

## COMMISSION ON PARKS AND RECREATION

### SUMMARY OF COMMISSION MEETING

SEPTEMBER 16, 2015

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A meeting of the Commission on Parks and Recreation was held at the Pelbano Recreation Center at 8101 Bustleton Avenue at 6:00PM.

**PRESENT:** Commissioner Nancy Goldenberg, Chair  
Commissioner Andrew Denison  
Commissioner Bridget Greenwald  
Commissioner Matthew Perks  
Commissioner Carol Rice  
Commissioner Sarah Clark Stuart  
David Kanthor, Designee for Commissioner Gary Jastrzab

**ABSENT:** Commissioner Michael DiBerardinis  
Commissioner Debra Wolf Goldstein  
Commissioner Derrick Ford  
Commissioner Jeffrey Hackett  
Commissioner Howard Neukrug  
Commissioner David Perri  
Commissioner James Straw

**ALSO PRESENT:** Mark Focht, 1<sup>st</sup> Deputy Commissioner

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Commission Chair Nancy Goldenberg called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone in attendance. She introduced David Kanthor, designee for Commissioner Gary Jastrzab and welcomed him to the meeting. Commissioner Goldenberg informed everyone of upcoming events and groundbreakings and added that Leo Dignam, Deputy Commissioner, would present a recap of the Department's summer programs later in the meeting. After-school programming started this week at 82 recreational sites. The fall tree planting season has begun. Philadelphia property owners can register for 2 free trees at [www.treephilly.org](http://www.treephilly.org). Congratulations to the Parks and Recreation Department for receiving numerous "Best of Philly" awards. Commissioner Goldenberg thanked Recreation Leader Jerry Gaul and his staff for hosting the Commission meeting. Mr. Gaul welcomed everyone to the recreation center and spoke of the various programs offered at Pelbano.

Commissioner Andrew Denison presented the PaRC Award to Michael Votel, a volunteer for a sports program for special needs children at the Mayfair Recreation Center, Mr. Votel could not be present to accept the award, and his wife, Karen accepted it on his behalf.

First Deputy Commissioner Mark Focht presented a report on recent activities of the Department of Parks and Recreation. Mr. Focht stated that the Dell Center just finished another successful season with 21 sold-out events. Mr. Focht also reported on Capital Projects. 65 projects are in the design phase totaling \$51million. The largest of these projects are the Love Park Redesign and the Martin Luther King Older Adult Center. 14 projects are in the bid phase totaling \$6.8 million and 42 projects are in the construction phase totaling \$27 million. 43 projects are completed totaling \$6.4 million. Lastly, Mr. Focht spoke of the upcoming visit of Pope Francis. 11 Parks and Recreational sites are being used. Tree crews are currently removing dead and dying trees from the Parkway and 4,000 mum plants are being planted. Franklin Square is being refurbished. All sculptures on the Parkway will be protected with barricades. The Boathouse Row lights are being redone. 120 PPR staff members will be working 12 hour shifts the entire weekend with the base of operations being Lloyd Hall. PPR center city offices will be closed on Thursday, Friday and Monday. MLK Drive will be closed to all users and Kelly Drive will be closed to cars, but open to bikers and pedestrians.

Commissioner Goldenberg then asked for Committee reports. Commissioner Andrew Denison, Chair, Communications and Civic Engagement Committee, said that the Committee met with the Pitch Your Passion finalists, Game of Thrones and Beach Volleyball. The Game of Thrones finalists were offered two locations in East Fairmount Park. Their season will run from February through October. Mr. Focht added that the group is very excited and were interested in a location near the Disc Golf Course. The Beach Volleyball finalists are looking at potential sites at FDR Park, Penn Treaty Park and the Strawberry Mansion area. There will be meetings with both finalists in October.

Deputy Commissioner Leo Dignam presented an overview of the Department's summer programming. Mr. Dignam stated that over 800,000 people visited PPR's 70 outdoor and 5 indoor pools and swimming lessons were provided to almost 15,000 youth. Over 7,500 campers enrolled at 130 neighborhood day camps. There were numerous specialty camps, including art, sports, theater, farming and a camp for people with intellectual disabilities. Almost 3 million meals were served at the camps including breakfast, lunch and snacks. The Department hired 1,550 teens to work in neighborhood day camps and PPR aquatics hired 779 individuals to work as lifeguards. Commissioner Goldenberg congratulated Mr. Dignam on the Junior Farmer's program which raised over 1,500 lbs. of food grown and distributed back into local neighborhoods.

Commissioner Goldenberg asked Mr. Focht to update the Commission on this year's Made in America concert. Mr. Focht stated that Live Nation sold all tickets for both days' events. There were 5 stages this year and some damage was done to turf, trees and curbing. Mr. Focht is currently in talks with the event producer. Mr. Focht also added that 2015 was the third year for the Oval, which received excellent reviews and had a very successful year. The Oval employed 8 full-time staff members.

Commissioner Matthew Perks reported on Art Commission action from their recent meeting. Commissioner Perks stated that the Commission approved improvements to 3 projects, J.F.K. Plaza, the M.L.K Senior Adult Center and the June 5<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park, with planning issues resolved.

Commissioner Goldenberg called for Partners Reports and introduced George Matysik, the new Executive Director of the Philadelphia Parks Alliance. Mr. Matysik stated that he spent much of his youth at Jardel Recreation Center and Burholme Park, and added that he is still an avid parks and recreation user. Mr. Matysik expressed his gratitude for this opportunity. Michael McCrea of the Recreation Advisory Council said the recreation centers had a safe summer with good staffing and more programming. Mr. McCrea stated that he was looking forward to the fall and winter programming at the centers. Kathryn Ott Lovell of the Fairmount Park Conservancy was unable to attend the meeting, however, Marc Wilken accepted the Place Making Award from the A.P.A. for this year's programming at the Oval.

Commissioner Goldenberg then opened the meeting to comments or questions from the public. An unnamed member of the Holmesburg Circle Civic Assn. spoke of the deplorable conditions at McArdle Playground, children swimming in polluted water at Frankford and Solly Aves., overgrown grass at the Holme Cemetery, and an onslaught of ATVs and overgrown trees at Pennypack Park. Mr. Focht addressed each issue. Nancy from the Friends of Pennypack Park expressed her concerns over a gate at Frankford and Solly Aves. that needs to be replaced. She added that the Friends group is working with Gerry White to remove trash from the Park.

Commissioner Goldenberg thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 7:45PM. The next Commission meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:00PM at the Shepard Recreation Center, 5700 Haverford Ave.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol J. Roache,  
Administrative Assistant