



PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, May 21st, 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 – HCPR Director, Brooke Whitmire & community member David Greenly

Old Business/Minutes

1. Old Business

- a. Request by community member – discuss planning for future addition of field space – Director Whitmire commented that field space is very tight with the growing numbers particularly in 3-4 tball and 5-6 coach pitch during the Fall & Spring seasons on the baseball/softball fields. We also do not have any greenspace to house football practices on site. We rely on the school system to help with that. During basketball season, gym space is **extremely** limited. In most cases, we have no other choice than to begin scheduling practices at 5:30, 6:30, 7:30 and sometimes 8:30 to give all teams practice time. Once games start, practices almost cease to happen because there is no gym space for them.

Question was raised about the potential of another recreational area on the South end of the county. Discussion about land the county owns behind the South Habersham Middle School. There is an excellent property there which has already been surveyed. The county/department just needs the funds to get started with it. The current conceptual design includes 4 baseball/softball fields, 3 soccer/football fields, separate pickleball & tennis courts, a new rec center, and 3-4 miles of trails.

The issue with parking and accessibility was raised. Discussion around how we can bridge the gap if nothing can be physically done with the space at Diamond Memorial. Suggestion was made for the county to purchase a golf cart to shuttle people. Board members receive multiple calls during baseball/softball seasons about accessibility at Diamond Memorial Park. The group discussed what the land around DM park looks like. Is there room for stairs? More parking? Etc. The reality is that the property the county owns is "locked" as is. Discussion was had about grading the hillside the stairs come

down and creating a walking path down it like the long stairs/path at the Hardman House in Helen. There is much concern about there not being enough room and no funds. A suggestion was made that it may be a better option to start focusing away from Diamond Memorial Park as the main facility for games and utilize the fields behind the Aquatic Center more.

- b. Discussion on revision Recreation Advisory Board By-Laws – There was discussion around what changes should be considered. The board wants to look at giving its members more authority in bringing information and suggestions to the BOC, as well as better outline member expectations, and duties. The subcommittee of Peggy, Joe, and Brooke will work on this.

2. Approval of April 2024 Minutes – Approved – Motion, Keith – Second, Cassie – Carried 6-0

New Business/Current Events

1. Written Report – Director, Brooke Whitmire
2. Timeframe to repair/replace bleachers in gyms – information was returned to county administration and will be brought before the BOC on how to move forward, no timeline at this time
3. Scholarship Application – Out of County Request – After much discussion, it was decided to move forward following the scholarship application process as written. No changes will be made.
4. Community input - Discussion on support of departmental request for funds to update playgrounds – a community member emailed the recreation feedback inbox with concerns with large roots showing underneath the playground, the thermoplastic coating is also coming off of the metal landing pads where people stand on the playground, there are also several areas of those landing pads that are showing much rust and decay of the metal. Director Whitmire expressed that she totally agrees with all of these concerns and feels that at minimum the playground at Diamond Memorial Park needs some general maintenance and upkeep but would ultimately like to see the playground replaced as it seems to be approaching the end of its life. Director Whitmire has requested funds in the upcoming FY25 CIP to cover the replacement of the playground, as well as building a new one at the Aquatic Fields as there is not currently a playground there.
5. Community input – Parking around Soccer & Maintenance Building at Aquatic Complex – Community member, Mr. David Greenly brought forward a concern about the open access to drive over curbing, etc and park next to fields and fencing around fields. This creates a safety hazard not only for people who are attending events at the park, but also puts underground utilities in danger of damage. There was much discussion about what options there were. While more supervision was discussed, with more people requires more hours and funds to cover hourly rates. It is also extremely difficult to catch people because if a staff member is not present at the exact moment a person pulls up into an incorrect spot, you'll never be able to track them down once they get out of the car. Options to post towing signage and fencing were also discussed. Board members mentioned that towing companies

will give you free signage in exchange for calling them when someone needs to be towed. The group also discussed the existing concrete barriers stored behind the county maintenance

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shop and what we could do with those. It was eventually decided to let Board member Keith Dayton check in with a gentleman who has put a swinging gate in at another location. This option was thought to help give the division needed while not impeding mowing grass and other maintenance needs.

Other areas of concern were discussed like the crosswalk and bridge leaving the pickleball courts and needing some sort of speed breaker there. Also, lack of signage in several visible areas around the fields. It was reported that signage is only on one side of the small restroom/concession side of the building by the Aquatic Soccer fields.

A question was raised about the lights on the baseball/softball fields behind the Aquatic Center. There are MANY bulbs out on each pole. Director Whitmire discussed the project with the Director of Facilities and it was decided to begin the bulb replacement project later on in the summer. One because in the new budget year, the funds will be available to use, but also we don't want to spend all the money now and pull it together somehow only to have the lights hit by summer storms, etc during a time when our programs are not running, we'd only have to re-visit it again before our Fall seasons start. So, beginning it in late July will be the best option.

A comment was also brought to the groups attention about a request from a pool member who'd like to see the pool chemical readings to the white board along with the temperatures, etc and also requested the new hours be updated on the website.

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 16th | 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. May 24th – PuzzlePalooza!
2. May 25th – NE GA Car Swap Meet
3. May 28th – 30th – Volleyball Camp
4. May 28th – HCPR Gymnastics Summer Camp Starts
5. May 29th – June 1st – Ride Like a Pro GA motorcycle event
6. May 30th – June 2nd – GRPA District 7 Class “C” 10U Baseball Tournament
7. June 10th – 15th – GRPA District 7 Class “B” 8U Baseball & 12U Baseball tournament
8. June 15th – Daddy Daughter Dance
9. June 21st – 23rd – private wedding event
10. June 28th & 29th – GRPA District 7 Class “B/C” Swim Meet
11. June 29th – private birthday party event

Adjourn

Motion by Joe Elam

Seconded by Shelly Tullis

Time: 8:01p