

Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission
Minutes
June 17, 2019

The Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission (PRAC) met at 7:04 p.m. on June 17, 2019 in the Cecil F. Gilkerson Community Activities Center.

COMMISSIONERS

Present:

Kevin Gibson (Chairman)
Dan Martonik (Vice-Chairman)
Chance Ebersold
Obie Hill
MuAwia DaMes
Dr. Donna Armstrong

Parks & Recreation representatives:

Luanne Santangelo, Director, Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation
Brian Mancini, Asst. Director, Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation
Erik Dart, Athletic & Special Events Manager

Absent:

James Logan
Deanna Reed

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Gibson called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

INTRODUCTIONS / PUBLIC HEARING

Mr. Gibson welcomed local business owners from the Agora Downtown Market who appeared before PRAC to express concern for the homeless population that congregate in the Denton Park area located in Harrisonburg. Local business owners present were: Paul Hansbarger, Owner of Lineage, Kathy Hurst and Allie Motyka, Owners of Heartworn Vintage, Andrea Estep, Owner of Charlee Rose Boutique, Phil Duntemann, Owner of Broad Porch Coffee Co., Kara Miller, and Kara Miller, Executive Director of Ten Thousand Villages. The business owners expressed the following concerns: littering, soliciting, verbal and physical altercations, smoking, sidewalk obstruction and failure to control pet dogs. The business owners expressed concern about the effects the homeless individuals are having on their businesses due to their lack of appropriate maintenance of Denton Park. According to the business owners, the Friendly City Merchants meeting members advised the small business owners to contact law enforcement (i.e., Don Clots – police officer) and now the business owners have been referred to PRAC as Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation manages Denton Park. The business owners have also expressed their concerns to Andrea Dono, Executive Director of Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance (HDR).

Ms. Santangelo expressed that their concern is a citywide issue with regard to the homeless population and the city is working to address homelessness in

Harrisonburg. Ms. Santangelo informed members that Denton Park would be closed next week for at least two (2) weeks for maintenance and upgrades to include park rules, signage, and possibly cameras. Denton Park will be locked overnight once the park reopens. The business owners informed PRAC that they are drafting a letter to present to City Council. The business owners advised PRAC to have park furniture that is bolted to the ground. Open Doors and Our Community Place have been requested to assist in engaging and providing resources to the homeless population.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Gibson asked for approval of minutes from the March 18, 2019 and April 15, 2019 meeting minutes. Dr. Armstrong requested to separate the approval of both March and April minutes. Mr. Gibson made a motion to approve March minutes and seconded Mr. MuAwia. The motion was approved by unanimous vote. Dr. Armstrong suggested that April minutes and future minutes include the name of the person recording minutes and to accurately record her title in meeting minutes as “Dr. Armstrong” instead of “Ms. Armstrong.”

Dr. Armstrong expressed concern for Purcell Park request for written proposals to include Storm Water Management on the approval team for the request for proposal (RFP), as Purcell Park is a floodwater zone and Dr. Armstrong wants to ensure storm water management is adequately addressed in the RFP due to historical flooding in Purcell Park. Ms. Santangelo assured Dr. Armstrong that storm water management and control flooding is a part of the RFP, which was included into the bids provided by the consultants. Erin Yancey, Public Works Planning Manager was selected as part of the consultant team to provide guidance in storm water management. Mr. Mancini and Ms. Santangelo are the other two members of the consultant team responsible for issuing a contract for the Purcell Park Master Plan. Ms. Santangelo reminded PRAC of the selection of three (3) consultants/firms who will be interviewed to determine final contractual agreement. PRAC will be involved in this process as a key stakeholder to the consultant.

Mr. Gibson provided clarity that Dr. Armstrong’s concerns for the Purcell Park request proposal would not be included in April minutes, but June minutes as her concerns were not discussed in April minutes. Dr. Armstrong complied and made a motion to approve April minutes, seconded by Mr. Ebersold. Motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Also, Dr. Armstrong indicated her involvement with the Lucy F. Simms Center and the Northeast Neighborhood Association (NENA) and advocated for outreach to be conducted by Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation (HPR) to include the aforementioned groups into their plans as NENA representatives “felt resentment” that they are not included into HPR’s plans. Dr. Armstrong commented that the Splash Pad, which was recently installed at HPR, does not have public transportation to transport residents of Northeast neighborhood to HPR. Dr. Armstrong commented that NENA would like to be included/partner

with HPR for community outreach to inform the community of the NENA organization and the Northeast neighborhood in Harrisonburg.

PRAC BYLAWS AND ORDINANCE

Mr. DaMes and Mr. Martonik stated the objective of PRAC is to be more engaged and active, which guided their rationale behind their suggested amendments:

- **Attendance** – commission members who miss more than two (2) consecutive meetings may be dismissed at the discretion of commission members or commission members who miss more than four (4) meetings in a calendar year may be dismissed at the discretion of commission members.
- **Meetings** – current PRAC meetings are scheduled on the third (3rd) Monday of each month (with the exception of July and December); suggested meeting change from third Monday of each month due to MLK, Jr. Day and President's Day occurring on a third Monday.
- **Rates / Fee Resolution** – PRAC having the ability to review / provide input and offer recommendations / revisions to the Parks & Recreation rates for classes, rentals, and charges necessary for the operation of the city park facility and programs.
- **Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)** – PRAC would be included into the discussion of the Parks & Recreation CIP prior to CIP's approval by Parks & Recreation. PRAC would be informed one (1) to two (2) months in advance of the CIP with input provided by the Director of Parks and Rec.
- **Community Engagement** – currently PRAC Bylaws indicate that Commissioners are to report on their experience after attending no less than two (2) or more related events/ activities/ functions per year; suggested amendment to include Commissioners visiting two (2) Parks and Recreation facilities or parks and report/share feedback of experience to PRAC in monthly meeting. Remove PRAC / Parks and Rec staff members from participating as a judge for the Annual Holiday Parade.

Mr. Gibson suggested as potential amendments to PRAC bylaws that PRAC members, if involved in other commissions, represent HPR and share/advocate for HPR activities and events. Mr. DaMes suggested PRAC take "fieldtrips" during the month of July, as PRAC does not have a scheduled meeting in July. Mr. DaMes suggested that during fieldtrips, PRAC could evaluate parks for capital improvements matters and fieldtrips could be lead by the Asst. Director of HPR, Brian Mancini. Dr. Armstrong suggested that fieldtrips be included into PRAC Bylaws as "optional" to attend. Dr. Armstrong suggested, on behalf of the NENA organization, that a kiosk be placed near (i.e., Simms boulevard) the Simms Center for the community, as residents within the northeast neighborhood are not aware of the guide/brochure produced by HPR. Ms. Santangelo asserted that a kiosk at the Simms Center and other locations could be considered and

informed PRAC that kiosks at several locations have been previously discussed. Mr. DaMes inquired of Ms. Santangelo, how to elevate the department to a higher level to have a department representative attend city council meetings. Ms. Santangelo suggested that a PRAC representative could attend city council meetings as a guiding principle. Ms. Santangelo also suggested that bylaws reflect the roles desired for PRAC members as bylaws are more accessible than city ordinances. Mr. Gibson added that PRAC present an annual report to City council; Ms. Santangelo supported the idea of an annual report. Dr. Armstrong suggested that PRAC not present an annual report, but to report to City Council on projects undertaken by PRAC centered on various initiatives. Ms. Santangelo encouraged PRAC to move forward in a positive way and to be involved in moving HPR forward as she and HPR supports PRAC. Mr. Gibson suggested to not include the annual report in the current bylaws, but to revisit at a later date due to disagreements amongst PRAC about an annual report.

Director's Report

Ms. Santangelo recapped on the successful opening of the Splash Pad and the celebration of HPR's 65th Anniversary. The shade structures have been installed in the pool area. Rotary hosted the Strawberry festival and chose HPR to be the recipients of the proceeds from the event. HPR agreed to receive the proceeds to convert Morrison Park tennis court into a Pickle Ball court. Mr. Dart commented that tennis participation is decreasing nation-wide. Ms. Santangelo encouraged PRAC to email capital improvement need.

Action items

World largest swim lesson – June 20th, 10:45 a.m.
Great American Backyard Campout – June 22nd, 4 p.m. - Hillandale
Bike Virginia, June 24th – 26th, 900 cyclists registered at Hillandale
Parks and Recreation Month - next month July
Hispanic Festival - August 11th 9 – 5 p.m. at Smithland (Soccer complex)
Dog swim event cancelled due to no longer draining the pool.
Lunch at Liberty Park, July 19th, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Dr. Armstrong commented that she would approach churches and community shelters to create community gardens as a community-building project.

6. Meeting adjourned.

Minutes respectfully submitted by,

Obie Hill

Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission

