
COMMISSION ON PARKS AND RECREATION

SUMMARY OF COMMISSION MEETING

MAY 19, 2010

A meeting of the Commission on Parks and Recreation was held at the Central Library at 6:00 P.M.

PRESENT: Commissioner Nancy Goldenberg, Chair
Commissioner Bernie Brunwasser
Commissioner Barbara Capozzi
Commissioner Michael DiBerardinis
Commissioner Debra Wolf Goldstein
Commissioner Jeffrey Hackett
Commissioner Pete Hoskins
Commissioner Anthony Langford
Commissioner Carol Rice
Commissioner Joan Schlotterbeck
Commissioner Sarah Clark Stuart

ABSENT: Commissioner Alan Greenberger
Commissioner Leslie Anne Miller
Commissioner Carlos Rodriguez
Commissioner Clarena Tolson

ALSO PRESENT: Executive Director Mark Focht, Fairmount Park
Deputy Commissioner Leo Dignam, Recreation
Carol Roache, Administrative Assistant

Commission Chair Nancy Goldenberg called the meeting to order and announced that the Planning Commission is undertaking a comprehensive plan, Philadelphia 2035 and will be hosting a series of meetings throughout the City beginning May 27th. Commissioner Goldenberg encouraged everyone to participate in these meetings. The “green part” of the comprehensive plan is being organized by the Department of Parks and Recreation, and Commissioner Goldenberg asked Commissioner DiBerardinis to speak. Commissioner Michael DiBerardinis discussed the Department’s role to develop a road map to the greenworks objective of 500 new acres of recreation, open, green space and park space in the City.

Commissioner DiBerardinis offered an explanation of the City’s current financial situation and added that there is a great deal of concern on the administration’s side as budget deliberations continue. The Department of Parks and Recreation may not get the increase that Mayor Nutter proposed. There is a hold on the potential 43 new positions for the Department. However, the capital side of the budget is more secure. There’s \$5 million additional for recreation and, along with the district council members’ investments, the total amount should come to approximately \$12 million. The Department will be breaking ground in a few months at Hawthorne Park, which will be one of two new neighborhood parks in the City. There will also be a groundbreaking on renovations and improvements on the Parkway, funded by the foundation, state and city. Lastly, the \$2.2 million that the Mayor added to the capital budget for increased street tree planting is solid at this point.

Commissioner DiBerardinis then introduced Leo Dignam, Deputy Commissioner of Recreation. Mr. Dignam made a power-point presentation showing the scope and breadth of programs this summer throughout the City. He stated that the Parks and Recreation Department is the number one provider of afterschool programs and summer camp opportunities for children in the City. The traditional neighborhood day camps concentrate on afterschool children, ages 5 to 12 years old. Specialty camps are geared towards young adults, ages 9 through 18. There are also seven environmental camps throughout the City. The Department’s goal is to provide low cost, high quality programming at neighborhood facilities and also to provide camp experiences that contribute to development, supportive adult relationships, growth and the progression of skills. He highlighted specific programs such as the Performing Arts Camp, Visual Arts Camp, Swim for Life Camp, Summer Adventure Camp, Special Needs Camp and Conflict Resolution Theater. Mr. Dignam then took questions from the Commissioners and the audience.

Land Use Committee Chair Debra Wolf Goldstein updated the Commission on the Committee's activities. The Committee has developed an initial draft of a Land Protection Ordinance and is in the process of getting comments from the Mayor and City Council.

Communication Committee Chair Carol Rice informed the Commission that they held a brainstorming session with a diverse group of people, invited to offer ideas and suggestions. The common suggestion at the meeting was to hold events to highlight the work of the department. The Committee is looking to develop partnerships and linkages to help with these activities. Commissioner Rice reminded everyone that the Commission now has an e-mail address, a blog and a website linked through the Parks and Recreation Department and invited everyone to contact the Commission with their thoughts and ideas.

Revenue Committee Chair Pete Hoskins stated that the Committee has had several briefings with staff and hopes to meet with stakeholders to make decisions on raising more funds on behalf of the Department.

Commissioner Goldenberg then opened the meeting for public comment. Mary Tracy expressed her concern about land dispersion and the protection of parkland. Cynthia Kishinchand added that the Arthur Ashe Tennis Center took 7 ½ acres of the Gustine Recreation Center to build their facility. Ms. Kishinchand also thanked the Commissioner and Park staff for a wonderful Arbor Day celebration at East Falls. Commissioner Hackett expressed his concern regarding overflow sewage in the Frankford and Tookany Creeks. Commissioner Brunwasser assured everyone that the Water Department is aware of the problem and is working with the Department of Environmental Protection to resolve it. Ron Thomas noted that specialty car license plates may be a revenue producing venue. Mr. Thomas also asked the Commission to make older recreation centers more user friendly.

Commissioner Goldenberg adjourned the meeting at 7:20PM. The next meeting of the Commission on Parks and Recreation will be held on **Wednesday, September 15th at 6:00PM** at the Central Branch of the Free Library, Skyline Room..

Respectfully submitted,

Carol J. Roache,
Administrative Assistant