



HABERSHAM COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, July 18th, 2023 6pm

Ruby Fulbright Aquatic Center – Large Meeting Room
120 Paul Franklin Road Clarkesville, Georgia 30523

Call to Order Director, Brooke Whitmire - 6:04pm

Roll Call

- ☐ Joe Elam – **was traveling for business**
- ✓ Andrew Gailey
- ✓ Peggy Fortson
- ☐ Alan Irvin
- ☐ Darrel Jones
- ✓ Stan Wilbanks

Others in attendance: Commissioner, Bruce Palmer, HCPR Director, Brooke Whitmire, Community Member, Keith Deyton

Old Business/Minutes

1. None – no meeting was held in April due to only 2 members being present.
 - a. Peggy, Joe, and Director, Brooke Whitmire stayed and chatted in the Recreation Department office. However, no official meeting was held.

New Business/Current Events

Update from Director, Brooke Whitmire

- additions of 7 new sports for the Fall – Baseball, Softball, TBall, Coach Pitch, Volleyball, 5U Flag Football, 5U Flag Cheer
 - Baseball, Softball, TBall, Coach Pitch brought inhouse in the Spring Season, also conduct a Fall Season
 - Volleyball has been offered in the Spring for years, but this will be the first season we've offered in the Fall & we'll be able to send an all-star team in each age group.
 - Some discussion on the growth of flag football programs. Director Whitmire stated she has reached out to other Parks and Recreation agencies that have strong flag football programs across many age groups for more information on how we can grow those programs.
1. Youth Athletics Program Reports – Fall Sports 2023
 - a. Addition of Fall Volleyball & Flag Football/Cheer for 4-5 Year Olds
 - b. Tackle Football/Cheer

- Tackle Football numbers are up! We will have 2 team in a Tackle Football age group this year, so that's exciting to see! We were only 1-2 participants away from having to split teams in 2 other age groups as well.
- Talked about moving our sideline cheer under our Gymnastics Division of the parks and recreation department. The gymnastics program has an all start cheer program and dedicated staff to helping with the sport, as well as dedicated facility space for the program.

2. Gymnastics Program Report

- Summer camp registration has been awesome. We've been at capacity or within a few participants of capacity all summer.
- Average 200 participants in gymnastics programs throughout the year

3. Aquatics Report

~~a. SPLOST Project Discussion~~

~~b. Donations~~

c. Aqua Aerobics

*Items A & B were removed. They were included by accident when typing up the agenda.

- Served over 80 children since late April with our new Swim Instructor positions.
- Sent a Lifeguard team to the State GRPA Lifeguard games with some combined Tallulah Falls Guards & we won Second Place!!
- Mr. Wilbanks stated he felt hiring the new Aquatics Manager positions was a great move. He spoke about how he's been happy to see guards who are attentive and alert, and the pool has not been shut down for lack of lifeguards to work since the Aquatic Manager came on board.
- Commissioner Palmer talked about how the Rec Department serves a wide demographic of the Habersham County Community & our future is with the young people, so we should always make it a priority to offer things for our young people. He also spoke about the need to maintain facilities and investing in the people, equipment, etc. needed to do that.

4. Fitness Center Report

a. Dance Class

b. Aikido

- Director Whitmire commented on the growth we've seen since starting. She believed when Total Fitness closed they had close to 600 members & HCPR has registered 424 members in less than 3 months! Our goal is to grow that by 10% over the next 3 months.
- Director Whitmire also commented on the increased access for members. While membership used to only cover access to the fitness center, it now covers access to the pool and locker rooms as well for the same price. And in some instances, an even further discounted price.
- Mr. Wilbanks commented on the positive impact moving day to day operations over to a digitized platform has had.
- Director Whitmire talked about the goal she has to add more transparency and reporting for everything we do at the Parks and Recreation Department.
- Director Whitmire pointed out that during the month of June we've had almost 2,000 visits walk through the door of the Aquatic Center to utilize the facility.

5. Discussion of more frequent Advisory Board meetings
 - Commissioner Palmer brought up a discussion about having the Rec Board meet monthly instead of quarterly to ensure involvement, etc.
 - Mr. Wilbanks stated that BOC & Rec Department should ask the Board their thoughts when needed since they volunteer their time.
 - Director Whitmire stated support for more frequent meetings if only to garner more investment from board members. She spoke about how meeting every 3 months often falls after seasons have already come and gone.
 - Mr. Gailey stated he felt that keeping the meetings at quarterly & Director Whitmire reaching out when an extra meeting is needed would be a good way to go.
 - There was some discussion on by-laws and possibly appointing officers. Mr. Gailey mentioned that with no voting, or decision making, the structure of the group matters little. The board is advisory in nature.
 - There was some discussion on an annual report to the Habersham BOC from the Rec Board.
 - There was discussion from the group on the nature of what the rec board should report on or advise on. Commissioner Palmer spoke about examples of new construction projects, ideas of new programs, etc.

Upcoming Events

1. Swim Safely Day – August 19th
2. Back to School Ice Cream Social Day – August 12th

Other Business

- Spoke about the Pickleball Tournament held in early April. There were over 100 participants and 5 states were represented (GA, FL, NC, TN, SC) ages 14-85.
- Mr. Wilbanks asked about the chance of getting the Rapids Swim team started again. Director Whitmire stated that she would be happy to look into it.
- Mr. Gailey talked about the need for the Rec Board to be a part of the discussion and planning for longer range plans. Helping to answer questions about how the department should grow.
- The group also discussed how we could take the success of the Habersham County Pickleball Club and what they've created and re-create that in the Rec Board for having active members.
- Discussed the start of the UGA Carl Vinson study. UGA staff will be reaching out to Rec Board members for their input soon.
- Discussed South Habersham Park concept & what we need to do to start thinking about how we get going with it. Director Whitmire stated that many of the comments she receives are comments/questions about how we can get recreational opportunities on the South end of the county to make it more accessible for residents in those areas.
- Director Whitmire also discussed the need for more space for the Gymnastics program, as well as getting out from under the monthly rental we pay currently. There have been many issues with where the facility is located now. It would open up opportunities for us to host competitions. Our program is special because we are a

public program and we have the ability to offer these specialized programs at an affordable price.

- Commissioner Palmer stated that building facilities for today is not the way to go. We must approach facilities and new construction to build for the future.
- Director Whitmire talked about how the gym space at the Aquatic Center is used year round for many different events, etc. However, during basketball season we are at capacity for what we can accommodate. We offer practices twice a week for 1 hour & with 37 teams last season, we were completely full M/Tu/Th/Fr/Sa and we had to start practices an hour early than usual to accommodate 4 practices per gym per evening and 5 practices per gym on Saturdays. She stated that the schools have been receptive to working with them, but many of the schools will not allow rec teams to be there without a school employee present & many of the janitors leave by 6:00p. It is her hope that with the new agreement with the school system, they will be willing to allow the Rec Department to utilize school space as long as a county employee is present to supervise.
- Mr. Gailey asked about the difference between a user group and a contracted instructor and Director Whitmire described the user groups the HCPR has agreements with.
- Mr. Wilbanks asked about possible under used facilities that would need user groups. Director Whitmire stated that regular use of the horse arena & now that we have full use of the Stonecypther building would be awesome for those 2 areas!
- Mr. Deyton brought up the need to upkeep facilities and used the example of Diamond Memorial and bringing in tournaments which would bring in revenues. Mr. Deyton spoke on the need to bring facilities up to par with what tournament directors and the community are looking for.

1. Next meeting date(s) October 17th @ 6:00p at the Administrative Building

Adjourn

Motion by Stan Wilbanks

Seconded by Andrew Gailey

Time: 7:50p