

**Recreation and Park Advisory Board
Virtual Meeting via WebEx
May 22, 2025
Board Meeting Minutes**

PRESENT: Board Members: Jack Thirolf (chair), Elizabeth Fischer, Tom Lynch
Chip Boylan, Natalie Vankos, Ken Scales, Dirk Whatley, Tiffany Holland
Absent: Kirsten Kaplan
Staff: Tara Stewart, Sharon Norcio
Council Liaison: Councilmember Adam Van Grack

Meeting commencement: 7:02

Re: Approval of April Minutes

The April minutes were approved as amended.

Re: Guest Forum

No guests are in attendance.

Re: Council Report

Councilmember Van Grack pointed out that Hometown Holidays and the Memorial Day parade were taking place this holiday weekend and extended his appreciation to Tara and the Recreation and Parks department for their work to put this event on.

Re: Supporting Inclusion Beyond the ADA
Sharon Norcio, Program Access Supervisor

Sharon Norcio joins us this evening to introduce herself and share with the board what her role as Recreation and Parks' Program Access Supervisor has her tackling.

Sharon started with the city in October of 2025 and comes from Montgomery County and has a degree in Recreation Therapy.

Sharon expresses that part of growing a program from its grassroots is by talking to your communities, your volunteers, and staff about greater access and acceptance. When we are creating this, we really want access and acceptance for all of those who want to work and play in our city. We talk about resource development, which means outreach, community engagement, and creating welcoming spaces. The first thing identified is greater access; who's coming to your centers; how are they using your parks, your facilities, and what questions are they asking? Our staff have great ideas on how to gain greater access, but we need to develop a long-term plan on how we can be more inclusive. One of Sharon's first implementations was an evacuation chair for the Glenview Mansion. The mansion has steps and an elevator for access to and from the second floor. However, during a power outage, the elevator cannot be used. Sharon set up staff training to learn how to evacuate someone using the evacuation chair.

Sharon is looking to obtain additional pieces of equipment to improve access in various facilities and events.

Sharon also spoke about **Resource Development**, which is a departmental access team leading work groups on training opportunities, volunteers, and coaches, along with identifying how we can make what we have better.

Outreach and Community Engagement is another essential part of Sharon's role, and she has been getting out, interacting with communities, sharing information about the resources we have available for our programs and camps. As a result, we are seeing an increase in participation, knowing they can request accommodations.

We are committed to creating safe, inclusive environments for all who participate in our programs. We have a dedicated mailbox where someone can email their questions, and a staff member will contact them to provide the information they need.

Rec & Parks is launching the city's first sensory safe space, which you can come see at Hometown Holidays this weekend at our Sensory Tent.

Tara shared that the city has hired a Director for our Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion department. Before the director's arrival, an ADA coordinator for the city was hired, who will be working closely with the department.

Re: Staff Reports

- **Registration for Summer Recreation programs** began May 6th for our Seniors and May 8 for our general registration. Staff were prepared to service patrons from our new 6 Taft Ct. facility, where we did get a few walk-ins. We are happy to report that we have since had a few more walks in. Patrons are finding us at our new facility, so we are happy.
- Our **Kids to Park Proclamation** was presented by the Mayor and Council during the May 12th meeting. A sincere thank you to Ken's son, August, for accepting the proclamation on behalf of Recreation and Parks.
- May 17, 2025, Croydon Creek celebrated **Kids to Parks Day** with the 24th annual Spring Festival family event, with a record 425 in attendance. The weather made it even more enjoyable. Among the nature games and crafts, there were animal meet & greets, Yoga demos, poetry, readings, and face painting.
- **Hometown Holidays** is taking place Saturday, May 24, and Sunday, May 25, in Rockville Town Center, from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m.
Each board member should have received their invitation from Mayor and Council to the Officials Reception Hospitality Area, scheduled for Saturday, May 24, from 3:30 to 5:30 pm. Your invitation included a site map for the event, and it shows where the Hospitality Area is located for the reception.

The event has two stages of entertainment for all ages and music from a variety of genres, including rock, pop, country, bluegrass, blues, and more.

Food and beverages from local restaurants and vendors will be available for purchase, including local flavors from around the world, with a preview of this summer's Explore Rockville Global Bites campaign. A new artisan shopping area will feature local artisans. Kids activities will include yard games, crafts, and kid-friendly performances. Outreach booths will connect attendees with festival sponsors, community groups and city services.

- **The Memorial Day Ceremony and Parade** is a long-standing tradition in the City of Rockville, which takes place on Monday, May 26 in Rockville Town Center. The day starts off with a ceremony at 9:30 a.m., remembering those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms and concludes with the annual parade. The parade starts at 10:30 a.m. and features more than 50 units, including military and community groups, marching units, dance troupes, and more.

We look forward to having board member Elizabeth Fischer as a parade judge to select winners for the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board 1st and 2nd place Awards (1st Place is \$150, and 2nd is \$100)
- **Outdoor Recreation Pool Project**

We are working on the final touches of the project. There is still some work to be done on the pool decks and some play features for the wellness pool, along with the medium-sized slide going in.

The fitness pool opened earlier this month, and we are excited to have this amenity accessible open to the community for Memorial Day weekend.

We are planning the dedication ceremony and looking at July 13th at 10:30 am, and the opportunity to use the facility, before the public opening. We are hoping to get a speaker from the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board. Jack, as the chair and past liaison to the advisory committee, if you are interested, let us know, and we will communicate this to Adam.
- **King Farm Farmstead Project Update**

The next round of community engagement meetings is coming up on May 28th, 29th, and June 3rd. We hope you had the chance to RSVP to attend one of the sessions:

 - May 28th at Saddle Ridge Community Center at King Farm
 - May 29th at Glenview Mansion
 - June 3rd will be a virtual meeting
 - Board Members and the community can RSVP for these opportunities via the Engage Rockville website: <https://engagerockville.com/kingfarm>

We had 131 participants attend the in-person and virtual sessions, and 246 complete the community visioning session.

We will be going before Mayor and Council on July 14th with the top concepts and obtain their feedback. Once we get their feedback in July, we'll then proceed to gather information regarding the economic analysis based on the programs that are recommended and construction cost estimates. Then come back to Mayor and Council in September or early October, hopefully.
- **June Board Meeting**

We are happy to host our board at 6 Taft Ct. for our June meeting/ Park Tour, which will begin at 6 pm. We will begin with a Pizza dinner, followed by a chauffeured park Tour, where we will visit the following 3 parks, highlighting recent CIP implementations.
- **Boards & Commissions Annual Report**

A reminder that the annual report from the board is due June 30th. If Jack or the board has any questions, please let Tara know, and she will connect with you.

- **National Gold Medal Finalist**

The Department of Recreation in Parks with the City of Rockville has been selected as a national gold medal finalist by the American Academy for Parks and Recreation Administration. The department won the National Gold Medal in 1994.

This was based on the work of the department over the past three years. We have five people from the department who were the writing team for the application, to will be attending the Award Finalist Gala at the NRPA conference in Orlando, Florida, where they will announce the Gold Medalist winner.

Re: Subcommittee Reports

a) **Swim & Fitness Center (Ken)**

The swim center has been centered around the renovations, and Tara gave us a great update on all of that. The timing is still mid-June which has been confirmed with Adam. The weather has impacted production

b) **Recreation and Parks Foundation (Chip)**

The Duck Derby event on the evening of July 18th will be fun.

The Foundation will be at Hometown Holidays again this year. Thank you to those who have volunteered. We will be manning a beverage booth again this year, near the main stage.

c) **Arts**

- **College Gardens (Natalie):**

Once the project is approved, staff will be planning for an early June installation.

- **Twinbrook Annex Mural (Elizabeth)**

Elizabeth went to the Twinbrook Rec Center to see the facility manager to find out the status of the mural. There have been some delays; however, the mural has been funded and the artist selected. The work has not been started yet.

College Gardens (Natalie)

The Mayor and Council approved the design last month and the work is supposed to begin in June.

- **Swim & Fitness Center (Jack)**

The pool project needs to be completed before we can begin planning for the artwork.

RedGate – (Kirsten/Tara)

Tara shared that right now, there is ongoing maintenance being done.

Having it as the backyard to 6 Taft Ct., staff can see firsthand how regularly the dog park is used.

Red Gate Park Master Plan design project

The RFP is currently with our City Attorney. Once they give it their approval, it will go out to bid.

New Business

Jack would like to see a proactive schedule of contacts within the city that the board would like to hear from to build connections. Jack suggested checking in with the leagues or other recreation groups. This list can get developed in the coming months, with board members submitting their input and suggestions.

Holding in-person meetings at the different Rec & Parks facilities would also give the board insight into recent highlights as well. The Senior Center, Nature Center, and Twinbrook CC are a few that the board has not been to recently and will be noted by staff to place on the list.

Re: Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:18 pm

The next meeting: June 26, 2025, at 7:00 PM (virtual)