

Recreation Advisory Commission
December 9, 2020

Call To Order:

A meeting of the Durham Recreation Advisory Commission was held on this day via video conference. Commissioners present via video conference: December 9, 2020. Councilmember Pierce Freelon was present. Commissioner White and Commissioner Stracks-Mullem were unexcused absences. After some technical difficulties, Chair Fellerath called the meeting to order at 7:41am. Attendance was confirmed by roll call.

Adjustments to the Agenda:

- Chairperson Fellerath offered a formal welcome to Councilmember Freelon as the new RAC City Council liaison. Councilmember Freelon introduced himself and gave background information on his personal history as a Durham native. He stated that he was looking forward to being a part of the RAC.
- Chairperson Fellerath requested to move **Item VII. Parks and Recreation Department Presentation Series – History 101/Overview** to the January 2021 RAC meeting – feedback or concerns.
- Chairperson Fellerath requested to remove **Item IX. Commissioner Comments & Committee Reports** from the agenda – feedback or concerns.

Approval of Minutes:

Marcella made a motion to approve the November 12, 2020 meeting minutes; seconded by Rebecca; *no further changes, whereupon motion duly made, seconded and unanimously adopted*, the minutes were approved as presented.

Public Comment:

Sam Jackson – an avid soccer player and long standing resident of East Durham

- Mr. Jackson expressed his concerns with the high volume of traffic that the Hoover Rd. Park project will bring and the need for more open communication moving forward.
- Fellerath: thanked Mr. Jackson for his input.

Bonita Green – President of the Merrick-Moore Community Club

- Ms. Green shared her concerns about the plans to move forward with a park on Hoover Rd. She has many questions about the proposed plans for the park as well as the lack of community engagement in the process.
- Fellerath thanked her for her comments and concerns about engagement.

Jock and Erica – South Durham Residents

- As advocates for positive recreation, both Erica & Jock spoke in support of Wheels and their desire for the city to maintain and operate the skating rink.
- Fellerath thanked them for sharing their comments and feedback.

Public Comment Q & A:

- There was some discussion among RAC members with the lack of community engagement in this process, while continuing to move forward with this project.
- Walcutt assured everyone, moving forward, that his expectations are to focus on an open transparent process with the Wheels acquisition.

RAC Reporting Items:

None

RAC Action Items – Fee Waiver Requests (Rich Hahn)

Rich recommended approval by consent unless there was discussion about the fee waiver organizations or questions about recommendations made by staff. Rebecca made a motion to accept all fee waivers as recommended by staff; seconded by Cedric. All in favor, motion passes unanimously.

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Event Recreation Programs

Facility Request Sherwood Park

Dates January 2021

Fee waiver application approved by consent at 50%

New Business:

None

Old Business:

Hoover Road Park Presentation – Tom Dawson, Asst. Director of DPR

- Hoover Road Facilities Planning Presentation
 - The presentation focused on the Hoover Rd. Park containing the multi-use athletic fields, while providing an overview of the park planning process, connection to the Comprehensive Plan, community engagement, the demand for additional facilities and next steps.
 - Other highlights included:
 - Demonstrated connection (physical and programmatic) opportunities between Twin Lakes Park, the soon to be acquired Wheels property and the department's comprehensive aquatic's plan.
 - A brief overview was provided on the intent of the Wheels acquisition; which, is to follow the comprehensive aquatics plan and use the space to build a public aquatic facility for the community.
 - Emphasis was placed on the need for greater and more frequent community inclusion and engagement for any future planning / development of the properties presented.
 - Residents will drive the design and/or selection of the playground, colors of the park, public art and other elements as budget permits.
 - Additional next steps for the former Wheels property development will be provided at a future commission meeting; however, in general will include gathering public input, developing a design for the aquatic facility while simultaneously exploring the potential of retaining existing facilities and elements on the property.

Questions/Comments to Tom Dawson regarding Hoover Road Park Presentation

- RAC members shared their feedback and ideas with staff.

- Councilmember Freelon shared his thoughts on public engagement and his desire for a broader opportunity in which residents can participate in the planning process.
- Tom Dawson provided some back ground history on the project. He pointed out that this project was unanimously approved and identified as a priority by City Council. The soccer fields were a City Council driven priority.
- There was additional discussion on the importance of stepping up our community engagement efforts and awareness.

Director's Report:

Wade Walcutt

- A copy of the director's report was included in each RAC packet that members received. Upon your review, send Wade any questions you may have regarding its content.
- Wade pointed out that most of the concerns we've received are relating to the engagement process. He recognized that everyone can take some ownership about the need to strengthen community engagement including parks and recreation. In his findings; it appears dialogue occurred early on; however, there likely should have been more updates and touch points along the way and prior to the ground breaking. Part of his vision moving forward will include making recommendations to improve this process.
- Wade stated the City has been intentional in developing an equitable engagement process to include multiple departments. He understands the need to avoid gentrification and this is an opportunity to make these changes and have these discussions through community engagements.
- Wade recognized Jason Jones, Lauren McKinnis, and Kelly Miller who participated as education presenters during our North Carolina Recreation Parks Association statewide conference which had taken place virtually.
- He pointed out that DPR staff has come up with many creative virtual activities, such as: a drive through giveaway; laser light shows; and drive-in movies.
- Wade highlighted the 2020 Remote Learning Site Grant Project. This program is designed for children that need access to technology for online schools. Kids can sign-up at a recreation center to be guided by DPR staff. It is an all-day program and they can stay as late as 6PM. He is most proud of the grant secured by staff to cover related expenses to run this program.

Q&A:

- Fellerath asked about the volunteer status for DPR's holiday events. Staff reported that volunteers are still needed for the toy drive and laser light show.

Open Discussion:

None

Marcella made a motion to adjourn at 9:09AM, it was seconded by Kokou, roll call was taken, all in favor.

Next RAC Meeting:

Wednesday, January 13, 2021
7:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.
Virtual Meeting

Minutes respectfully submitted by Paola R. Roland: