

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

August 21, 2024

Present: Ned Michie, Jessica Jackson, Geoffrey MacDonald, Mark Denison, Jackie Webber, Jeff Fracher

Student: Gabe Damiani

Absent: Amanda Burns, Kent Merritt, Hosea Mitchell, Jenny Taylor, Jeanette Abi-Nader, Denny Berry

City: Riaan Anthony, Annie Sechrist, Justin Mckenzie, Will Bassett

Public Matters:

Aileen Carey- represents Cultivate Charlottesville which is a non-profit. Cultivate Charlottesville has a focus on Washington Park and having a community farm in the lower area of the park.

Michelle Gibson- community advocate for Cultivate Charlottesville from the 10th and Page neighborhood. She is concerned about Washington Park meeting the needs of the youth community.

Information Items:

I-1 Master Plan Update Mike Svetz

- Community Engagement Efforts
 - 32 meetings and events with 750+ attendees
 - Online surveys with over 2000 responses
- Key Findings from Community Input
 - Strong desire for unpaved trails, natural park areas, paved trails, water/river access, environmental education centers, community gardens and dog parks. These were high priority.
 - Medium priorities included specialized facilities like skate parks and dog off-leash areas.
 - Low priorities were mostly athletic fields and sports-related amenities.
- Park and Facility Utilization and Condition
 - Survey results show 94% utilization rate for parks and facilities

- Only 11% of respondents rated the parks condition as excellent
- This could be attributed to lack of funding for lifecycle replacement of assets like playgrounds.
- Maintenance and Program Satisfaction
 - Respondents were generally satisfied with maintenance activities.
 - Restroom maintenance is a significant issue that needs to be addressed.
 - 24% respondents rated programs and services as excellent, slightly above national benchmark of 23%.
- Funding and Staffing
 - Need for sustainable funding sources and stabilized staffing levels.
 - 67% of respondents support at least a one-cent tax increase, indicating a willingness to fund improvements and expansions.
- Site-Specific Framework Plans
 - Plans addressed issues like restroom access, community gardens, passive civic spaces, and historical recognition.
- Next Steps
 - Further technical work, framework plan development, connectivity analysis, and presenting a final Master Plan to board and City Council.
 - Need to continue to engage with the board over the next few months.

Board Matters:

Geoffrey M.- With looking at survey mechanics, how do you control for bias? (ex: people who use the facilities being overrepresented in the survey against people who don't use the facilities and may not be aware of the survey?)

Mike Svetz- ETC does a random sampling in a way to ensure that we don't end up with a ballot box study to ensure we represent the community through demographic and geographic balance.

Ned M- Is the report going to include a look at the depts organization and whether the dept makes sense with prioritizing of staffing?

Mike S- Yes, there's a program and service assessment that was just reviewed.

Geoffrey M- Are we setting goals for the Master Plan itself or defining larger goals of the dept as a whole?

Mike S- Our goals are making our system reflective of the needs of the community while having a funding strategy that continually reinvests.

Geoffrey M- Do people have an issue with dog waste/amenities?

Mike S- We didn't hear that as part of our conversation.

Ned M- How do Parks and Rec depts around the nation deal with enforcing leash situations and picking up after your pet?

Mike S- Some depts have Park Ambassadors, who drive around and address situations as they see them, they do not write citations.

I-2 Garden Plot Rules Justin Mckenzie

- New fees, \$150 year for 30 x 30 space
- Partnered with 10 localities, will have a forum in the coming weeks
 - Jackie W- do the other amenities provide water?
 - Justin M- 3 of the 10 provide water from what I saw but I'm not 100% on this.
 - Riaan A- we are doing a reinvestment in garden plots and in the next 4 years we hope each plot will have some form of resource.
- We can apply our scholarship to Garden Plots
- No city residents can rent a plot for 5 consecutive years
- Non-residents are not permitted to renew a plot, must go back into pool.
 - Jessica J- I don't think it's wise to allow people to go on waiting list who have had a plot for 3,4, or 5 years, there should be a waiting period.
 - Ned M- I agree, only if there's no one on waiting list.
 - Justin M- We also have to have different pools for different locations
- 3 tier analysis on current renters
 - 1st tier 1 to 2 years 32%
 - 2nd tier 3 to 5 years 23%
 - 3rd tier 6+ years 45%
- Going forward we're going to till the land between renters.
- We will be putting up our own fencing between each plot.
 - Gabe D- Could you tell us more about scholarships?

- Justin M- They're available to city residents, they're based on household income and size. There are 4 tiers 25, 50, 75, and 90% discount.

I-3 Dog Parks Riaan Anthony

- Brief update on efforts
 - Sending postcards asking for respect of parks
 - We will be implementing new yard signs
 - Focusing efforts at high traffic parks
 - Social media posts

Public Comments:

None

Chairman Matters:

- Roll dog parks into next meeting
- Set priorities for our request for capital improvement.

Meeting Closed