

## Recreation Advisory Commission 2021 Annual Report

### I. Mission

To advocate for the Department of Parks and Recreation and for public recreation in the Durham community.

### II. Functions

- A. Advise and make recommendation to the Director and City Council for their approval. This includes rules, regulations, policies, and administrative and budgetary matters pertaining to parks and recreation.
- B. Promote community awareness and understanding of, and appreciation for, the value of parks and recreation, which contributes to greater quality of life in Durham.
- C. The commission is an advisory body only and shall have no authority or responsibility to enforce regulations, rules, ordinances, or laws.

### III. RAC Members

1. Lesley Stracks-Mullem, Chair
2. Cedric Burke, Vice Chair
3. Kokou Nayo
4. Rebecca Reyes
5. Marcella Scurlock-Jones
6. Karthik Sundaramoorthy
7. Frank White
8. Eric Tullis
9. Open seat

### IV. Executive Summary

This report is an overview of the work the RAC has been doing in the fiscal year 2021. The work of the RAC is to share opinions and perspectives and develop recommendations, while also connecting the community to city staff. This work is accomplished through the lens of equity and inclusion.

### V. RAC Year in Review/ Monthly Meeting Highlights

- A. **January 13, 2021:** Commissioners received public comments from the pickleball community advocating for designated courts for pickleball play. A final review of the 2020 annual report was made with a vote of approval. A collective presentation was made by NIS and DPR staff on community engagement. The presentation focused on city engagement, collaborations between departments, and the new Equitable Engagement Blueprint. A unanimous vote of approval was made to endorse aligning with the city's Equitable Engagement Plan; budget

strategies were also shared. A proposal was made to dissolve the Park Safety Subcommittee due to lack of support.

- B. **February 10, 2021:** THANK YOU to February's DPR Volunteer of the Month, Cedric Burke! Commissioners received presentations on DPR operations, facilities, and offerings. A presentation on the history of Durham Parks and Recreation was also made. DPR's history, mission, vision, future, and strategic planning goals were discussed. A motion to formally dissolve the Park Safety Subcommittee passed. During public comments, a request was made for DPR to consider adding more baseball and softball fields.
- C. **March 10, 2021:** AD Jones gave a presentation on *Spring & Summer Programming*. He highlighted virtual and in person programs, such as workshops, exercise classes, concerts, games, and sports, as well as overall challenges due to COVID-19 restrictions. A presentation led by Sharon Williams, Racial Equity & Inclusion Manager, was made. The presentation provided an overview of racial equity, and she shared the City of Durham's vision/mission, and the Equitable Decision Making Mode. Topics discussed included meanings of diversity, equality, and equity and examples of individual, institutional and structural racism.
- D. **April 14, 2021:** Lesley Stracks-Mullen was elected to serve as Vice-Chair. A presentation of the Durham Sports Commission (DSC) was made by Marcus Manning, DSC Executive Director and Dan Hill, DSC Board Chair. Commissioners learned about the history of the DSC, how it is funded, and its mission. Commissioners were supportive and eager to learn more about the proposed sports complex that could attract national tournaments!
- E. **May 12, 2021:** No Meeting
- F. **June 9, 2021:** A RAC letter of support for the 2021 Durham RAISE funding application for the Durham Belt Line was shared [see December update]. RAC members received updates from Sharon Williams, Racial Equity & Inclusion Manager on the Racial Equity Plan. Commissioners learned how they can assist the community in regards to advocacy, literary, and the implementation/ education of racial equity. They learned more about DPR's pilot project designed to identify areas for improvement (for example, Hoover Road Project and Wheels Fun Park) in regards to racial equity. Sharon shared the Equity Impact Assessment Tool, its steps, and how it will be embedded in the City's culture. Members learned more about the Durham Community Trail Watch Group (DCTW). They also discussed some concerns with RAC's ability to recruit new members. The director provided budget updates.
- G. **July:** no meeting

- H. **August 11, 2021:** Hoover Road / Wheels Fun Park updates (Racial Equity Pilot Program): commissioners were asked to serve on the project team for the Hoover Road / Wheels Fun Park pilot project as part of the city's Equitable Engagement Blueprint.
  - I. **September 8, 2021:** Commissioners received presentations on: 1. Aquatics, which outlined future plans for aquatics, the Aquatics Facilities Master Plan, and the Wheels Fun Park acquisition. 2. Hoover Road Facilities Planning, including updates on construction progress and community engagement timelines, as well as planning updates by PAC. DPR's project updates list as of August 26, 2021, organized by project phase and anticipated completion date, were also shared.
  - J. **October 13, 2021:** David Fellerath, RAC Chair resigns, Lesley Stracks-Mullem, Vice Chair accepts the role of Chair. The annual RAC retreat was held virtually. Commissioners spent time getting to know each other personally and learning more about their passions for recreation. Discussions were engaging as they identified core responsibilities while determining their goals/initiatives for the next year.
  - K. **November 10, 2021:** Cedric Burke was elected to serve as Vice Chair. A presentation of the Durham Parks Foundation (DPF) was made by Annette Smith, DPF Liaison. Members learned about the history of the board, development, and the accomplishments of the foundation over the past six years. The presentation highlighted opportunities for fundraising with a concentration on playground renovations in the community and how the RAC can work with DPF to achieve this goal. A draft copy of the annual RAC report for 2021 was presented to commissioners for review, edits, and feedback.
  - L. **December 8, 2021:** Commissioners made a final review and vote of approval for their Annual 2021 RAC Report. Public comments were received from a life-long squash enthusiast advocating support to fund youth programs focused on the sport of squash. Chairperson Stracks-Mullem advocated for a self-nomination to serve as liaison to Durham Parks Foundation meetings. DPR's project updates list as of December 1, 2021, organized by project phase and anticipated completion date, were also shared.
- VI. Additional Accomplishments and Impacts
- A. Facility and field fee waiver applications reviewed and recommendations made.
  - B. RAC members are engaged in our community and talk to residents throughout Durham about their experiences with our programs.
  - C. Attendance and participation in numerous DPR programs and special events.

- D. Support of DPR: Participation with DPR's Youth Soccer Academy (Cedric); program participation in outdoor recreation exercise programs (Lesley); Pickleball (Rebecca); Community Trail Watch (Frank White).
- E. Serving as advocates by sharing concerns about DPR's use of police presence in DPR parks and facilities; sharing program feedback.
- F. As liaisons to: DOST and Hillandale Advisory Commission.

VII. Looking Ahead – 2022 (proposed plans and objectives)

- A. Will work in tandem with staff to learn about and execute the City's Racial Equity Action Plan and the Equitable Engagement Living Document.
  - i. Specific opportunities will include projects such as:
    1. The "Wheels" property
    2. Hoover Rd. Park
    3. CIP
    4. General Fund Budget
    5. Other park projects for 2022
- B. Members will attend and/ or participate in community conversations led by staff.
- C. Members will attend and/ or participate in community meetings and report back relevant information and/ or make recommendations to the commission and to staff.
- D. Consider having a Commissioner serve as a board liaison with the Parks Foundation.

Proposed plans and objectives for 2022

- Attracting new demographics in the community
  - Universal access; inclusion network
  - Non-Profits, Businesses & Corporate partnerships
  - Young Professionals
- Fundraising
  - Playground improvements
  - Youth / Participant scholarships (Phase 1 – Focus on youth sports, and partner with Parks Foundation and Sports Commission)
  - Volunteerism / Recruitment
- Key initiatives proposed by staff to consider:
  1. Fundraising campaign with Parks Foundation for playgrounds
  2. Fundraising campaign with Parks Foundation and Sports Commission to establish a youth athletic scholarship fund