



COUNTY OF DELAWARE
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Delaware County Park Board Meeting
March 13, 2024
12:00 p.m.

Location: Zoom

Attendees:

- **Board:** Kathy Lopez; Parker Snowe; Bridget O'Donnell; John McMullan; Mary Coniglio; Kelly Johnson; Trish McFarland; Nicholas Hoyt
- **Department of Parks and Recreation:** Marc Manfre, Director of Parks & Recreation; Anne Stauffer, Deputy Director of Parks & Recreation; Beth Chapman, Marketing & Communications Manager
- **County:** Councilperson Elaine Paul Schaefer, County Council Liaison; Planning Department Assistant Director, Peter Williamson; Steven Beckley, Planning manager, Open Space and Trails
- **Not present:** Stephanie Gaboriault; Barron Lacy
- Minutes by Carol Tustin
- **Call to Order:** 12:03 pm

Annual Election.....Trish McFarland

- For the Park Board Chair and Vice Chair positions we had 2 self-nominations, one for each position. One nomination for Kathy Lopez to remain Chair, and one for John McMullen for Vice Chair. There were no other nominations, so a vote was called. Parker Snowe voted to approve; Mary Coniglio seconded the motion. There were no oppositions, everyone was in favor, so both positions were approved.

Meeting Minutes from January 10, 2024 were approved by the board.

Call to Order..... Chair Kathy Lopez

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

Guest Speaker.....County Planning Assistant Director, Peter Williamson

- Peter presented a slide show on the demographics of our county, municipality borders, census tracts, trail systems, poverty levels, etc. Government maps show that there is a cluster of disadvantaged poor around Chester and in Philadelphia. The traffic accidents run along the same pattern in both Chester and Philadelphia. The County Planning

Department at the urging of County Council has decided to focus on this part of the county. One of the maps shows the trail systems within the county. The county has decided to focus along the river on what is called the East Coast Greenway on 2 trails; the Darby Creek Trail and the lower part of the Chester Creek Trail that runs into Route 291 in Chester along the River Walk. Route 291 is a large road that was planned for truck traffic to the river but is unsafe in terms of speeding and accidents. The County did a study with a consultant to do a "road diet" to try to shrink Route 291 so people do not speed as much since it is such a wide heavily traveled road. A conceptual drawing was done to show a design with less traffic lanes with a multi-purpose path beside it for pedestrian use. We received a 2.5-million-dollar grant from a program called reconnecting communities, a USDOT program, which allows us to do this in partnership with PennDOT. This project will help with the high volume of accidents in this area and eventual connecting of the trail system.

- For the Darby Creek Trail System, there is a lot of work that has been done by municipalities including a bridge at Gillespie Park built by Upper Darby Township. The trail plans run through assets owned by both municipalities and the county. To complete the connection to the trail system, there is a boardwalk and another bridge, which will be expensive with estimates of 5 million dollars. Another section of the trail system that is being looked at is running through Mercy Fitzgerald Hospital area and Lansdowne Towers apartments. We will be applying for funds from the state to start this project which will complete the connection between Darby and Upper Darby.
- We are also working on expanding the Knowlton Road parking lot for Chester Creek Trail and expanding the Chester Creek trail system between Brookhaven and Dutton Mill Road.
- The last phase of our trail plans, which the county calls the fourth phase is connecting the Chester Creek Trail to the city of Chester, through Kroger Park, Upland Park, and the Toby Farms neighborhood creating a loop. Middletown Township has been working with the county in doing extensive work on the Chester Creek Trail.

Directors report.....Marc Manfre

- Trail Day is the first Saturday in June at Darby Creek at Providence Road and McDade Boulevard.
- Derrick Ford, who was our Redwood Community Center Coordinator, has resigned. He is moving on to other interests. He was a great asset to our department over the years. Replacing Derrick will be one of our top priorities. The individual who does get the position will need a lot of training. It is a huge community outreach and recreation program. I'm very proud that we work with various groups, and we have a large senior population there that uses our programs.
- The Summer Festival preparations are in full swing. Beth Chapman has again put together an exciting program. The County Juneteenth Celebration is going to be part of the program again this year. We are meeting with County Council Chair, Doctor Monica Taylor, who is the point person of contact for this program
- Anne and I along with Karen Wilwol met with some residents over some issues with trail maintenance. We will work with Donny DeMutis, who is our new Superintendent of

Parks. There will be Sustainability conferences in May, dates to be announced. Also, we will be working the Senior Expo at Harrah's on May 3rd, sponsored by County Council and COSA.

- Senior Games registration day will be April 25th at the Redwood Community Center. The Senior games will be the middle of June again this year. We are very excited with the schedule of events this year.
- Barron Lacy and I are working on partnering the Ninth Street YCC with East Side Inc. This is for underserved youths from the ages of 7 to 17. On April 26th, we will be touring Upland Park, the Redwood Community Center, and the newly renovated playground.
- The Rose Tree Park schedule is booked up for the year. Ruby Jones has done a great job with scheduling the Cross County events and large weekend events at Rose Tree.
- The noise issue with the playground during the Summer Concert Series was discussed and it was decided to limit access to the playground during the concerts.
- We will get an overview of our slide presentation in the Green Space Task Force today at 4:30. This is the one that was presented to County Council. We can send you all a link to the slide presentation.

Deputy Directors report..... Anne Stauffer

- Earth Day this year is April 20th, which is a Monday. We are doing a workshop in the stream bank at the New Park to prevent erosion and help with stream bank stabilization with the Conservation District Master Watershed Stewards and Penn State Extension. It will be an educational event using Christmas trees. There will also be planting by the Penn State Extension Master Gardeners in the Reed Road parking lot with education for that as well.
- We are doing about an acre of lawn conversion to native meadow in May in the north field of Rose Tree Park. We will be working with Weeds, Inc. This is an exciting project. They are donating the use a Truax seeder, which is costly equipment, to help us to seed the area well. There will be a lot of signage to explain the meadow project, which should take about 2 to 3 years to fully establish. This will also be done with the Conservation District Master Watershed Stewards and Penn State Extension Master Gardeners.

Guest Speaker..... County Councilperson, Elaine Paul Schaefer

- The first update is on commercial filming in county parks. We currently have an ordinance prohibiting filming in county parks. The county has been approached several times about filming in our parks by Apple movies and HBO because a big film production studio has been opened in Chester Township. There is an interest in filming in Delaware County, which is great for the county and our economy, but we have had to say no due to the ordinance. They have asked us if we would reconsider amending our ordinance to give a narrow exception for movie use. We have brought that in front of council and have had a first reading of an amendment. This would be on a case-by-case basis and would have to be approved by both the Director of Parks and the Executive Director. We will get verification they are bring economic activity, as in Delaware County hotels, catering, and craft services. This will be on Council's April 17th agenda.

- For the naming of the New Park in Maple, everything is moving forward. The naming committee, Councilperson Christine Ruether, Councilperson Richard Womack, and Deputy Solicitor Jonathan Lichtenstein went through the names and picked the top 3, which were Delco Woods, Lenapehocking Woods, a nod to the Lenape, the original inhabitants of the area, and the third was Whetstone Woods. We need to do more research on the second and third names and reach out to the current tribal leaders. We would also like to find out where the Whetstone name started and if it is connected to a family or a person. The other park naming would be for Little Flower Manor Park. The 2 names that are being looked at are Darby Heights County Park or Darby Overlook County Park. The naming committee is going to go out and walk the property before they make a final decision.

Old Business

- Last month, we had our park visit to Little Flower Manor. We had a good turnout with board members and a few people from the Green Space Task Force as well. All the phase one work is done, and it looks fantastic.
- We passed along our recommendations and discussion points for the Rose Tree Park First Responders Memorial to County Council.

New Business

- I will be sending out a board priority survey this coming week so we can look at what we want to accomplish in the coming year.
- Councilwoman Elaine Schaefer explained about an open space funding referendum to hopefully be voted on by Delaware County voters. It is called Trust for Public Land. A lot of trail projects and open space projects were funded through the Green Ways Grants Program. The funding was 5 million dollars a year for the last 3 years, but the funding has run out. We are looking to put a referendum on the ballot with the approval of County Council to let the voters decide on the ballot if they are willing to pay a small amount of tax dollars to keep funding an open space trails and parks program. We are hoping that the smaller municipalities have been the biggest beneficiaries of all of the incredible projects that have been happening in the County. This would help to cover costs to finish our trail system, developing our New Park at the old Don Guanella property, and to help with the infrastructure of our current park system.
- Our next park meeting will be at Upland Park on April 10th to talk about potential trails. In June we will go back to Pennock Woods and Shrigley Park and in August we will go to Smedley Park. In October, we will go back to the old Don Guanella property and in December we will see you at the Festival of Lights. The Summer Festival is always looked forward to, there is lots of interest on Facebook. There will be a concert on June 19th with Philly Gumbo on the schedule for the Juneteenth celebration. That is a Wednesday night, June 19th. We hope that you will come out and bring your friends. There is a lot of work put into that program with various county agencies and the Chamber of Commerce along with County Council.

Open Discussion and Public Comment

- **Meeting adjourned: 1:02 pm**

Meetings:

January 10

March 13

May 8

July 10

September 11

November 13

Park Visits:

February 13 – Little Flower Manor

April 10 – Upland Park

June 12 – Pennock Woods and Shrigley Park

August 14 – Smedley Parik

October 9 – Don Guanella

December – Rose Tree Festival of Lights on opening night

