



PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, April 16th, 2024 6pm

Conference Room – Main Floor Admin Building
130 Jacob's Way, Clarkesville GA, 30523

Roll Call

- ☒ Joe Elam
- ☒ Peggy Fortson
- ☒ Cassie Head
- ☒ Angela Haughton
- ☒ Keith Deyton
- ☒ Shelley Tullis

Also in attendance: Director, Brooke Whitmire - Athletic Manager, Todd Mayfield – Commissioner
Bruce Palmer, County Manager, Alicia Vaughn

Welcome and introductions from Chairman Angela Haughton. Introduced new member Shelley Tullis.

Old Business/Minutes

1. Old Business - none
2. Approval of March 2024 Minutes – Motion to approve – Vice Chairman, Cassie Head,
Seconded – Peggy Fortson – Carried 6-0

New Business/Current Events

1. Written Report – Director, Brooke Whitmire – Gave an update on missing Spring Sports uniforms. Explained we were at the mercy of the postal system issues going on. Unfortunately, volleyball was the hardest hit. The missing boxes contained volleyball jerseys & shorts, where other parts of different sports uniforms were shipped separately. We did receive the entire order as soon as we got back from Spring Break, so only a few teams had to play their first game without the jerseys. Other than this challenge, Spring Sports got started great!

45% of operational days in the month of March were rented at the Dewey Tench Pavilion with over 223 hours of rentals. Events hosted ranged from Jeep invasion, Car Swap Meets, Gun Show, Children's Consignment sale, etc. As well as 317 hours of reservations in the Large Meeting room inside the Aquatic Center.

Discussed the summer camp hosted by our gymnastics staff. This is a full day, traditional summer camp where kids are dropped off in the morning and leave after working hours. They swim one day a week at the aquatic center and go on one field trip per week.

2. Gymnasium Bleacher Replacement or Repair – Options/quotes to discuss – There was much discussion about the needs inside the gymnasiums and how much they are used. The current bleachers are original to the building. Facilities have patched as much as they could over the last 20+ years to the point that the top row in each gym does not even have a seat on top of it. People who sit there are just sitting on a piece of metal. While many agreed it would be wonderful to make an entire change out of bleachers, the group also agreed it was more important to make sure the project can stay within budgetary boundaries. It was voted to support the replacement of the seats only, and mechanical updates needed provided Brooke could get more information about the useful life of the product should they just replace those pieces.

While discussing the bleachers it was also asked what other large-scale projects would be requested for next budget year. The group discussed the need to refinish the pool deck, replace metal doors and do something about the metal beams rusting at the bottom. Other things on the list are replacing the center divider in the Large Meeting room, replace carpeting with a hard surface that's more easily cleaned and maintained between groups, remodeling restrooms outside at the ballfields, replacing scoreboards at Diamond Memorial and Aquatic baseball/softball fields, and replacing the digital sign in front of the Dewey Tench. The group also discussed creating a running list of large CIP projects to keep up with that could also be shared with the public.

3. Request by community member – discuss planning for future addition of field space – tabled for next month's meeting
4. Discussion on support of HCPR's staffing requests – HCPR Athletic Manager, Todd Mayfield gave updates and spoke about his role with HCPR. Mr. Mayfield brought up other peers in our field and the agencies they work for, often agencies which are similar in size to ours, their Athletic Teams can focus on one sport at a time. Meaning, they have staff who can cover 1-2 sports only where Todd is the only person in the Athletics Division in our department, meaning he is juggling anywhere from 3 – 7 sports at any given time during the season. There was much discussion over how we'd love to bring on as many programs and sports as possible, but we are so short staffed, it hinders our ability to continue to branch out and grow the way our community would like us to. Todd discussed as an example as he spoke there were over 22 games going on between 3 locations at our facilities and he was the only person on staff managing those events. Each night is similar as our Director, Athletic Manager, and Aquatics Manager all split athletics responsibilities to where there is at least one person on staff each evening. This is additional to all other duties M-F 8:00a-5:00p.

There was much discussion over the heavy reliance on our young, part-time staff members to take on the responsibilities typical of a full-time, permanent position. We are extremely lucky to have several part-time staff members who are excellent young ladies and gentlemen who do a great job. However, by way of their circumstances are very much temporary in our employment. We're spending a large amount of time training new people how to do many skilled tasks like dragging and lining ball fields, as well as our general on-boarding process. Many times, when we bring a new employee on board it takes at least 3-6 months for them to

rotate through every facet we need them to experience to be fully trained. When we are turning over every two years or so, it creates a heavy burden to continue to advertise, interview, hire, and train new staff constantly throughout the year.

A question was raised regarding the growth from when Director Whitmire started in August of 2022 to now, almost two years later. Director Whitmire reported that there has been tremendous growth in all offerings at the Parks and Recreation Department. She also clarified that there has been great support from the county in helping get to where they are today. While the department is still severely understaffed, the department was able to add 3 positions in December of 2022. When Director Whitmire first started, the Athletics & Programming divisions only had herself and one other employee working. Since then, the department was able to repurpose a position where someone left for another job and a needed position as well. Now, the Programs/Aquatics/Athletics Divisions have a Programs & Fitness Specialist, Athletic Manager, Aquatics Manager, and an Office Supervisor. There is one person in each of these divisions and each person carries multiple roles and responsibilities in their day-to-day work. An example of this is our Fitness & Programs Specialist, she runs day-to-day operations of the fitness center, she teaches fitness classes, runs programs, plans special events, and assists the director with marketing for the department.

A question was raised about what was involved for staff when the Dewey Tench or fairgrounds facility is rented. Todd spoke about how we always have staff on hand in case anyone needs anything. They are on staff for general supervision, making sure rules are being followed, and making sure the grounds and facilities stay clean.

Mr. Mayfield spoke to his duties in attention to athletics he also takes on coordination with Facilities and Facilities Maintenance team, supervising part time staff across several different facets of the department, project management, purchasing for needed equipment, public relations, community service volunteers, etc.

Discussion was had about how revenues from rentals at the Dewey Tench was spent. Members wanted to know why revenues can't be put back into the upkeep of the facilities. There was discussion about how all revenues go back into the general fund and several projects on the calendar to be done at the Dewey Tench.

The group discussed ways the department can begin to educate the public on how their department works. It was decided to create a task tracking list and to look into scheduling a town hall or two throughout the year so we can help educate the public. There was also much discussion about how the community looks for the physical changes they can/cannot see and where the worry lies in us getting more employees, yet many maintenance needs and other tangible needs still aren't being met. We touched on the different way the department is set up compared to other places in that the Parks and Recreation Department in Habersham does not have a dedicated maintenance staff and County Facilities Maintenance oversees that for the Parks and Recreation and all county buildings, etc as well. All employees in every area are greatly stretched thin.

5. Discussion on revision Recreation Advisory Board By-Laws

A question was raised about the wording of how the requested salaries for new positions were listed in the budget document provided. Director Whitmire explained that it was required by county finance for Department Heads to list requested new positions at the mid-point of the salary range

rather than the starting salary they plan to offer the job at. Totals on the page also include benefits to full time employees.

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6. 2024 Remaining Meeting Dates – all held at Habersham County Administrative building beginning at 6:00p
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| a. February 20th | g. August 20 th |
| b. March 19th | h. September 17 th |
| c. April 16 th | i. October 15 th |
| d. May 21 st | j. November 19 th |
| e. June 18 th | k. December 17 th |
| f. July 16 th | |

Upcoming Events

1. April 20th – USFA Softball Tournament & Swim Safely Day!
2. April 26th – 27th – Arts and Crafts Show
3. April 11th – Superhero/Princess Pancake Breakfast that raises money for the Senior Center
4. May 18th – NA GA Swap Meet
5. May 24th – PuzzlePalooza!

Adjourn

Motion by Shelley Tullis

Seconded by Keith Deyton

Time: 8:24p