

**Recreation and Park Advisory Board
In-Person Meeting @ Thomas Farm Community Center
September 25, 2025
Board Meeting Minutes**

PRESENT: Board Members: Jack Thirolf (chair), Tom Lynch, Chip Boylan,
Natalie Vankos, Ken Scales, Elizabeth Fischer
Absent: Tiffany Holand, Dirk Whatley
Staff: Tara Stewart, Karla Sheehi, Nia Smith
Council Liaison: Adam Van Grack

Meeting commencement: 7:03 pm

Re: Approval of June Minutes

The June minutes were approved as amended.

Re: Guest Forum

No guests in attendance.

**Re: Thomas Farm Community Center Highlights
Nia Smith, Supervisor**

Nia has been the Thomas Farm Community Center Supervisor for four years, and before that was the center's Assistant Supervisor. Nia shared the following highlights of exciting activities going on at Thomas Farm:

- **Adventure Kids Camp:** During the summer of 2025, TFCC hosted 170 kids participating in the popular 5-week program. In previous years, the program hosted 35 kids in this program, which was expanded as a result of the demand.
- **Afterschool Program:** There are currently 14 participants in the program, which is housed in the center's game room, and going well.
- **Tiny Crafters program:** Offered for parents and guardians with children ages 2 to 5.
 - Parents have received input about hosting a toddler summer camp, which staff are going to implement, to take place a week before the start of summer camp programs.
- **Fitness programs** are held during three different times of the week, accommodating member schedules.
- **Gymnasium:** The gym stays busy with drop-in volleyball, drop-in pickleball, drop-in badminton, senior basketball, and open gym basketball

Re: Council Report

Councilmember Van Grack is not in attendance.

Re: Staff Reports

- **Sports Leagues**

Sports leagues are doing well. Currently, we have 8052 participants as of late September. However, participant numbers are tracking slightly lower with Lincoln Park Community Center closed for renovation.

- We are up 136 participants compared to Fall 2025.
- There is an ebb and flow of participants, and we are seeing crossover of participants from our Cross Country and Soccer to NFL Flag Football. Overall steady increase for our overall Fall Leagues.

Adult Kickball League - 17

Adult Pickleball Ladder League - 64

Adult Pickleball Traditional League - 64

Cross Country - 146

Men's Softball- Fall - 11

NFL Flag Football League - 174

Soccer Co-Ed League Fall - 318

Soccer Co-Rec 7's - 22

Volleyball - Co-Rec - 13

Volleyball - Women's - 7

Total 836

- **The City's Cultural Arts Team** has been working to assess conditions and preserve artwork throughout the city to include pieces located in our parks.

- Progress has been made with the conservation and maintenance of public artworks:

Blossom, sculpture at the intersection of S. Stonestreet Ave & Park Road - work is anticipated to be completed week of 9.15.25.

Rockville, sculpture in Monument Park - work completed week of 9.15.25; public notification sign removed

Taking Flight, sculpture at Twinbrook Community Recreation Center - work completed week of 9.15.25; public notification sign removed

Untitled, sculpture in James Monroe Park - work will be performed week of 9.22.25

Untitled, mural at Lincoln Park Community Center - is expected to be completed 9.19.25, scaffolding will come down week of 9.22.25

- Exceptional work brought the City of Rockville's **Department of Recreation and Parks** to the stage of national recognition. As a **National Gold Medal Finalist**, the Department was formally recognized last week by the **American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration and the National Recreation and Park Association**.

- The 2025 finalist plaque will be hung in the Recreation and Parks reception area at the 6 Taft Center alongside the city's other finalist and Gold Medal plaques.
- This year's application and evaluation process served as a meaningful reminder of the significant impact Rec and Parks has on the Rockville community. From maintaining high-quality parks and facilities to delivering innovative programs and essential services, the staff's work demonstrates outstanding public service.
- The Gold Medal Application writing team, including **Elisabeth Deal, Paige Janzen, Andy Lett, Jessica Corazza, and Terri Hilton**, represented the

department well and put their wealth of experience and talent in presentation to good use, telling Rockville's story.

- **Rocktoberfest** will be held Saturday, September 27, 2025, in Rockville Town Center. The event celebrates German culture with beer, bands, bratwurst, artisan vendors, and family-friendly activities. Originating in 2017 as part of the 60th anniversary of Rockville's sister city relationship with Pinneberg, Germany, Rocktoberfest has grown into an annual tradition that attracts nearly 8,000 attendees.
- **Dedication Ceremony for the F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre** ADA Improvements and Renovations will take place after Rocktoberfest on Saturday, September 27th at 6pm. The event will include a brief program and tours of the theater after the ceremony. There's also a performance by one of our Resident Theater Companies, "Rockville Little Theatre's The Woman in Black" starting at 8pm.
- **King Farm Farmstead Master Plan**
On Monday, September 29th, the Department will return to the Mayor and Council Meeting to lead a work session on the King Farm Farmstead Master Plan. This third work session will focus on a review of refined building use concepts, construction cost estimation, and cost recovery analysis. The Department will be seeking direction from the M/C on which building options are preferred as well as how best to phase project implementation over the next several years.
- As part of the **Rockville Goes Purple** campaign for Opioid Overdose Awareness month in September, staff at the Rockville Swim and Fitness Center will receive Opioid Overdose Response (Narcan/Naloxone) Training on September 30. For September.
 - Purple Lights have been illuminated at 10 city facilities:
 - Rockville City Hall
 - Rockville City Police Station
 - Croydon Creek Nature Center
 - Thomas Farm Community Center
 - Lincoln Park Community Center
 - Twinbrook Community Recreation Center
 - F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre and Social Hall
 - Rockville Swim and Fitness Center
 - Rockville Senior Center
 - Taft Center
- **RedGate Park**
 - On October 4th 9am-12pm, we are partnering with the Friends of RedGate on a free community event at RedGate Park.
"Birds, Blooms, and Beyond at RedGate Park"
Activities include:
 - Bird/Nature Walks
 - Nature Education Table

- BioBlitz Activity
 - Weed Warriors Event
 - Chronolog Photo Opportunities
 - Native Plants Plug Giveaway
- This week, Rec & Parks received confirmation/notice of award from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources that the City of Rockville is being awarded a \$1.5M land, water, and conservation fund grant. This matching grant will assist the city with moving the first phase projects forward at the park. We have also received preliminary approval to apply for a second LWCF grant for an additional \$1.2M to implement additional projects at RedGate. This second grant is currently being reviewed by the City Attorney's Office in preparation for Mayor and Council review and approval to proceed.
- **Youth Fun Run at Woodley Gardens Park**
On Sunday, October 5th, the city is partnering with Georgetown Hill Early School to host the second annual Youth Fun Run at Woodley Gardens Park.
 - Parking will be in the pool parking lot, at Woodley Gardens Park, the shopping center across from the park, and the streets around the park and pool.
 - Cost is \$25-\$40 depending on registration date (\$30 before 10/1)
 - The waves will be held on the schedule of:
 - 100 Yard Dash – 8:45 am (ages 3-5)
 - ½ Mile Loop – 9:15 am (ages 5-9)
 - 1 Mile (Double Loop) – 10 am (ages 8-12)
 - **Maryland Municipal League Municipal Achievement Award recipient**
The City of Rockville will be recognized as the Maryland Municipal League (MML) Municipal Achievement Award winner in the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility category. The City is being recognized for its work over the last two years to establish a Department Program Access Team, hire a Program Access Supervisor, and the City's ADA Coordinator. This year's award winners will be recognized at the Closing General session of the MML fall conference on Tuesday, Oct. 14.
 - **Welcome new R&P hires**
Rec and Parks welcomes two new staff members: Maria Kolanowski, who accepted the role of Program Specialist at the Rockville Swim and Fitness Center. Maria will be overseeing the fitness classes and personal training department. David Smith, the new Secretary and Sports Admin at our 6 Taft Ct. facility, and whom patrons will speak to and see first when inquiring about our recreation programs and services.
 - **Outdoor Fitness Pool at the Rockville Swim & Fitness Center**
The outdoor Fitness Pool at the Rockville Swim and Fitness Center remains open for post-season hours through October 17. Check out www.rockvillemd.gov/swimcenter for facility and program schedules.
 - **Rec & Parks program registration procedures**
The Department will be updating our program registration procedures starting with the Winter 2025 season to prioritize resident and senior member registration. Registration for

residents will open two days ahead of general registration for our recreation programs. We are hoping this will assist resident families with being able to secure spots in our classes ahead of non-residents.

Re: Review of Board Charter and Purpose

Jack wanted to encourage the board to review the charter from the admissible code on what the board's purpose is, and to highlight a couple of things the board should focus on:

- Vice chair (named by M&C)
 - The board can assist with nominating a volunteer member
 - A 2-year role that moves into the chair role within the cycle time
- Members represent broad geographic diversity
 - Representation of core neighborhoods within the board, allowing ideas or concerns to be tabled during board meetings.
- Recommendation to identify a lead to represent big topics like RedGate or King Farm Farmstead, or Recreation Leagues.

Re: Subcommittee Reports

a) Swim & Fitness Center (Ken)

The Swim Center hired a Program Specialist, who will not only focus on swim programs but also on many fitness programs, which will be great for the center.

The main pool will be closing on October 17th. The city tries to keep it open as long as possible.

Ken updated the board on the two youth applicants interested in joining the Swim Center advisory committee. The committee members were so impressed with both applicants that they voted both into the committee.

b) Recreation and Parks Foundation (Chip)

The Foundation will be serving coffee and donuts at the Car Show on October 18, and could use a few volunteers.

c) Arts

▪ **College Gardens (Natalie):**

The installation of the mural is complete, and the city held a ribbon-cutting ceremony with the artist.

▪ **Twinbrook Annex Mural (Elizabeth)**

Ann Odelle is coordinating the installation, hopefully for October

▪ **Swim & Fitness Center (Ken)**

No new update

d) RedGate Park – (Tara)

Tara covered this topic in her staff report.

Jack made a motion to bring the board's concern to Mayor & Council about the city giving up the flexibility of the RedGate property for the \$ amount of the LWCF grant. Chip seconded the motion, and all members present voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Old Business/ New Business

Old Business

- Annual Report final review
 - The annual report data is a shared file for collaboration and was reviewed by all members. The report identifies the board's accomplishments over the last two years. The board does not need to take a vote. This will be submitted to the City Clerk's office by the September due date.
- Brainstorm long-term priorities at next meeting
 - Jack would like the board to brainstorm on some of the themes that have come up in previous meetings for new residents, being budget conscious, prioritizing city resident access, and cost benefits.

New Business

- **Rockville Baseball Hall of Fame (Tara)**
 - The city was approached by William Hickman representing Rockville Baseball Hall of Fame. They have 16 inductees that they would like to recognize on a commemorative wall at Dogwood Park's concession building. The city researched the process, met with Park staff and gathered specific questions for the organization regarding their process and the specific location. The city has another Hall of Fame plaque in one of our community centers, so the city's commemorative policy came into play with this request.
Tara shared the proposal with the board, which included questions posed by the city, and their responses. Included is also a draft recommendation letter that staff wanted the board to review and provide their thoughts or comments on.
The department is supportive of the request, but with some formalities in place. The organization purchases the supplies, handles the installation of the wall, and is responsible for the costs associated with the maintenance and upkeep.
The details on the exact size are still being resolved and to be reviewed by staff.

After further discussion, the board members in attendance are supportive of this request. Chip made a move to inform the Mayor and Council of their support to move forward with the organization's request. Tom seconded the motion, and all voted unanimously in favor.

Tara will share the recommendation memo with Jack to review and make and suggested comments for the memo.

- **Summary of July 4th Celebration concerns from the Environment Commission (Tara)**

Recreation and Parks (Special Events) took the concerns that were brought forth from the Environmental Commission and did some research on the environmental

impacts. The Special Events team responded to the concerns and documented their findings and research. It also identifies what the Rec & Parks department is doing on our end to minimize the impacts of the concerns, wherever it is possible. This document was included in tonight's meeting documents distributed to the board.

Tara asked that the board review this information, in preparation for Rec & Parks to formally respond via a memo to the Environmental Commission.

After discussion and review of the data gathered by the Special Events team, the board feels that the department can include this information and respond to the Environmental Commission, encouraging them to reach out to the Department of Public Works for further research. Recreation and Parks will be happy to collaborate if needed.

Re: Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:42 pm

The next meeting: October 23, 2025, at 7:00 PM @ Croydon Creek Nature Center