

**Recreation and Park Advisory Board
In-Person Meeting @ Croydon Creek Nature Center
October 23, 2025
Board Meeting Minutes**

PRESENT: Board Members: Jack Thirolf (chair), Tom Lynch, Chip Boylan, Natalie Vankos, Elizabeth Fischer, Tiffany Holand, Dirk Whatley
Staff: Tara Stewart, Steve Mader, Karla Sheehi, Melinda Norton
Absent: Ken Scales
Council Liaison: Adam Van Grack
Guest: Marsha Douma

Meeting commencement: 7:02 pm

Re: Approval of September Minutes

The September minutes were approved as presented.

Re: Guest Forum

Marsha Douma, introduced herself as a Rockville resident who applied for the open vacancy on this board. Marsha shared that she was a board member many years ago and is now retired and would like to get involved again. She found out about the vacancy through board member Elisabeth Fischer.

**Re: Thomas Farm Community Center Highlights
Melinda Norton**

Croydon Creek Nature Center opened in 2001. Melinda has been working for the City of Rockville since 2006, at Thomas Farm Community Center for a short time, then came to the Nature Center. The Center has grown from a place people did not know about to a place for community gathering, a place to learn about nature, and take walks. Melinda shared the following highlights about Croydon Creek Nature Center:

- **Nature Center Programs for:**
 - **Scout groups**
 - **School programs & groups**
 - **Families**
 - **Adults**
 - **3 miles of trails around the nature center**
 - **Welcomed a record 29,000 visitors in 2024**
 - **Summer Camp programs, which include the use of RedGate Park**

The square footage of the nature center poses the biggest challenge, with such a large community population. Another challenge is accessible trails for all, as the center does not have a paved trail. Discussions have been held regarding a future project and potential funding options for trail improvements. Melinda also spoke about the efforts towards cleaning up and reclaiming the meadow behind the Nature Center, which invasive species like to take over.

Re: Council Report ~ Councilmember Van Grack

Councilmember VanGrack extended his appreciation to Recreation and Parks for a fantastic Antique Car Show on Saturday, October 18th.

During Monday night's Mayor and Council meeting (Oct. 21st) Mayor and Council reviewed the proposed master plan for the King Farm Farmstead and based on the public's comments and feedback from the Mayor and Council, have suggested tweaking it with parking option #3, utilizing the surrounding parking. The other significant change is to remove the large usable space connecting the two dairy barns at the southern end of the facility. These changes will need to go back to the consultant for updates to the master plan draft and have it readily available for presentation at the December 8 Mayor and Council meeting for possible adoption.

Re: Staff Reports ~ Tara Stewart

- Leaf season is here, and our Parks crews have been hard at work blowing and mulching leaves throughout the city's parks and green spaces. Park maintenance and beautification highlights include:
 - **Welsh Park:** The fields were fertilized and watered.
 - **Elwood Smith:** Crews hauled topsoil for the renovation of the ballfield and repaired a retaining wall.
 - **Dogwood Park:** Fields repaired and mowed.
 - **Welsh, Kinship, and Rosehill Parks:** Mowed, removed trash, sticks, and debris while refilling Mutt Mitt stations throughout the area.
 - Playground inspections were also conducted at each park to ensure safe play spaces.
 - **Dawson Farm Park:** Wood chips were installed around newly planted trees in the central grove area to improve soil insulation, retain moisture, and enhance the visual appeal of the landscape.
 - **Maryvale Park:** Vegetation around the overlook was trimmed to improve visibility and site appearance.
- **RedGate Park**
 - We're excited to share that a new ADA-compliant sidewalk and concrete pad have been installed at Redgate Dog Park, enhancing accessibility for all visitors. This improvement ensures that individuals with mobility challenges can navigate the area more safely and comfortably. In addition, an ADA-accessible picnic table has been ordered and is scheduled for installation in the near future. Once in place, it will provide an inclusive space for everyone to enjoy the park amenities. These upgrades reflect our ongoing commitment to making public spaces welcoming and usable for all members of the community.
 - On November 17th, the Department will present an action item for the Mayor and Council to consider acceptance of the \$1.5M Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant to implement first phase park improvements per the approved Master Plan.
 - The city is currently evaluating design firm proposals for RedGate Park, and we expect to bring this item to the Mayor and Council in January for contract award. Once approved and the vendor has been given the notice to proceed, we expect the design and permitting phase to take approximately one year.
- The City of Rockville's Recreation and Parks Department successfully hosted the inaugural **Rockville Open Pickleball Tournament** on **Saturday, October 11, 2025**, at

Mattie J.T. Stepanek Park. The event featured **14 doubles teams** competing in a **round-robin format** across four courts, followed by semifinal and championship rounds. Designed for **beginner and intermediate players (3.5 & under)**, the tournament promoted community engagement, friendly competition, and active recreation for all participants. Participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and the department plans to make the Rockville Open an **annual event** as part of its ongoing efforts to expand inclusive, community-based sports programming.

- The Rockville Antique and Classic Car Show was held **Saturday, October 18**, at **Rockville Civic Center Park**. Featuring vehicles from **Packard to Ferrari** and **33 participating car clubs**, the show brought together a wide variety of antique and classic cars for enthusiasts and collectors to enjoy. In addition to the vehicles on display, the event included a flea market, car sales area, live music, and food and beverages available for purchase, making it a beloved community tradition for participants and spectators alike. The gorgeous weather contributed to the show's success
- Afterschool staff from Lincoln Park, Thomas Farm, and Twinbrook Community Centers participated in a professional development training led by Sharon Norcio, CTRS, Program Access Supervisor for Rockville Recreation and Parks on Monday, Oct. 20th. The session focused on inclusion, understanding diverse learners, and effective program planning. Staff took part in activities, videos, and discussions on strategies to support youth with ADD/ADHD, ASD, and anxiety, as well as techniques for maintaining structured and flexible programming. The training concluded with role-playing exercises and feedback to strengthen inclusive practices.
- On October 20, the Department of Recreation and Parks presented an action item requesting the Mayor and Council's adoption of the **King Farm Farmstead Master Plan**. In response to direction received during the September 29th work session, staff presented parking options, updated project implementation phasing, and construction cost estimates. The Mayor and Council provided feedback regarding their preference for parking at the Farmstead Park and requested updates to the dairy barns to reduce overall project costs. Staff will return to the Mayor and Council on December 8th to request adoption of the revised plan.
- **Rockville Baseball Hall of Fame Commemoration Wall** - The Recreation and Park Advisory Board recommendation approved at the 9/25/25 meeting was submitted to the City Clerk's Office and shared with the Mayor and Council on October 17, 2025. Notice to the public will be included in November's edition of Rockville Reports (hard copy and online), which should be released at the beginning of the month. The Department of Recreation and Parks is working with the City Attorney's Office to finalize an MOU draft that will be shared with RBBA for their review/feedback. Once the MOU draft is reviewed and finalized by the City and RBBA, it will be scheduled for review and consent agenda approval by the Mayor and Council.
- Lastly, as I transition from the City of Rockville on October 28th, **Steve Mader will serve as the interim Recreation and Parks Director**. Noel Gonzalez will serve as the interim Superintendent of Parks and Facilities, while Steve Mader serves as the interim director. These changes will be effective October 29, 2025.

Re: Subcommittee Reports

- a) **Swim & Fitness Center (Jack for Ken)**
The Swim Center continues to stay busy.

- b) **Recreation and Parks Foundation (Chip)**
Thank you to Jack and Elizabeth for volunteering at the Car Show's coffee and donut booth.
- c) **Arts**
 - **Twinbrook Annex Mural (Elizabeth)**
No new update
 - **Swim & Fitness Center (Ken)**
No new update
- d) **RedGate Park – (Tara)**
 - Tara covered this topic in her staff report.
- e) **King Farm Farmstead**

Jack suggested having board members volunteer on a subcommittee of interest or in their neighborhood. Natalie volunteered to take King Farm Farmstead. Elizabeth expressed that she can also collaborate with Ken on updates for the Swim Center. Sports is also an important subcommittee topic to report on.

Old Business/ New Business

Old Business

- Long-term priorities
 - Be proactive for future budget cycles
 - Board retreats to discuss topics of interest that would take up most of a meeting
 - Discuss and suggest top 3-5 priorities for the year.
- Vice Chair role
 - Jack relayed that based on the city code, this board is supposed to have a board chair who serves a 2-year term, along with a vice chair. The board has run well for years without a vice chair and extended the invite to the board for anyone who is interested in being the vice chair, perhaps to begin in 2026.

New Business

- **FY27 Budget Timeline**

Provided in tonight's meeting packet is information on the city's FY27 Budget timeline and the process Recreation and Parks follows. This helps the board consider a timeline on how it will engage with the budget process.

The department is currently at the beginning of developing the FY27 budget. The timeline talks about the public's involvement and what Recreation and Parks is working on internally, when Mayor and Council will review the budget, and then take action.

Between May and September timeframe the city calls for community budget proposal projects, which are submitted online. This is when the board can submit projects that may be of interest. Budget public hearings is also another opportunity to speak on behalf of the board.

Key Operating initiatives are reviewed and discussed with the Mayor and Council and all departments. These Key Initiatives are department recommendations that evolve into enhancements or CIP projects that are submitted as part of the city's budget.

- **Applicant of interest (Marsha Douma)**

Chip reminded the board that when an applicant of interest is invited to a meeting, at the end of the meeting, the board voluntarily provides their feedback to the board liaison, which is shared with the City Clerk's office.

Elizabeth Fischer pointed out that Marsha is very active at RedGate Park and would be a good representative.

Chip shared that he recalls Marsha playing an active role as a past board member, as he served on the board when she was a member.

The consensus from the board is that they are in support of Marsha's expression of interest, as she would add value to the board. The feedback will be shared with the City Clerk's office by Tara.

Re: Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 pm

The next meeting: December 11, 2025, at 7:00 PM @ Glenview Mansion