2	1	6

90 lbs. (9/12 yrs.)	2	1	1	4
100 lbs.(10/13 yrs.)	-	-	-	-
JV 120 lbs. (11/14)	2	-	1	3
Varsity (6-8grade; 14 max.)	1	-	-	1
TOTAL	15	6	6	27

Pax River Raiders – 18 Teams

Pee Wee	3 teams
70 lbs.	3 teams
80 lbs.	4 teams
90 lbs.	3 teams
100 lbs.	2 teams
120 lbs.	2 teams
Unlimited	1 team

Why R&P Involvement? To unify youth football in St. Mary’s County; provide impartial; league administration; stability; and accountability. R&P currently administers youth basketball, roller hockey, indoor soccer and lacrosse. Outdoor sports are administered by volunteer youth sports leagues. R&P provides safe playing fields and administers the Community Standards program (training and background checks). R&P staff feels it would benefit the youth of St. Mary’s County to have one unified football program. This would enable more teams to play each other and not have to travel outside of the County for the recreational program.

R&P Staff Recommendation for Youth Football Administration is the Club Model Community based non-profit, youth football organizations would be established to register players, create teams, fund raise, purchase equipment and enter teams into age and weight divisions of a countywide league that is administered by R&P. The new Board of Directors would consist of the league administrator (R&P) and Board members (presidents of each club).

Organizing a Club

- Apply in writing to Recreation and Parks
- Provide proof of establishment
- Register a minimum of three teams at lowest consecutive weight classes (not including Flag)
- Submit a monetary deposit that will be credited toward league fees
- Identify uniform colors

Club Responsibilities

- Advertise club registration and activities
- Register participants
- Purchase appropriate safety certified equipment and supplies
- Submit league fees (for game officials, hourly part-time staff, field lights, field markers & other incidental costs)
- Recruit volunteers
- Schedule team practices on assigned fields
- Abide by youth football league rules and regulations

Recreation and Parks Responsibilities

- R&P will provide oversight for football operations as League Director. With input from the League's Board of Directors, make decisions on all matters concerning participant safety, league policy, rules and regulations, and the welfare and integrity of the league.
- Preside over all meetings of the League Board of Directors (Presidents of each Club).
- Establish and collect fees for league operations (game officials, field lights, field markers, other incidental costs).
- Assign practice and game sites
- Administer player weigh-ins
- Provide a league game schedule
- Contract game officials
- Oversee league activities at County parks
- Continue to manage Community Standards program (coaches training, background checks, parent training and code of ethics)
- Mark game fields

Issues to be Addressed

1. Ownership of League Equipment

- To qualify to utilize County fields, youth sports league equipment must be the property of the Club and not an individual or sole proprietor. R&P staff feels it can be an unhealthy situation if one individual owns a league.
- Prior to receiving field use permits every league must verify that equipment is owned by the league and that no individual is receiving monetary compensation for their involvement in administering the league.
- All leagues shall include in their bylaws a statement that says upon dissolution of the league or youth sports organization all league equipment and assets shall become public property.

2. Creating geographic boundaries for participation in the club model

- R&P staff will work with football league leaders and volunteers to establish appropriate boundaries
- Option #1 – Participants must register with the club that serves their community.
- Option #2 – Participants may register with any club they choose but recruiting by coaches, parents, or anyone else associated with the club is a violation and disciplinary action will be taken.

3. Flag Football Operations

- If interested in participating in Flag Football, club will be responsible for registering and entering teams into a fall and spring league, also administered by R&P.

4. Raising Community Standards Program

- Require all coaches in all leagues to be certified by R&P, including coaches training and background checks (County pays for 2 coaches per team).

- League or coach would have to pay for training and background checks above 2 coaches/team.

Al Harrison asked if there would be increased costs to leagues for R&P administration; Mr. Rollins stated that costs shouldn't be anymore than they are now; however, if leagues are unable to have volunteers supervise game day activities, then R&P hourly staff may need to do that. Dick Buckler asked about the additional R&P staff time needed to administer the program; Mr. Rollins stated that the current Sports Coordinator should be able to handle the increased duties. He currently administers several sports programs and the Community Standards program.

Mr. Hicks stated that the club model should enhance opportunities for kids in the County to play other kids in St. Mary's. R&P would support a plan where Pax River Raiders and SMYFL came together to offer one combined program to citizens.

Mr. Don Kemp, the previous President of Pigskin Football, stated that R&P made a proposal a few years ago to administer youth football. Pigskin Football did not support the idea at that time; however, he does support the plan now. He and his wife Trude have been with Pigskin Football for about 23 years. Among other points, he noted that you may have great volunteers today, but they can be gone tomorrow. He stated the County should manage the program and oversee the weigh ins and other activities. Trude Kemp also expressed support for the club model and agreed that County oversight would benefit the children.

Pat Murphy, Director of SMYFL, stated the bottom line is there are currently two great football programs in the County and in fact, SMYFL and the Pax River Raiders have scheduled games against each other this season. He stated that SMYFL has enough teams to play in County for kids under 90 lbs. He stated there has been a considerable amount and time and money invested in these leagues and feels taxpayers should be concerned that the County has enough time to take over such operations. He stated that he works on league business about twelve hours per day. He also disputed the fact that participation numbers are down from last year; he stated the numbers are actually up about 12% from last year. He stated the County's proposal has many unanswered questions. He stated that both he and Chris Pixton have asked that a staff person from R&P be involved on their Boards; they were told that would be a conflict of interest.

Mr. Murphy stated that both the Pax River Raiders and SMYFL grew out of Pigskin because people wanted something different. He didn't feel that the Pigskin organization could be changed because of the name associated with it.

Sabrina Hecht asked Mr. Murphy to clarify his statement about working twelve hours per day on league business and "is this his regular job?" Mr. Murphy stated this is not his regular job. Time on league business varies, but mostly consists of work from 3:00 pm – 10:00 pm, and all day on Saturday and Sunday. Mr. Hicks asked about the SMYFL registration fee; Mr. Murphy stated that the beginning rate was \$50 with no fundraisers; they sponsored approximately 90 needy kids. The current rate is \$150 per child. Universal Sports donated 400 sets of gear. Mr. Nelson asked if there are other costs involved for the families; Mr. Murphy stated there are no other costs.

Chris Pixton stated the Pax River Raiders, who play games in Calvert and St. Mary's County, has been in operation for approximately four years. He stated that he feels that Calvert County has welcomed them with open arms and he thinks it's wrong to propose they come back to St. Mary's County. He thought it was odd that a gentleman who sells football equipment is pushing for the County to take over youth football. He asked when the County would take over lacrosse, baseball and soccer? He didn't support the management of the County's basketball program. He stated that Pax River Raiders are a family organization. He also stated the participation numbers from last year were incorrect.

He does not support the County managed club model. He stated the he proposed this model about four years ago. He asked R&P staff if the two current programs will be allowed to continue to use County fields. The league is prepared to play on private fields if necessary. He stated that the Pax River Raiders will work with SMYFL. He blames Recreation and Parks for allowing Pigskin Football to continue for so many years. Four years ago the County had a chance to make the change, but didn't. He stated that he put \$50,000 of his own funds into the program and let kids play for free.

Ms. Hecht asked him to explain playing in Calvert County. Pax River Raiders are a club in the Calvert County league. Games are played in Calvert and at Lancaster Park. He stated that his organization is not interested in donating their equipment to R&P. He stated that Tyrone Harris has been great to work with in scheduling fields.

Mr. Murphy stated that what the County should do is revise the policy and procedures manual if needed and not propose the club model. Mr. Hicks asked how they feel about having all the coaches undergo background checks. Mr. Pixton stated that Pax River Raiders are doing that now as Calvert County requires all the coaches to have background checks. He didn't understand weighing in before each game as weight sometimes varies.

Lisa Wainger-Rush asked how often the teams play each other; Mr. Pixton stated that they play teams in Calvert County, so they only play each other one time. Calvert County prepares the schedules.

A grandparent asked "what number constitutes a team?" His grandson plays with Pax River Raiders and he doesn't think you can have a decent practice with the current number of players on teams. He thinks that recruitment will happen no matter what you do. He thinks officiating has improved over last year. He asked if parents can get a copy of the rule book; Mr. Pixton stated the rules are on the website. He thinks R&P should be involved on an advisory level, the leagues should be the authority.

Jeff Tidings stated that he was disappointed by the citizen turnout tonight. He has two children in SMYFL, and everything seems to be doing well. He did not express a preference for the management of football, but did say that if more on the history of the football situation was "out there" people would understand why there are now two football leagues. He noted that soccer and baseball seem to be working in the County. For whatever reason, this doesn't seem to work for youth football. What happens if Pigskin comes back next year? There has been enough turmoil and we could be back here next year discussing the club model again. It will be frustrating trying to figure out

which of the three leagues to sign up for. It's frustrating as a parent to hear Pax River Raiders say the club model works in Calvert but can't work in St. Mary's. He doesn't think there are enough kids to have two or more football leagues in St. Mary's County. He thinks the recreational leagues should be feeders to the high schools. He understands the leagues' positions; however, the situation is very frustrating for parents. For whatever reason, football seems to need "adult supervision."

Mr. Kemp stated that Mr. Tidings made the point that he was trying to make. Some years you have great volunteers and some years you don't. He stated that "it's imperative that the Board support the R&P recommendation for the Club Model in St. Mary's County. You have to do what's right for the kids."

Patrick Dugan asked what the leagues would do if the current administration leaves (job transfers, resignation, etc.)? Mr. Pixton stated that the Pax River Raiders have Board members that can take over the operation. He stated the equipment stays here. Patrick Murphy agreed; the league is run by a Board of Directors and the equipment would stay with the league.

He recommended that the Board view the NYSCA training video for football and determine if that prepares you to become a coach. Also, there should be a policy in place when someone wants to start a new league and use County fields. (Note: there is a current R&P policy in place for this).

Michelle Stratton, a parent in SMYFL, stated "why do people think St. Mary's County kids need to play only St. Mary's kids?" How are our kids going to compete with other counties when they get to high school if they don't play kids from other counties now? We need our middle school kids to play other kids in other programs. She doesn't think the government should be involved in youth football.

David Phalen asked Mr. Rollins to explain the County's proposal for youth football four years ago. Mr. Rollins stated that R&P proposed the club model four years ago in response to public outrage after a "brawl" that occurred during a Pigskin game. The general public has the perception that the County has oversight of programs when they use County facilities. After considerable discussion, the BOCC decided not to change the way youth football was administered at that time.

Mr. Rollins stated that a lot of the information presented tonight was inaccurate and staff will respond to that at a later date. The Department's goal has always been to have a unified football program in St. Mary's County. He commended the volunteers for the job they do; however he agreed with Mr. Tidings' comments on the frustration of having more than one football program in the County.

Ms. Wainger-Rush recommended that the Board table the matter of youth football administration until the Board can have a more thorough discussion on this.

OTHER BUSINESS

Director Phil Rollins presented a request for an Alcohol Consumption Permit from the Seventh District Optimist Club for the upcoming annual Blessing of the Fleet events to

be held October 2, 3 & 4 at the St. Clement's Island Museum site. Mr. Nelson asked if there have ever been any issues with these requests; Mr. Rollins stated there have not.

David Phalen moved, seconded by Robert Hicks, to approve the Alcohol Consumption Permit for the Seventh District Optimist Club's Blessing of the Fleet activities. Motion carried with all in favor.

SCHEDULING OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Recreation and Parks Board is scheduled for Thursday, October 1, 2009 at 5:30 p.m., in the Chesapeake Building in Leonardtown.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Kathy Bailey, Recorder

Minutes approved by the Recreation and Parks Board on October 1, 2009.