The Wicomico Recreation & Parks Commission met in regular session on September 26, 2017 at 7:05 p.m. in the Conference Room of the Youth and Civic Center. The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. The following members and staff were present.

Allen Brown, Chairman  
Jay Disharoon  
April Jackson  
Shawn Johnson  
Johnny Insley  
Les Wright

Pam Oland  
Chuck Poole  
James Simmons

The meeting minutes were approved from June 27, 2017’s meeting. Shawn Johnson motioned to approve and Jay Disharoon seconded the motion.

Mrs. Oland introduced James Simmons as the new Recreation Superintendent for the Recreation, Parks and Tourism department. It was announced that the Child Care Program Director had been filled, and also that Janice von Paris is now working as the new Administrative Office Supervisor for Recreation, Parks and Tourism, in response to Tammy Taylor’s retirement. The Program Director position is still vacant and interviews are being conducted.

Mr. Simmons reported that the Kids Klub after school program is up and running with 274 participants beating last year’s number of 244. Soccer is being held at Winterplace Park. Adult softball is being held at Henry S. Parker Athletic Complex and enrollment is up 35 percent. Men’s slow pitch and co-ed softball is going well also. Karate is being offered for kids now. The program started with 18 and now has 44 participants. Mr. Wright asked what type of karate is being taught, and Mr. Simmons was uncertain at the time.

Mr. Simmons updated the Commission on special events. It has been a busy time during the last few months with the 150th celebration of Wicomico County. There was the Parade of Towns, Brothers of the Brush, the Court House Lighting and Heritage Bike Tour. Upcoming events are the Beer Fest, Wine Festival, Pumpkin Tour and Turkey Trek 5K.

Mr. Simmons talked about the Westside Community Center being in transition. The staff is reaching out to residents of the community to determine wants and needs for the center. Mr. Brown asked if the community center is closing. Mrs. Oland responded that it is not the county’s intention to close the facility. Currently there is a mentoring program being held there. Due to licensing issues it is currently not an after school site. The site will not house a full time employee going forward.
Mr. Poole reported that there have been many projects being done with Parks and Recreation in recent months. There have been rain events that have required a lot of extra work. Two Fire Departments were needed to pump water from WinterPlace Park to get ready for the County Fair. Billy Gene Jackson Park now has 4 Pickle Ball Courts. Winterplace and Cope Bennett Park are slated for Pickle Ball courts as well. Winterizing and dead tree removal will be done throughout the parks during the winter. Preparations are underway for the Good Beer and Autumn Wine Festivals. The license for the Beer festival is in progress with the liquor board. The Maryland Wine Association provides the license for the Wine festival.

Now through April 1st we will continue with the Parker Athletic Complex expansion. The projects that will be addressed this fall are the addition of dugouts, installation of fences (that will begin next week), lights on field 6, new audio and speakers, renovations of bathrooms, and addition of new walk in freezer. Information kiosks will also be placed at field 5 and on the way to fields 1, 2, 3, 4. Batting cages will be constructed at field 5 (championship field), field 1, and one will be placed central to fields 6, 7, and 8. New scoreboards are planned, new press boxes which will be two stories with storage space underneath so teams can sell t-shirts and merchandise. A new maintenance building with a conference room will also be built.

Program Open Space continues with renovations to basketball courts at Crooked Oak and Centennial Village and Kilburnie tennis courts. Play modules will be replaced at San Domingo, Cope Bennett and Cedarhurst Park this winter. The parking lot at Schumaker Park is also slated to be redone.

The Capital Improvements Plan is a 5 year plan to make updates to parks throughout the county. Tennis courts to be updated are in Cope Bennett and WinterPlace Parks next year.

Mrs. Oland went over the Program Open Space information. Mr. Miller is looking to move the dates of when the annual letters are sent out to the municipalities. Letters would be sent in December and asked to be returned in January. This would allow requests for POS funding to be included in the budget process during February and March. Projects can be added at a later date also. Mr. Johnson requested that the Recreation Commission members be alerted when the annual letters to municipalities are sent.

Mr. Brown asked if there have been problems with the plastic material on the playgrounds. Mr. Poole responded that there have not been any issues to his knowledge. Parks Division staff is placing new wood fill product on playgrounds instead of regular mulch. This is costing the county $10,000 to $15,000 a year. The change in the playground surface is being made to be compliance with national safety standards for playgrounds.

Updates were given on the Land Preservation, Parks & Recreation Plan. A public hearing will be held on October 3. Once it is adopted by the County Council, it can be sent to the State for final approval. The original deadline was 6/30/17, but we received an extension from the State. Since the required acquisition goals were met, the County will receive 90 percent funding for Program Open Space development projects which will require a 10 percent local match.
Mr. Brown asked about the open gym at Salisbury Middle. Mr. Simmons responded that there were some issues that he needed to discuss with the school. A situation allegedly took place in the parking lot and police were called. Ms. Jackson clarified that the police were called in retaliation of two young boys being turned out of the gym for disrespectful behavior. Ms. Jackson said that she is very involved with the program at Salisbury Middle, and she does not have tolerance for disrespectful behavior and will not allow it in the gym. She said there are also young ladies that attend the basketball nights but don’t play. She would like to offer Double Dutch jump rope as part of the program as well. Mr. Brown asked what the time frame is for the program. Mr. Simmons replied the open gym program is from 6 to 9 p.m. and runs October through March. Mr. Wright brought up concerns with students getting their homework done. Ms. Jackson replied that the students do get out of school at 3 p.m. so they have time to complete their homework before arrival at the gym. She proceeded by saying they have thought about offering an area for students to complete their homework if they haven’t already done so. They would need to complete it before being able to participate. Mr. Simmons stated the Department intends to continue with the program. However, he will meet with the administration of the school to discuss the particulars for the upcoming year.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Janice von Paris
Janice von Paris, Recording Secretary