

The City of Durham

Parks & Recreation Department

Recreation Advisory Commission

Wednesday, October 9, 2019

DPR Training Room (1st Floor)

7:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Members Present:

David Green, David Fellerath, Frank White, Eric Tullis, Rebecca Reyes, Kokou Nayo, Marcella Scurlock-Jones

Members Excused/Unexcused:

Lesley Stracks-Mullem - excused

City Council Liaison:

Council Member Alston – not present

City Staff Present:

Tom Dawson, Joy Guy, Rich Hahn, Rhonda Parker, Lynda Merritt

Introduction/Call to Order:

David G. called the meeting to order at 7:39 a.m. and welcomed those present.

Welcome new members:

Special welcome to Marcella Scurlock-Jones as a newly appointed member. Formal introductions were made.

Guests:

Mesa Somer and Toby Berla

Approval of Minutes:

Rebecca made a motion to approve the September 11, 2019 meeting minutes; seconded by Marcella. *No further changes, whereupon motion duly made, seconded and unanimously adopted*, the minutes were approved as presented.

Adjustments to the agenda:

- A recommendation was made to move up (Public Comment) since we have guests signed up to speak.

Public Comment:

Mesa Somer and Toby Berla spoke on behalf of the Pickleball players' community.

- Pickleball is a very addictive and inclusive sport. It's one of the fastest growing sports (3 million to 8 million). Pickleball continues to experience continued growth.
- It's a great sport for our mature adult community and players of any age, although the number of younger players is growing rapidly as well.
- The Pickleball community is welcoming, encouraging and very supportive. They are not attempting to compete with tennis.

- Pickleball can be played on tennis courts but ideally it's better played on a designated Pickleball court. Our (city) facilities are lagging behind Raleigh which has four to six various sites (6 lighted) for Pickleball players to play. Serious players, play outside of Durham. They need lighted courts; and can't play on tennis courts. We need our own courts that are exclusive for Pickleball. Our community really needs six (6) dedicated courts. Their goal is to have eight (8) dedicated city courts for Pickleball play.
- Toby Berla – the play is so much better with a real Pickleball net, the Bethesda tournament wasn't as ideal, but they'd be willing to try a temporary site and see how it goes. They envision a premiere Pickleball community in Durham that could host Pickleball tournaments. They have over 500 volunteer Pickleball ambassadors that fully volunteer, and run all skill clinics, and intro. classes to Pickleball. They would love to have a six or eight court dedicated facility.

Rebecca thanked them for attending and sharing their thoughts. Rebecca has been an advocate for this sport, as she plays it.

- Mesa wanted to know, if additional Pickleball courts are on DPR's list of needs?
- She pointed out that two tennis courts can be converted into six Pickleball courts.
- There was some discussion on what facilities DPR has and what type of modifications would be needed.
- Q. Marcella - If you had your choice, where would you want your permanent facility to be? A. Pineywood or Bethesda would be perfect sites.
- A. Mesa - Covered courts would be perfect, this is our first public engagement, and we would love to hear what the RAC is suggesting on how we can do this. We represent something different. This sport is more accessible to people with mobility issues and very appealing to a wider demographic of players.
- Toby – Pickleball is a really interesting sport, and doesn't take as much technique as tennis does. He's met 100's of players, it's a very socially accepting, inclusive sport. It's about building community, and working with each other, it's not just another sport, but a special activity, we can all play together, and everyone is included. We urge you all to come out and see what our sport is all about.
- David G. thanked them for sharing their ideas and speaking before the RAC as advocates on behalf of the Pickleball community.
- Toby – we want to work together with DPR on growing this sport.
- David F. suggested they reach out to the Durham Parks Foundation as a potential funding resource.

Director's Report:

In an effort to advance the meeting, Rhonda asked that we include her written report as part of the meeting minutes.

- There was an article in the 'Are We Safe' series: Discarded needles in Durham parks raise local man's concern.
 - DPR staff are monitoring all our parks and requesting Sharpe containers in parks where we have a needle problem.
 - Park maintenance staff are working on developing a needle SOP which encourages staff to report any increase or decrease in evidence of needle usage.
 - We have sharp containers at: WD Hill at the gazebo, Hillside in the small shelter, and Grant Park.
 - We have requested more directed patrols from the DPD.
- DPR received a crystal award from NCRPA, Playcore and Gametime at the Joint Carolina's Conference in Myrtle Beach, SC in September. The award was in appreciation for the Lakeview

Park “NCRPA Healthy Play and Recreation Initiative”. The grant is one of two received in order to reestablish the playground at Lakeview Park. Fourteen DPR team members led seven sessions, and was a panelist on an eighth during the conference.

- Staff participated in International PARKing Day on September 20th by converting a parking space on East Chapel Hill St. to a parklet. Parking DAY is dedicated to bring awareness to how much land we use to park automobiles. Downtown Durham Inc. and The Scrap Exchange also converted parking spaces in downtown.
- DPR and Durham Parks Foundation shared a booth at Centerfest last month. The festival was very well attended and the booth stayed busy all day both days.
- The mural in the Teen Room at WD Hill Recreation Center has been completed by Durham artist Candy Carver
- DPR hosted the first Recreational Pickleball Tournament at Bethesda Park on the Tennis Courts on September 7, 20219. The Tournament had 30 registered participants. This was a successful event and we received a tremendous amount of positive feedback from the community and spectators.
- DPR staff provided PAC1 facilitators with some construction project updates for: East End Park, Long Meadow Park, Drew Granby Park, and Hoover Road Park
- City Lake updates: Due to low water levels, the Little River Reservoir will be closed to the public until conditions improve. Staff will be evaluating lake levels on a regular basis, for now, Lake Michie is very low, but passable. Staff have been vigilant in notifying lake users and the public.
- The Chief Operating Officer at TROSA, is requesting assistance from the City on how to address their concerns with the parking lot TROSA shares with DPR near the corner of North St. and Geer St. They have been experiencing problems with people patronizing businesses in the immediate area (bars & restaurants) and parking their cars in the lot behind their building. This results in blocking the fire lane for TROSA and blocking their loading dock, loitering in the lot and drinking in public, leaving behind trash, etc. DPR staff will be working with our DPD liaison for enforcement for people who are violating the City’s ordinance related to drinking on park property. Our goal is to establish that this space is owned and regulated by the City and managed by DPR.
- Durham Parks Foundation hosted an Inaugural Member Open House at the Environmental Education Pavilion at West Point on the Eno Park.

RAC Reporting Items:

- On September 15, Rebecca attended the 6th Annual Fiestas Patrias En Unirumba event. It was nice but different due to a change in the location this year.
- David G. attended the Durham Parks Foundation Meeting.
- Frank attended the Durham Police Department Training Academy event.
- Nayo attended the Jerk Fest event that was held on Sat., Sept. 21st at West Point on the Eno. He shared his concerns about the lack of wheelchair accessibility at this location.

RAC Action Items – Fee Waiver Requests

Fee Waiver Request - Rich Hahn

- Frank made a motion to approve the fee waivers by consent (staff recommendation); it was seconded by David F.; all in favor, motion passes.

1. Step Up Durham

Event: Annual Fundraiser

Facility Request: Durham Armory

Date(s) of Event: April 21, 2020

Staff recommendation at 25%

2. Fostering Families

Event: A celebration for adoptive families

Facility Request: Forest Hills Clubhouse

Date(s) of Event: November 9, 2019

Staff recommendation at 25%

Old Business:

Pre-CIP Discussion

Tom provided an overview of the CIP process and various types of funding sources.

Half-penny:

For maintenance of parks and trails; not for new projects.

- We typically have about 50 projects going on. Staff is always looking ahead to the next project.

CIP funding:

To be included in the CIP, a project should require a total expenditure of at least \$100,000.

- We have debt; it is stretched over a 10 year period timeline, it's largely funded on debt.
- DPR projects have to compete with other city services and projects.
- Funding used for new parks, playgrounds, trails and athletic fields.
- Staff are carefully reviewing projects to ensure fairness, and objectivity in the scoring and ranking process.
- Unexpected issues do arise, such as playgrounds that are failing due to their location in the floodway. These issues are new so we must add them to the 10 yr. CIP list. Fortunately we can use some impact fees, The plan is to work with public works to get the playgrounds out of the floodway.
- RP – we compete with other projects across the city, if we add something the list, we must remove an item and we're still trying to catch up from past deferred projects.
- Investing in trails, we need to connect Whipoorwill Park to West Point on the Eno, and River Forest, Old Farm.
- Warren Creek Trail may be a really good place to invest, development within the trail corridor
- West Point on the Eno – we produced a plan to make it ADA accessible, coming into alignment with Warren Creek Trail.
- Orchard Park – staff are working to reduce the occupying elements of this park and clean it up.
- Duke Park Playground issues, this park is heavily used. We recently used ½ penny to repair some of the slides, and will be proposing this project be added to the CIP.
- Includes funding to continue the planning and design of the Hoover Rd. Athletic Facility. Tom provided a google map overview of Hoover Rd. the project is underway, development includes four natural turf fields, the project is more expensive than first thought.
- Twin Lakes Park – it's not very ADA accessible, the bridge is not repairable, a study was done, and we developed a plan.
- Lyon Park – there is an opportunity for new recreation and development, new affordable housing, outdoor year round restrooms, a lot of complaints about crime, staff did a CPTED study and came up with a plan.

Impact Fees

Are used for new residential development and cannot be used for routine or periodic maintenance.

- Impact fees cannot be used for routine or periodic maintenance, or improvements made to the existing infrastructure where the improvements are not related to new development.
- The City's impact fees are collected for streets, parks and recreation facilities, and open space.
- Impact fees will be used only to serve the zone where the fees were collected.

- There is a distribution issue in the northern part of the county.
- The RAC looks at projects, is it fairly distributed, the angry Eno River washed away our playgrounds.

Community Impact:

- There are many communities that are waiting for their particular projects to move forward. Then we have projects that occur progressively. We're also looking at equitable distribution which considers geographic, environmental and socio-economic balance.
- Internal staff assessments are ongoing; this is the order with a limited amount of money.
- We are continually reaching out to communities, asking what their needs are.
- Rebecca – how does DPR monitor use of growing sports that have limited facility usage due to lack of proper facilities, such as pickleball where players often play in surrounding communities. A. we have automated processes, staff is out there, we organize community meetings to learn about their needs.
- Joy – the selection process includes aligning projects with identified master and strategic plans. We do a lot of community outreach that feeds into development of the plan.
- One issue right now is: playgrounds that are coming to the end of their life cycle. We've done what we can to maintain them and the community is upset when we have to take them offline due to unsafe conditions.
- Tom – what would we do with the money, connections to parks and making parks ADA assessible, we don't do connections that aren't ADA accessible.

Future Funding:

- Support of the full-penny, new recreation is possible and we can expedite some projects faster.
- Members want to know: How can they work with DPR staff to make sure our needs are met and that projects don't fall behind? How to advocate for the department on behalf of the commission, do we want to endorse candidates, how has that worked in the past? Do we ever come together and discuss this at the local level with our elected officials? Rhonda – then Councilmember Schewel took the lead for the half penny, it was his idea. We also gained support from DOST and BPAC. It may be a good idea to start advocating support from organizations that support our services and mission. Any RAC member can attend these meetings and advocate on behalf of the RAC to support parks and recreation related issues, including funding needs.

Open Discussion:

- Some discussion on the type of support we get from City Council.
- Question for staff (Rich): full penny, any information on how the full penny would affect the tax rates? Lynda will share the information when Rich provides the answer.
- By attending some community meetings such as the INC Candidate Forum, the RAC could create a list of park related questions. This would be one way the RAC could voice our support for parks and recreation in a community platform that might not discuss issues relating to parks and recreation. Look at making a recommendation to roll yearly funding for playgrounds so they are not a part of the CIP. Email David G. any questions you would like to ask and he will share them during the meeting.

RAC Priorities for FY20 – Lynda

- It's not too late to submit your feedback and suggestions.

RAC Report to City Council – Lynda

- The report/presentation to City Council is scheduled for the October 24th Work Session at 1:00 p.m. please join us if you can and wear your RAC shirt.
- Lynda will meet with David G. on the talking points.

New Business:

Committee Reports:

There were no committee reports at this meeting.

Open Discussion: no open discussion

A motion was made to adjourn at 8:57 a.m.; it was seconded.

Next RAC Meeting
Wednesday, November 13, 2019
7:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.
DPR Training Room – 1st Floor

Minutes respectfully submitted by Lynda Merritt: