

**Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Minutes**  
**March 17, 2021**  
**Zoom Meeting**

**Members Attending**

RJ Hogan – Chair  
Andy McGlenn  
Marissa Bryant  
Emily Morgan  
Will Bordeaux  
David Eason  
Shirin Jenkins  
Ingrid Corbi

**Members Absent:**

Hunter Holland  
Zach Gilbert  
Erika Robertson

**Others Present:**

Andrea Talley  
Steve Morrissey (County  
Victoria Carrai (Fit For Fun)  
Kim Adams (Grant Writer  
Margaret Isbell – Admin

**CALL TO ORDER**

RJ called the meeting to order.

**APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 2020 MINUTES**

Shirin made a motion to approve the February 2021 meeting minutes (joint meeting with County), Andy seconded, all approved.

**WILDLIFE EXPLORERS UPDATE – VICTORIA CARRAI**

Victoria is a contact for the Wildlife Grant from NCRP, they were one of five that was awarded the grant. Hunter Hollard from UNCW is also an active member in this program, he sits on the P&R Advisory Board. The program is a turn-key that the NCRP created organizations across the county. There is a workbook that was printed out. They used some of the funds, \$1,500.00, to purchase backpacks, field guides, thermometers, magnifying glasses and binoculars. This program is geared towards the after-school ages children, between 6 and 12 years old. This program is also part of the Racial Equity initiative as well. A majority of the children in the program are African American. They are hoping these children will get a love of nature out of this program. This program lasts 6 weeks, and there are 4 interns from UNCW that are helping with the program. Two of the interns are Environmental Science majors and two are Recreation majors. Training for the interns took place twice a week during the month of February so they would get a feel for where the centers are within the city. The first week of the program started March 9<sup>th</sup> so they are currently in the second week with the children. The children were able to hear bird sounds with the help of Andy Fairbanks at Halyburton Park. The program will be done by the end of April with a big event where they can bring their family. They children will be taught to make their own campsite. Ingrid asked how many participants are in the program, there is a total of 12 in each group right now.

**GRANT FOR OUTDOOR FITNESS EQUIPMENT**

Kim Adams is working with Steven Schmitter who is the supervisor at the Fitness Center for an outdoor equipment grant. This is through NRPA, called Resilience Park Access Grant. Kim wanted to share a video produced by National Fitness Campaign, but was unable to share via Zoom. They are hoping to provide outdoor fitness equipment for 3 parks within the city. Andrea asked Kim to send the link to the board members to watch at a later time. The video shows the types of equipment utilized in each of the locations. The grant is between

\$300,000 to \$500,000 and 5 grants are awarded nationally. They would like to place one at 10<sup>th</sup> & Ann Street, plus two other parks. They are looking for statements of support, must be recreation agency and this is due by April 23<sup>rd</sup>. The cities that are selected to receive the grant will be selected by May 21<sup>st</sup>, the kick-off will be in early June and the cities awarded the grant will have two years to use the funds. There is also program training to those that are awarded the grant. In September 2023, the city is hoping to have outside fitness courts in 3 of their parks. Andrea suggested they have staff draft a letter and have the board sign it.

RJ asked about the three locations they plan to place these outdoor fitness areas. One of the areas is at 10<sup>th</sup> & Ann, by the Fitness Center, Robert Strange, Empie Park, Portia Mills Hines. These would all be in high citizen traffic areas and within walking distance.

Ingrid made a motion to support the grant, Will seconded the motion, all present passed the motion to support the grant.

### **WORKING TOWARDS RACIAL EQUITY IN ENVIRONMENTS AND OUTDOOR ORGANIZATIONS – WORKSHOP SERIES GRANT APPLICATION**

This is a national grant that will be awarded to 10 organizations. This grant is to promote racial equity in environmental and outdoor education organizations. There will be an organization systems change team, this is comprised of 1-7 individuals, at this time they have identified 6-7 to be on this team. There will also be a second team called Professionals of Colors Team, this will consist of 1-7 individuals, will be put together if awarded the grant. This will consist of 40 hours of intensive training for a duration of 5 months. They would be training individuals in Environmental Education to offer more equitable work places, programs and facilities. This grant is offered by the BEETLES Project. Andy Fairbanks and Kim Adams worked on the application for this grant for the city. Zach Gilbert of the P&R Advisory Board was selected to be on the Organization Systems Change Team since he selected Halyburton to be his adopt a park project.

### **COVID RELIEF BILL**

Andrea wanted to give the board a heads up. It has been identified that \$25 million will go to the city of Wilmington as part of the COVID Relief Bill that was just passed by Congress. It will be anywhere between 60 – 90 days before the city receives the official letter and any of the funds from this relief bill. The city would have two years to spend the funds. This would be for the city of Wilmington and not for the Recreation Department. The department is hopeful to receive some of the funds to help with some of their projects. Per Andrea, we have not received any guidance on exactly what meets the guidelines for the funds. This is meant to go toward COVID Relief. These funds could go to businesses and possibly lost salaries for businesses that suffered due to COVID.

### **DAVIS CENTER**

The Davis Center gym is almost complete. Should get the Certificate of Occupancy by the beginning of April. They are putting down the lines at this time. There is no date set for opening. The ribbon cutting will be on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, time is unknown at this time. There will be a series of special events during the week of April 26<sup>th</sup>. On the 26<sup>th</sup> there will be 15U basketball ball game. Practice is currently going on at the MLK Center, their first game will be on the 26<sup>th</sup> at Davis Center. Some of the events include Zumba, Futsal pickup game, Pickleball and to wrap up the week of grand opening events will be the Wilderness Explorers final event. This project came in underbudget. RJ asked if GLOW would be utilizing space at the Davis Center. They have done programming at the Davis center in the past and are working out an agreement with GLOW to use the center at a reduced rate.

### **YMCA/NSEA SWIM PROPOSAL**

Just an update that the YMCA sent a proposal to council for Northside Pool. Total contract amount is about \$130,000 and for the summer pools, the contract amount is looking at around \$114,000. The \$130,000 is a little

more than the operations for October – May. The proposal has two phases, one is requesting improvements to the building, to make it more suitable for the winter months. This would include heating, ventilation, better plumbing, hot water for showers, insulation of the building and exterior doors. The total estimate for these repairs would be around \$120,000 which the city would pay for. Phase 2 is asking for the replacement of the bubble with a harden pool enclosure, with heating and ventilation. May not agree to this part of the proposal. The timeline for replacing the bubble would be 5-7 years.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Steve Morrissey talked about the New Hanover Parks & Garden budget for FY21/22 has \$1,034,000 to the contribution to the Olsen Park phase II project. This is right now as part of the budget planning for next fiscal year. The COVID budget pressures are a bit tighter than the city. Steve has talked to Tara with the County and he has been a Pickleball advocate on the County Parks and Recreation Board. He has been looking at Olsen Park as a possible venue for dedicated pickleball courts. Olsen is one of the few pieces of land in the city and county that could handle building several pickleball courts that they hope could be a venue for tournaments, in town and south east NC. Steve is hopeful, as part of the city's plan, city and county can incorporate some of these ideas together as the city goes through the phase II plan for Olsen Park. Steve is aware the city just hired a consultant to help build the plan for parks and recreation.

Andrea mentioned that the planning for Olsen phase II to come up in May or June of 2021. This is also included in the comprehensive plan. Construction could begin by the end of 2022, this is just an estimate of when it could begin. Andrea noted that anytime a large project comes up they have public meetings to get the word out. Andrea will make sure to include county in some of these meeting when the planning phase for Olsen phase II comes up.

During the last city/county joint meeting RJ brought up the fact of having facilities used by citizens that are not city/county residents. He hopes there is some sort of system that gives preference to city and county residents and gives court access as preference. It is very concerning that our tax money, our staffing, energy, brain power, goes to make this infrastructure, to be monopolized by citizens that have chosen to live outside the city/county boundaries, for example, Brunswick and Pender counties. Especially with the location of Olsen and the new I-140 extension and easy access from either direction.

Steve noted that this has been a discussion on the counties advisory board as well. One of the overarching philosophies they have when looking at the customer base, of tax payers, visitors and residents. They came to the conclusion it would be very difficult to monitor the guests that come in, although it can be done. Also hoping they are promoting the visitor that comes in and spends money in our city/county.

Marissa asked how can we gage people who choose to live outside New Hanover County and those who are forced to live outside the county due to not having affordable housing within the city and housing market? We have to think about the residents in Brunswick County and our rural areas and may be forced to live in those areas. The parks in the city/county may be the only place they can play the way they would like to ore enjoy the parks. What is planned to monitor this?

RJ said that as Wilmington becomes more and more expensive this becomes a valid point. Those of us that choose to live in Wilmington, comes with benefits and additional taxes we pay. The group that came to a meeting a few years ago were from Brunswick county. They wanted the city to change the courts at the MLK Center.

Steve suggested that maybe have the citizens that live outside the city pay a higher rate. Ingrid asked Steve who, from New Hanover County, used the courts in Brunswick County. His best guess would be about 100 citizens

get invited down and used the public courts. He sees the traffic that goes to the MLK Center, that number totals about 30-40 people. There are about 15-20 that travel to Waterford or Brunswick Forest across the bridge. There are about 1600 +/- pickleball players in the greater Wilmington area.

Andrea would like to point out the differences the requests that the Cape Fear Pickleball Club has been making to convert the 6 courts at Robert Strange Park. They want to convert 3 of the 6 courts to permanent pickleball courts vs. building new courts just for pickleball. About half or more of the people playing in the softball tournaments are from out of town. Local people playing during the week and on the weekend for tournaments there would be more out of town people. Olsen Park might be a good fit for standalone pickleball courts.

This will be looked at and surveying the public once the time for phase II comes up for discussion and planning. Andrea asked Steve the reason for the location, Olsen Park? Per Steven, land is the biggest factor they want to consider. They could be looking at 12-16 courts at Olsen.

RJ said that this topic doesn't demographically reflect our community. He still stands by his belief that to use city funds for such a niche sport doesn't sit well with him. Emily and Shirin both agree with RJ.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

RJ wanted to let the board know that tonight is going to be his last meeting, he is moving to be closer to his parents. He sent an email to Kevin Spears thanking him for opening his eyes in a way they have never been opened before. He credits Davina on how the board has come together. He thinks the board has really come together and been more engaged and more accurately represented the citizens of Wilmington.

All board members will be invited to the ribbon cutting. If the board wants to have the next meeting at the new gym at Davis Center or Zoom/In-person meeting. Shirin thinks it would be great to meet at Davis Center for the next board meeting.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Shirin made a motion to adjourn, Andy seconded the motion, all approved.

**Next meeting: Wednesday, April 21, 5:30pm**