

**KANAWHA COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
COMMISSION MEETING
November 16, 2022
AMENDED MINUTES**

CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Kanawha County Parks and Recreation Commission was held on Wednesday, November 16, 2022, 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, Dave Pope, John Robertson, Andrew Jordon, Chris Hamilton, Karen Haddad, Stuart Smith, John Huddleston (phone), Steve Koepsel, Janet Drumheller

ABSENT: Pat Donahoe

OTHERS

Jeff Hutchinson, Director (phone)

Leslie Koepsel, Megan Estep, Commissioner Wheeler

Brad Maschari, Sarah Menefee, Eddie Amburgy

Jordan Herrick (phone)

Drema Watts, Susan Thompson, Kathleen Persinger, Judy Hutchins, Cecilia Thomas, Lois Kuhl, Ed Milam, Carolyn Eddins-Outman, Robert Belding (phone)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Pope made a motion to approve the minutes with a correction. He had misspoken last meeting when talking to Kelly Shumate and it was in August 2019, not December 2020. Commissioner Koepsel seconded the motion with the correction, and all were in favor.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Commissioner Drumheller reported that everything is OK with personnel. She added that we had a police officer resign due to personal reasons.

LONG RANGE PLANNING

Commissioner Smith reported that the final work on the Holiday Lights is being finalized now and Carver Career Center has helped. She added that a lot of the lights and the displays are old, and the lights bulbs are not readily available. The tree lighting is set for December 1st and this will be a big event this year with train rides, Santa, Toys for Tots, vendors from area schools, and more. Santa will also be here on December 2nd and 3rd and KRT will run their trolley during Santa's visit. There has been lots of requests for holiday parties and bookings.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Sarah reported from July – October all facilities had a total income of \$806,673 with a gross profit of \$781,767. The total expenses were \$743,451 with a net income of \$38,316. Add back non-reoccurring and ARP funds and that leaves \$1,015,785. October alone had a total income of \$182,063 with a gross profit of \$177,828. The total expenses were \$169,921 with a net income of \$7,906. Add in the ARP Funds that the county has given us leaves us with \$38,146 net income. Big Bend from July-October had a total income of \$207,097 with a gross profit of \$185,549. The total expenses were \$159,989 with a net income of \$25,560. October alone, Big Bend had a total income of \$42,318 with a gross profit of \$38,681. The total expenses were \$38,635 with a net income of \$45. The people with audit came in a did a site visit and got everything they need and they should be done by November 30th. Commissioner Haddad asked why utilities are up form last year. Sarah had looked into the issue already and a lot is from Pioneer Park and the increase in water use due to a leak in the pool. She added that we had an issue with the water company and a leak at Gorman Shelter and the Upper Park area. The Water Company came out and looked at it and said it was a leak, but the water has been off and winterized and it used more water than what's needed to fill the pool. They came out and requested a new meter and do test on the old one. Sarah had not heard back from them. Commissioner Haddad made a motion to accept the finances and Commissioner Hamilton seconded the motion. All were in favor.

GOLF COMMITTEE

Commissioner Pope reported Big Bend in October had 1,051 rounds and is down 382 from the previous year. He was surprised at this number since the condition of Big Bend has not been good. Commissioner Pope said that we are stuck waiting on the FEMA and Fish and Wildlife report to give us permission to do the work. When that gets taken care of, we can look into the big issue that the USGA gave back to us in a 16-page report and that would be to replace the pump station and repair the irrigation. But our hands are tied until Fish and Wildlife gives us approval and FEMA then can get their work done and then when that is done, we can replace the pump house. Commissioner Pope reiterated that we know the course is not in good shape and is embarrassed with the conditions, but we are doing everything we can to get it back to good condition, because it is too nice of a course with lots of players. Without water we can't do anything and it's on our radar and is discussed every month at these meetings.

Commissioner Pope would like to table the discussion on the equipment leasing to next month when we have a little more information. He said that we have a subcommittee of three people working through the winter to try to come up with every issue that could come up and a solution to that issue and then bring it to the full committee to go from there. President Tackett said concerning the used golf equipment that it's up for vote and to give Jeff the opportunity to get what is necessary to take care of the golf course. Commissioner Pope did not have that information to make that motion and this is in regard for Jeff to sign off on the lease to get on waiting list. He said we discussed with the First Tee in leasing equipment at a discount, but doesn't have all the information. The discussion is for Jeff to sign on the waiting list as a representative so when it comes around to leasing the equipment our name is up there. President Tackett made a motion to allow Jeff to sign in on the lease

so that we can get on the equipment list. Commissioner Haddad seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

COONSKIN FOUNDATION

No report

PUBLIC SAFETY

Chief Amburgy reported that part time Police Officer Dave Harris retired due to having his own business and not having enough time to do both jobs. Chief said that we had a couple vehicle break ins and he is working that case. He added that from the police side, he is ready for the Holiday Lights, and got light towers from the county to help with safety and traffic.

DIRECTORS REPORT

Jeff reported that winterizing has been done in the park. He said that all the greens have been mowed at Coonskin and he got a drown to do a flyover on the course. We are working on how to post it to our sites. Jeff said that he talked with Carver and they need more materials and we are working on getting them that. There was a meeting with the airport to discuss the plans for the runway expansion into Coonskin Park that Jeff said that he attended. He said we need to think about the way we do things and what the plan is for the future. Jeff said that we need to decide when to have our December meeting and if we want it before or after our holiday luncheon. President Tackett said with the Holiday Lights that we have been contacted by organizations and 501C3's, to set up to take donations during the lights. President Tackett asked if we were ok to do that again this year. Commissioner Wheeler was ok with taking donations. We did not do this last year but did it in the past and were contacted again by organizations to do it this year. President Tackett said he knew of one organization which was the Food Bank at the United Methodist Church in Chelyan and they serve 65 kids. Chief Amburgy said he is normally the one that does the scheduling for these organizations, and he was not aware that we were going to do that this year. He has nothing set up and no volunteers at this time and if we do this, then he has to get a bunch of things set up for them. He was under the belief that we were not going to do donations this year. Chief said that at this point, he would not be able to have volunteer's every night and can't guarantee they will show up. Commissioner Wheeler asked to see what you can do to make this happen and if we can't do it in this short of time, it's understandable if it can't be right. He said we will have organizations for our Santa event that are non-profit and anyone is welcome to participate.

Next on the agenda was discussion and a vote on the time limit for public comments. Our attorney has set aside this and it needs to be put under public comment. It says 15 minutes of the meeting will be set aside for public comment and anyone wishing to speak needs to sign up by 1:45 p.m. and the speaker will be limited to speaking on topics that are on the agenda or brought up during the meeting and each speaker is limited to (blank) many minutes to speak. President Tackett said we are to determine the number of minutes allowed to speak. Commissioner Wheeler said the County Commission had never restricted anyone from public comment and never restricted time. But that is the board's decision. He said he has two rules and that is to respect everyone in the room and talk like

adults and the second is, to be considerate of everyone's time. Most of the people on this board are not getting paid to be here and volunteering their time to serve the public. So, when you speak, you speak very clearly and quickly state your name and your case and any questions and be respectful to everyone. I'm ok with 15 minutes total overtime, but doesn't think we need to put a time limit on individuals. We serve the public and the public has a right to talk to us and Commissioner Wheeler will leave that up to this board. Jordan said that the ethics rules say you don't need public comment and that is up to the board and if you are going to have a public comment session, the only limitation is the sign-up time and that it's that board decision to allow them to speak and put a time limit on them. He advised that speaking should be limited to topics that are on the agenda or something that is discussed in the meeting. President Tackett suggested putting 15 minutes of the meeting aside for public comment and any individual wishing to speak must sign up 15 minutes prior to the meeting. Each speaker will be allowed to talk. Commissioner Hamilton asked are you proposing that we adopt this and President Tackett said yes, but we can discuss the amount of time they can speak. Jordan added that you don't have to have a time limit, but a board member can motion and second, to give a person an amount of time and not have a set time limit. Commissioner Hamilton asked if there has been an issue and Commissioner Haddad said there isn't an issue and that we are cleaning up the way we run meetings. Commissioner Hamilton disagrees with addressing the commission with limitations. President Tackett said we usually only have a few speakers and it was discussed because of the situation with the airport and discussed on how long individuals can talk in the meetings. President Tackett said that we are looking for a solution before there is a problem. Commissioner Pope made a motion to table the discussion and Commissioner Hamilton seconded the motion. All were in favor. Jeff added that this could get out of hand, and he will do whatever the board votes to do. Commissioner Haddad was in favor of tabling until all commissioners know what is going on and are educated on the issue.

Next thing on the agenda would be discussing the times of the next meeting and if you want it before or after our holiday luncheon at noon on December 21st. Commissioner Haddad suggested to do it at 1:00 p.m. and President Tackett said that our December 21st meeting will be at 1:00 p.m. instead of 2:00 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

LEGAL REPORT

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mrs. Watts stated that she lives in St. Albans, 10 minutes from Big Bend and has been in a league there for over 20 years and plays once a week. She appreciates everyone in the Clubhouse and they are helpful, but she has concerns about the course. As a league, they are a member of Kanawha Valley Women's Golf Association along with Edgewood, Sleepy Hollow, and Berry Hills and they hosted the 93rd women's golf tournament at Big Bend in August, even though the greens were unplayable. She said they all play at every golf course and belong to other leagues in other areas around here and those courses are comparable to Big Bend and Big Bend is always in the worse condition. She said she read the minutes from the last meeting and this isn't the first time it has happened, that it's been

year after year and their question is why is this happening? She asked is there a schedule in place for regular routine maintenance in reference to chemical applications, treatments, and equipment maintenance above daily grass cutting? She asked who over sees this and are they on site regularly to troubleshoot and prevent problems before they occur? She asked if there was a certified agronomist, is there a plan in place, are the people given the tools to do their job? Mrs. Watts said she's just asking questions to take it to the next step. She said it obvious that the Commission is pro golf after spending \$1.5 million at Coonskin and yet were not maintaining the course that our middle/high schools play and Top Flight Jr. Tournaments are held. She stated that Big Bend should get equal treatment and maintain your existing course where matches are played and need to stay on top of that.

When Shawnee Sports Complex was built to replace one of the only places from middle and high schools matches and now, they play at Big Bend. She said she wants our needs considered and maintain that golf course and get reassurance that in the future, attention will be paid before things get out of hand. Commissioner Wheeler commented that we know this is a concern and the 2016 flood took out the back nine at Coonskin and that was also a major concern. We made plans here that were a little different than what you see at a typical golf course, especially a Par 3. We wanted something that was quicker to play, sort of like at Shawnee, but during that time Big Bend was suffering and wanted to know why. So, we suggested to the board which they agreed to get the USGA to come in to look at the course to tell us what is wrong and how we improve it. We recently got the report back and there are things in that report that are concerning, but to defend the individuals that take care of that golf course, it is not their fault. The one thing we saw in the report is that the life expectancy of a pump house is 20 years and that one is at least 30 years old. Everything has an end life and this pump has reached the end and needs replaced and there is drainage that needs replaced. He said we have record amount of play this summer and we have to put something back into the course. Commissioner Wheeler promises that we will work with you as you work with us and he is glad to see them here to give them input on what needs to be done. These things can be worked on and it's going to take a lot of money and time and we are held up right now by FEMA and Fish and Wildlife to tell us what we can do and to get the money from FEMA. The last thing we want to do is spend \$1.5 million on the golf course to tear up, because FEMA is going to come out a do work. Commissioner Wheeler said your concerns are valid and we are looking at what we can do to make Big Bend the best it's ever been. Commissioner Hamilton asked that these ladies could have a copy of the USGA report. Once of the ladies stated that this wasn't the first year the course has been in bad shape and that it been on going. Commissioner Wheeler said he is committed to making Big Bend a priority.

Ed Milam from Cross Lanes said that he is a frequent user of the park and had questions about the airport coming into Coonskin Park. Commissioner Wheeler said the airport is looking into extending the runway because things are changing in aviation with airplanes getting bigger and airlines wanting more people on them. Then you have to look at the safety and landing of these planes and that would require extending the runway and there are only two ways in which it can be done. Commissioner said all this is in the early stages and if they are able to move forward with this, then you'll see economic development especially with what is going on in Kanawha County and the newly established National

Park with the New River Gorge, but it would have to take land for Coonskin and with that we are making sure there will be mediation money that we can put back into the park system to make sure nothing is lost. Those conversations are continuing and, in the end, we have to look at the overall impact to all Kanawha County citizens and this could lead to more recreation opportunities for recreation in Coonskin Park. Commissioner added that we are years away from anything occurring.

Robert Belding called in with a list of questions and concerns about the airport but edited testimony to limit his comment to 5 minutes. He would like to bring attention to the poor treatment he was given by the parks police. He said he's not on the agenda so he's editing his statement. Commissioner Wheeler asked how the parks police treated him poorly? Mr. Belding said he shortened his testimony tremendously concerning the treatment he received in order to follow the park's time limit. He said with Mr. Hutchinson's understanding he's been laying out several proposed walking trails that would extend the Elk River Trail that could eventually lead to Clendenin. He said recently while in the park he came along an unmarked fence blocking his passage. Which now he knows is the boarder for the new golf course. He said he went across the fence and came out near the clubhouse and crossed the fence and did not see any signage. He said when he was crossing the golf course, a park police officer confronted him very efficiently and ignored the fact there is no signage on the golf course and he did no damage. He said the officer's treatment of him is unimportant and what is important, is that he treated any park visitor so rudely. He said he displayed an appalling lack of common sense. He said it starts with the Chief of Police, as if they were trained to protect a group of inner-city liquor stores and not a public park. He hopes no other visitors are treated this way. He is willing to peruse this further but doesn't want to waste the commissions time. He said Mr. Hutchinson has his contact information and he is willing to answer questions. He is respectful of the commissioner's time and appreciates that opportunity to express his views.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Pope made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Haddad seconded the motion. All were in favor.

President Tackett called the meeting adjourned at 2:56 p.m.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, December 21, 2022 at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted: Jeffrey K. Hutchinson, Director