

City of Fairfax
Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB)
Meeting Minutes

September 12, 2024
City of Fairfax
3610 Blenheim Blvd

PRAB Members Present:

Matt Rice
Kelly O'Brien, Vice Chair
Douglas Stewart
Diana Gibson
Rusty Russell
Matt Hoffert
Sarah Ross, Chair
Kelsey Sandoval
Rachel McQuillen

Absent:

Charish Bishop
Frank Francis
Chuck Paceley
Yolanda Ortiz

Staff:

Stacey Sommerfield
Kay Kaelin

Student Representative:
(position not filled)

Agenda

1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order by Chair Sarah Ross at 7:04 p.m.

2. Adoption of Agenda

Agenda for September 12th, 2024 meeting.

Moved the Thaiss Park discussion to New Business (Item 6c).

Added City Manager Laszlo Palko to Presentations/Introductions (Item 4a).

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Removed Padma Surapureddi and added Yolanda Ortiz and Kelsey Sandoval to Stakeholder Updates (Item 8a).

Kelly O'Brien motioned to adopt the amended agenda.

Diana Gibson seconded the motion.

Approved.

3. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Approved.

4. Presentations and Introductions

A. New City Manager, Laszlo Palko

- i. Mr. Palko stopped by the PRAB meeting to introduce himself. He has been making the rounds to all the advisory boards. We introduced ourselves to him and told him our favorite parks.

5. Old Business

A. Throne Summer Update

- i. Throne Labs has put together a presentation for our summer use statistics. There were 15,000+ total uses over the summer, with 39% of those being return visits. The Thrones had an uptime of 96%. As for feedback, 92% of people who completed the survey think Throne is a "good" or "awesome" restroom option. Only 5 users have had access restricted due to misuse. 97% of people used the text message option to enter the Throne. The Van Dyck Park Throne was the highest used Throne, with Providence Park and Ratcliffe Park being close seconds. The Thaiss Park location was more popular when Little League was in season. Weekends were the busiest day of the week for the Thrones, with afternoons being the busiest time of day. Only 5% of people who answered the survey answered that they were not a fan of the Throne. The units from Providence Park and Ratcliffe Park will be removed soon as the contract expires, but once Thaiss Park goes under construction in October, we will have the option to move that unit to another location.

B. 2025 July 4th Evening Show Update

- i. We received 295 emails with feedback regarding the 2024 July 4th evening show. 43% of those emails expressed disappointment in the evening show concerning safety, accessibility, and crowd

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control. 26% expressed disappointment with the location and visibility of the fireworks. 11% were concerned with the evening show crowds and safety of the parking lot venue. Staff feedback from police, fire, CUE, and more expressed lack of ADA accessibility, no designated egress points or aisles, and how access was very difficult for many community members.

- ii. For 2025, there are three locations required: a fireworks launch location with a sufficient fall out zone, an event location that can safely hold 10,000 people, and a parking location with ADA accessibility. All three of these locations should be within close enough proximity of each other. Several sites have been eliminated already, including the Judicial Complex, Van Dyck Park, George Mason University, Woodson High School, and Providence Elementary School/Katherine Johnson Middle School. The staff recommendation is to return to the stadium at Fairfax High School for the event location and the parking location. The stadium has controlled locations for bag checks, easy ingress and egress points, and is overall a safer venue. From there, there are three options for the fireworks launch location. We can do a proximity show from the roof of Fairfax High School with an approximate cost of \$35,000, launch from the original location on the baseball fields and potentially pay the \$250,000 deductible, or do a drone show with a potential cost of \$100,000+.

C. Parks Foundation Bylaws – Update

- i. A third draft of the bylaws for the Parks Foundation was discussed. The feedback from PRAB from the July meeting was considered. The next step is to present to the City Council on October 8th and request startup funds to build the website and do some design work. After that, we would elect the inaugural board and obtain 501(c)3 status, with hopes to have a functioning Parks Foundation within 6 months of that. We compared an older version of the Parks Foundation bylaws and noted the differences made. There was a suggested change of adding in a minimum age of 18 years old to serve in the Parks Foundation. Another proposed change was to require a 2/3 majority vote to amend the bylaws. Kelly O'Brien motioned to recommend and endorse the adoption of the revised bylaws. Kelsey Sandoval seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

D. Student Representative Recruitment

- i. We are attempting to recruit a new Student Representative for PRAB. A flyer has been created and local schools have been

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notified. No applications have been received yet. A recommendation was made to amend the application process for student positions on advisory boards, as applicants currently go through the same process as adults.

6. New Business

A. Summary of Recent Council Meetings Actions Pertaining to Parks and Recreation

- i. The July 4th presentation was presented at the last City Council meeting. There will be a proclamation for Hispanic Heritage Month on Tuesday, September 17th with a mariachi band playing in the City Hall Atrium beforehand. We will talk about the Parks Foundation and Thaiss Park redevelopment during the October 8th meeting.

B. FY26 CIP & Staffing Requests

- i. Several updates were made for the FY26 CIPs, including updating the amount of money needed for the Willard Sherwood Health and Community Center.
- ii. There was also a new FFE (furniture, fixtures, and equipment) for Old Town Hall, once the construction is complete, which includes new tables, new chairs, improved A/V equipment, and a new piano.
- iii. The new timeline to move into the Willard Sherwood Health and Community Center is February 2029. Therefore, we need to keep Green Acres open and functional until then. A small CIP of \$55,000 has been requested to fix things like updating the urinals in the men's restrooms as they currently only have child size urinals, and to replace some of the fitness equipment.
- iv. We have requested to install security cameras at several locations including parks around the City.
- v. We are continuing to ask that the Cultural Arts Assistant Manager position be made full time, and we are also requesting a marketing/grants/scholarship position full time.

C. Thaiss Park

- i. The bids for Thaiss Park have come in, but not been confirmed. We have had two apparent low bidders come in but would still be over budget. Options include using spare money from the fire station project or taking out some money from the Van Dyck Park redevelopment and building it in later. Kelly O'Brien motions to endorse the full project with no alternates taken out, and directs the

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PRAB Chair to write a memo declaring such and present it to City Council. Rachel McQuillen seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

7. Parks and Recreation Department Report

A. Project Updates

- i. Master Plan
 - 1. We are still working with Berry and Dunn, who are putting together graphics. They will be at the Fall Festival collecting public feedback and will be setting up public outreach meetings.
- ii. Staffing Update
 - 1. Michael Ryan, our Parks Manager, is retiring November 1st. We have two internal candidates who have made it to the final rounds, Christopher Fleming and Demetric Willingham. We are looking at reorganizing the department to have 2 Parks Managers and 1 Parks Lead, so we would be able to run three crews at a time. Christopher and Demetric would become the Parks Managers, with Chrisopher managing green spaces and trails, and Demetric would manage athletic facilities and parks. We would then need to hire for the Parks Lead role.
- iii. Pat Rodio Park
 - 1. Baseball field redo is almost done.
- iv. Van Dyck Redevelopment
 - 1. We are hoping to get Thaiss Park going and then we will focus on Van Dyck.
- v. Old Town Hall renovation
 - 1. Renders were shown of what the outside of Old Town Hall will look like, with the yellow “butter” colored paint. The inside will be painted a lighter, robin’s egg blue, while the librarian’s office will be painted the historical orange color. We are still intending to close from February 2025 to February 2026, but we are building in a 6 month buffer just in case.
- vi. KJM Turf
 - 1. We need to update the projected cost numbers.

B. Upcoming events and Programs

- i. Fall Festival is October 12th. National Dance Day is September 21st. Fiesta Fairfax is October 5th.

8. Stakeholder Updates

A. Commission on the Arts – Yolanda Ortiz and Kelsey Sandoval

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- i. Have not had their meeting yet. The first ArtScreen will be on September 13th at 7:00 p.m. The movie being shown is *Best in Show*.

B. Environmental Sustainability Committee – Rusty Russell

- i. Have not had their meeting yet. The Old Town lighting project is underway, replacing lights in Old Town with LED lights. The Urban Forestry Master Plan is underway with a steering committee. The ESC has offered a number of insights into the Comp Plan. The new Stewardship Coordinator has come on board and is planning for Arbor Day. Arbor Day will be celebrated on October 26th at Kutner Park. The new Climate and Energy Coordinator was appointed. The ESC composed a letter to the City Council to have a broader definition of urban agriculture. A movie called *Just Eat It* is being shown at Cinema Arts, which is about food waste and composting. It is currently free to the public.

C. NOVA Parks – Douglas Stewart

- i. Absent.

D. Planning Commission – Matt Rice

- i. The Planning Commission talked about accessory dwelling units. They are also making progress in the Comp Plan. They will recommend its adoption to the City Council in 1-2 months. They also discussed urban agriculture and its role in commercial districts. There was a proposal for a Taco Bell on Fairfax Boulevard, but the center it is proposed in was not well designed for parking, and there are concerns that increased traffic in that center would only make the problem worse.

E. School Board – Rachel McQuillen

- i. Fairfax High School's Back to School Night will be on September 18th, with Providence Elementary School being on the 19th. There will be 2 community engagement nights on September 30th and October 15th about the proposed referendum. The Fairfax High School Homecoming Parade is on September 13th.

F. Senior Center – Chuck Pacey

- i. Absent.

G. Student Representative – Maisie Curtin

- i. Absent.

9. Matters of the Members

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10. Meeting Adjournment

Time: 10:00 p.m.