

**The City of Durham**  
Parks & Recreation Department  
**Recreation Advisory Commission**  
Wednesday, June 10, 2020  
Virtual Zoom Meeting  
7:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

**Members Present:**

Rebecca Reyes, David Green, David Fellerath, Frank White, Lesley Stracks-Mullem, Kokou Nayo, Eric Tullis, Cedric Burke

**Members Excused/Unexcused:**

Marcella Scurlock-Jones – did not participate – attendance is marked as present due to the challenges of COVID-19

**City Council Liaison:**

No council representation at this meeting.

**City Staff Present:**

Joy Guy, Tom Dawson, Jason Jones, Rich Hahn, Lynda Merritt

**Introduction/Call to Order/Welcome:**

David G. called the meeting to order at 7:45 am and provided a welcome to the first virtual zoom meeting of the RAC.

An official welcome was made to Cedric Burke our newly appointed RAC member.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Rebecca made a motion to approve the March 11, 2020 meeting minutes; seconded by David G.; *No further changes, whereupon motion duly made, seconded and unanimously adopted*, the minutes were approved as presented.

**Adjustments to the agenda:**

No adjustments.

**Interim Director's Report:**

Joy Guy

- We were faced with some technical issues during our transition from office to work home environments. First the malware attack, then faced with stay-at-home guidelines, created a few challenges. Staff worked on canceling and rescheduling our programs, rentals and services, and issuing a large number of refunds. Staff have been busy reconnecting with our participants, PT staff assisted with these processes. Five weeks of COVID leave was issued to each employee including PT staff. However, as time progressed, it became more difficult to assign meaningful work for our PT staff. We had to make the difficult decision to furlough most of our part-time staff.
- We understand how important the mental and physical well-being of our community is. A survey was completed by the NRPA noting that parks are essential especially during a health crisis.

The results showed 83% of adults find that exercising was essential during the COVID pandemic.

- Some of the challenges we faced were: staying connected with our participants, especially those we routinely are serving in programs and centers, developing a reopening plan to restore these programs and services, in our rapidly changing environment. As the stay-at-home orders are relaxed and restrictions are removed, we want to make sure we are well prepared to reopen our facilities and programs and reconnect with our residents and participants. Our goal is to provide equitable access to our programs, make necessary modifications, and adhere to recommended safety guidelines. Hiring and training of new staff for essential positions is also a challenge, as we've had a few full time vacancies.
- We have been able to keep our parks and trails open and safe for the recreational activities that have been allowed under our stay-at-home orders. We have posted signage throughout our system to educate and promote the allowed activities. We also posted signage reminding users to practice social distancing guidelines.
- We implemented a park monitoring program, assigning staff to visit our heaviest used parks and trails and to inspect and monitor use, conditions, and to report unsafe practices and violations. We've recognized the benefit of this program and will likely continue it, even after orders are lifted and when normal operations resume.
- We hired off-duty officers from the Durham County Sheriff's Department to help patrol parks, especially during evening hours to assist with park users playing group sports in large numbers and accessing our facilities that were shut down in accordance with the stay-at-home guidelines
- Our marketing team has done a great job in maintaining our website and using social media .tools to educate and promote safe recreational activities. We also took the opportunity to promote "leave no trace" practices in our parks and trails.
- In April our marketing team facilitated a NCRPA virtual round table discussion *in the time of COVID-19*, which was held for nearly 100 NCRPA members and students from across the state. Staff shared our marketing efforts to promote "leave no trace" and our virtual Earth Day campaigns. Attendees were encouraged to share their success stories and strategies on how they are staying connected and engaged with their communities and how they are planning for what comes next.
- Virtual round table discussion: staff have responded with several online virtual programs designed to keep participants healthy and entertained while at home.
  - Basketball skills & drills with our partner *Coach to Inspire* which is a non-profit organization that partners with our athletics unit to provide student coaches for our youth athletic leagues and skilled clinics.
  - Our support and participation in the virtual One Mile Walk to support Special Olympics Spring Games in partnership with Durham Academy.
  - Virtual Muddy Boots and other outdoor programs that were offered by our Outdoor Recreation team
  - Care Programs staff hosted a zoom Hang Outs (twice a week) with after school participants. Some of the programs offered were: home scavenger hunts, exercise routines and dance parties. Often times, siblings and parents would participate as well.
  - We hosted our first virtual Earth Day celebration. We partnered with Pulse Radio to promote and share various tips, information and videos via social media. Several organizations contributed to providing information including Water Management, Keep Durham Beautiful. Stormwater, the City/County Sustainability Office. CBS even allowed their top meteorologist, Bill Reh, to record a promotional commercial.

- Residents have selected the winning design for the Bay-Hargrove Playground replacement project and will soon have the opportunity to vote for their favorite color scheme. The engagement survey for the Drew Granby Park Participatory Budget project has been released. Through this survey residents will select the playground design for the park. We want to complete and reopen when it's safe to do so.
- Staff have also assisted other departments and agencies. We've been heavily involved in local, state, and national meetings with professional organizations, while working to navigate the challenges of safely providing recreational services.
- Staff have utilized their time to complete online trainings and certifications. We've worked with our TS department to restore our systems due to the malware attack.
- We've been working on our draft reopening plan, it's a rapidly evolving document. We want to share it with you, and talk about where we are and where we stand. Our National Recreation Park association has compiled guidance to assist agencies with the development of their reopening plans. We've taken advantage of the many resources and many of the recommendations they provided. In addition, we've been in communication with regional parks and recreation agencies including Raleigh, Greensboro, Winston-Salem, and Cary to discuss trends, and prepare an aligned reopening strategy. As NRPA has recommended transitioning through the various phases of our plan, which require meeting a set of outlying indicators, while maintaining criteria, as well as implementation of additional measures to protect public health.
- We also need to make sure we are effectively meeting federal, state and local progression guidelines and matrixes as determined by public health officials.
- This includes conducting a risk assessment of all spaces, facilities, and programs.
- We assess contact intensity, the number of contacts and the degree to which activities are considered to be modifiable through our mitigation strategies. Including the need to ensure sufficient staffing capacity and resources are in place to support reopening.
- We need to make sure we are able to secure cleaning supplies and PPE and that we establish and implement related state of operating procedures for our staff and the public.
- Our phased approach to our re-opening plan prioritized public health and safety, considers equitable service delivery, and recognizes our adherence to all local, and state guidelines. It's for this reason that many of our offered programs will be at a reduced or modified service level.
- Joy shared her screen for review: DPR Programs and Services Restoration Plan
  - Restored services such as our virtual programs which are continuing. We're working through our zoom licensing, trying to figure out the most efficient and economical way to provide this service to our staff. You can expect to see more virtual programs in the near future.
  - **Phase 1** - May 18<sup>th</sup> we opened up our tennis courts, disc golf course and dog parks. May 22<sup>nd</sup> we opened city lakes for bank fishing, and Lake Michie for self- launch boats.
  - As we talk about this plan, we first identified the many different types of programs that we offer, which included discussion about the level of contact (gatherings no more than 10). As the plan progresses it starts out with very low contact and even passive recreation opportunities and then progresses to higher levels of participation and increased contact.
  - **Phase 2** – programs are somewhat modified, the administrative office is still closed, we do have a few staff working as needed. We're also having to look at the city's risk management guidelines for returning to work. Staff are looking at ways to provide

programming, while adhering to the mass gathering guidelines. We're hoping to start some of the tours and fun caravan programs. Staff are working to implement the city lake by offering non-motorized boat rentals. We're having to work around the aspects of providing services, while limiting little to no contact with our staff. These type of decisions are very well thought out and vetted through risk management and in some instances the city attorney's office for consideration.

- Joy is meeting with our teen and youth managers to explore ways our summer programs, labeled (Summer Connect) will operate. We're looking at the safest way to offer them. Decisions will be made soon with recommendations from staff.
- **Phase 3 & 4** – TBD because we really don't know what the projected dates are. Hopefully by phase 4 we'll be in early fall. As the number of mass gatherings increases, we'll be implementing programs as we can.
- We made the difficult decision to keep our outdoor pools closed this summer. We would be very limited in the number of participants we could safely serve. It was a very difficult decision. We're continuing to monitor the recommendations from public health and CDC to see if there are any changes, at this time, they will remain closed. We hope to open indoor pools by the end of the summer. This is subject to change based on the updated guidelines from state and local health and government officials, as well as guidelines from the National Parks and Recreation Association and other professional parks and recreation organizations.

#### Q&A

- Park Monitoring –what was the reasoning behind this decision? Joy provided additional information.
- Is DPR responsible for the oversight of park safety as it relates to hiring security? Yes, we utilize the sheriff's department as opposed to the city police because we're able to contract at a lower rate than city reserve officers. More economical, so we don't have to pay over-time to city employees.
- What's the status of the Director's search? At this time, the search is on hold, due to the stay-at-home order. Hoping to resume the process toward the end of July.
- What's the working status of the executive team, is it business as usual? Joy is serving as interim director with Tom and Jason serving in their capacity as assistant directors. It's business as usual with everyone providing assistance and support.
- Was there any communication with the public that DPR was contracting police to monitor our parks? No, we didn't announce it, it's not unusual, and it is part of our overall security plan. Joy, we utilize them more as a support function, especially in some of our higher usage parks. We also utilize their services for some of our programming like (PAL's), and outdoor pool security. We developed a system to assist with monitoring our parks, and it provides us with feedback that is useful in making decisions, so we can be more proactive rather than reactive to what is going on in our parks.
- Eric – moving forward with our Park Safety Subcommittee, is there a way this type of information could be shared with us? Tom, yes, the spreadsheet we have is tracked and they can provide results to the committee. Tom will make sure the data is provided to the group. We are in the process of hiring a GIS Analyst that will be able to assist us with mapping and tracking that level of activity.
- David F. requested more information on how DPR works with police officers. Joy, we work closely with city police, to provide security and support where needed. We have a police liaison that attends our monthly meeting to hear any issues or concerns we're having and work with us. We notify our liaison or district commander for issues such as abandoned vehicles, breaking

locks, vandalism, etc. We contract with off-duty for outdoor pools, Weaver Street Recreation Center, and Holton Career and Resource Center. David F. - are they in uniform, while in their patrol cars? Jason, provided information on how we are sensitive to fostering great partnerships with our participants and officers. We are constantly building relationships in this capacity and the effort is ongoing. Tom provided additional information on park enforcement needs. Tom provided information on what type of work park maintenance staff have been working on .Leslie thanked the maintenance staff for the great job they're doing under these difficult times. She inquired about the park ranger program and if the discussions to consider it are still in the works. Frank – the subcommittee has not met since March. The subcommittee is an ongoing entity.

### **RAC Action Items – Fee Waiver Request**

Rich Hahn

No requests at this meeting.

### **RAC Reporting Items:**

David F. reported on the letter of support request for the Durham Belt Line Trail project. The city is applying for a BUILD grant, and they would like the RAC to provide a letter by May 7<sup>th</sup>. The request was made by Dale McKeel in the planning department. Our next RAC meeting was scheduled for May 13<sup>th</sup> which was past the deadline. Since we didn't have time to consider it as a body, several members endorsed the effort by personal email (David F., David G., and Frank).

**Public Comment:** No public comment or questions submitted

### **Old Business:**

#### **RAC Engagement in the Comprehensive Plan 2050**

- No report from David G. or David F.

#### **Updates/FY21 Half- Penny (Tom)**

- Due the impacts of COVID-19 some projects have been put on hold, while others are moving forward.
- Safety concerns are a top priority and strict guidelines are in place.
- We are in the process of wrapping up the half-penny for parks and trails projects. Now we are working on the list of proposed projects for the upcoming year.
- Tom provided an overview on how the funding works for half-penny and CIP projects.
- Tom shared his screen, highlighting some of the projects during the past year.
  - East End Park – a vegetation and fencing project
  - Lakeview Park – did not receive PB funding for this project
  - Herndon Park – renovation of bathrooms
  - Trails Implementation Plan – charts out many new trails for federal/city funding
  - Artificial Turf Safety Maintenance – multiple fencing projects
  - Bay Hargrove playground replacement
  - Annual ball field maintenance
  - Sandy Creek Park project
  - Park signage

GIS mapping shows the distribution of projects and funding is widely represented across the city.

- Valley Springs – (fields 1 & 2) major renovation project
- Solite Park – add additional basketball courts, and major park cleanup
- Fencing projects at: CR Wood, Sherwood, Morreene Rd, Geer St., and Cook Rd.

- Bethesda Park – work on the high ropes course
- West Point on the Eno – signage, paving, and new playground (later)
- Whipporwill – tennis courts
- Wrightwood – playground replacement
- Long Meadow – dugout replacement
- Rock Quarry – bathroom renovations

Unfunded projects for FY21 – ½ Penny

- Forest Hills
- Valley Springs playground
- Rock Quarry
- Valley Springs and Herndon
- Snow Hill

Tom provided Eric with an update on the northern parks.

Frank asked for an update on the Rock Quarry project and the type of funding used for this project. Specifically, why the bathroom renovations are not included as part of the CIP funding.

Tom described the various types of funding sources used to fund this project. Rich pointed out that funding of bathrooms will most likely be by ½ penny funding.

**New Business:**

Virtual Meeting Process

Lynda – the RAC will not meet in July. Virtual meeting in August!

Rich talked about the process and what we can expect moving forward with our zoom meetings.

**Committee Reports:**

DOST Report - Frank White

- No report at this meeting.

Park Safety Committee – Frank White

- No report at this meeting.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission (BPAC) – David Fellerath

- No report at this meeting.

Hillandale Advisory Committee - Rebecca Reyes

- No meeting – no report.

**Open Discussion:**

- No open discussion.

**Next RAC Meeting:**

Wednesday, August 12, 2020

7:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Location & format TBD

*Minutes respectfully submitted by Lynda Merritt:*