

Parks & Recreation Commission
Meeting Minutes – February 25, 2019
Cecil F. Gilkerson Community Activities Center

The regular monthly meeting of the Harrisonburg Parks & Recreation Commission was held on Monday, February 25, 2019 at 7:00pm at the Community Activities Center. The meeting was called to order with the following commissioners present: James Logan, Kevin Gibson, Obie Hill, MuAwia DaMes, Deanna Reed, Chance Ebersold, Donna Armstrong; resident: Mike Cullerton and Parks and Recreation representatives: Luanne Santangelo, Erik Dart and Brian Mancini; Daniel Martonik was not present.

1. Meeting Called to Order-The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair (Kevin Gibson).
2. Approval of January 28, 2018 Meeting Minutes- The January 28, 2018 meeting minutes received a motion to approve by MuAwia DaMes, seconded by Obie Hill; meeting minutes were unanimously approved by commissioners.
3. Lori Kizner, Executive Director of the Boys & Girls Club of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County
 - a. Smoke-Free Parks Presentation

Ms. Kizner informed commissioners of a grant i.e. Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth the organization received last summer to inform children about the dangers of tobacco and peer pressure. The \$149,000 grant covers three years and would focus on initiating change in the city by creating a smoking ban / prohibit tobacco use at Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation facilities. However, this is not a possibility as Virginia operates under Dillon's Rule, which stipulates that local governance is restricted to those granted by the commonwealth. Ms. Kizner expressed signage restrictions such as: the inability to use the words "prohibit" and "ban" due to Dillon's Rule and discussed the idea of creating a *culture* of voluntary compliance or positive enforcement. Ms. Kizner received twenty (20) free signs from the Virginia Department of Health, but would not be able to use the signs due to verbiage/symbols that are prohibited under Dillon's Rule throughout the state of Virginia.

Ms. Kizner discussed the possibly of creating signs with "meaning without words". Ms. Kizner displayed an example of a sign used in Arlington, VA that encourages non smoking near community facilities e.g. please no smoking our community values a healthy and safe environment...we ask that you do not smoke within 50 feet of playgrounds, courts, ball fields, pavilions, and recreational areas. Ms. Kizner, presented an example of another sign made in Fairfax, VA that read, "Tobacco free play zone but thank you for your voluntary cooperation".

Ms. Kizner received quotes for signs (i.e. 12 x 18) at \$25 each from Sign Pro. Ms. Kizner referred to a conversation she had with Councilman Chris Jones who had referred Ms. Kizner to contact Public Works for sign creation if needed. Ms. Kizner estimated that she would need forty (40) signs for eighteen (18) parks in Harrisonburg, which would be equivalent to at least two (2) signs per park. Ms. Kizner referred to other counties e.g. Arlington and others that have been successful with creating signage that would be considered "polite enforcement". Ms. Kizner discussed the identification of funds for implementation i.e. signage either through internal funding, grants, or partnerships. Ms. Kizner noted that she was aware of the challenges and the political, emotional, social implications smoke-free signs could create within the Harrisonburg community i.e. stakeholders. Ms. Kizner discussed the necessity to engage community for support on the smoke/tobacco free Harrisonburg parks initiative. Ms. Kizner voiced her desire for Harrisonburg City Council to take action to adopt the initiative of smoke/ tobacco-free parks. Ms. Kizner stated the verbiage she intends to use at the March 12th meeting with City Council. Ms. Kizner adopted wordage from Arlington, VA (as Arlington, VA adopted smoke-free parks) and intends to utilize similar verbiage during her meeting with City Council, but will seek to add, tobacco free parks to include all tobacco products i.e. smoking, dipping, vaping, etc. Ms. Kizner listed action steps:

1. Create a sign and decide who would make the sign
2. Develop internal communication plan and guidelines for staff about the smoke/tobacco-free initiative and how to handle situations/questions that may arise.
3. Train field staff
4. Implement the plan
5. Identify priority parks and where to install signs

Ms. Kizner solicited commissioners for questions regarding her presentation:

- Mr. Gibson sought to gain clarity from Ms. Kizner regarding her expectations of PRAC and inquired if Ms. Kizner needed an endorsement or official decision from the commission. Ms. Kizner responded that it was recommended that she present to PRAC before she presents her request to City Council.
- Mr. Logan inquired if Ms. Kizner examined the possibility of the state giving the locality permission to regulate the activity of creating smoke/tobacco-free zones as states have allowed localities permission to regulate certain items (e.g. taxes for lodging) as Virginia statute is "vague". Ms. Kizner commented, "I think that's a laborious process".
- Ms. Santangelo recalled a bill that may be introduced this year that would allow local jurisdictions to implement bands on smoking.
- Ms. Reed inquired about Ms. Kizner's expectations and her desired response from PRAC. Ms. Kizner commented that she would like PRAC to "approve" or "add" to her presentation request to City Council and decision on signs. Ms. Kizner noted that Councilman Jones indicated that City Council could cover the cost for signs at $\$25 \times 40 = \$1,000$. Ms. Reed affirmed that City Council would need to approve Ms. Kizner's request and inquired about the \$149,000 grant and how the funds would be appropriated. Ms. Kizner commented that most of the funds from the grant would be allocated toward curriculum and staffing, but funds could also cover sign costs.
- Mr. DaMes admonished sign verbiage to be all encompassing of "smoke and tobacco" as there are products that may not be tobacco based and would inadvertently allow people to "smoke" trending non-tobacco products such as: electronic cigarettes and/or vaporizers.
- Mr. Gibson asked for a delineation of what the awarded grant would fund and what Ms. Kizner would ask from City Council for support. Mr. Gibson also inquired how new signage enforcement would translate into the job duties/responsibilities of the Parks and Rec staff?
- Ms. Armstrong suggested Ms. Kizner develop curriculum approximately 1-2 hours in length specifically geared toward providing strategies/options for staff and how to approach the implementation of a smoke/tobacco free program in our city's parks to ensure staff is fully equipped.
- Mr. Mancini noted that he had recently experienced a similar tobacco/ smoke free initiative in Dinwiddie County where he previously lived and worked, however, he is not sure how smoking was banned, but recalls verbiage on signs that designated areas for smokers. Mr. Mancini discussed challenges for smokers to be aware of signs and suggested an adequate amount of signs to suggest smoking/non-smoking areas.
- Ms. Santangelo provided historical reference to the start of the tobacco-free parks initiative in 2017 and informed commissioners that former Grant Coordinator of Boys and Girls Club, Wendy had inquired if Ms. Santangelo would partner with the Boys and Girls Club. Ms. Santangelo fully supports tobacco-free parks, but understands the inherent challenges to enforce/patrol the parks of Harrisonburg. Ms. Santangelo recalled the ability to enforce local ordinances where she had previously worked i.e. Florida and targeted specific areas where people congregated and self-police. Ms. Santangelo offered that Ms. Kizner inquire of local organizations that use the parks e.g. Little League, Soccer, etc. and determine how their rules address smoking. Also, Ms. Santangelo suggested that there is some private property around the park that is within 50 ft. of the park, therefore, certain areas of the park would not allow for this type of signage.
- Mr. DaMes reiterated that Ms. Kizner's proposal is essentially a request to change a culture, not environment, as this initiative is not enforceable.
- Ms. Kizner accepted suggestions proposed by commissioners and agreed to make adjustments to her presentation. Ms. Kizner inquired about the cost for signage and the cost for PRAC to create signs.
- Ms. Santangelo expressed reservations for PRAC to budget for signs as it was not included in last year or next year's budget and expressed that signage should be covered by the grant. Ms. Santangelo also cautioned the excessive creation of signs to avoid sign pollution and suggested decorative/friendly signage.
- Ms. Reed commented that Ms. Santangelo should review the proposed signs and determine which parks and amount of signs suggested for each park. Ms. Reed also expressed reservations for City Council to pay for signs when the grant funds allow for the purchase of signs. Ms. Kizner agreed that the grant could pay for signs, but sought a possible partnership.

- Ms. Santangelo expressed “mixed-feelings” about staff approaching people to not smoke and noted a recent news story that confirmed how polarizing the topic of smoking vs. non-smoking might be for some people. Both Mr. Dart and Mr. Mancini confirmed local occurrences involving staff who intentionally avoided confrontations with smokers.
- Ms. Armstrong sought clarification and concluded that the signs would create cultural change and would not be enforced by staff; Ms. Kizner agreed and added that staff would voluntarily suggest non-smoking.
- Ms. Santangelo expressed a need for clarification on the initiative provided by Ms. Kizner in establishing a culture change outside of the usage of signage and how the community would be educated/linked to the mission of the program? Ms. Kizner solicited ideas for educating the community on the tobacco/smoke-free initiative and added that website information and flyers could be created to inform the public. Ms. Armstrong commented that the proposed signs were informational and referred to resources listed on Ms. Kizner’s presentation.
- Mr. Gibson solicited action items/ proposals for Ms. Kizner as she prepares her presentation for City Council. Ms. Kizner asserted that she could make the suggested revisions and present at PRAC’s March 18th meeting and then to City Council on March 26th.
- Mr. Cullerton informed group that Public Work has the ability to build signs that would be cheaper than \$25, which is cheaper than Sign Pro. Mr. Cullerton commented that signs should be placed where people are congregating and where kids are located, but should not restrict people from smoking elsewhere and to include community stakeholders who may be against the non-smoking initiative.
- Mr. Gibson consolidated commissioner’s recommended proposals to seven (7) items:
 1. Alternative location for smokers or designated area
 2. Signage creation and installation is paid for by grant funds with possible partnership
 3. Parks and Recreation staff would have input on signage and locations
 4. Define the perimeter of park grounds and designated areas for smoking
 5. Enforcement burden is not on Parks and Recreation staff
 6. Create educational tactics to communicate message to change culture to broader community
 7. Research other leagues / organizations and policies that support non smoking to assist with her effort to change the culture
- Ms. Armstrong thanked Ms. Kizner for her work toward her smoke prevention initiative.
- Ms. Kizner commented that she would make the suggested revisions offered by commission and present at PRAC’s March 18th meeting; PRAC agreed to Ms. Kizner’s request.

4. Review of PRAC Bylaws and Ordinance

a. Amendments

Mr. Gibson recapped on the “new vibe” of the commission and did not want to inadequately attach amendments to bylaws but solicited commissioners to provide due diligence in thoroughly evaluating bylaws and proposing amendments to bylaws; Mr. DaMes expressed interest; Mr. Gibson commented that Mr. Martonik previously expressed interest in accomplishing this task. Mr. Gibson expressed that he would send an email to both, Mr. DaMes and Mr. Martonik expressing their agreement to accomplish this task and would expect both Mr. DaMes and Mr. Martonik to present amendments to the commission at their March 18th meeting.

5. Director’s Report & Project Updates- Project updates- Brian Mancini / Luanne Santangelo

Mr. Mancini introduced himself as Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation, a position he has occupied for nine (9) months. Mr. Mancini apologized for missing the previous PRAC meeting and shared several updates:

1. Park View Office (located at intersection of Waterman and Chicago avenue) with assistance from a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) James Madison University (JMU) student, created maps for better workflow. All parks are now mapped, which has allowed for efficient work plans and user friendliness. Mr. Mancini invited commissioners to visit the Park View office.
2. Mr. Mancini commented that he and his team are working on initiatives for more efficiency in the parks e.g. restroom and park locks.

3. Lucy F. Simms Educational Center is currently under evaluation to have AV audio system installed in the auditorium to improve acoustics for meetings, family events, etc. Also, the flooring of gymnasium will be refurbished to preserve its historical design and painting.
4. GIS-JMU Student assisted with creating a Pollinator Corridor, which would involve native plants to encourage pollinators.
5. Dog Park- Mr. Mancini expressed challenges with water sitting under the bottom of the Dog Park, but informed commissioners that space has been cleared to construct a third park to be utilized when the other parks flood; next fiscal year's budget contains funds to create a fence in the dog park and electric lines to connect electricity to the shelter.
6. Shelters in the park are on a maintenance system, which three (3) roofs and floors will be refurbished on the shelter every year, in addition to various fixes to drains near shelters.
7. Rocktown Trails Project was delayed in the past, however this project is being revived and will include emergency signage for pedestrians on trails for emergency services if needed.
8. Heritage Oaks Golf course was impacted by flooding and damaged some of the bridges within the golf course; designs for new bridges have been created and by next fiscal year, after bid stage, Parks and Rec plans to replace the bridges.
9. Dream Come True Park will experience changes, as items/equipment within this park will be replaced. Some additions will include a train and an item called the vomit comet by July 1st.
10. Skate Park will undergo an update with a revamp to the half pipe.

Ms. Santangelo informed commissioners of the Parks and Rec. budget meeting scheduled tomorrow with City Manager, Deputy City Manager, and Finance Director. Ms. Santangelo stated that the goal is to address the infrastructure of Parks and Rec and modernize the facility; Olympic pool is roughly 50% complete with an anticipated opening date of the Splash Pad for Memorial Day. Mr. Mancini encouraged commissioners to inform Parks and Rec staff of concerns and/or suggestions to improve facilities. Ms. Reed inquired about a situation involving a citizen (i.e. woman) who feeds cats within Hillandale Park; Ms. Reed referred to an article featured in "hburgcitizen" online news about cat situation. Ms. Santangelo inquired if any commissioner attended the pollinator event yesterday. Ms. Santangelo commented that JMU, Public Works, and Parks and Recreation were involved with the pollinator event, which was an event geared toward promoting pollinators in the Harrisonburg community. Ms. Santangelo added that the pollinator event was well attended, as people were interested in the impact of pollinators on Harrisonburg city food source. Future pollinator event will be scheduled due to its success in the city.

6. Action Items- Mr. Gibson read an email from Daniel Martonik recapping a Harrisonburg city event i.e. The History of the Congo that he attended. Mr. Hill attended Daddy/Daughter Dance on February 9, 2019 and provided a summary of his favorable experience; event was sold out at approximately 125 people. Mr. Gibson reminded commissioners of Shamrock event scheduled for March 16th at Hillandale Park. Mr. Hill informed commissioners that he would not be able to attend following PRAC meeting due to a scheduling conflict.
7. Adjourn- Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

The next Commission meeting is scheduled for March 18, 2019 at 7:00pm at the Cecil F. Gilkerson Community Activities Center.