

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

City of Fairfax

Meeting Minutes for February 11, 2009

Location: Old Town Hall

Members in Attendance:

Brian Knapp (Chair), Joe Harmon (Vice-Chair), David Bauer, Paul Cunningham, Donald Johns, Donald Lederer, Arthur Little, Janice Miller, Esther Nasjleti, and Gary Sidor.

Absent:

James Ogletree, Zinta Rodgers-Rickert, and Harry Wilbur
Janice Miller filled in for Elisa Lueck (thank you Janice!)

Staff in Attendance:

Michael McCarty
Karen Bixler

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm.
2. Minutes for the January 8 meeting were approved.
3. Old Business:

a.) Parks Update

Mike McCarty provided a brief update on various park projects. The City is still working with the Yorkville community to secure an easement to install lights at Draper Drive Park. Minor repairs are being made to Stafford Park (trail, asphalt). A grand opening for Stafford will occur on March 21 or March 28. The City is still negotiating a storm water management easement for the new baseball field at Providence Elementary School.

b.) Community Center

Mike McCarty recently hosted a meeting with interested stakeholders of the future building. Stakeholders (including PRAB, Commission on the Arts) got to look at updated plans for the interior of the Center. Attendees articulated the priority needs for rooms dedicated to performance, art, dance (especially a wood floor for the performance space). City staff is preparing the necessary paperwork for Council to host a work session in March (review special use permit). There will be a public hearing in April on the special use permit.

c.) Budget Update

Janice Miller gave PRAB members an overview of the current budget crisis in the City of Fairfax. She described the budget process as one step forward, two steps backward. The revenue shortfall changes every week. She outlined the components of overall revenue (sales tax, personal property tax, business tax) and how each is impacting the overall budget figures. Janice said that the Budget Committee is meeting with Department Directors to be prepared for the FY10 budget.

Mike then presented PRAB members a very detailed overview of the current budget for Parks and Recreation. He has had to reduce his FY09 budget by twelve percent (on top of further reductions in FY08 – this is three phases of cuts (Sept 2008, Dec 2008, and Feb 2009)). He also has two positions that are frozen – not able to hire and several temporary positions eliminated. Mike expects the FY10 budget will be ten percent less.

Brian Knapp asked about morale on Mike's staff...he responded with a mix of emotions – fear, uneasiness, nervous, worried.

Mike also shared with PRAB members a document that outlines the priorities (as seen by his staff) for park services, recreation services, and City events. PRAB members gave considerable advice to Mike on how to modify the priorities and additional points to consider. PRAB members continue to rank July 4th, Fall Festival, and the Festival of Lights and Carols as priority events. Mike planned to revise the document based on the input provided.

d.) Trails Festival

Joe and James and Esther are working hard to find sufficient funds (donations and/or race fees) to cover this year's Trails Festival. Currently, the event has been canceled by City Council due to budget cuts.

e.) Foundation

Brian announced that Joe and Zinta were co-chairing this ad hoc committee of PRAB. They are hosting a meeting on February 18 to discuss issues.

f.) Park Visit Project – Team 3

Team 3 comprised of Gary, Art, Esther and Karen Bixler.

The team presented five excellent presentations of our City parks.

Highlights:

Ranger Road – variety of activities, good trail, good fitness trail.

Park basketball court and signage can be improved. Trees trimmed.

Shiloh Street – small neighborhood green space; not well known.

Trash should be picked up; better signage; maybe a bridge one day and better linkage to existing City trails.

Country Club Hills Commons – small neighborhood green space, shelter.

Improve trail linkage.

Draper Drive – great fields and walking perimeter trail.
Park needs new playground equipment and better signage, especially on Fairfax Boulevard.

Thaiss – great playing fields and trail connectivity to County. Good play equipment.
The tunnel to Wilcoxon trail is terrible. It is hard to cross Pickett Road by car. Signage could be improved. Install concrete pads under bleachers.

4. New Business:

Mike presented his Department's draft report on cost recovery for programs and facilities and a new fee policy. Council directed Mike to prepare this comprehensive document and to submit it directly to Council for review and consideration (this was done in late January). Mike explained that it was not too late for PRAB to provide comments and input.

Mike gave PRAB members a detailed overview of the new policies and fees and stressed his Department's attempt to recover direct expenses by 100%. He also provided the estimated revenue that will be generated over time by the new fees. PRAB members agreed that the new policy/new fees were long overdue, especially for groups that were getting free use of the City's facilities. PRAB was not enthusiastic about recovering the expenses associated with staff time dedicated to scheduling facilities.

5. Update from Parks and Recreation Department

Mike had a few items:

- His department is looking at installing signs on Fairfax Boulevard for Stafford and Draper Drive.
- The City is consulting with GMU regarding the over crowded parking situation at Green Acres.
- Mike's Department is developing a business plan for the Community Center.
- FPYC recently honored Mike and his Department for their outstanding cooperation and partnership.
- Mike's Department will now be responsible for scheduling, cleaning, and marketing for the Bleinhem Visitors' Center.

Karen Lussier provided a written report on Youth Programs. She reported on such items like summer camp 2009, specialty camps this spring, after school programs in April, and the Father-Daughter Dance on June 20.

Leslie Herman turned in a written report, covering topics like the Chocolate Lovers Festival (very successful), the Independence Day Celebration (Jeanne Agee will be the Parade Grand Marshal), adult classes (many successful classes), and athletics (indoor scheduling at the schools and outdoor field permits).

Jo Ormesher submitted a written, comprehensive report on projects and events for January and February (arts report).

6. Members Time

Janice had several items:

- Lanier School fields will open this spring.
- The Joint meeting between the School Board and PRAB is scheduled for May 18. The two bodies need to review the school use document and decide if any changes are needed.
- A reminder – dogs are not allowed on school property.
- Fairfax County has a \$158M shortfall in the school board budget. Options are under review to achieve these cuts.
- The County/City is reviewing a proposal to start school at a later time.

Don provided a detailed, written report from the Seniors Center.

His report described a new program for membership cards. Regular meals have been curtailed at the Center. There are several upcoming fundraisers, including the Spaghetti Dinner on April 18.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10 pm. The next PRAB meeting is scheduled for March 12. It is a joint session with members of the Senior Center Council.

Minutes prepared by Brian Knapp.