PaRC Minutes for November 21, 2016 Meeting

A meeting of the Commission on Parks and Recreation was held at Venice Island Performing Arts & Recreation Center at 6:00 PM.

Present: Commissioner Raed Nasser, Chair
Commissioner Derrick Ford, Vice Chair
Commissioner Kathryn Ott Lovell
Commissioner Susan Dannenberg
Commissioner Michael Froehlich
Commissioner Jean Marie Kouassi
Commissioner Gregory J. Allen
Commissioner Phoebe Coles
Commissioner Kristine Soffa
Commissioner Brenda Reavis
Commissioner Jeffrey Hackett

Also Present:
State Representative Pam DeLisso
Captain John Moroney - 5th Police District
Captain Sekou Kinebrew - 14th Police District
Josh Cohen - Special Assistant to Councilman Curtis Jones
Executive Director Fairmount Park Conservancy Rick Magder
Executive Director George Matysik
Chief of Staff Tiffany W. Thurman
Deputy Commissioner Aparna Palantino
Deputy Commissioner Orlando Rendon, Jr.
Deputy Commissioner Sue Buck
Director of Strategic Engagement Barbara McCabe
Director of Compliance Barry Bessler
Strategy & Communications Manager Moria Miller
Executive Assistant Kathleen DeCrescio
Commissioner Kathryn Ott Lovell called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone in attendance. She introduced Raed Nasser Commission Chair for PaRC. Raed said he and his fellow commissioners are looking forward to helping Parks & Recreation achieve the goal of making parks, recreation centers, programs and services more inclusive, enjoyable, and safe for everyone.

Vice Chair Derrick Ford introduced himself and asked for a brief history of the Venice Island building. Kay Sykora, Project Director of Manayunk Development Corporation lobbied for the new building. Venice Island Performing Arts and Recreation Center opened in October 2014. Funding for the theater was a struggle until the early 2000s, when the Philadelphia Water Department began a project to put a four million-gallon tank for capturing sewage during high-water events under Venice Island Playground. The water department sought the opinion of Sykora and the Manayunk Development Corporation for a solution. Through a joint effort, the center was built.

The Commission members then introduced themselves:

**Rick Ford** who is vice chair of the commission is also known as the "Mayor of Strawberry Mansion". He is a longtime advocate for Parks and Recreation and he thanked other members for stepping up to continue the momentum.

**Greg Allen** is the director of foundation and government relations for the Vetri Community Partnership. The Vetri foundation teaches kids how to cook and how to prepare for jobs. Greg started with the Recreation Department as a CETA worker and was hired by former Parks & Recreation Deputy Commissioner Carol Rice.
Jeff Hackett has a passion for children. Both of his parents were teachers and he spent his youth at Morris Estate Recreation Center. He was an integral partner in the rebuilding of Sturgis Recreation.

Jean Marie Kouassi is the chair of Sports and co-chair of the Housing committee for the Mayor's Commission for African and Caribbean Affairs. He is actively involved with the Friends of Clark Park and was responsible for the organization of a soccer tournament which was the pre-cursor to the Unity Cup in Southwest Philadelphia.

Michael Froehlich is a legal aid lawyer specializing in consumer rights and foreclosures. He is actively involved with Clark Park and Cedar Park. He and his daughter have visited more than 200 playgrounds and together blog about their experiences.

Kristine Soffa is the community liaison for the 5th District Police Advisory Council. She is also a PA Master Naturalist. She is passionate about the parks and environmental preservation and is looking forward to the opportunity to serve.

Susan Dannenberg is the board chair for the Friends of the Cresheim Trail. She is an advocate for the park and trails in both Philadelphia and Montgomery counties.

Brenda Reavis is an administrative assistant to the Executive Director of the American Women's Heritage Society and the committee person for the 60th ward. She is an advocate for the under-served communities and welcomes the opportunity to introduce nature walks to members of the inner city.

Phoebe Coles is the Executive Director of Keep Philadelphia Beautiful, and she proposes that every person in Philadelphia recycle their plastic bags to make our city cleaner and more sustainable.

Commissioner Ott Lovell announced Mayor Jim Kenney's initiative to transform the city's aging recreation centers, libraries and parks has been bolstered by $100 million in funding from the William Penn Foundation. The funding was officially announced during a press conference at the Cecil B. Moore Recreation Center in North Philadelphia. ReBuild is a $500 million investment by the City of Philadelphia which aims to promote citywide community engagement, invest in community priorities, promote healthy lifestyles and expand economic opportunity by encouraging workforce diversity and inclusion.

Nicole Westerman is the Executive Director of the ReBuild Initiative. Nicole presented a Power Point presentation that outlined the three goals of ReBuild: Revitalization; Empowerment and Economic Opportunity. The Revitalization of parks, recreation centers, playgrounds and libraries will ensure that communities that are most in need will receive reinvestment.
Raed stated the mission of the Commission on Parks and Recreation is to become the nation's leader in the park and recreation field. To do so, the Commission works to:

- Promote opportunities for our city's park and recreational spaces and their users
- Develop and adopt written, enforceable standards and guidelines for park and recreation land and facilities related to their use
- Assist in promoting, supporting and enhancing the image of parks and recreational facilities and programs

Kris Soffa presented the PaRC Star award to Marlene Schleifer. Marlene is a tireless Roxborough environmental advocate who has worked for over 12 years dedicating her time, money and energy to improving PPR parks and parcels, the Hillside Recreation Center as well as the Dobson School. Marlene's motto is “Green, Clean and Recycle”. Because of generous passionate people like Marlene, our city is even more enjoyable since it is greener and cleaner with more deeply connected community ties.

Raed then introduced the Executive Director of Fairmount Park Conservancy, Rick Magder. Rick is from Detroit and he has worked preserving green space around the country. The conservancy is an independent non-profit organization that is involved in strategic planning.

Raed then introduced George Matysik who is the Executive Director of Philadelphia Parks Alliance. George works directly with the community and is an advocate to continue the work of the community.

Raed then opened the meeting for public input. The first speaker was Richard Giordano. Rich is co-chair of the Upper Roxborough Reservoir Preserve. The Reservoir is a 34 acre site bounded by Summit Avenue, Port Royal Avenue, Eva Street and Lare Street. Over the last ten years trees and bulbs have been planted. The group is requesting the following items: 1) Repair of the 120 year-old wall on Lare Street 2) Finish the fence 3) Build a bridge over the opening in the spillway 4) Plant Material needed for the Summit swales 5) Signage that includes the history of the site.
The second speaker was Cynthia Kishinchand, who is a member of East Falls Tree Tenders, Friends of Inn Yard Park, Friends of McMichael Park, and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. Cynthia stressed the importance of open space for children and adults and requested a hydration station for McMichael Park.

Alexis Franklin, Deborah Thorp, Robert Rabinowitz, and Beth Gross-Eskin, all from McMichael Park, stressed the importance of keeping the 6 acres of park space green by adding more trees.

Rosemary Rau presented testimony on behalf of the Philadelphia Canoe Club which is located at the mouth of the Wissahickon Creek. The Philadelphia Canoe Club is the third oldest paddling club in the United States. PCC has more than 200 members who take scores of trips every year on our local rivers and streams. Their general meetings are held at 4900 Ridge Avenue every 3rd Monday of the month beginning at 7:30 pm. To get more information, please visit their website at philacanoe.org.

Melvin Sharpe from Strawberry Mansion was the last speaker. He stressed the importance of investing in the community around the area of 33rd and Dauphin and asked for more bathrooms and lighting.

Raed thanked everyone for coming and thanked them for their input. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm. The next public meeting will take place on Monday, January 23, 2017 at 6 pm at Guerin Recreation Center (16th & Jackson Streets).

Kathleen DeCrescio
Executive Assistant