

**KANAWHA COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
COMMISSION MEETING**

**July 17, 2024
MINUTES**

CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Kanawha County Parks and Recreation Commission was held on Wednesday, July 17, 2024, at Coonskin Park in the Oak Room. This is the monthly meeting of the Kanawha County Parks and Recreation Commission and President Tackett called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Allen Tackett, John Robertson, Steve Koepsel, Dave Pope, Janet Drumheller, Andrew Jordon, Karen Haddad,

ABSENT: Pat Donahoe, Chris Hamilton, Tyler Ohrn, Crescent Gallagher

OTHERS

Jeff Hutchinson, Director

Commissioner Wheeler, Leslie Koepsel

Brad Maschari, Eddie Amburgey, Cliff Wheeler,

Jeanne Chandler, Beth Campbell

Jordan Herrick (phone)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Drumheller made a motion to approve the minutes from June and Commissioner Haddad seconded the motion. All were in favor.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Commissioner Koepsel reported that there have been no changes since the last meeting and two employees started since then. He said that there are a few in-house rearrangements to full time, and we should be at full compacity with employees. Jeff said we have one more to bring in on the 1st of August but will be part time. President Tackett added that were able to fill these positions because of the increase of wages made possible from the Kanawha County Commission.

LONG RANGE PLANNING

Commissioner Haddad reported that it is July, and we need to start working on Holiday Lights and what we are going to do. She said we don't have help from the trade schools anymore and we have to work on that. She reported in part of the Coonskin Foundation that we ordered nine benches. Eight of them will be at the range and one will be designated for the 1st Tee at the Short Course. The foundation paid for them, and they were \$565 per bench, and we assembled and installed them to save money. They are heavy duty benches and Commissioner Wheeler would like to see how they do, and if they do well, he would like to see them throughout the park.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Jeff reported that we ended the fiscal year last month, and stuff is still coming in and we will do a report next month.

GOLF COMMITTEE

Commissioner Robertson reported the Golf Committee met last week and reviewed the status of Big Bend and the Short Course, and no recommendations or actions were taken. He gave a comparative report for the last two years. Rounds of golf at Big Bend last fiscal year were 18,170 and the year before was 13,137, which is an increase of 30%. Also, we have an increase in receipts of 41%. That is receipts for rounds of golf. He added that on motorized carts at Big Bend this last fiscal year was \$254,000 compared to \$220,000 the year before which is an increase of \$34,000. He said to keep in mind that the carts are on a lease, so we have expenses. He said at The Coonskin Short Course we don't have a 12-month comparison because we opened June of last year. He did report that rounds in June, we had 1,101 and last June we had 2,117, that's a decrease. However, there was a lot of hoopla last year because we just opened and that created a lot of interest. Commissioner Robertson said our gross receipts for the last fiscal year at the short course was \$155,930 and he said there were some things that made it difficult to compare because golf is so affected by rain, drought, and weather factors that determine if its available and interesting for people to play golf. He said you will probably see in July this year that we will show a significant downturn because the weather has been just too hot for people to want to play golf. Commissioner Robertson would like to add this report to the minutes.

Commissioner Wheeler said I know you said June of last year had more play than this year and we have seen a decrease. He said first off, he agrees with the hoopla of the opening last year, and it was new. He said he does not agree with the hot weather and rain being a contributing factor. He said that Big Bend had a significant increase from June prior. Commissioner Robertson said last year Big Bend was in bad shape in June and didn't go to full rate until July 1st because of the condition. Commissioner Wheeler said that there are almost 600 more rounds this year than last. Jeff and Commissioner Robertson said this year the course was in great shape compared to last year. Commissioner Wheeler said that we are not marketing Coonskin, and we need to make sure we do everything to bring as many people out here as possible. He said that it's not getting the exposure it needs, and Big Bend has been there for decades and people know Big Bend. He said he wants to make sure people know that Coonskin still exists, and he is seeing this number trail lower and lower every month when it comes to Coonskin and rounds of golf. He said we need to do whatever we can do on the administration side to promote Coonskin.

When we opened, we had media promotion, and we haven't really done a lot outside of that. Commissioner Robertson said we have been working with the golf association offering ladies clinics at the range and on the course and that has been very successful and well attended. He said that our market is people learning how to play. Commissioner Wheeler said that the point he is making is that it's just not marketing to the people that are learning how to play, but also to the people who play their entire life that like that short course and can play within an hour after work and the challenge of it. He said we need to continue marketing and giving those types of incentives that will bring people back and

not a black and white flier on the door. Commissioner Koepsel said that we have a promotion going on right now for families. A kid 15 and under plays for free with a paying adult. Brad said there have been probably about 5 kids playing a day for free with this promotion during the weekdays. Weekends have picked up and we are getting about 10-15 kids, but it's been so hot not many people are playing golf. Commissioner Wheeler said that's not a bad thing and it is a win. He asked if more kids were playing, and Brad said it's been about the same kids playing with some new kids scattered in. It's been mostly the same kids that play year-round with their parents that are now taking advantage of the promotion. We also have some kids playing by themselves without a parent that we have been charging. Commissioner Wheeler said social media on Facebook is free and we need to put it out there. He said we have a tendency where we only post one time when we have a new incentive or something going on in the park. He calls these ever-green posts, and they are ever green because they are ingrained all year round. He said to continue to post the same thing every three days so they don't forget and remind them that kids can play free all month long. He said that it doesn't cost us anything and we need to keep posting and do it for everything, not just golf. Remind people there is fish in the pond or anything that people do anyways that we need to keep posting.

Commissioner Haddad asked if the people that play the game at high level, are they still playing out here? She said her brother played and he played all his life, and he thought it was wonderful and came back and played another time. She said we need to promote it more and is curious if the lifetime golfer is playing out here. Jeff said yes, they are playing, and Brad also said that we get a lot of play from people from County Clubs that are working on their game. Commissioner Haddad asked if we had a chance to get a demographic of who playing. Jeff said that we are getting people from the average golfer to the more skilled golfer, and we get a lot of repeat golfers from Edgewood and Berry Hills. Commissioner Wheeler said that we say this golf course is for new people, but he stressed that there is large demographic of individuals that want to play and we need to make sure that we are marketing to them and promoting the course because we spent a lot of money on it. Commissioner Robertson said 33% of our golfers at Big Bend are on the WVGA VIP Card and Coonskin is also on this discount card. Commissioner Wheeler said that we need to promote that then, either through the WVGA or our Facebook page.

Commissioner Pope asked how many 100-degree days did we have compared to last year. He said no one wants to play in 100-degree heat and Jeff said we hadn't seen much play in the afternoons. Commissioner Wheeler disagreed on that because Big Bend has 18 holes, and they play 18 holes instead of 9 holes. Commissioner Pope said they get a cart to ride at Big Bend. Commissioner Wheeler again said that he doesn't agree with that and the underlying problem here is that we are not promoting the new golf course. He said he thinks people remember it from last year and they came out and played and now it got to when they play golf again, they need to remember Coonskin. Commissioner Haddad is curious who is using the course and when it was built, she thought it would reach this community near the park and people that can't afford a country club. Jeff said that we are getting them. Commissioner Pope said that walking in 100-degree heat is a lot hotter and different than riding a cart in 100-degree heat. Commissioner Pope said that we discussed early on about having tournaments and that's an option to get more play or a pro-am tournament where

they put something together where they win something. Commissioner Wheeler agrees but said we need to market better and that's where it comes to the staff here. He wants to make sure that people are aware that we are here, and it is concerning to him because the numbers are low. Jeff said that this year we are playing night golf with the Contractor's Association two nights instead of one night because of the success of last year. They paid \$3,500 rent for the glow equipment and we charged them green fees. Commissioner Robertson asked if we could tag on a third night while they are still here and do a glow event ourselves. Jeff said the best thing we can do is purchase the glow equipment and do it ourselves.

Commissioner Jordon asked about the movie night we had last year, and we could tag a movie night with night golf. WQBE no longer does movie nights. Jeff said we can do it on a Friday night and in September or October when it gets darker earlier. He said all the equipment is rechargeable and LED. He said the startup cost would be expensive but that's something the foundation can investigate purchasing if they want to do it. Commissioner Robertson said if we had the equipment then we could host our own tournaments with other companies like the contractor's association does and host our own for the public. Commissioner Wheeler said when we do these events, we need to post them. Commissioner Pope said we need to get price for this equipment. Commissioner Robertson said that we need to start documenting the statistics of what draws people here and how many people come, so that when you go out and try to sell commercial sponsorships or activities the people want to know the numbers. He said not only do we need to do that with the golf course but the shelters as well, and then we develop statistics to use as leverage.

Jeff updated that he talked to the people with the credit card system at the range and he said that 88% of all business done is done with credit cards. He said that it has been working and said we can order one door with the credit reader in it and leave the other side cash until something changes. Instead of two doors we will only get one and they say that should fix the problem, as it's the credit card machine and how it connects to the software. They said they have had nothing but problems with it. It's not an internet issue and we are using a hot spot that can run a bunch of devices. Jeff said it was a software problem and they said the only thing we have to do is buy a new door. The doors have all the hardware built inside. Commissioner Jordon said we should have some type of guarantee that it is from the company when you buy the new door. Jeff said that three years ago we had to replace the door because they went from a computer-based system to a cloud base program, and that is when the problem started. Commissioner Robertson said that it should be the company's responsibility. He asked do they want to sell those doors at full price or discounted. Jeff said they are willing to discount. Commissioner Drumheller doesn't like seeing these comments on Facebook and we need a system that works.

Commissioner Pope asked about the irrigation from the pond and asked is there any silt or anything getting through the filters. Jeff said that so far, we haven't had a problem. Commissioner Wheeler asked how many times we check the filters and Jeff answered annually, about every two days. Jeff said the filter self-furnishes itself and the material back into the lake on its own, but we manually check it on our own.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Chief Amburgey reported that Big Bend had the cart barn broken into by some juveniles and they used a cart to knock off the barn style doors. We were able to get them stopped shortly after on Smith Creek and the cart came back with minimal damage. Chief Amburgey did a juvenile petition on all three kids. He also said that the Fly Field had something stolen, and someone stole a Hatfield McCoy Trailer. He has been monitoring more closely. Meadowood itself has been having a lot of issues with the hot weather and people accessing the river and driving down to the river where we paved. We tried our best to keep people out, but it's been hard. We rented an auger and put in 50 – 60 posts with gates and wire to keep people from driving to the river. It won't stop people from going but at least they can't drive down to the river. Lastly, Chief Amburgey said that the Coonskin Trail Coalition, who have volunteers that want to start working on the trails, got a MOU for them to sign that our attorney wrote up and he will include this MOU for next month's meeting for a vote. They will all sign their own individual release, and they will not build new trails just assisting on the existing trails. The attorney recommended that they have an insurance policy and Chief spoke how to do that and it shouldn't be too much as a rider on our insurance.

DIRECTORS REPORT

Jeff reported on the slip repair at Coonskin and if nothing happens by our next meeting then they should be finished. They have all the concrete and steel put in and they ordered a handrail, and they will work until they are finished. Jeff said that we are closer than we ever have been to grating access to the Elk River Trail because we already have the road built in, and when they pull out, they will clean the area up and smooth the path and add smaller gravel down and roll it in. The grade on the road isn't bad and runs right into the Elk River Trail. This company has done a great job. They will pave the trail where they may have done damage and fix the ditch lines and put the drainage back. Jeff reported that the insurance company sent an adjustor all the damage that we had and he's working on it and waiting to hear from him.

The front gate we had ordered as a replacement gate and the people that did the damage had a \$25,000 deductible and we turned that into the insurance company, so there will be some to pay. The gate is \$40,000 because it was custom made. He said that the company ordered the gate, and it should be here in about a month, and he would get it installed quick. Before our next meeting, the pools will close. We had pretty good attendance at times but after the 7th day of July it tended to die down. The pool will close August 4th and we will drain and paint the pool here and at Coonskin. Commissioner Haddad asked at what point is the pool economically feasible to maintain a pool if we are only going to use it for two months. Commissioner Drumheller said that it serves the public and we have to have it for the children. Commissioner Wheeler said that every year he asks for a report on what it costs to maintain it, attendance, and the cost to operate it, and it's always a loss to the park. Commissioner Wheeler asked for that report to be given to the board. The YMCA uses it for their day cares and the attendance picks up Monday-Friday, but when the day care clears out there is not a lot of people there. Commissioner Wheeler questioned paying the YMCA to operate the pool. Jeff said that we pay the YMCA a management fee and we

pay all the expenses. Commissioner Wheeler seems to think that the YMCA is getting a good deal because we are paying them to operate the pool and expenses, and they get to bring their day care in for free. That's not us giving a service for free, but us paying the YMCA for them to use our pool. Jeff said that it's much cheaper for us to give them all the day care they want to use the pool and still pay them instead of us operating the pool. Commissioner Wheeler said that when we open next year this is going to have to be a conversation and seems a little one sided for a non-profit. Commissioner Wheeler said that we pay the YMCA \$15,000 to operate the pool then they can do some of the things that we want them to do, and at the end of the day the tax payers are paying the YMCA \$15,000 for that pool for 60 days, and they are using that pool for their services and members for free of cost, and he thinks that's a little one sided and we definitely need to have that conversation with the YMCA. We are paying them \$15,000 and they are closing the pool for their members. It's not the YMCA's pool, it's a public pool and we need to have those conversations. He thinks we also need to have events, discuss hours, and market the pool better.

LEGAL REPORT

PUBLIC COMMENT

Written notes available upon request.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Pope made a motion to adjourn.

President Tackett called the meeting `adjourned 2:58 p.m.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, August 21, 2024, at 2:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted: Jeffrey K. Hutchinson, Director