



**COUNTY OF DELAWARE
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**PARKS AND RECREATION
MARC J. MANFRE
DIRECTOR**

**ANNE P. STAUFFER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR**

**Delaware County Park Board Meeting
November 8, 2023
12:00 p.m.**

Location: Hunt Club

Attendees:

- **Board:** Marc Manfre, Director of Parks & Recreation; Anne Stauffer; Beth Chapman; Kathy Lopez; Parker Snowe; Bridget O'Donnell; John McMullan; Mary Coniglio; Kelly Johnson; Nicholas Furman; Stephanie Gaboriault; Trish McFarland; Barron Lacy
- **County:** Steven Beckley, Planning manager, Open Space and Trails; Karen Wilwol, Soil & Water Conservation Watershed Specialist.
- **Not present:** Nicholas Hoyt
- **Redwood Senior Center Update:** Derrick Ford
- Minutes by Carol Tustin
- **Call to Order:** 12:02 pm

Meeting Minutes from September 13, 2023 were approved by the board.

Call to Order..... Chair Kathy Lopez

- The meeting was called to order by Kathy Lopez, Park Board Chair.

Directors report.....Marc Manfre

- In terms of today's agenda, I have asked Anne, Beth, and Derrick to come to this meeting. I wanted Derrick to give an overview of what we do at the Redwood Center.
- We have made tremendous progress on the Capital Funds Budget, thanks in large part to our Public Works department, specifically Danielle Floyd. We are currently more than 85-90% complete at Rose Tree Park in terms of the destination playground, we have a few small items but should be complete by mid-December. Anne just attended a Little Flower Manor progress meeting with the continued work going on there. There are some issues that need to be ironed out, Anne can update you on that.
- The big thing that we have going on now is the Holiday Village. This is our third year that we are doing the village, we partner up with the Commerce Center and work with the Chamber of Commerce and Trish McFarland. It is here on three weekends, and they do a

monumental job in putting this together and getting these vendors in. We decided as a team to move the village to the Hunt Club parking lot. We hope that this gives us more room and fixes the logistics problem that occurred with the 20 parking spaces that we were losing to the huts in the front parking lot. We are working to make sure that the vendors are comfortable. We are having our opening night in the front parking lot because it sets up nice with our staging area and all the entertainment that we are going to have. It is December 1st at 5pm. It will be about a half an hour to 40-minute opening ceremony with the village open afterwards. I talked to Laura Goodrich today, who is the Commerce Director. She did tell me that she is working with the shuttle folks. There will be a shuttle from a nearby parking lot, to help eliminate parking. The trouble that I see with a shuttle is the traffic in and out of the park. I asked Laura to go over this with the Chief of the Park Police. Last year we had a lot of problems with parking and traffic patterns in the park. The Commerce Center must go to Council to get an approval for the alcohol sales.

- On the operations end, our golf course had a banner year, an historic year in my tenure. We will have the final numbers in December. I would like to credit Nick Furman, who helped us out with getting us the Gap Association of Philadelphia to buy into our golf course and bring in some youth golfers at a discounted rate. Where we thought, we were going to lose money, we gained money. Credit to Charlie Tustin, our manager out there, and the non-full-time workers we have out there working the register and our “starters,” and our maintenance staff who do a great job out there every day.
- The one thing that I want to do, and this is foremost on my mind, and I know that this is going to hit you hard Stephanie, is the retirement of Norm Bennett, our Superintendent, which is going to happen soon, his last day is December 29. The team is going to have a cocktail party/ get together at a place in Drexel Hill/ Havertown to honor Norm’s 20+ years of service and all of you will be getting an email very soon with an invitation. On a personal note, with Norm, you do not work with someone for 20+ years and not get attached to someone. We work well together, we have taught each other things, he is a great family man, and he is going to be deeply missed. It is time, he is ready, he is moving on to another adventure in his life, his wife just got a promotion for a new job in Springfield. It is going to be an open vetting process in HR, and it is going to be competitive. I will probably be reaching out to some folks to sit in on some interviews in this room. I cannot say enough about Norm, and Stephanie, you have worked with Norm since you started some 15 years ago. Anne is going to take on some of the role, just to shepherd us through the process of getting somebody new. All our major projects that were on schedule have either been started or complete; the paving of Rose Tree, the paving of Upland Park, it is all coming together.
- I went through the budget process; I will touch on that right now. There is a budget issue with the County, I have made that very clear. In terms of operations, I think that we are okay, the big issue will be vacancies. There is a push to take away the vacancies, I do not know all of nuances of it, but we were told through the Administration and the Budget Director to make our argument for our vacancies. I did that, we have about 5 vacancies and I made it clear that we need to keep those vacancies alive in the Parks and Recreation Department.

- We have a few items we must go over here as a board, but does anyone have any concerns or questions since this is the last meeting of the year. Certainly, you can call me or email me with any questions that come to mind. I will turn it over to Derrick.

Redwood Senior Center Update.....Derrick Ford

- Thank you for having me. I want to give you an update on the Redwood Community Playhouse. We have programs for our seniors, some of our seniors have been there for 20+ years. Our attendance is growing, and we are looking to add more programming. We have diverse programs focused on Health & Wellness. We have partnered with COSA and the Widener University Nursing program to add different health and wellness classes, we have added some new classes including blood pressure checks, cardio drumming, walking, theatre, and chorus. We have various classes, some we have had very long term, and we are always looking to add more. We have the holiday season events coming up. We just updated the sound system, the lights, replaced the roof and updated the kitchen. We had lights installed outside for the Upland football program. We put up a new shed and the 6-year-old team were the champs this year. Marc Manfre then added that Derrick has been working very diligently since starting at the Redwood. He has been dynamic and very creative to keep the programs going during the shutdown for the renovations that were needed at the Redwood. He moved his classes to the Hunt Club and other venues to continue classes for the seniors. This was greatly appreciated. The Redwood Community Center clientele comes from all over Delaware County, not just the Chester area.

Deputy Directors report.....Anne Stauffer

- I have just a few small things that we are working on. I am not sure that everyone knows that the County partnered with PA DEP last year to do air monitoring in the I95 corridor from Marcus Hook to Chester. Two of those air monitors are going to go in County Parks, one in the Redwood Center and the other either in Chester Creek Trail or Catania Park.
- We are looking into an educational grant to do a feasibility study on an educational Vernal pool in Smedley Park. This is something that the Conservation district and the Natural Watershed stewards and PA Sea Grant are working on. They are really excited about this. There is an area in Smedley Park that is almost a natural vernal pool, this would be a great educational component that is right near the playground.
- We also got an email from a young man who wanted to, his company does volunteer days, and he wanted to plant trees down at the former Don Guanella site. We said that it was great that they wanted to volunteer, but we did not need trees planted. He was happy to hear that we needed invasive removal, so we might have a day April 26, 2024. The stewards are going to advertise it, so we are going to call it "habitat restoration" or something like that. Hopefully, that will be the beginning of more volunteering at the park, but it is right after Earth Day.
- The last thing that I am going to talk about is the Community gardens at Little Flower Manor. We are trying to make sure that there will be water available at the gardens. It is

a 100 x 100 foot fenced in area with an 8-foot-tall fence to try to keep the deer out. There will be raised beds that are set off the ground. We talked to the Master Gardeners about seed-to-soil programs, and we would like to start the season in March.

- Marc added that Anne has closed the circle of what we needed in Parks with her environmental background, so she has been a tremendous asset to us and all our organizations that we deal with. She has a background in grant writing which is a tremendous addition to what we need here, along with the background that I have in Park management and maintenance. We have the marketing professional with Beth, who does a wonderful job in terms of all the special events in coordinating and marketing and promotions and working with all the various agencies, like Derrick, who is doing a great job at the Redwood. We are very fortunate; Anne has been here since May, and we have made tremendous progress. Beth and I have been working together since 2008 and Norm and I have been working together since 2003 and one of the ingredients of bringing in the superintendent with the golf course, which is a major revenue generator for the County, is going to be a component of a licensed pesticide and herbicide applicator who can come in and work on the golf course. To be truthful, we have had the worst year this year at the golf course in terms of maintenance and conditions. We got destroyed on our greens and how the numbers were elevated is a mystery. I always say, we are a recreation department, we are not a golf club. We are not Springfield, or Merion, we are not Paxton Hollow. We like to see the youth, the elderly, the younger golfers, we are a great starter venue, the pace of play is slow. It is a great venue for that. We are very fortunate at the golf course, professionals, all of them. The greens had problems due to the drought, rain, and insects. We brought in a company to do applications for the insects on two occasions. I need to bring in someone to help us out, to bridge the gap between Norm and hiring someone new. I am looking at getting an intern. I want to get a diverse type of person, to have a background in recreation or environmental service and understand the recreation side of things with the Senior Games, the Summer Concert Series, the Redwood Center. Hopefully, we can get someone like that. I will put together a job description.
- Anne applied to the National Forestry Grant but did not get awarded. A lot of that grant went to Philadelphia.

Old Business

- Opening ceremony is at 5pm. There is a link on the County website for the Holiday Village.
- Anne and Marc are part of a group of people from Planning that are meeting tomorrow to finish up the application for the Greenways Grant. Each municipality has a shot at getting part of this \$5 million dollar grant, so we have been working on that. Just wanted to let you know that they are working from the park side on that grant. So, everyone keeps an eye out for the announcement of Round 4 of Delaware County Green Ways Grant recipients.

New Business

- Every board member got a copy of the Memorial pavilion proposal from Councilperson Schaefer. They saw a rendering of what the Memorial team wanted to do. Kathy Lopez read from the Memorial moratorium that was passed last March by the Park Board in reference to memorials prior to showing the presentation for the Delaware County Law Enforcement Memorial. Council is looking for a majority opinion on what the park advisory board wants to do and how they feel about the memorial expansion. The memorial pavilion project would be funded by both ARPA money and the rest from the Law Enforcement Foundation. They are a group / organization that does phenomenal work in memory of those who have lost their lives in the line of duty. They do great work. I was here back in the day when the memorial wall went up and the President of our board was against it and Council went ahead with doing it. The fire memorial went up two years prior. They want to expand the wall and put up the pavilion structure. In fairness to that organization, they probably did not read the ordinance that was passed in March. In most cases, County Council takes our Park Board's opinion and advice under tremendous consideration, especially when you are talking about open space and parks. This was presented to County Council, and they asked for the advisory board to weigh in and look at the schematics of the project and give their opinion. The question here is, what would our recommendation be? It would be used twice a year for memorial events on 9/11 and one other event. So, since it is a public park, would the pavilion be used for other events? We would have to think of the reverence of the area. Parks would be in control of the permit process. After much discussion, it was tabled to the next park board meeting. Kathy made a list of follow up questions and we need to look and see if the ordinance that was passed by the Park Board was passed as an ordinance by County Council. The Park Board is an advisory board, but the final decision would be made by County Council.

Old Business

- For the naming of the Don Guanella property, everything went to Ann Toole. The naming process is lengthy and there are many people involved. Council will make the final decision. We need to narrow down the list of names. The naming list summary will be forwarded to the board members. What are the next steps and the timeline? Kathy emailed Elaine Shaefer, there is a Don Guanella Committee meeting tonight and we will get more information tomorrow.
- We still have not named The Little Flower Manor park. We will get it down to 8 suggestions. Please keep in mind the new naming policy for all facilities by the County.

Open Discussion and Public Comment

- We will be sending invitations to each of you for the opening of the Festival of Lights. There will be 12 huts per night on the weekends plus food trucks. We hope to see you there.

- **Meeting adjourned: 1:08 pm**

Meetings:

January 11 – Zoom

March 8 – Zoom

May 10 – Hunt Club

July 112 – Hunt Club

September 13 – Hunt Club

November 8 – Hunt Club

Park Visits:

February 8 – Mineral Hill

April 12 – Little Flower & Darby Creek Trail

June 14 – Rose Tree Concert - canceled

August 9 – Don Guanella - canceled

October 11 – Upland

December – Rose Tree Festival of Lights on opening night

Park Board Meetings Schedule 2024:

January 10

March 13

May 8

July 10

September 11

November 13

*Park Visits will be announced soon