

PARKS AND REC ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

MAY 15,2025

Present: Ned Michie, Jenny Taylor, Mark Dennison, Jessica Jackson, Jeffrey Fracher, Tina LaRoche, Carla Manno, Adam Courville, Amanda Burns, Hosea Mitchell, Ginger Craghead-Way (Student Member)

Absent: Kent Merritt, Jackie Webber

City: Riaan Anthony, Katie Lockhart, Annie Sechrist, Justin Mckenzie

Community: Todd Diamond, Adam Peters, Alan Dawkin (**President of Central Little League**)

Ned Michie calls meeting to order at 5:35pm

Administrative Items:

ADMIN-1 April Minutes

Ned Michie

- Ned M. asks for motion to approve minutes
- Jenny T. moves to approve minutes
- Jessica J. seconds motion
- Board approves minutes

Action Items: **None**

Information Items:

I-1-Central Little League Lighting Project

Todd Diamond

- Presented proposal to install lights at Pen Park field in memory of Aidan Peters.
- Project has been in the works since 2005.
- Serve 500-600 children annually.

Adam Peters

- Aidan Peters was a dedicated and passionate young baseball player.
- Absence of lights limited evening play

Alan Dawkin

- Proposed lighting system from Musco Lighting has zero light spill over and is energy-efficient.
- Estimated cost is \$300,000, but no funding is requested from Board. Fundraising is underway.
- Safety, extended playtime, and tribute to Aidan Peters are central motivators.

- ★ Board members expressed appreciation and support for project.
- ★ Clarified that the Board's endorsement does not imply funding.

I-2-Garden Plot Rules

Justin Mckenzie

- Proposal discussed to adjust garden plot fees to \$90 per year for a standardized 20x20 ft plot.
- Aims to maintain competitive rates compared to 11 other regional programs
- To ensure affordability, the City plans to offer scholarship program aligned with federal poverty line criteria.

REGIONAL COMPARISON AND JUSTIFICATION

- Plot fees in surrounding communities range from \$45 to \$140 per year, with square footage pricing between .15 and .23.
- Higher-end fees typically support enhanced services, including staff salaries and maintenance costs.

PLOT AVAILABILITY AND COMMUNITY ACCESS

- Charlottesville currently offers 122 plots for a population of 45,000-resulting in a favorable ratio of 1 plot per 359 residents
- This compares positively to jurisdictions like Fairfax County where the ratio is significantly lower.

RESIDENTS VS. NONRESIDENT PARTICIPATION

- Approximately 75% of garden plots are occupied by city residents
- This ratio has remained consistent from 2024 to 2025.
- Data quality prior to 2016 was noted as unreliable, with improvements in tracking efforts now underway.

WAITLIST TRENDS

- In 2024, 10 individuals were on the waitlist
- In 2025, that number increased slightly to 11.

GARDEN PLOT TENURE ANALYSIS FROM 2016-2024

- A wide distribution of gardener duration with over 50% of users maintaining plots for more than 4 years.
- Approximately 15% of gardeners have held plots for 9 or more years.
- This indicates a strong core of long-term users and supports the program's perceived value.

Public Comment:

GARDEN PLOT CONCERNS

- Several longtime gardeners shared frustration with new guidelines and what they perceived as overly punitive oversight.
- Gardeners emphasized their stewardship of their plots and expressed concern over lack of City maintenance (e.g., shed disrepair, weed overgrowth).
- Requests were made for better support and clearer, more equitable plot evaluation standards.

TENNIS COURT CONDITIONS AND USE

- Residents voiced concern about deteriorating conditions at the Pen Park tennis courts including
 - Cracked and faded court surfaces
 - Broken or missing nets
 - Lack of windscreens
- Tensions were reported between tennis and pickleball players over shared use of limited space.
- Speakers urged City to invest in resurfacing and maintenance and to consider dedicated space for each sport
- Some speakers also advocated against eliminating any tennis courts, highlighting the sport's popularity and limited local availability.

Chairman's Matters: **None**

Board Matters:

- Amanda B. moves to cease discussion on term limits for the time being
- The motion included directing staff to focus on enforcing existing rules, particularly those about maintenance and upkeep (e.g., issuing notices).
- Suggested amendments to rules to give priority access to students and city residents.
- Board puts emphasis on forming creative working groups to gather community input and develop more robust recommendations.
- Board states desire for participatory decision-making, possibly including garden representatives in advisory roles.
- Board acknowledged the long-standing contributions of gardeners and expressed hesitancy to make impactful changes without full community feedback.
- Board mentions concerns that term limits could unfairly displace long-term gardeners.
- Board members encouraged staff to continue with garden renovation plans, regardless of any policy pause.
- Board noted importance of making garden opportunities more widely known, particularly to those currently unaware.
- Amanda B. moves to amend first motion

- Amanda B. makes second motion for Board to cease discussion of term limits at this time, staff create a working group to engage gardening community and the community at large, developing a more thorough recommendation for review in 12 months time.
- Ned M. asks Board to okay Amanda B. withdrawing first motion
- Board agrees
- Ned M. asks for second to Amanda Burns' second motion
- Jenny T. seconds motion
- Board passes motion
- Amanda B. suggested including a calendar or agenda section highlighting upcoming community events to improve clarity and engagement among Board members.
- Board felt a shared calendar would help all members stay informed and involved.

Director's Matters: **Riaan Anthony**

- Provided update about the availability of the City Space venue for meetings
- Confirmed space is generally available on 2nd Wednesday of each month, except in September.
- Thursdays are consistently unavailable
- Board asked to consider whether 2nd Wednesday works for everyone, and to plan for discussion and potential vote at next meeting.
- Venue changes may affect bylaws.

Public Comments:

- Several speakers emphasized that for many, especially immigrants, gardening is not a hobby but a vital source of culturally specific food that can't be found in stores.
- A suggestion was made to differentiate between people who rely on gardening for food and those who garden recreationally.
- One speaker argued that term limits on garden plots might prevent individuals from fully developing their plots.
- A concern that community garden resources have diminished and should be restored or expanded.
- Encouragement to think creatively about expanding access and involvement based on different capacities and interests.

Adjournment: **Ned Michie**

- Ned M. adjourns meeting at 7:35pm