

Orange County Parks and Recreation Council

(Haywood Rhodes, Chair; John Greeson, Vice-Chair; Bruce Chinery; Mikki Fleming; Cecily Kritz; Andrew Landstrom; Gina Reyman; Bob Smith; Tim Tippin, Michael Zelek; Xilong Zhao)

March 3, 2021

6:30 p.m.

Members present: Haywood Rhodes, Chair; John Greeson, Vice-Chair; Mikki Fleming; Cecily Kritz; Andrew Landstrom; Gina Reyman; Bob Smith; Tim Tippin; Xilong Zhao. Members absent: Michael Zelek, Bruce Chinery

Staff: David Stancil, Beth Young

Chapel Hill Parks and Greenways Commission Liaison: Alice Armstrong

Meeting notes from the January 13th and February 3rd, 2021 PRC meetings were reviewed.

Report from the Chair: Current vacancies – there is one now and will be three at the end of the month. At Large, Cedar Grove Township, and Carrboro Town limits. David Stancil reviewed the five current applicants with the board. Cecily Kritz made a motion to appoint Christopher Colvin to the Carrboro Town Limit vacancy. Xilong Zhao seconded. Motion approved.

New Business: Stancil will reach out to the two other applicants who have older applications to make sure they are still interested in serving.

Parks and Recreation Operations – An overview: All parks (except Soccer.com) are open, though some with limitations. Central Recreation Center (CRC) remains closed, a few in-person programs are being offered but the bulk remains as virtual programming. Athletics are not happening right now. Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Hillsborough, and the County met with the County Health Director to discuss spring sports and summer camps. As of now, outdoor sports may occur with restrictions but indoor sports are not recommended. For the County, baseball and softball via HYAA will begin at Cedar Grove and Fairview Parks with COVID regulations being followed. Volleyball will be held outside in the field behind the CRC.

After discussing with soccer groups, with the spring soccer season winding down in April there was not a likelihood of many reservations. Stancil discussed this with the County Manager and it was agreed that it was not worth the effort and resources to open Soccer.com Center this spring for a one month schedule with little to no projected use. Soccer.com will reopen for the fall 2021 season.

Stancil reviewed possible ramifications for this spring and next fiscal year due to COVID. The County is looking at a budget shortfall for FY 2021-22. One of the areas of reductions (along with 5% reduction in operating costs) is to reduce hiring

of seasonals to help with parks maintenance. Normally Parks seasonals are hired in March and work into early November. These seasonals are relied on due to the small number of full-time staff for the number of parks we have. However, current budget issues have not allowed for that yet. Stancil is working with County management to create a plan for limited seasonal staffing. The department may be asked to significantly reduce seasonal staff, and depending on the scale of reductions, may be looking at reducing maintenance and closing some parks during the weekdays in order to maintain them. The County Manager will make a final decision on this in the next several weeks as the budget is prepared, but options are being discussed. Recreation seasonal staff are a bit different in that they are not hired until their programs are in place (and the revenue for the programs received), making their positions revenue neutral. Parks seasonals however do not have this luxury. The Manager has just approved hiring one full time seasonal at Cedar Grove to help with the ballfields with HYAA starting up.

Blackwood Farm Park: Park construction design and engineering is nearing completion and bid documents will soon be out and construction bids solicited, with construction to begin this summer. One of the scenarios being considering is closing Blackwood Farm Park during the construction process – which would last about a year. Much of the construction would take place in parts of the park that see public usage and the staging area may take up the existing parking area.

Director report: It does appear we will be doing limited in-person summer camps, but at much smaller numbers than usual. Should know more in the next couple of weeks. Tennis single and double play is allowed at Fairview. However, no tournaments are being allowed at this time.

Rhodes noted the Intergovernmental Parks Workgroup will meet virtually April 14.

Friends of Parks and Recreation: Gina Reyman will work to have a meeting set up. One Hillsborough resident is very interested in planting trees along Hassell Street to improve the play area behind Central Recreation. This has been suggested for fundraising and may be a good project for the Friends?

Alice Armstrong mentioned that Chapel Hill will be extending a greenway up to Eubanks Rd and the Parks and Greenway Commission would like to see Orange County consider extending the greenway towards Hillsborough in the future.

The next meeting will be held virtually April 7th.

Meeting adjourned at 7:35 pm