

COMMISSION ON PARKS AND RECREATION

SUMMARY OF COMMISSION MEETING

A meeting of the Commission on Parks and Recreation was held at the Feltonville Recreation Center at 231-37 East Wyoming Avenue at 6:00PM.

PRESENT: Commissioner Nancy Goldenberg, Chair
Commissioner Andrew Denison
Commissioner Derrick Ford
Commissioner Debra Wolf Goldstein
Commissioner Jeffrey Hackett
Commissioner Gary Jastrzab
Commissioner David Perri
Commissioner Carol Rice
Commissioner Sarah Clark Stuart
Deborah Cahill representing Commissioner Bridget Greenwald
Joanne Dahme representing Commissioner Howard Neukrug

ABSENT: Commissioner Michael DiBerardinis
Commissioner Matthew Perks
Commissioner James Straw

ALSO PRESENT: Councilwoman Maria Quinones Sanchez

Commission Chair Nancy Goldenberg called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone in attendance. She recognized Park and Recreation staff and thanked them for hosting the meeting.

Commissioner Andrew Denison presented the PaRC Star Pathfinder Award to Helen (Betty) Dworkin for her outstanding volunteer efforts with senior citizens at the Northeast Older Adult Center.

Commissioner Goldenberg informed everyone that Deputy Mayor Michael DiBerardinis was not feeling well and was unable to attend the meeting to present the report from the Department of Parks and Recreation. She then proceeded to review upcoming events. Maple Sugar Day will be celebrated on February 28th at the Wissahickon Environmental Center and March 7th at Fox Chase Farm. All are welcome to attend. The Philadelphia Flower Show opens on February 28th at the PA Convention Center and runs through March 8th. There is an adult wheelchair basketball tournament at the Carousel House from March 6th through March 8th. There are several upcoming groundbreaking. There is a groundbreaking on February 24th at Vernon Park, on February 25th at Stinger Square Park and on March 17th at Collazo Park. Parks and Recreation received a grant for \$10,000 from the U.S. Forest Service that allows children from recreation centers across the city to explore the forests and waterways of Philadelphia's parks. Staff will work with children, ages 8 – 12, introducing them to nature in a series of 6 trips, one Saturday each month. The Ralph Brooks Tot Lot broke ground on December 22nd with City officials, community partners and Philadelphia Eagles player, Connor Barwin participating. On December 23rd, Mayor Nutter announced the completion of the newly upgraded playground at the Hank Gathers Recreation Center. The new, improved and greened William Dick Elementary Schoolyard recently received a Merit Award in Environmental Enhancement from the American Society of Landscape Architects NJ Chapter. On January 20th, Parks and Recreation concluded the civic engagement process for the redesign of Love Park. However, the Fairmount Park Conservancy is still taking comments from the public. Lastly, BirdPhilly is an exciting new series of bird walks and events that will take place across Philadelphia during 2015 in partnership with the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club.

Commissioner Goldenberg introduced Mike McCrea, President, Recreation Advisory Council, to speak. Mr. McCrea noted that the Feltonville Recreation Center has received numerous grants to rehabilitate the building and trees and landscaping. A new gym floor was recently installed and a 15 station computer lab was added to the center. There is now a teen center lounge and a weight room for public use. The center's afterschool programs are now attended by 45 children. They hope to refurbish the center's kitchen shortly.

Kathleen Muller introduced Shiro Morita visiting from Japan. Ms. Muller also announced a Citizens and Friends Day, sponsored by the PA Recreation and Parks Society on March 22nd in Lancaster.

Commissioner Goldenberg then asked for Committee reports. Commissioner Debra Wolf Goldstein, Chair, Land Use, Planning and Design Committee, stated that the Committee is currently deliberating over the Velodrome proposal at FDR Park. Comments regarding the proposal can be posted on the phila.gov website.

Commissioner Andrew Denison, Chair, Communications and Public Engagement Committee, presented background information on Pitch Your Passion. In October, the Commission asked people to present ideas to promote parks and recreation. Several ideas were presented. The first idea, Traveling Rings Circus, was presented by Eric Belcher, entertainment director. He stated that 100 years ago, there were traveling rings in every park. There are currently three parks in the U.S. that have traveling rings. They are located in Providence, RI, Manhattan, NY and Santa Monica, CA. The traveling rings are arched metal frames with a ring every 12". There are two sizes, adult and children, and are set in a bed of sand roughly 100' ft. long by 40' wide. They are very simple and easy to use. The traveling rings cost \$7,000 - \$8,000 not including installation. The second idea was public beer gardens. The third idea was kayak and canoe public access to water ways and was presented by Commissioner Sarah Clark Stuart. There are currently kayak and public access and launch locations in Pittsburgh, including a handicapped accessible ramp. This is an excellent way to get the public out on the river and there are several locations on the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers that would be excellent launch sites. EZ launches range from \$2,000 to \$17,000. There is currently one on the Cooper River. Other Pitch Your Passion ideas included metal detectors in the Park, decorated stands for trash cans in the Park, renovations to the Hatfield House, and a boat ramp in East Falls. David Wong presented his idea for beach volleyball at various locations in Philadelphia. There is currently beach volleyball at Drexel University. Many major cities currently have beach volleyball courts. They are great for city residents who are unable to get to the beach. They are low maintenance and only the sand needs to be replenished. There are currently beach volleyball courts in Central Park, NY and the public can play free of charge. Commissioner Jeffrey Hackett questioned if they considered dirt courts also. Mr. Wong responded that sand is much easier for folks to play on. Anthony Bocchicchio stated that in the Asian community, tennis courts are being taken over and used as volleyball courts. Commissioner Denison noted that in June, six Pitch Your Passion ideas will be chosen. Pitch Your Passion posters will be distributed to all recreation centers.

Commissioner Jeffrey Hackett, Chair, Programming Committee, said that he met with City Council members who are requesting information on programming and space for children and activities in recreation centers. Mr. Hackett requested assistance from fellow Commissioners to obtain this information.

Commissioner Goldenberg introduced Kathryn Ott Lovell, President, Fairmount Park Conservancy. Ms. Lovell stated that she loves the Pitch Your Passion program and added that the Conservancy is currently working on additional boat access in the City. The Conservancy is also involved with the design concept of Love Park. On January 1st, The Conservancy merged with Fairmount Park Historic Preservation Trust and is in the process of building a new website. Lastly, Love Your Park Week begins on May 9th, involving over one hundred neighborhood parks.

Commissioner Goldenberg then opened the meeting to comments or questions from the public. Mike McCrea announced that the Feltonville Recreation Center has received additional funding in the budget for a cluster project. He added that young people will soon be hired for after school activities. Beverly Rothsneider, a member of the General Meade Society, urged Commissioners to move the Meade statue, currently located behind the Please Touch Museum, to a more visible location, such as Love Park.

Commissioner Goldenberg thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 7:30PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol J. Roache
Administrative Assistant