



**Cromwell Valley Park Council, Inc.
Minutes – September 14, 2020**

CVPC General Meeting

Board members in attendance: John Canoles, Rick Childs, Bill Curtis, Kate Joyce (Talmar, Inc.), Kenneth Keady (joined meeting at 7:54), Sya Kedzior, Kristin McFaul, Pat Novak, Joe Rector, Kim Shapiro, Mia Walsh and Abe Yoffe.

Park staff: Kirk Dreier

Baltimore County: Kris Mervine, Regional Coordinator, Nature, Agriculture and Environmental Centers

Council Members: Bob Eder, Kelly Emerson and Joyce Stevens

1. WELCOME FROM PRESIDENT

- a. Mia called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. The September meeting is one of the two general meetings specified in the bylaws. It was conducted online using the Zoom meeting app, due to safety considerations during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Mia presented the agenda, which had been distributed by email. As all board members were present, we had a quorum for both board and Council decisions. Mia described the process we would use for the meeting to allow for questions and minimize interruptions for those that have the floor. Mia invited questions throughout the meeting.
- b. Summer Interns – Kaitlyn Paszkiewicz and Katie Lee, both attending college, provided support through the summer by performing updates to website and Facebook pages, as well as assisting the park staff with video editing. We are grateful for their assistance.
- c. Recreation and Parks Meeting – September 4, 2020. Mia explained that each Council President has been invited to a private meeting with County Recreation and Parks staff in roles important to the work of the Councils. Representatives from the County were Director of BCDR&P Roslyn Johnson, Keith Wilson (finance), Bob Smith (programs), Kris Mervine (nature centers), and Pat McDougall (Property Management and other duties).
 - 1) Money for projects: The budget for spending for work at Cromwell Valley Park is over \$1 million. Through the State, the Park has another \$200,000 designated for its use. Recognized needs for improvements include: roadway and parking, an accessible trail, a pavilion with handicapped access, and Barn-atorium repairs and improvements. The planning process will not begin until late this year or early 2021 and will be long and arduous. We should not expect any completed projects for at least a year and a half.
 - 2) Mia talked about the benefits that Recreation and Park staff have provided to the community during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Responding to the need for services, County staff has stepped outside of normal roles to provide food to needy families and child care services at PAL centers. These centers have been set up to provide WIFI access for families who cannot provide it at home.
 - 3) The Director, Roslyn Johnson, is one of just a few African American women in the role of director of similar organizations around the country, and she is the first to hold this office in Baltimore County. The American Academy of Park and Recreation Administration recognized her achievement in March of this year. (Note: The Academy was formed in 1980 to advance knowledge related to the administration of recreation and parks, among other goals to elevate appreciation of parks and how they are managed.)
- d. Style Magazine contest – Our park has been nominated for several categories of benefit to the public: Best Kid’s Programming, Best Day Camp, Best Hiking Trail and Best Place to Take the Kids. Mia encouraged those who haven’t already voted to consider doing so in support of our park. Voting ends Sept 17th.

2. SHINING STAR AWARDS – Mia Walsh, Abe Yoffe

- a. Mia explained that the Shining Star Award is awarded annually and recognizes one or two individuals for their volunteer service to Cromwell Valley Park. As a board, we recently provided our selections through an email vote and tally. Abe explained that each board member was asked to provide one or two named individuals that they felt deserved this award and send these names to him. Abe tallied the nominations and determined this year’s two winners. Mia announced these:



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- 1) An award goes to an individual who has served on the Buildings and Grounds crew for many years. This year, in response to the discontinuation of volunteer service on site at the park by the County, this man lobbied for permission to continue his service at the park, seeing his work as “essential”. He pushed the appeal up through our park staff, the Recreation and Parks Director as well as our County Council representative. This passionate and determined volunteer is **Thom Grizzard**.
- 2) Equally recognized is a volunteer who has performed many volunteer roles for the park for more than a decade. She served on committees, played major roles in planning big seasonal events, and provided leadership as the Council President. Most recently she supported the Night Out with Nature speaker program for the Council, both in an organizational capacity and as host for the events. This dedicated volunteer is **Pat Novak**. As Pat was present at the meeting, she provided remarks: Pat expressed finding joy in her work for the park and love of the group of people that she feels part of. “The people are the jewels and the park is a crown.”

3. GOVERNANCE

- a. Meeting minutes acceptance from August meeting: Kim provided for website posting a revision of the draft sent out shortly after the August meeting. Changes were corrections of the contractor business named by Abe, KBK not KDK; and John Canoles’ request to include a discussion about providing email promotion of our programs, discussed during the Staff Report. In addition, Kim found a subsequent correction, a missing board member’s name from the meeting absence list. The minutes were accepted with these changes and are posted to the website to <https://cromwellvalleypark.org/about-cvpc/park-council/>.
- b. Background Checks - Mia provided additional information from the Recreation and Parks meeting regarding this topic. The County is spending a significant amount to money to implement a more stringent background check program; however, this new program will not be ready for roll-out until after the start of the new year. In the meantime, we are continuing with the current system and assuring that all the Council board members are current at all times.
- c. Treasurer’s Report – Kristin. Mia shared the screen to make the Budget vs. Actuals portion of the report visible to meeting participants.
 - 1) Kristin reported that dues and donations have exceeded budget for the year.
 - 2) Summer Camp expenses – As Summer Camp was canceled, most expenses were not incurred, however, CampBrain fees are charged to that line item.
 - 3) Abe asked about the balance between revenue and expenses, considering revenue losses due to cancelations. Kristin said that we are positive for now. Mia said that a lot of expenses were not incurred. Mia explained to the broader group the various ways that donations come in, sometimes committed to a particular planned expenditure and others not designated. For the latter, the board can determine how to use it.
- b. Financial Review update – Joe Rector and Bill Curtis. Mia explained that Financial Reviews are required of the Councils by BCDR&P every two years, but we choose to provide them annually. Joe reported that he is doing his review by cross referencing checks and invoices and has seen nothing that would not be a reasonable expense for the Council. Bill, who has performed that review in years past is ready to do his portion. Joe will need to transfer the records to Bill.

4. MANAGEMENT

- a. Membership – Kim (A report is included in the board packet.) It is noteworthy that our current membership total is very close to totals for September for the past several years. This speaks well of our long-term members who continue to support the park despite the loss of onsite programs and closed buildings.



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b. Communications – Mia/Sya

- 1) Mia reported on the reach of social networking platforms that she monitors, and these data are included in the board packet.
 - Facebook is used for posting events to promote them. As many of our events were canceled, there was understandably less action than the prior year. Despite this, there were still a lot of “reach”. Facebook also provides a great way to share the beauty of the park through sharing the wildlife photography that our photography community generously allows. Between September of 2019 and September of 2020, Facebook followers have increased from 2857 to 3620. Followers are 79% female and 20% male, the largest portion being in the age range 35-44.
 - Instagram saw a rise from 303 followers in January of 2019, to 501 in September of 2019 to currently over 1,050 followers in October of 2020.
- 2) Newsletter – Sya said that 341 newsletters went out over a month ago. It was her first time owning that work. She asked for ideas and suggestions for the next issue.

c. Gazebo Project – Abe Yoffe/Joe Rector

- 1) This project was sparked by an offer of a donation to provide a gazebo on the park property. The current work is to evaluate the cost of turning the damaged Sherwood gazebo into an attractive and inviting structure at a price of about \$6,000.
- 2) Joe said that this is still under evaluation. He has obtained an estimate from Awards Construction, Inc. for under \$6,000 that proposed repair and/or replacement of damaged floor boards and railings and staining, but leaving the structure unroofed. (See board packet for details.)
- 3) Abe recalled that funding would be split: a minimum \$2,000 from initiating donor, \$2000 raised for purpose, \$2000 from existing Council funds.
- 4) Mia suggested that the team working on this to decide on the best option and come to the October meeting with a motion.

e. Park Staff Report – Kirk (See attached report for details.)

- 1) Signs around the park are being spruced up by Mimi Knuth.
- 2) Our rangers have produced 10 video programs with more being planned for production as the fall season begins. Changes to approach are needed to make these traditionally up-close presentations workable in these days of required social distancing. Requested equipment is in hand now, wireless mics and another iPad, to make the shoots easier to perform. Many thanks to Rangers Breena and Laura for their hard work in producing programs of such high quality.
- 3) The Baltimore Bird Club, Chesapeake Search Dogs and Hawk Watch folks are back at the park.
- 4) Anne Wedgeworth met with the Hampton Garden Club for lunch in the Children’s Garden, where the group had done some native plantings for the park.
- 5) A new weather-proof kiosk was completed at Sherwood as an Eagle Scout project. The old kiosk was moved by the Buildings & Grounds team to the Nature Discovery Zone.
- 6) An entomology class from TU will be using the park for research.
- 7) The week of virtual Summer Camp had only three attendees, but they stayed with it all week, and these programs will be made available for use by teachers, identified as to relevant curricula.
- 8) Pollywog Camp sessions are full and will be held outside.



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- 9) The outdoor classroom area is being prepared for onsite programs. The area is being cleaned up and benches and podium brought in, with the expectation of seating 25 participants.
 - 10) The fencing leading up to the Emerson Pratt property is being painted. Phil Gruber's Pro Deck Finishes, Inc. is donating the materials and the service.
 - 11) Based on car counts, visits to the park continue to be very strong; well more than previous years.
- f. Friends of Sherwood – Mia – No report.
- g. Buildings and Grounds - Rick
- 1) The Buildings and Grounds crew is keeping the trails open. There was one tree that came down on the White Trail.
 - 2) Both of our mowers broke down earlier in the season, and repairs are being completed.
- h. Leaseholder's Report – Kate
- 1) A wheelchair-accessible port-a-potty has been procured by Talmar, as the lack of facilities threatened program participation. The County has been unable to meet the needs for Talmar, and Kate is hoping to arrange reimbursement of the expense through Pat McDougall.
 - 2) Onsite programs are being limited to the veterans' programs, as others require relatively close contact and would not be acceptable in the COVID-19 climate. Virtual programs are being created for online access, and plans are being discussed for taking programs on the road, meeting participants where they spend their days.
 - 3) The Friday picnic is planned for this week. Promotion has been weak as resources for social media are meager. Kate is hopeful that the needed resources will come in with new board members. For the picnic event, Mia offered to post on Council platforms. Kate extended the invitation to meeting attendees to join in the Talmar bring-your-own picnic.
- f. Programs - Ken
- 1) Some requests have come in form running clubs to use the park for fall events, however the County is not allowing events of that scope before the end of the year unless the protocol by the state of Maryland changes.
 - 2) A yoga teacher is interested in holding classes at the park on Tuesday evenings or Saturday mornings, running through November. She will not be charging a set fee but will be asking for donations. Kirk asked where this would take place, and Ken said that Sherwood lawn is considered. That seemed acceptable. Kim suggested that Tuesday evenings might not work because sunset is early in November. Ken said that Saturday would be preferred. Kim also asked about "donations" and whether this is legitimate for a for-profit business. Kirk said that, if for-profit, they can make a donation to the park. Kirk suggested that the yoga teacher talk to Susan regarding procedures.
- i. Finance – Rick – No report.
- j. Volunteers - Kim
- 1) Volunteer hours reporting is not well understood. Susan provided help with questions at the end of August, but it the use of reported numbers is still hazy. Kirk said that the RPSS is the system that tracks these numbers and he is aware that these numbers are useful in justifying the need for a staff position, and Kris Mervine supported this.
 - Bill asked how the numbers are collected and Kirk provided some examples of sources of volunteer hours that he typically includes, from bird monitoring to parent assistants for field trips.



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- 2) Kate asked if she should be reporting through the Council, as she was asked not to report for the current period through her normal channels. Kris said that her numbers should be reported one way or the other. Kate will check with Carla first.
- 5. NEW BUSINESS – None.
- 6. OLD BUSINESS – Mia – Dog Park – Anne Westgate has made contact with Jeff Budnitz to get his perspective directly. We are tabling this proposal due to potential cost and volunteer requirements. We will take it up again in 2021 if warranted.
- 7. KEY MESSAGES – Mia – We need to get the word out about cancelation of the Fall Harvest Festival. Kim will add this in the weekly email announcements. Rick asked Kirk if Marshy Point had also canceled its big events, and Kirk confirmed that it has.

Mia asked for a motion to adjourn. Rick offered it and there were many seconds.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for October 19th, Executive Board meeting.

Respectfully submitted by Kim Shapiro, Secretary

9-16-20

2020 CVPC Meeting Dates

Voted Upon at November 4, 2019 Meeting

MEETING LOCATION: SHERWOOD HOUSE

DATE 2020	MEETING	Open to Public?	Time
Monday, January 13	Executive Board Meeting	Yes	7:00 p.m.
Monday, February 10	Executive Board Meeting (closed to Board only)	No	7:00 p.m.
Monday, March 9	Council Meeting (open to Public – Annual Meeting)	Yes	7:00 p.m.
Monday, April 13	Executive Board Meeting	Yes	7:00 p.m.
Monday, May 11	Executive Board Meeting	Yes	7:00 p.m.
Monday, June 8	Executive Board Meeting	Yes	7:00 p.m.
Monday, July 13	Brief Executive Board Meeting	No	7:00 p.m.
Monday, August 10	Executive Board Meeting (closed to Board only)	No	7:00 p.m.
Monday, September 14	Council Meeting	Yes	7:00 p.m.
Monday, October 19 (moved from 10/12 Columbus Day)	Executive Board Meeting	Yes	7:00 p.m.
Monday, November 9	Executive Board Meeting (closed to Board only)	No	7:00 p.m.
Monday, December 7 (moved from 2 nd week)	Executive Board Meeting	Yes	7:00 p.m.