



Cromwell Valley Park Council Minutes – September 9, 2019

CVPC General Meeting

Board members in attendance: John Canoles, Rick Childs, Bill Curtis, Kenneth Keady, Cate Murphy & Kate Joyce (Talmar, Inc.), Pat Novak, Kim Shapiro, Mia Walsh and Abe Yoffe.

Park staff: Kirk Dreier

CVPC members: Sharon Childs, Charlie Conklin, Thom Grizzard, Wayne Skinner, Don Sloat

Buildings and Grounds volunteers: Barry Smith and TG, WS, DS above

Absent: Sya Kedzior, Kristin McFaul, Jenny Trust

1. PRESIDENT'S OPENING REMARKS

- a. Mia called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. following a brief time to gather food and drink from the buffet spread in the Sherwood dining room provided by Mia. Mia welcomed all to the meeting and explained that all were welcome to any board meetings if they are not closed meetings and suggested that any interested parties may find meeting dates posted on the website.
- b. A quorum was present as nine of the twelve board members were in attendance. Mia said that Kristin may not be able to make the meeting, but that Mia herself would present for Kristin in her absence, as Kristin had submitted Treasurer's documents.
- c. Volunteer recognition –
 - (1) Mia expressed general recognition of the hours that many of us give to support the park.
 - (2) Mia thanked Night Out with Nature volunteers Pat, Sharon, Rick and Wayne for their help the past Friday evening.
 - (3) Kenneth assisted for a large group event on August 18th hosted at the park.
- d. Donations –
 - (1) Joe Herning donated \$750 for a bench purchase and installation to honor his parents' 50th wedding anniversary.
 - (2) William and Michele Kutzera, Mia's sister-in-law, donated \$500.
 - (3) Allan Scott donated \$400 for a bench purchase and installation.
 - (4) Eva and John McCann provided \$50 through membership and donation.
- e. Style Magazine is running a "best park" vote, among votes for other "bests". Voting closes September 29th. Mia encouraged all to vote to help promote the park. Please use this link to vote:
www.baltimorestyle.com/readerschoice

2. SHINING STAR AWARDS – These awards are presented annually to two individuals in recognition of volunteerism at Cromwell Valley Park. Pat Novak coordinates this effort. Honorees are each presented with a trophy. This year's honorees are:

- a. Barry Smith – Rick talked about Barry's contributions. Barry has recently joined the Buildings and Grounds work at the park, and is extremely responsive to requests for help. He is a former fireman and brings along great skill in maintenance of equipment. He led the work on installation of the benches for the new accessible path. He has done many other tasks, including creating some rather large "mouse traps" for Kirk, and dubbed "the #1 inventor of mouse traps" as well as planting the wildflower seeds along the accessible path.
- b. Don Sloat is a longtime member of the Buildings and Grounds team which is always at the park. Pat described him as loyal, reliable and funny, a consistent part of the team. Sharon said that he was the first to sign up to volunteer on the Trails Committee when it came into existence. Rick said that he keeps the team

honest, assuring that important plants for wildlife are protected in their efforts to keep the trails clear for use by park visitors. Mia thanked him for promoting a natural jewel-weed cure during her poison ivy infection.

- c. Following the awards presentation, Mia thanked the committee and asked the Buildings and Grounds crew to assemble for a group picture, following which all were treated to a round of applause. At that point, Wayne, Don and Thom left the meeting.

3. GOVERNANCE

- a. October 2019 meeting – Cancel or change date? – Mia –

The standard meeting date, 2nd Monday, falls on a holiday when the park office is closed. We may postpone the meeting or cancel it. If canceling, we would be committing to make the November meeting totally focused on the budget. Kim asked if we should put off other business until December, but none had an issue with that. Mia decided that the October meeting will be canceled and suggested that there be some advanced preparation for budgeting ahead of the November meeting. The Treasurer, Finance Chair and President will meet in October in preparation.

- b. August, 2019 CVPC Meeting Minutes – Kim Shapiro expressed that the minutes had been updated to eliminate a few typos that Mia picked up. There were no other requests for changes. The minutes were accepted with those changes. The minutes are posted on the website.

- c. Nature Council President's Meeting – Bill

Bill attended this meeting in Mia's place. The meeting was introducing a new process for assuring background checks for park volunteers. The new process will utilize a system that is part of the FBI, the Criminal Justice Information System. The intent is to ensure the safety of all children who take part in BC DRP programs. The background check process for the county is being extended to all regular volunteers regardless of level of interaction with children. Volunteers that are needed for one-off events will be handled as special cases and may or may not be subjected to screening.

- The process includes the one-time fingerprinting and screening through CGIS. Once accomplished, the volunteers will register annually through a system set up through the Eventbrite online service. Badges will be issued annually, with a new color each year.
- To expedite implementation of the new system, the county has purchased portable fingerprint machines. These will be taken to sites around the county with the objective of collecting data for 250 volunteers a day. Processing of data is expected to take 48 hours from submission. The screening involves a limited record check and is not a full criminal check. The screening is set to begin in October and the county is picking up the bill.
- For additional details see the report from Bill in the Board Packet for the meeting.

- d. Treasurer's Report – Mia presenting for Kristin

- (1) Kristin provided up-to-date finance documents, including a Balance Sheet, Profit and Loss, and Budget versus Actuals through September 9th.

- Money was spent this month for work on the Accessible Path, ~\$9000. We are waiting for ~\$8000 in grant money from MD State Highway Administration. (Update: The check arrived on 9/11/19 in the amount of \$8,000)
- Under Liabilities, Merrick Bank Barn, the \$5,410 is money spent on the engineering survey of the structure.
- Rick pointed out that the \$2,000 listed for Towson Rotary Trail for All should be moved to the Accessible Trail (Path). Bill asked if the Rotary was due a letter of appreciation, and Rick indicated that the Rotary had been thanked years ago when the project was led by Alan Lake. Rick suggested sending a letter to let the Rotary know that the project is at last completed.
- From P&L Statement: Income of \$10,500 is from the Halten Garden Club for the Accessible Path.
- Summer Camp income is higher this year in part due to divvying up the cost of CampBrain ~60/40 between Summer Camp and other park programs which are now a regular part of online registrations.

(2) Petty cash – \$200 has been granted for use by the Buildings and Grounds crew for incidental expenses. This money is only available when Susan is in the Park Office. Expenses that would consume a significant chunk of that money should be submitted for reimbursement by check.

e. WIFI system change – There is now a new process for logging in at the park, which must be completed each connection day. Please see Susan or Mia if you need instructions.

4. PROPOSAL – Charlie Conklin –

Earth Day celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2020. Charlie is suggesting that all of the Baltimore County Nature Centers consider contributing in some way to events on a day chosen to celebrate this. Since April 22nd, traditional Earth Day, is on a Wednesday, the event date will likely occur the following weekend. Charlie has already approached Oregon Ridge, and they expect to host a celebration on their Lodge site. Other nature centers may join there or provide a public celebration at their own site. Kirk offered to discuss this with the nature Center reps at a planned meeting on September 10th. After “planting this seed”, Charlie left the meeting due to prior commitments. Overall, this was a well-received activity by the Council for 2020.

5. MANAGEMENT

a. Membership and Communications – Kim

(1) See reports in the Board Meeting Packet, including data from social media stats from Mia.

(2) Membership Data – Currently membership data is maintained in three databases, an Access database on Kim’s home computer, the CampBrain online system, and the Vertical Response online email system. There is a lot of rework involved in keeping these up to date. Use of CampBrain only would reduce the replication and would also be a more accessible source for those who need the data.

- The Access database has suffered scope creep over the years as data needs are recognized. The database has expanded to include Volunteer Interests and Donation tracking, and there are limits on the ability to do this well.
- CampBrain needs to be adapted to handle this data by addition of fields, new data entry, and building of relevant reports. Data entry will be significant, as it will likely need to be done manually. Current membership data is already in the system, along with program registration information, so a data dump will not help. Mia suggested that we can get some help from internship.
- Kim asked the board for any additional tracking information that would be useful, as now is the time to get all wishes included. John asked about the potential to include background check info. Bill said that this is actually owned by the county and not the responsibility of the Council to monitor.

b. Completed and Ongoing Projects:

(1) SHA grant for signage completed – Abe – The State Highway Administration sent out a delegate to approve the work which was completed. The representative was very happy with the quality and educational scope of the signage. See note in Treasurer’s section for financial reimbursement.

(2) Accessible Path – Halten Garden Club Daffodil Donation – Mia

- The garden club would like to plant daffodils, their garden club symbol, along the path.
- There were two issues with this. John said that daffodils are inappropriate plants for the native meadow theme of the path. Rick said that there is little space along the path and that, if planted, they’d likely be destroyed by mowers.
- Suggestions were made for planting around the introductory sign or the planting of some native species instead of daffodils. Mia agreed to talk to the garden club members about alternatives. Since Halten did so much to support this project, we want to allow them to do something.
- There was a tangential discussion about plants sprouting in the path area itself. John suggested an organic herbicide would be a good way to deal with this. Cate suggested a product call Sythe that she has had good success with.

c. Staff Report – See attached report from Kirk Dreier. Kirk highlighted the following items:

(1) August and September has been spent getting ready for fall school programs.

- (2) Kirk has been working with Eagle and Gold Scouts to set up projects for them at the Park. One of these is repairs to the paddock below the Sherwood barn and the other is work on the turkey pen and lodging for a raptor, a screech owl. Other Eagle Scout projects are being considered. Rick suggested that Kirk might provide a list of projects he is thinking of so that the Council can help come up with ideas.
- (3) Talmar and Sherwood have been switched over to the new wells for drinking and service water.
- (4) Barn at Willow Grove – Kirk and Jim are pulling together the use-report for the barn to help county project management determine future repair work for this 147 year old structure.
- (5) The fulltime CS1 position has been approved for CVP. Candidates will have a background in environmental studies. Rick asked if we would be losing anything in return for having another fulltime staff person (i.e.overtime salaries), but Kirk said that there was no indication of that. Interviews are being conducted now for part-time staff for weekend programs. Master Naturalists are being considered.
- (6) There is a tree jam on the Minebank that is planned for removal on September 12th. Mia said that, in a recent similar effort, some fencing was taken down and not reconstructed.
- (7) Trail Guide training is this week: one day at Marshy Point, a day at Oregon Ridge and a field trip hosted by Bill at Hampton Mansion.
- (8) Modifications to the Trail Sign Exhibit are complete and Hopewell will provide a proof. Mia requested an electronic copy for posting on the website.
- (9) Willow Grove Nature Center will get a power wash. This was approved by the county and will be conducted by City wide of Central Maryland.
- (10) Kirk provided a proposal for new system of speakers to enable broadcasting announcements during events. It would link to the current radio system in use at the park and would involve installation of speakers at various points on building structures that enable access to electric power. Areas for announcements can be isolated. It would be helpful for emergencies. Cost estimates are \$1500 to \$1800. Mia asked if there might be issue with mounting speakers on historic structures. Rick suggested that we get an answer to this and get cost nailed down and then consider a motion.
- (11) Barry Williams will be retiring from his role in BC Department of Rec and Parks at the end of the month. Keith Williams (no relation) will be assuming his position.
- (12) Rick said that he observed the sign and chain at the park access on Loch Raven drive has been cut with a chain cutter and moved. Kirk will look into this. Rick is concerned about plans for this area as it is quite isolated and difficult to monitor, and we may have problems with abuse. He suggested a more permanent structure be installed, rather than just a chain.

d. Leaseholder's Report – Cate for Talmar.

- (1) Cate introduced Kate Joyce who has just taken the position of Executive Director of Talmar, replacing Cate who is retiring. Kate said that she is originally from Owings Mills. Following college she worked in the Peace Corps in Mali, Africa, in agricultural programs. She now lives in Baltimore City and has been involved with food security/urban gardening projects. She has done fundraising for the last three years at Sheppard-Pratt.
- (2) Cate asked about the fencing wood that was knocked down by a car accident and is still piled out at the mailboxes near the Sherwood entrance sign. She asked for it to be moved and cleaned up. It is on Kirk's list.
- (3) Cate said that is Eagle Scouts are in need of projects, Talmar could surely provide some.
- (4) The third group of veterans just graduated from the Talmar-provided sustainable agriculture program. The program has been a success and will continue next year. Next year they expect to have some veterans with physical disabilities and will include horticultural training in the program to serve these individuals. This program is federally funded. A meeting is planned with Barry Williams to talk about this program.
- (5) Christmas trees will be coming in, expecting about 200 this year.

- e. Friends of Sherwood – Mia – The Sherwood Tour sold out this year. It got a big response on social media with 23,000 expressing interest. Perhaps the cost of \$4.00 should be increased for another tour.
- f. Buildings and Grounds – Rick
 - (1) Things are in maintenance mode.
 - (2) Tree falls are being dealt with, the primary cause is being pulled down by aggressive vines.
- g. Programs – Kenneth
 - (1) The Eastern Region Association of Forest and Nature Schools education event on August 18th was a big success with about 250 in attendance, 100 more than originally expected. It was a low-tech family program with lots of activities, with a hike around the park was included. The event was mostly handled by the visiting organization. An issue came up with the use of vendors with improper insurance documentation. We will have to consider this for the future and make sure the requirements are clear.
 - (2) Ken talked about a future event at the park by a group who wants to use the park for yoga.
 - (3) Sharon said that the Myasthenia Gravis organization wants to hold a 1 mile walk at the park. They have mapped out a path that involves the blue trail. John suggested that Sharon let the organization know about the new accessible trail. Sharon said that this information had already been shared.
- h. Communications – Mia
 - (1) Mia designed and printed two signs printed for posting at the entrances to the Park to promote the Fall Harvest Festival. The signs are attractive and were well received. An additional sign was printed to promote the Lime Kilns. Rick and Abe talked about the need to make sure the support structure would be adequate for the signs. Mia suggested that they decide what will work best, but the bungee cords look better than frayed roping.
 - (2) Mia said that we should consider making a tri-fold brochure to promote the new Trail for All. She will get that work going.
- i. Volunteers – Pat circulated a form to get signups for the bake table.

6. NEW BUSINESS

Bill Curtis proposed that the staff consider extending the Nature Center hours during the summer based on a conversation with Thom Grizzard. Thom said that he often observes visitors looking to access that center after the current posted hours. Kirk said that he can't support it with his planned staffing.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

The next meeting is a general meeting on November 4th.

Respectfully submitted by Kim Shapiro, Secretary
9-10-19