

Recreation Advisory Commission
June 14, 2023

Call To Order:

A meeting of the Durham Recreation Advisory Commission was held on this day in person, June 14, 2023. Vice Chair Cedric Burke called the meeting to order at 7:35 am. Attendance was confirmed by roll call. Councilmember Holsey-Hyman was not present. Commissioner's Sundaramoorthy and Stracks-Mullem were an excused absence.

I. Adjustments to the Agenda/Special Announcements

None

II. Public Comment

- Dale McKeel shared his concerns with unsafe conditions on the Third Fork Creek Trail. He provided pictures of the tree root and drainage/ponding water issues. He is concerned that the problem areas have not been corrected and lack of communication and additional information on when repairs will take place.
- Jesse Huddleston provided an introduction and shared his feelings on the recent communication efforts on the lead study in City parks. He expressed concern regarding decisions made, communication with the community, and environmental racism and injustice. He asked for DPR to consider what we did, did not do or could have done differently, including mandating a way to share the results of the study, reaching out internally. He expressed dissatisfaction that staff did not contact him directly; he was updated by Karthik Sundaramoorthy. He expressed the matter felt unacceptable and that DPR need to do better to admit mistakes and build trust.

III. RAC Community Engagement Events & Committee Reports

- Wade reported out on the widely successful Bimbe' Festival event.
- Cedric provided highlights of the recent soccer clinics held in partnership with DPR.

Hillandale Advisory Commission (Lesley Stracks-Mullem)

- No report at this meeting.

DOST Report (Jill Thomas)

- Jill attended the park tour which included five park and trail development sites. She enjoyed the interaction with peers and learning more about the important work that's been achieved with trails and the work in some of our parks. She's looking forward to our RAC park tour in the fall.

Durham Parks Foundation (Girija Mahajan)

- Most of their focus is planning for their upcoming fundraising events and August retreat.

IV. Approval of Minutes

- Commissioner Thomas made a motion to approve the May 10, 2023 meeting minutes; seconded by Commissioner Mahajan; no further changes, whereupon motion duly made, seconded and unanimously adopted, the minutes were approved as presented.

V. **Fee Waivers (June)**

- Commissioner Thomas made a motion to accept all fee waivers as recommended by staff; seconded by Commissioner Barnes. All in favor, motion passes unanimously.

1. **EDFC Recreational Soccer**

Event: Youth Soccer Program

Facility Request: East End Park – Ball Field

Dates: July 5, 2023 – August 30, 2023

Fees approved by consent at 50% after payment of non-waivable fees

VI. **Old Business/New Business**

Summer Programming Highlights & 2022/23 Presentation

Jason Jones, Assistant Director of Community Recreation Services

- In November of 2022 a re-organization was made to create more alignment by grouping all of our recreation services in one Community Recreation Services Division.
- This division is responsible for providing all of our recreation programs, special events, service, and facilities. Facilities managed and programmed by this division include: 6 community recreation centers; 2 city lakes (Lake Michie and Little River); 5 public swimming pools; all of our athletic fields and the newly added City Wide Special Events Unit.
- A few of the new and unique programs were shared (Beyblade Tournament; History Hike – Man & The River; Shakes & Quakes; The Churches of Durham (new program); Blue Moon Paddle; volleyball camp at Walltown; open skate at WD Hill; floating down the Eno River; Challenger Flag football.
- We have two major teen programs (Teen Connect and My Durham); Teen Connect is a teen focused summer camp. Teens seem highly engaged and have enjoyed learning how to be more involved in their community by volunteering at the Food Bank. My Durham programming is specifically designed for teens by teens and continues to grow.
- Q. Mahajan - How many teens are participating in the summer program?
- A. Teen Connect is mostly full with 15 teens and My Durham is a drop in program which varies daily.
- Summer Camp locations are Edison Johnson; Walltown, & W.D> Hill. We have 45 participants at EJ; 30 each at Walltown and W.D. Hill. Staffing is highest since COVID and we have a waitlist for each camp, with plans to increase numbers as we hire additional staff.
- Staffing numbers for our outdoor pools (Forest Hills & Hillside) are higher now than last year. We've really made a push to increase the number of aquatic school participants which helps us hire seasonal staff. This year My Durham started a swim lesson program at Campus Hills. Teens will learn how to swim while advancing their skills in areas of growth for job opportunities within DPR and our industry. We recently hired an Aquatics (only) Manager position who will be starting in July. We also have a recreation manager position for Edison Johnson & Campus Hills with a focus on recreation facility programming.
- The all new Bitty Baseball served 20 kids and was very successful. Staff even invited local leagues to participate. Q. Mahajan –will staff look at compare competitive vs. non-competitive sports? A. Yes, we're looking at programming opportunities for every athlete regardless of ability.
- 2022-2023 Highlights
 - Our two most staff intensive units have had the best year of hiring since COVID.
 - The MyDurham has achieved pre COVID numbers.

- We have offered 442 programs this FY
- Served 20,320 participants
- Served 999 renters and fishing enthusiasts at the lakes
- 39% of our FT hires this year have been promotions

Q&A

Mahajan: do we have a breakdown of participants by age, older vs. younger, is it what you would expect? Jones: No, but we do trend more towards youth and teens. It's hard to compare registered participants vs. passive recreation as we're not capturing all attendees. Some discussion on looking for better ways to track our numbers.

VII. Director's Report

- A copy of the June director's report was included in each RAC packet that members received. Upon your review, send Wade any questions you may have regarding its content.
- Year of the Trail, updates provided.
- The Durham Sports Commission presented its plans for a proposed multi- sports complex, at the last work session. The proposal includes an indoor complex, gym, and an outdoor space. The indoor portion would have a track, basketball or volleyball courts, and seats for 5,000. The presentation was well received by City Council.
- The Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan will recognize current needs and plans for future facilities. This process will have multiple opportunities for engagement with the public and follow guidance of the City's Equitable Engagement Blueprint.
- Ticket information for our Fourth of July event will be shared soon with commissioners.
- Wade provided information on where we are with the Equitable Green Infrastructure fund. The purpose of the project is to prioritize investment and engagement with low-income communities and communities of color that have historically been excluded from or harmed by policy decision. Several DPR projects align with this mission.
- Wade reported on the recent developments of the lead contamination in three Durham Parks (Walltown, East Durham, and East End). A statement from the city manager, was recently released identifying next steps. A Duke student reached out to DPR staff requesting access to three parks for a research project. DPR staff allowed access; while requesting they keep us informed of their findings along the way. On June 1, DPR received the study results in an email from the Walltown community. Once the City received the Duke student's report that initially alerted us of lead levels in the soil, the City connected with subject matter and public health experts to take necessary steps. We are working with Durham County Department of Public Health to assist with public education. Once the work is complete and findings are available the City will share publically and include any necessary next steps.

Q&A

- Q: Barnes: are you going to test other parks as well? A: Lyon Park possibly Northgate Park A. we always test playgrounds as a standard practice.
- Q: Mahajan: Was there any discussion requesting that the student agree to a project scope plan and providing us with deliverables along the way? A: DPR asked for results but never received them. Staff will consider this moving forward and put some plans in place. Transparency and communication is important.
- Mahajan participated in the community zoom discussion, an example was used of a faculty that was absent from process and didn't guide the student on how to navigate the process. We should set up parameters detailing how the process works adding a statement that study results must be shared with DPR first before it goes public.

Cedric adjourned the meeting at 9:04 AM.

Next RAC Meeting – Wednesday, August 9, 2023 (7:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.)

Minutes respectfully submitted by Lynda Merritt