

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

**July 19, 2023  
MINUTES**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The regular meeting of the Kanawha County Parks and Recreation Commission was held on Wednesday; July 19, 2023, at Coonskin Park in the Hearth Room. This is the annual meeting of the Kanawha County Parks and Recreation Commission and President Tackett called the meeting to order at 2:00pm.

**ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT:**

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

**ABSENT:** John Huddleston, Pat Donahoe, Stuart Smith

**OTHERS**

Jeff Hutchinson, Director

Leslie Koepsel, Commissioner Wheeler

Brad Maschari, Eddie Amburgey

Adam (lawyer)

Donna Carney, Lois Kuhl, Jeanne Chandler,

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

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

**PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

Commissioner Drumheller reported that everything is fine and no problems.

**LONG RANGE PLANNING**

Jeff reported that we are getting ready for the Holiday Lights and when school comes back in, we will get with Carver for help. He said that the ditch line is in for the pump at Coonskin and we are waiting on the power company to come in and run power.

**FINANCIAL REPORT**

Jeff reported a draft of the financials from Sarah and Coonskin golf had \$38,087 in June compared to \$8,206 in June of 2022. That is an increase of \$29,880. The total expenses are up \$9,805 from last year. Last year we were \$(27,639) in the hole and this year we are \$(8,316). The expenses from July – June this year were \$44,960 and last year it was \$35,154. There were no numbers for Big Bend. Jeff said that next month we will get an end of the year report and July's report when Sarah gets back from vacation.

President Tackett said before we go the Golf Committee, he would like to talk to the board about him calling Commissioner Pope to step down as Colf Committee Chair and have Commissioner Robertson take over as Golf Committee Chairman. He said that

most of our problems are at Big Bend and Commissioner Pope doesn't play golf anymore and Commissioner Robertson plays there a couple times a week at Big Bend. President Tackett would like to congratulate Commissioner Pope on putting the golf course at Coonskin together and he did a really good job at getting it done. There are a few things that Commissioner Pope got a little to close for because he helped with the course. President Tackett said that our job is not to manage people that work here but to come up with ideas and provide Commissioner Wheeler a list of things that make the park system better. President Tackett said we did a heck of a job to get the county commission to come up with money for the golf course and to give us extra money to get extra help and to pay our part time employees \$12 an hour. He said he is getting with Commissioner Drumheller, Jeff, and Sarah to see what public golf course in the state pay their employees and see if we need to do raises to retain good employees. Our job is get that to Commissioner Wheeler and let him pitch that to the county commission. President Tackett thanked Commissioner Pope once again and said he did a great job on the golf course and people will see the benefits of the course for a long time.

Commissioner Pope said that 15 years ago he was appointed by this board as chairman of the Golf Committee, due to his vast experience with the game of golf. Early on in his tenure as Chairman there were many discussions of the need for a public driving range for the residents of Kanawha County. He took this idea to a friend, Andrew Jordon, and he agreed to take on the project. Soon after, and with the moving of an enormous amount of dirt, The Francis P. Jordon Learning Center opened and has been a great success since day one. He said that over the last decade there has been numerous discussions of the possibility to enhance the exposure of Coonskin Park, by bringing the West Virginia Golf Association, The West Virginia Golf Hall of Fame, and the state offices for the First Tee of WV to our facility. Through his capacity as Championship Chairman of the WVGA and as active board member he helped facilitate the conversation between the two groups. In the summer of 2022, the WVGA opened their new offices at the Francis P. Jordon Learning Center and this is a big deal with the First Tee. He said that due to elimination of public accessible golf facilities in Kanawha County, such as the closing of Shawnee Golf Course, Sandy Brea Golf Course, and the back nine at Coonskin Park, he felt there was need to do something for our Kanawha County golfers. In December of 2020, Commissioner Pope approached a reputable golf course architect, and good friend, Kelly Shumate, and asked of his interest in designing a modern Par 3 Course to replace the front nine at Coonskin Park. Kelly agreed to the project and soon thereafter we had a rendering of the proposal as well as a cost estimate of \$700,000. It was at that point he met with newly elected County Commissioner, Lance Wheeler, to present the project, and he was very responsive to the idea. We formed a four-person subcommittee to ensure everything necessary for Opening Day was in-house no less than 30 days from our opening, and this was accomplished in spades. He said as you've always heard, "You only get once chance to make a first impression." The end result is a world class Par 3 Short Course that rival any course of its kind in the United States. Since the opening we have had multiple news articles, including two, above the fold, front page articles in the WV Gazette. We were interviewed by WV Metro News 58 Talk Radio that was aired statewide as well as a three-minute interview and walkaround the course with Fox, Channel 8. We have had rave reviews from golfers of this county and state and we are

only half way done. He said, true, that its built, but we have to maintain it to the beauty of Opening Day. Commissioner Pope said that recently he was removed as Golf Chairman and he intends to stay on the committee to do what he can to accomplish our goals. His time as Chairman was occasionally aggravating, but in the end has been a rewarding experience and he is extremely proud of all we have accomplished thus far. Commissioner Pope said as he drops back to a supporting role, he wants to thank the board for the opportunity he's had for the past 15 years and as always for good of the game.

### **GOLF COMMITTEE**

Commissioner Robertson said that rain makes the golf course look good and it has help with watering of Coonskin and the conditions at Big Bend have improved. He said that storms had hit and there were limbs and trees down at Big Bend and Coonskin and all damage has been repaired. In June of 2022 the income at Big Bend was \$31,000 and June of 2023 was \$29,500 and only down slightly. Commissioner Robertson would like to highlight that June of 2023 at Coonskin we had an income of \$35,128. He said Coonskin being 9 holes we did \$35,000 and Big Bend which is 18 holes did \$30,000 so the course at Coonskin is taking off like gang busters. President Tackett once again thanked Commissioner Wheeler for his hard work for getting the funding for the course and the extra money for the employees to maintain that course.

### **COONSKIN FOUNDATION**

No report

### **PUBLIC SAFTEY**

No report

### **DIRECTORS REPORT**

Commissioner Wheeler gave an update on the FEMA process and said that they denied our claim at Big Bend and gave us time to appeal and that we will appeal. Coonskin is not an issue. We are reaching out to all the powers that be and delegators to try to help us get this approved. We will continue to fight it and is still up in the air because we know its from the storms and the flooding and it does need to be restabilized before more damage is done. President Tackett said that a lot of work and improvements at Big Bend hinges on this project and if it doesn't get done then the next flood could take our pond and we will be hurting for irrigation. Commissioner Wheeler said if we are completely denied by FEMA then this is a project that we will have to do on our own dime and that takes away finical improvements that we were hoping to do at Big Bend. Jeff said that the pools are kicking right along with no problems since we prepared the pools at East Bank and Coonskin. This is the lowest amount of attendance we have seen in 20 years. The main business is from Memorial Day to the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and if you have bad weather between those time that overall attendance is going to be bad. Jeff said that we had a strait line wind storm come through the park on Monday and had lots of trees down and people stuck in the park. A limb fell on the putting green and that's been repaired. Once we aerify this fall you won't notice the damage. There was no damage to the rest of the course and no damage to Big Bend. Jeff reported that the two aerifiers are in on the pond

and they came with a light kit we can use for the Holiday Lights. This aerifier will also help with the algae build up. Commissioner Wheeler asked about an update on the dock at the pond. Jeff answered that once the guys get the power boxes built for the pump then they will start on the dock and they will use composite. Commissioner Wheeler added that he had conversations with Jeff about how to reconnect the path to the Elk River Trail. One area we looked at was going around the old pump station and some steps or something would have to be built there and looking at ADA compliant as well. This route would be costly. President Tackett said he attended a Birthday party in Glasgow last Saturday and there were several people there that wanted to know if it was possible for the park board to take over Glasgow Pool. Commissioner Wheeler said that we have our own issues with our pools and we need to take care of what we have in our own house before we start to look for something else. Commissioner Wheeler has serious concerns about the pool at Coonskin and it's the oldest aluminum pools in the US and is in dire need of improvements and maintenance down the road. He said that we are doing everything we can to keep the pools open and we have to be smart when it comes to users and how the pool is being used. He said you heard the pool update that there is not a demand for pools and they are highly expensive to tax payers and we have other projects we can build on that has higher demand.

### **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

### **LEGAL REPORT**

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Donna Carney is concerned about the areas for families. She said she is not a golfer and this park is not a golf resort but a family park. She said that there are schematics drawn up and that were submitted to the Kanawha County Commission to improve the park and FEMA denied it. She wants to know if you are pursuing this like you did the golf course. Commissioner Wheeler said that we have done nothing but spend money for our children. He said that he has big shoe to fill after taking over for Hoppy Shore and his big thing is we do it for the kids and he brought that mentality with him. He said when you talk about the 9-hole golf course at Coonskin and one of the reasons he got so involved is that it's a short course and kids can play on the course. He said that it's been a revenue generator for the county so that we can use that money to put back into the park. Commissioner Wheeler said kids can play on our golf course and that our first hole in one was from an 11-year kid. He added that we have the soccer complex at Shawnee that's doing great for baseball and soccer. One thing Commissioner Wheeler heard is that there is no place for kids to play golf and this is why he invested in this project because it can be a revenue generator and kids could play on the course. He said when he came on the Commission in 2020 and he thought this park was a disappointment and didn't see a lot of people using the park and didn't see a lot of activities or a lot of interest why he would bring his kids. He came in knowing our pools were in dismal shape and the pond and the aerator was in bad shape and the dock need to be repaired. He said our shelters are in dismal shape as well and need to look into those because we are renting them every weekend. He also said all of this takes a lot of money and we are trying to slowly move in the right direction. One of the big things we did for the kids is the Christmas Lights. He said we are in dire need of new lights but those displays so expensive and he has to prioritize the county budget and you have to look at the Sheriff's Department, Shawnee,

the Clerk's Office, EMS, etc. He said he made a focus of putting money back into our parks because not only good economic development but good for the people that pay taxes as well. Donna said that it is pathetic that she is 77 years old and she can't access this trail from where she used to access it because the golf course being built. She said in the spring we didn't have half this trail because of the line being put in. She said she worked with contractors and if they left a job unfinished then they would start to get fined. She doesn't know who left this open on the Elk Trail and when she walks now, she has to walk with her shoes that she mows grass in because of the pathic mud that is on this part of the trail. Commissioner Wheeler said that he will take credit when due and blame when at fault and when we looked at the project, we didn't imagine losing access to that trail. He said he got with Jeff to look how to gain access back to that trail because as you said this isn't all for the golfers. He and Jeff walked the trail to see if there was a way to access the trail and he believes there is a way and it is on our priority list. He said he will take that blame and not the board and he will work to make sure that we have access to the trail again. He thinks that there is a way to make that trail system better and can utilize it and would like to get that trail system accessed all the way to the colosseum. He said that its possible and then create that system into our other trails as well. It will take some time and he will take with the mayor to see if that is something that they are on board with. But first we need to get the access back to the trail and he thinks he found a way to do it. Donna asked when the loggers where in here taking our wood was there anything asked of those loggers to replant those trees. She said that it is required on certain jobs and she has not seen one tree replanted. Commissioner Wheeler said that he's glad she asked because he shared ideas with Jeff about looking at a tree for tree replacement. He said that these trees had to come down because somewhere dyeing, rotting, bad pines, and in the way of future projects. He would like to see a one for one so when we cut a tree in the park, we create a program with an arborist to get kids out and plant trees. This would be a good education for the kids and it will replace trees that we cut down. Jeff said that they didn't come into the park a log and that it was a private company that cut the trees that needed to be taken out like the pine trees near the playground that causes damage to that. The other trees around the lake they took out so that we can run power and the tree they cut near the family center was for preservation of that building. Jeanne Chandler had a question about the trail access and curious why we can't access it. There is a split rail fence and the fence between the pool and course there is an area they can access the trail and why can't they use it. Jeff said that we are looking at that and there is an area were there are trees that need to be removed between the pool fence and golf course fence. What we can do is create a gate where you can walk through the clubhouse, across the porch, and through the gate. Donna said that what some people are doing is walking around the fence and on the golf course. Jeff said that if they are caught doing that then they will be removed because it is dangerous. You have people out there hitting golf balls and it concerning us that someone could get hit. Jeanne said it walks the trail and it is ridiculous to walk down to access that trail when the trail is right here. She said the stairs by the pump station are dangerous. Commissioner Wheeler asked if you would be ok with walking through the lobby to access the trail off the porch. Jeanne said she doesn't understand why because we are not really blocked off and can walk around a fence and that you said we needed it for the ABCA. Jeff said that we need to establish a permeator under there laws. Jeanne said but it's a split rail fence.

Jeff said that is what they required in their laws is an established permeator. Jeanne said she doesn't think that we really need the ABCA permit. Jeff said that we had a permit before and it only covered the clubhouse and in order for people to take alcohol onto the golf course we needed a new permit and we need to create a hard permeator which the fence would do for it. Jeanne said she doesn't understand why we can't access that trail like we used to. Commissioner Koepsel we live in a prestigious society and if you get hit by a golf ball at 120 mph, you're going to sue the county commission and what they are trying to do is avoid that problem and that what this board is trying to do is to make sure you do not get hurt. Jeanne said what if I get hit by a golf ball on a road and what is a split rail fence going to do. Commissioner Wheeler said that we will look at every option and all those decisions will be made in a public meeting. Donna commented that the park police are so excellent and if you like to give someone a raise then the park police should get one because they run the park. Commissioner Wheeler agrees and he is working to make sure they have adequate cars as well and that is one of the things, he asked was an inventory on vehicles. He said that we bought 13 new sheriffs' vehicles that were ageing out and we are going to get those donated to them to make sure that we have vehicles that properly run. These pay raises are something that we will have to look into because the park has been ignored for a long time and they done a great job handling it. Commissioner Wheeler added again that we are doing everything we can to get you back on that trail. Donna asked why you could move the fence two feet then you wouldn't be facing this problem. Jeff said that the fence is up against the first tee right now and it came in after the course was designed. There is a possibility that we can create a gate in the fence between the pool fence and golf course fence that grants access to the trail. Brad said that you will have to have a fence and a gate with a no alcohol sign beyond this point due to ABCA licensing. Everything has to be shut off in the areas where alcohol is being served. This has to be on a floor plan and submitted to the ABCA with hard boundaries and a certain amount of acreage. If there is an opening in the fence than we can not be approved. Jeanne asked about funding for the Clubhouse and about FEMA fixing road. Commissioner Wheeler said that FEMA has approved the work at Coonskin. About the Clubhouse he had the commissioner send a CDS request to Shelly Moore Capito's office and they moved that request to a committee so hopefully when the budget is passed in October, we can receive federal funding for improvements at the Clubhouse. It's not just upgrades but ADA compliance as well and we requested \$1 million. Elaine thanked the grounds crew and the pile of wood chips they moved to the entrance garden. Commissioner Robertson remind everyone about family movie night on August 2<sup>nd</sup>. We met with WQBE and and its free of charge and they are playing Top Gun Mavrick.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Drumheller made a motion to adjourn.

President Tackett called the meeting adjourned at 2:56pm.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, August 16, 2023 at 2:00p.m.

Respectfully Submitted: Jeffrey K. Hutchinson, Director