

KANAWHA COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
COMMISSION MEETING
August 20, 2025
MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the Kanawha County Parks and Recreation Commission was held on Wednesday, August 20, 2025, at Coonskin Park in the Oak Room. This is the monthly meeting of the Kanawha County Parks and Recreation Commission and President Koepsel called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Steve Koepsel, Allen Tackett, Tyler Ohrn, Karen Haddad, Joe Stevens, Crescent Gallagher, Mat Currey, LeFlore Lucas, Dave Pope, Carrie Smith (phone),

ABSENT: Andrew Jordon,

OTHERS

Jeff Hutchinson, Director

Leslie Koepsel

Brad Maschari, Cliff Wheeler, Sarah Menefee, Chief Amburgey

Jordan Herrick (phone)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Ohrn made a motion to approve the minutes from July and Commissioner Gallagher seconded the motion. All were in favor.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Sarah reported that all the college and high school kids are back to school as of last Monday. We had an individual join Big Bends grounds and he started Monday and has been working out well. We had one individual apply for maintenance at Coonskin and we need to call him for a drug test. He is a part-timer for Terra Care, and he wanted to get into the maintenance side. She added that we had two people call that were emailed applications to. We haven't heard back.

LONG RANGE PLANNING

Commissioner Haddad reported that the playgrounds are looking fantastic, and we have a ribbon cutting coming up for it. She said we can check that off our list of improvements. We will pull out the old playground and put picnic tables there, so people have a place to eat lunch and sit down. Jeff said it shouldn't be too expensive for that, and we don't want too many structures because of the proximity to the river and slippage.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Sarah reported that she emailed everyone the financials. At the end of September our checking account was \$366,040 and you can see the main reoccurring bills which are retirement, sales tax, P-Card, cart lease, PEIA, insurance, and workers comp. At the end of September, we had \$214,873 in accounts payable, and our checking account was \$264,020. She mentioned that in July we moved to the new Plan C Health Care where

we fund all the deductibles, and we asked the Commission for more money, and we got a check for \$192,825.50. Our normal check this year will be \$131,400.50 which will be 11 months, but we asked for money upfront and we funded \$59,150 in Heath Care deductibles for all employees. Everyone has their HSA's set up and got their money in their account. August is a three-payroll month. The audit is set up and they will start September 8th. We will have to rebid for 2026 and will have to do that in July or August 2026.

GOLF COMMITTEE

Commissioner Tackett reported that the golf course conditions, and the issues are being corrected, and employees are an issue as we don't have enough. We are trying to do things to get more employees. There were 2,568 rounds played at Big Bend in August compared to 3,205 in 2024. That's a difference of 637 and it was mostly weather related. They brought in \$47,753 this year in green fees and last year they brought in \$53,624. At Coonskin in August 2025 we had 1,100 rounds and in 2024 we had 1,094 which was 6 more rounds than last year. Our green fee revenue this year was \$16,962 and last year was \$18,775. That is basically because we charge less to the schools. Jeff reported that we had two WVGA Events in the last month. Cliff said they were the Senior Series at Big Bend, and they had ninety players, and our new snack bar guy took care of their lunch. Everyone was happy. Yesterday we had the Women's Series at Big Bend, and they had twenty golfers with lunch afterwards, and we heard nothing but good things. President Koepsel asked Commissioner Lucas if she could market these events to get posted on social media.

Commissioner Pope added that he thought Big Bend was in great shape as well as Coonskin but just need some rain, and to touch up some spots the sprinklers cannot reach, and that a little bit of rain will bring everything back. He said he would like to see about bringing the USGA Public Qualifier to Big Bend, like we did five years ago.

Commissioner Pope mentioned night golf and Jeff said that we talked a little about it and we have a tournament this Friday with the WV Contractors Association. He said we do not get a lot of requests for it except for the Contractors, and they really like the event that is after hours. They have been renting equipment through a company called Glow Golf, and when they come in this time, we can ask some questions. Commissioner Pope thinks we can purchase the equipment and then rent it out for outings, and it will pay for itself in a year. Jeff said the biggest problem we have when we do an event like this is staffing. Commissioner Ohrn said maybe do it once a month to start and see how it goes. Jeff said summer is hard to do it because of the time and it doesn't get dark until later, and the best time would be early spring and late fall when it gets darker earlier. Jeff reiterated that we don't have the staff to do these events, and everyone needs to adjust their expectations because our staff is ragged.

This is two years in a row that the weather has been unbelievable with no staff, and we are doing everything we can possibly do to hold this place together. We got a roof that leaks when it rains, we got water running over the gutter, we have infrastructure problems, we have money problems, and we have people problems. He said a lot of this sounds fun, enticing, and political to do all this stuff, but we are going to have to pull our

horns in, and we're not going to have anyone to work them. The people we got are tired, and they are the ones doing the bulk of the heavy lifting. He said he spends a lot of time with the employees, and you can see it, they are ragged & on the edge.

The other thing on the Golf Committee is that Jeff would like to purchase a stand-on steel-grade manufactured granular spreader. He said when your doing fertilization on a golf course you can either put it out manually or with spray tanks, and a lot of this fertilizer that's being put down must be walk spread which takes manpower. With this machine you can put down enough fertilizer on it and in it to do 9 greens at a time, and do the collars, tees, and approaches. It's smaller than a golf cart and can go across the greens and is adjustable on the spreading. We are looking at a demo before we do anything and the price with everything is \$16,000, which we would save that much by not having people on part-time payroll. Once he looks at the demo he will look for permission to buy one.

MARKETING COMMITTEE

Commissioner Gallagher reported that Commissioner Lucas and Commissioner Stevens and himself, met and talked about marketing, and one of the big things was updating the website, and other than that we need to work on promotional content. He said the Commissioner Lucas made a video, and it was nice, and Alise is doing a lot of things and is giving her as much content as possible with pictures and events going on. The night golf would be a good promotional event. The other thing is he suggested a press release for the Playground and Mountaineer Mile. Commissioner Lucas said she would reach out to the County Commission to see if they are doing a press release. She will push it out on our end on social media and tag Alise. Commissioner Gallagher said to get ideas and content to our contractor, Alise.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Chief Amburgy reported that Meadowood Park is having problems with people driving through our picnic shelter areas to get to the river, and people are getting stuck and tearing up the grass. We got one that was stuck and later that evening was on fire, and we believe it was him trying to get the stuck vehicle out of the mud, and a lot of dry debris that started a fire. We do not think there was any foul play. We have a plan to put in a gate that would stop all of that. The officer that lived at Meadowood had his trailer torn down and is gone, and we are in the process of bringing another officer in. He is going to move a camper temporarily on that site, and he is allowed three months in the camper until he gets a trailer on site. He will be part-time for us as well and will be at Meadowood.

Chief Amburgy talked about the Coonskin Trail Coalition, they are doing a trail building workshop and lunch on September 27th that coincides with the National Parks Land Day. Then they will do a guided tour on the Alice Knight Trail down to the Coonskin Grotto. They would also like to add a trail around the upper circle that would be just inside the wood line. He will have some UC Students volunteering their time working on the trails as well throughout the year.

DIRECTORS REPORT

Jeff reported that the playground at Coonskin will be done this week, and we will have some work to do around the area, and we will grow grass there when the weather is conducive to doing that. They will go to Pioneer Park after they have a job in between ours. Coonskin Pool from May-June had 10,338 people and that is down from last year. At Pioneer Park we had 3,822 people, and you don't want to do the math of what it costs to run the pools per person. The fence at East Bank is complete from the storm damage. They quoted us one price and gave us another price, and Jordan will probably get this information if Jeff can't get that straightened out.

He also has some dates to let the board know what we will do. The stage goes to Marmet in the next week, and it goes out 3 times in the next three months. St. Albans has the stage three times in September. It's going Kanawha City Rec Center at the end of September. It will go to Rib Fest the beginning of September. South Charleston has it on October 31st – November 3rd and Shawnee has it November 4th-12th. When we take it to Shawnee it's not much of a problem because we can drop it off and pick it up when we need to. We have two guys that help with the transport of the stage and set up. Every time we move the stage it's half a day's work gone for them. Also, the train is going to Train Days in St. Albans on September 20th. Depending on where we find ourselves it may be difficult to get things done that have to be done during these times. That's what he is talking about when a lot of this stuff may seem fine and nice to do for the community and stuff, but until we can get some employees this stuff becomes exponentially harder to do.

Jeff said that we have three problems here, the first being money. Second would be infrastructure and third would be employees. We have leaks and we have a lot of stuff going on, and we have two guys that can handle that stuff. Jeff said we need to get this pool painted and we will try to do that next week. He said he would pull everyone in together, and he planned on painting until his latest stint in the hospital and the doctor suggested not to be in the middle of the pool in middle of the day. He said he will do something else to support the guys. The people we have to get this stuff done are few and far in between, so keep that in mind when coming up with ideas. Jeff said that we haven't looked at the Holiday Lights yet because we have not had the time. Once we get the pool painted and this other stuff caught up, it will be the middle to first part of September.

We all know that the Holiday Lights are in a state of degradation. The City of South Charleston is doing a whole new show, and they are going into it wide open, and they have more money than any city in WV. Jeff said he saw the news releases and stuff about the Ball Park doing their light show again and bringing over a half million lights and activities to the ballpark. We are going to need to have some serious discussions and make some serious decisions about what we intend to do with the Holiday Lights, or we are going to look like a bunch of clowns with what's going on around us. Jeff said if we throw up what we got with the state it's in we are going to look foolish and he doesn't like to look foolish, as well as the board and employees looking foolish, with everything else going on around, St. Albans having people working on theirs year-round, the ballpark light show growing every year, and now South Charleston is on the mix. Last year we had the lowest turnout ever for the lights. Chief Amburgy did know the exact

number of vehicles in the park, but they were low. Jeff said the most people we have in the park during the lights are when we have Santa, train rides, tree lighting, and other stuff. We would be much better served to do three days of that and scale the lights back, than to keep the gates open every night with no one coming through. Commissioner Haddad asked if the County Commission has a priority of putting the lights in the park. President Koepsel talked to Commissioner Wheeler, and he is aware of it, and we will do it this year & turn around at the Family Center, and the next year dial it back again. He said there is no choice. You either put a bunch of money into it, which is probably not going to happen. Commissioner Haddad said that when Commissioner Shores was alive, he was adamant about having the lights, but she agrees with Jeff, and just to do a short window of something. She said we need to scale this back because our fixtures are not the greatest, and trying to get them repaired is a ton of manual labor to get that done. She feels like somewhere we need to have meeting of the minds on what direction do you want us to take. President Koepsel said that Commissioner Wheeler is already aware of it, and this year is set because nobody said anything. Commissioner Haddad said it's going to be very, very hard to get ready for Christmas when we can't start until next month, and it is going to be a lot to ask from the employees, and she doesn't even know if we can get it done in that time. We don't have the work release women available. Sarah said she talked with someone down there and they don't have anyone, men or women. Commissioner Haddad is at a loss to know where to go to get help.

Jeff said he has an idea and is going to talk to a former co-worker in Cannan, he runs Silver Creek, and they have a hotel up there with all the units. He is using J1's and HUT's and he said without them Snowshoe Mountain would not run. Commissioner Haddad said maybe just do one big event with lots going on, like the train and Santa, and that's her thoughts from long range planning. Commissioner Stevens added that he has an outdoor movie set up and licensing for it and it's available at no cost. Commissioner Haddad asked about how much is in the Foundation when Commissioner Shores passed from his donations. It was about \$5,000. She suggested offsetting that and using that money for the train expenses, because that's what it was given for. Jeff said that we are going to use that money to do signage and stuff for the playground. Commissioner Haddad said that we need to use all the money in that fund and close that account between now and the end of the year. President Koepsel ended the meeting with saying the last Finance Committee Meeting was last month, and we will only meet once a month, and added if anyone has any issues with that, you have his phone number and to call him.

LEGAL REPORT

PUBLIC COMMENT

Written notes available upon request.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Pope made a motion to adjourn.

President Koepsel called the meeting adjourned 2:40 p.m.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, September 17, 2025, at 2:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted: Jeffrey K. Hutchinson, Director