



**COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF KENT COUNTY, MARYLAND
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**



Kent County Community Center * 11041 Worton Rd., Worton * MD 21678

**Microsoft Teams Video Conference
May 16, 2022, at 6:00 PM**

MINUTES

In Attendance: Myra Butler, Mary Fisher, Faye Little, Mike Moulds, Greg Welch, Jr., and Guest Speakers Kat Stork Blaher and Kim Duncan from Shore Strategies, LLC.

Absent: Melinda Bookwalter, Melissa Cannon, Commissioner Bob Jacob, Nivek Johnson, Joyce Moody, and Penny Usilton.

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Fisher called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

MINUTES

The minutes from the February 7, 2022, meeting have been approved by the Board electronically.

GUEST SPEAKER(S): Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation (LPPR) Plan Presentation

Kat Stork Blaher and Kim Duncan from Shore Strategies, LLC were present at the meeting to provide updates on the final draft of the Kent County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan and the next steps within the update process. The following information was shared at the meeting:

- The draft Plan was submitted to the State for their review and when their response came in, there were not many changes required to be made. The largest issue of concern was with regards to identifying the availability of Parks and Open Space within the properties that the County already owns and with regards to what is available within the municipalities. Based upon the population density and other factors that were presented to the Board at the previous meeting, the State has determined that the County has met its acquisition goal. This is important because it means that it allows more funding to be directed towards development, rather than land acquisition at a high rate.
- In review of the Parks and Recreation Plan and how it aligns with the Comprehensive Plan for the County, the State reviewed the Plan for the three main components: Parks and Recreation, Natural Resource Land Conservation, and Agricultural Land Conservation. These were the areas that were of most importance for enriching the lives of the citizens and sustaining a healthy community by providing quality recreation, cultural activities, and access to natural open space, while preserving the historic and cultural traditions of the County, as well as the economic well-being of its residents.
- The Planning Commission will review the draft Plan at their June meeting. The Commission is tasked with making a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners for adopting the Plan as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan.
- The goals of the Board and the Parks and Recreation staff continue to be the following:
 - Continue to enhance recreational programs.
 - Continue to build and enhance existing parks and facilities that are available in the County.
 - Promote the preservation and use of public open space and the natural resources that are an important part of Kent County.
 - Increase opportunities for the County's youth to be engaged.
 - Recruit and retrain committed staff.

- We worked closely with the Planning team for their expertise in the areas of Natural Resource Land Preservation and Ag Preservation to support and focus on the strategies already provided in the 2018 Comprehensive Plan and to continue to support the land preservation efforts that are on-going.
- The funding sources that are available from the State level are through the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Fund, Rural Legacy Program, Program Open Space, and through Heritage area work as well.
- Other important strategies and goals are to continue to require conservation subdivision techniques and to support the No Net Loss of Forest initiative.
- Within the next few years, the Planning Department will be required to prepare and complete the Phase III version of WHIP, the local Watershed Implementation Plan.
- With regards to Ag Preservation, it is the goal to increase the rate of easement acquisitions. However, Kent County is doing some of the best work in the State for preserving agricultural and natural resource land.
- Capital development priorities are dependent on on-going funding decisions at the state level and the direction of Open Space funds that the County makes in terms of what is done in the annual plan that gets implemented. The priority projects that were identified in the LPPRP focus on three parks:
 - Worton Park: The redevelopment of features and amenities that have reached their lifespan, as well as new features.
 - *Turners Creek: Some redevelopment with a possibility for new trails and a potential for connecting the trails to the Sassafras National Resource Management area.
 - *Still Pond Station Park: Review the initial concept plan that was developed and formalize a master plan with engineering involved; then determine a phased development for the project.

*These are both long term projects which will take significant financial investment at the County and State level.
- Betterton Beach is an on-going project in terms of redevelopment of the boardwalk and for public access to the beach and water area.
- Parks and Recreation is hoping to find ways to enhance water access for the public, particularly at Still Pond Station Park and Turners Creek.
- The Plan includes working with the Department of Natural Resources for the possibility of connecting the Gilcrest Trail to Worton. The Town of Galena is also looking into a safe walking/biking access trail along 213, from Toal Park to Georgetown.
- Other unique features that were discussed at length:
 - Look into the potential for developing a BMX or skate park, and a dog park.
 - Historic Preservation of the Lathim House and Granary, a part of the Turners Creek parcel; there is interest in collaborating with other agencies and organizations to identify funding to do preservation work on the projects.
 - Extending the Betterton Beach boardwalk to allow water access for individuals with mobility constraints.
- The County's municipalities have their own capital priorities and projects that they are working on with grant funding that was provided last year, as well as new grant funding that may be available this year.

In closing, Ms. Stork Blaher talked about the next steps in the update process. She said the Plan will be reviewed by Planning Commission at their June meeting and if no additional changes are required, the Commission will make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners for adopting the Plan. Ms. Stork Blaher commented that for Program Open Space funding, the Plan is required to be updated every five

years. Ms. Stork Blaher said they thoroughly enjoyed working on the project and that they appreciate everyone in the various departments for their hard work and partnership.

Ms. Butler informed the Board that the draft Plan will also be available for public review and comment from May 23, 2022, through June 3, 2022.

Ms. Butler thanked Ms. Stork Blaher and Ms. Duncan for their hard work and for facilitating the Plan's update process during the past year and a half.

OLD BUSINESS

Recreation

Full Time Staff Updates (Old and New)

- Ms. Butler announced the following Parks and Recreation full time staff changes:
 - The department is down one full-time staff (Facility Monitor) position. Josh Iseman has resigned, and currently no one has applied for the position.

FY22 Capital Projects

- The two projects that will be completed in FY22 are the underwater lights at the Community Center pool, and the additional shelving and electrical outlets in the storage room at the Community Center pool; this room also serves as a break room area (in season) for the lifeguards.

Kent County Youth Softball League Administration

- Kent County assumed leadership of the Youth Softball League earlier this year and shortly after the season started, the County received a surprise request from the Youth Baseball Administration requesting to take over the Youth Softball program. It has been shared with the County, by former leadership, that there has been an overwhelming response from the parents of the players who wish to keep the program localized. The parents are concerned that if the program moves under the little league baseball administration, there will be additional long-distance travel. It is the position of Parks and Recreation Department to continue honoring the request from the Youth Softball Administration's previous leadership in the interest of the parents and players. The softball season ends mid-June.

Future of Sassafras and Environmental Education Center

- Part of the FY23 budget request was an ask for funding for this program to continue under the leadership of Parks and Recreation. In recent weeks, in having conversations with Mr. Gilcrest and receiving feedback from the County Commissioners during budget discussions in April, the request was removed from Parks and Recreation's budget request. Ms. Butler said in speaking with the Board of Education, other options are being considered.

Spring/Summer 2022 Schedule of Programs & Activities

- Individual announcements pertaining to programs and activities are currently being pushed out via social media and shares, through schools, and via flyers. In the fall, the department will go back to publishing the traditional schedule for activities.

Aquatics Staffing Management

- The County Commissioners approved contracting with a vendor for lifeguard staffing at its pools and Betterton Beach; Aquatic Management Systems (AMS) was awarded the contract. We are excited that all three pools will open for the summer season.

Parks

Local Parks & Playground Infrastructure Grant Projects Status

County Parks:

- Most FY22 projects are being delayed due County-wide departmental staffing issues which have affected sending out RFPs, receiving bids, and conducting pre-bid meetings, along with world-wide delays with shipments, deliveries, and supplies. For these reasons, and due to the timeline of the funds being released from the State, we anticipate the following projects to be completed in FY23: Betterton Pavilion, Bayside bathhouse flooring, Worton Park playground replacement, pavilion, athletic field lighting, ballfield fencing, digital message signage, and fencing at the lower ballfield at Toal Park.

Town Parks:

- Wilmer Park playground will be completed in FY22. The remaining projects being funded for the Towns will be rolled into FY23.

Public Works Director Mike Moulds informed the Board that a request has been made from the high school to install a Monarch Butterfly Waystation at the Community Center. The waystation will consist of 200-300 square feet of wildflowers, for the Monarchs to stop and eat on their journey to Mexico; another waystation will be installed at the High School. Mr. Moulds anticipates the project to begin in September and in time for the flowers to bloom in the spring.

Program Open Space Grant Projects Status

- An annual POS program will be required to be submitted by July 1. Projects must align with the LPPRP and be identified in the annual program in order to be funded.

NEW BUSINESS

Recreation

- We are in a good position with regards to our summer camp and counselor staff; we are also partnering with the Boys and Girls Club of Cecil and Kent Counties to partner with programs.
- We had a pickleball tournament this past weekend. There were sixteen participants, and the event was successful.
- Last Friday, staff participated in an emergency shelter drill at the Community Center with several of the County's agencies; Virginia Gregg, from EMS, spearheaded the exercise. It was nice to be able to come together and get into character with some of the roles, and staff enjoyed helping.
- Our pool inspections are scheduled for this Friday with the Health Department. Mr. Moulds inquired about fencing at the Millington pool. Ms. Butler said she believes the issue has been resolved, but she will confirm and report back.
- The pools will be open on weekends during the first four weeks, beginning Memorial weekend through June 19th. After public schools close, the Community Center Pool will operate 7 days a week through Labor Day, and the Millington Pool will operate 6 days a week, closing on Mondays. Bayside Pool will operate Thursday through Sunday with lifeguards on duty; and Betterton Beach will have lifeguards on duty Thursday through Sunday.
- Summer Camp will begin Monday, June 27th, and staff training will begin the prior week. We are pleased with the number of youths who have registered.

Other

Advisory Board Meeting Schedule

- The Board discussed its options for attending future meetings. Ms. Butler informed the Board that the County Commissioners' preference is for Boards to resume in-person meetings as much as possible. Ms. Fisher said she would prefer to attend the May and August meetings in person, and the November and February meetings via virtual attendance. Since the Board did not have a quorum to vote on the matter, Ms. Butler said she will send out a notice for voting online.

REPORTS

Chair/Toal Park:	Mary Fisher Nothing to report
Vice-Chair/Worton Park:	Faye J. Little Nothing to report
Bayside Landing Park:	Penny Usilton No report
Betterton Beach:	Greg Welch Ms. Butler wanted to know if the rails for the steps have been completed, and Mr. Moulds said they were.
Millington Pool:	Melissa Cannon No Report
Edesville Park:	Joyce B. Moody No Report
Turners Creek Park:	Melinda Bookwalter No Report
High School:	Vacant
High School:	Vacant
County Commissioner:	Bob Jacob No report
Board of Education:	Nivek Johnson No report
Public Works:	Mike Moulds Nothing to report

Ms. Butler thanked the Board for their continued service.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Butler made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Ms. Little seconded the motion; the meeting was adjourned at 6:53 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: Monday, August 15, 2022