



Cromwell Valley Park Council

Meeting Minutes

March 11, 2024, 6:00 PM

1. Council Meeting Attendance:

In-person: Abe Yoffe, Rick Childs, Mia Walsh, Kelly Emerson, Carl Gold

Joe Rector, Bill Curtis, and Kate Joyce

Virtually: Pat Novak, Kim Shapiro, Stacey Cruise, and Deb Lee

Absent: None

Park Staff: Breena Doyle

Membership in attendance: Raymond Reed and Kate Murphy

Guest: Ben Porter, Chief of Nature for Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks

Welcome from President Abe Yoffe

- The President called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the Annual Meeting at 6:04 PM. The meeting was hybrid via Google Meet and in-person. The Agenda was adopted, and a quorum was present.
- The President delivered an extensive Annual Report for the 2023 Cromwell Valley Park Council year, utilizing a PowerPoint presentation to detail key achievements and developments. Highlights included a notable increase in Park membership, reaching 589 members, and an impressive commitment from Council members who volunteered for 4355 hours. The financial summary showcased fiscal health, while successful council-sponsored events such as The Migration Festival/Arts in the Park, the Holiday Open House, and the Members Appreciation Celebration were well attended. Updates on major projects were also provided, including the progress on the Sherwood Herb Garden, efforts to establish a new Memorandum of Understanding with Rec and Parks, advocacy initiatives for Cromwell Valley Park during Baltimore County hearings, and the coordination of building chimney swift towers to

support nesting birds. Additionally, work to increase visitor accessibility and greater visitor interaction was highlighted through initiatives like installing guide posts with QR Codes. Other endeavors, such as refurbishing the Honor Garden and the construction timeline for ongoing Park improvements and enhancements, were also outlined, underscoring the Council's commitment to Cromwell Valley Park's continued growth and the people who visit and enjoy the park.

- Mia Walsh, the Communication Chair, provided insight into the tangible impact of the Park Council's expanded social media engagement, exemplified by a significant milestone of 5000 Facebook followers and its direct correlation with the surge in Park membership. Noteworthy social media highlights for 2023 encompassed captivating posts on various topics, from exciting bear sightings to encounters with Spotted Lantern Flies, playful fox kits, unexpected sinkholes, and noteworthy weather-related events. Mia underscored the value of platforms like Constant Contact as indispensable communication tools in fostering community engagement and disseminating vital information to Park members and enthusiasts alike.

2. Governance

A. The Council approved the February 12, 2024 Council meeting minutes. Stacey Cruise:

B. Treasurer's Report: *Mia Walsh*

2023 FINANCIAL AUDIT

Provided Deb Lee with additional backup documentation for the 2023 Audit and answered some questions. She will pass all documents off to Bill Curtis for a second evaluation.

YEAR-TO-DATE 2024

We continue to limit our spending for non-Council directly related items or programs for We received income from the anticipated Memorandum of Understanding with the County. As of 2/24/24, we are 70% of the budget for membership dues and 76% for donations. We are extremely pleased with our community's support this early in the year. The Communications Committee has had bi-annual expenditures hit early this year (GoDaddy, website, URL hosting renewal, SSL security, ConstantContact), and we have spent 60% of the budget for the year. Newsletter costs have also risen, and we will need to begin paying for postage starting in the Summer newsletter as the County will not be paying for those expenses anymore. We may need to request funds for marketing/communications that are out of budget as the year progresses. The Garden Subcommittee spending is at 75% of the budget for the year, as we voted at the February board meeting to spend \$3,000 on the enhancements of the Honor Garden out of reserve funds rather than restricted.

DISPLAYS AND EXHIBITS

We received a \$1,000 donation from Jim Gephart for displays and exhibits in May 2023 and are monitoring those funds. We will continue to fund WGNC displays for that amount through 2024. A current breakdown is at \$594.04.

HONOR GARDEN

We received just short of \$4,000 in Honor Garden donations in 2024, mostly due to the obituary of Phil Tupper, which asked for donations to be sent to the park in his honor.

2023 990

The treasurer pulled all documentation together for the 2023 taxes and will work through the details to submit it by mid-March.

Fundraising Report

The Annual Report was mailed in late February as an insert with the Spring 2024 newsletter. Of the 628 sent, 47 were put in the kiosks and buildings at the park.

ACTIVITIES OR ITEMS FOR THE UPCOMING MONTH

1. Order new remittance envelopes. This year, to cater to the younger generation, we will put PayPal and Venmo QR codes on the envelopes.
2. Order plaques for Adirondack chairs in the Honor Garden.
3. Follow up on the Chimney Swift Tower Project and additional Bluebird Boxes

A total of 220 memberships or donations were received from 183 donors for \$15,680.00.

Background Checks: *Abe Yoffe*

- All Directors have current background checks.

C. Committee Structure Changes - *Abe Yoffe*

- The revised by-laws were sent to the Board of Recreation and Parks for review.
- Board Member Elections - ***Raymond Reed***

The annual meeting is the time for the election of officers and directors of the Executive Board of the Cromwell Valley Park Council, effective April 1, 2024. Any CVPC member who has attended two or more meetings during the past twelve months is eligible to vote at the meeting. The Nominating Committee of the Cromwell Valley Park Council, chaired by CVPC member Raymond Reed, submitted the following open positions and a slate of candidates for the term of April 2024 through March 2026. Terms in office comply with the election cycle stated in the CVPC Bylaws.

Open Officer and Director Positions are Vice President, Secretary, and 2 Directors.

The following individuals were elected for the open positions during the Annual General

Cromwell Valley Park Council Meeting: March 11, 2024

Membership meeting conducted in person and via Google Meet on Monday, March 11, 2024.

There were no nominations from the floor.

Vice President..... Joe Rector

Secretary.....Rachel Allshouse

Director.....Carl Gold

Director.....Bill Curtis

3. Management

A. Park Staff Report: Breena Doyle

- Ranger Breena manages all Park operations until April 6, 2024.
- Approximately 500 participants attended the Maple Sugar event in February.
- There is an increase in home school and private school reservations.
- Senior Stroll begins March 20th.
- The Children’s Garden Club starts in March.
- Preparation for the summer camp season is in process.

B. Leaseholders Report (Talmar): *Kate Joyce*

- Kate Joyce met with Rec and Parks
- The veterans program is ready to start
- The newly hired farmer has started working
- Baltimore County High School students can complete service hours onsite during the Spring Break.
- For your information, the trail markers near the Eck House do not align with the trail shown on the map.

C. Friends Of Sherwood Report: *Mia Walsh*

- Maxaela began work on enhancing the existing Honor Garden on February 26, 2024. We look forward to seeing the new grass, plantings, and stepping stones. We should consider holding a “ribbon cutting” for this newly renovated area to welcome back Charlie Conklin, Mrs. Sue Lake, The Tupper Family, and Susan Dorsey and to bring those people recognized back to the park. This could be a simple dessert and drinks with a red ribbon cutting in the Spring or Summer. The cost would be minimal (and could be covered by Honor Garden donations). We could also invite the members of the Halten Garden Club to thank them for donating to the Sherwood Herb Garden.

ACTIVITIES OR ITEMS FOR THE UPCOMING MONTH

1. Order Dr. Lake's and Phil Tupper's name plates for Adirondack chairs.
2. A cohesive messaging for signage is needed in this area.

D. Standing Committees

1) Building and Grounds: **Rick Childs**

- Mowing has started in areas with a continuous field.
- Concerns/questions regarding installing the chimney sweeps must be resolved for planning purposes.
- Final decisions are needed to place the Honor Garden's bench, two picnic tables, and four chairs.

2) Programs: **Kelly Emerson**

- Currently working with Park staff regarding the PPI process.
- The Merrick Family reunion is planned for June 15, 2024.
- Gilchrist will again host an event at the Park scheduled for June 19.
- The Halton Garden Club is determining if its budget can accommodate the fees for hosting garden club meetings onsite.
- Ben Porter was in attendance and explained
 - There is a fee waiver process for organizations that wish to apply for it. This waiver request needs to be submitted by park staff.
 - The county is willing to consider paying for extra toilets as needed for organizations that are paying through the civic rec process.
 - At this point, the council is not required to submit fee waiver requests
- The Fall Harvest Festival/Arts in the Park event is planned for one day, September 28th. (rain or shine) Committee volunteers are still needed to assist with event planning and execution.
- Kelly gave an overview of the first planning meeting.
- The next Membership Appreciation event will be in 2025.

3) Communications: **Mia Walsh**

- DI. The 2023 Annual Report is completed. Thank you to Dave Schroeder for pulling together the Spring 2024 newsletter, which Kirk mailed the third week of February. Additional newsletters were put in the kiosks at Sherwood and Willow Grove. On one of the pages of the Annual Report, the font was too small, and the color was too light to read. The report was fixed for the online version, which is currently on the website. The social media report for the annual meeting has been prepared. There are 5,000 Facebook followers as of the fall of 2023.

ACTIVITIES OR ITEMS FOR THE UPCOMING MONTH

Kirk Shapiro for how well he has done for sending out letters, business cards, and
3/31/24.

4) Volunteer Hours for February: **Pat Novak**

Last Name	Hours	Category/Event
Childs	215	16 volunteers- Trail Crew
Cruise	3	Meeting minutes
Curtis	6	
Emerson	11	Meeting, planning, and paperwork
Gold	18	Writing articles, volunteering at the Maple Sugar event, leading hikes, and reviewing Civic wreck issues
Lee	10	Board meeting, Weed Warriors, wallpaper project, financial review
Novak	10	NOWN emails
Rector	8	Office visits, check signatures, site visits, trail monitoring
Shapiro	38	Membership, communications, capturing, meeting prep
Walsh		
Yoffe	30	Meetings and Emails
Total	349	Volunteers Hours

Night Out With Nature (NOWN): The March event was canceled due to low registration. The new dates for NOWN events are April 5th and May 10th.

5) Finance: *Rick Childs*

Membership: Finance sub-committee: ***Kim Shapiro***

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP DATA:

- We maintain record-high membership numbers. The March number will be the highest for

months ahead, as we hit the expiration date of March 31st. See the membership growth and trends below over the last two years. Over 200 thank-you notes with membership cards went out in February.

Current Membership Data as of February 29, 2024: Total 649

February Report	621 Members
Lifetime	16
Patron	4
Sustaining	32
Contributing	33

For this coming month: Continue to send out thank-you cards and membership cards to renewing households. Mail out invitations to renew to current members who still need to do so.

Recognition: Thanks go to Mia for gathering membership data from all of our sources, mail-in, website, and CampBrain, inputting membership data into CampBrain, and forwarding records of membership purchases.

4. New Business - *Abe Yoffe*

The timing for implementing Civic Rec is July 1, 2024.

5. Old Business

A. Plexiglass on dining room walls - *Deb Lee*

There are mixed reviews regarding the effectiveness of the stanchions protecting the wallpaper. Deb and Abe plan to assess this preventive measure by the end of the month.

B. Chimney Swift Towers – *Joe Rector and Carl Gold*

Follow-up is underway.

C. Community Generated Request re: footbridges over streams- *Abe Yoffe*

A meeting is pending.

The meeting adjourned at 7:53 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stacey Cruise, Council Secretary