

Open Work Session

Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (Chapters 1-4)

November 15, 2016

Mr. Steve Miller, Director of Recreation, Parks & Tourism, Mr. Keith Hall, Transportation and Long Range Planner, and Mr. Bob Kriebel with Urban Research Development Corporation (URDC), came before Council. Mr. Steve Miller said they will be reviewing Chapters 1 through 4 today as well as the Executive Summary of the Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP). Mr. Hall said the first four chapters as well as the Executive Summary have been added to the Recreation, Parks, and Tourism website for public review and comment. At this point they have not received any public comments, however, as they work with Council on the review the plan, prior to adoption, they will keep Council informed of any comments that come in. Mr. Miller said the LPPRP is updated every four to five years for two primary reasons (1) the plan is a requirement by the State of Maryland for the County to receive Program Open Space Funding. (2) It is also a planning document that they use internally to help them assess the open space, facilities and match them to meet the needs of the population and also to help identify what gaps there may be in their service, if any. They use all of these things as tool for capital recommendation. It is a requirement of the state but it is also an internal tool for their planning. Mr. Miller said he mentioned that the plan is updated every four to five years, however, Council may recall seeing the plan sooner than that as the 2013 plan was late and it was adopted in August 2014, which was just over two years ago. What Council is seeing is an update of the 2013 plan that was approved and enacted two years ago. Council will see some facilities have changed over the last couple of years have been updated, program statistics have been updated. Mr. Miller said at the new work session, he will talk more specifically about chapter 7, which has some updates on capital planning on where they project they will be in the next 5 to 10 years. Mr. Miller said as far as the timeline, they have vetted the first draft with the Recreation and Parks Commission and in October they gave the unanimous approval to move forward to this stage in the process to review with Council. They are here today and again in December to get any thoughts and feedback from council members and then the first draft will be submitted to DNR by the end of this year, December 31st. After that point they will get comments back from the state and then come back before Council sometime in the spring. The idea is to have the plan adopted before the end of June 2017. Mr. Miller said Urban Research Development has been involved with updating the plan since 1988 in some fashion, so they have a long history in working with the County and working with this plan. Mr. Kriebel said URDC has been helping the County with the Land Preservation Parks and Recreation Plan since they first started being required by the state in 1988. He said URDC does quite a bit of parks and recreation planning and he thinks it is fair to say that Wicomico County has developed one of the finest recreation and parks systems, both from the standpoint of the planning and elements that it is in the system as in any others small to medium county in the eastern united states. He said what this County has is exemplary and the service in parks and recreation is outstanding. The plan itself is going to discuss the physical characteristics of the County, the demographic characteristics and touch on the current planning policies and objectives for parks and recreation. They looked at three different types of parks identified through the national recreation and park association, neighborhood community and county parks and they differ by not only the size of the park but who wide their service area is. Mr. Kriebel said the plan looks are both the park land and the recreational facilities. The state requires that the County, in order to be eligible for Program Open Space Funding provide, 30 acres of open space for every thousand residents. HE said Wicomico County has met that guideline since 1988. Now the actual provision is 36.3 acres per thousand so once again the County will submit it has met its required goal for continuing program open space funding. There is analysis of facilities that uses a supply and demand model from the state and this particular version in 2017 has identified current needs for softball facilities, facilities in tennis, golf, disc golf, swimming pools

and boating ramps. He said they will be discussing capital improvements at the December meeting and they will get into how the County will help meet some of those needs. HE said the plan also looks at additional needs for the population in 2020 and 2025 because, of course, as the population grows so is the need for parks, recreation and open space. The plan also addresses bikeway, walking trails, heritage tourism, water access, recreation programs, tourism and finances. He said 2017 the state requires one of two new elements in the plan. The County gets to pick which would it wants to do. For 2017, what they have done is what they refer to as a proximity analysis. In another words, how far are your parks and recreation facilities from the residents. He said the guideline is within a five-mile radius and that is for large rural and countywide areas. Mr. Kriebel then showed council members several maps, including the picnic pavilion areas, aquatic facilities, water access, and trails and bikeways. He said the plan recognizes that the aquatic facilities are either semi-public meaning the residents have to join at some point, or private facilities. He said their understanding is that there are no public swimming pools in the County, but the state has accepted the use for this analysis of semi-public and aquatic facilities. He said council can see how extensive the system is and the state has recognized Wicomico County has one of the leading counties in the state. The plan is also going to deal with agriculture land preservation and natural resource conservation. The County Planning Department is currently working on those sections. Mr. Kilmer he noticed that there is a mid-range goal to have a plan for Pirate's Wharf. He asked if they could elaborate on the plans for Pirate's Wharf, to which Mr. Miller said one of their goals is to look at over the next year developing plan and work with planner to develop a vision for that specific park. Mr. Miller said this a planning tool for them so they do not know specifically what it will look like or what amenities that it may have. It is something they want to develop. Mr. Kilmer then asked if there is process as there are members of the public that are keen on being involved in the planning. Is there a public process? Mr. Miller said they will work through the Executive's Office, but it has not been developed as to how exactly it will look. Mr. Hall said it will be part of the scope of work that they will work with the Executive's Office to develop to figure out what level of participation will take place. However, with any planning process you want the public involvement throughout the various stages. Mr. Hall said they have heard a lot of different options for Pirate's Wharf as to what it could be, but with a plan they will have a roadmap as to exactly what it can be. What is allowed by law whether it is working with critical area issues. Also utilities and from that they will be able to Council with Capital programming considerations with future CIPs. Mr. Hall said there are two maps that have weaknesses and one of them is aquatic. He understands there is very little the County can do for aquatic. The other map is the biking and hiking trails. He assumed the County is working on much more aggressive programs and they will be seen in the future. Mr. Hall said when looking at the proximity analysis, they looked at the data as a starting point for what the County had. Mr. Hall said when you start looking at the gaps, which you will see more in the rural areas the County, were biking is permissible. HE said part of this is going back to evaluate the data again to make they get all the data, so they get a full coverage as they should have for biking faculties and then whether it is a function of the Metropolitan Planning Organization, the County as well as the municipal jurisdictions, there has been a push in the area to create a regional bikeway network. Mr. Kriebel said you will notice that the five-mile coverage areas are a radius around each facility. Bikeways and trails are a different type of facility and you could analysis them in terms of five-miles in a straight line away, basically a five-mile width from the facilities They have not talked to the state about that and he does not know what effect that may have on the map. What they did was continue the accepted practice of the five-mile radius. Mr. Cannon asked if the five-mike geographic radius was in the plan as he does not recall see it specifically. Mr. Hall said the proximity analysis is being folding in as part of the appendices, so in reviewing the first four chapters of the plan, Council has not received that information. Mr. Hall said when they come back to council on December 6th that information will be presented in detail as well as the facilities information. Mr. Cannon asked if they are using the proximity analysis instead of the number of acres per thousand

residents. He then asked if that is more beneficial in the rural areas, to which Mr. Kriebel responded, yes, because what you are talking about is the location of facility relative to the people that are going to use the facility. Mr. Hall said it is mainly being driven by that is a new state requirement versus the 2013 plan and previous planning efforts, it has the ratio of 30 acres per thousand people and was the metric of whether or the County met recreational needs for both existing as well as future projected population. Mr. Hall said as a function of the new 2017 guidelines the state has recommended with the proximity analysis given that we are rural area, there is a five-mile radius, or they can do a park equity analysis. It has to be one or the other and they chose the proximity analysis given the rural nature of the County. He said it does show all the amenities and affords the county a better coverage rate.

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John T. Cannon, President



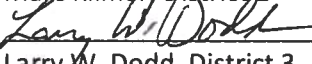
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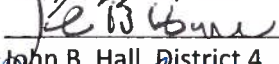
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