



**COUNTY OF DELAWARE
GOVERNMENT CENTER BUILDING
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**COUNCIL
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**ANNE P. STAUFFER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR**

**KEVIN M. MADDEN
CHRISTINE A. REUTHER
RICHARD R. WOMACK**

**Delaware County Park Board Meeting
September 13, 2023
12:00 p.m.**

Location: Hunt Club

Attendees:

- **Board:** Marc Manfre, Director of Parks & Recreation; Kathy Lopez; Parker Snowe; Bridget O’Donnell; Anne Stauffer; Beth Chapman; John McMullan; Mary Coniglio
- **County:** Councilperson Elaine Paul Schaefer, County Council Liaison; Steven Beckley, Planning manager, Open Space and Trails; Karen Wilwol, Soil & Water Conservation Watershed Specialist.
- **Not present:** Nicholas Hoyt; Barron Lacy; Trish McFarland; Nicholas Furman; Kelly Johnson; Stephanie Gaboriault
- Minutes by Carol Tustin
- **Call to Order:** 12:00 pm

Meeting Minutes from July 12, 2023 were approved by the board.

- **Call to Order**..... Chair Kathy Lopez
 - The meeting was called to order by Kathy Lopez, Park Board Chair.
- **Directors report**.....Marc Manfre
 - This year’s 2023 Summer Concert series had a successful year. The first few weeks we had some weather issues that put a little damper on it, but we had a very successful season. The attendance numbers on the good weather days were great. Our sound and lighting team did a wonderful job. The young people working with Price Stevenson are tremendous. Beth, again, had a very creative and wonderful group of entertainers, so I am extremely proud of that. It was our 48th year and each year we grow. It is an honor to be a part of this great tradition.
 - We have had some major developments in our system. Upland playground has been completed as I reported in the July meeting. The Little Flower property project is coming along. All the roadways are in. We saved a 100-year-old tree that was scheduled to be knocked down, but with Anne Stauffer’s diligence and persuasion, we managed to save it. We talked to the general contractor to save it and worked the roadway around it. So, everything is on schedule, I urge you to go down and look at it. One of the key components of the project is the Community Garden project, like the one here at Rose

Tree. Since it is located in the eastern end of the county, such a condensed area, we have to figure out how we are going to vet this out to the public. Who gets in, who is eligible, are we going to charge a fee like we do here? We charge \$30 here at Rose Tree Park and that has not gone up since 1980. That is one amenity that I pushed for; I think it would be great down there. I think one day I would like to get a greenhouse set up down there.

- At Rose Tree Park, in terms of the playground, we have had some stumbling blocks. We have a problem here with some of the kids being unattended and not being watched closely. I just got a call from the Park Police that we had to call the Fire department yesterday to get a child from the very top of the highest tower on the playground. We also have kids jumping off the equipment. We do not have anyone there 24/7, but I think we have a problem with the parents watching the kids. I think that we are going to have to put up another sign over in the playground for the parents to be more vigilant with their children. So, overall daily, the park gets heavily used. We are trying to work some of our programs around the playground. We have the Italian Festival that uses the area and the Upper Providence Township Community Day coming up. The Bark in the Park, which usually uses that area, we are going to set that up in the middle of the field up there. There are no trucks being driven over there, no vendors. The Holiday Village will be moving back to the Hunt Club area.
- The budget process is going along very slow. The message is clear that there is going to be a tightening of budgets. I have been here a long time and that's always kind of been the message, although last year I was fortunate enough to get a couple of new positions and our operating budget was untouched. Revenue is not keeping up with expenditures. There is another process that the Budget Director is asking us to go through for the budget. The one-line items that he wants to look at are the open line item and the operating expenses. We do not have "official" contracts with contractors, landscapers, etc. We are unique in that we only have 3 vendors under contract, our sound and lighting vendor, our porta potty vendor and our cleaning vendor. A lot of our summer concert expenses come out of that line item; our facilities come out of that line item. We need on-call trades people, like plumbers, electricians, carpenters, painters, landscapers for a lot of the big jobs that our maintenance guys can't handle or for special projects. He's looking for exact numbers to substantiate our requests. We could spend different amounts every year on electrical work, carpentry work or other trades work. We have 45 – 50 performers that sign a contract. Beth puts together contracts for our performers every year, but they are not something that County Council has to sign because it's under \$25,000. I am going to look at expenses, and I have a working knowledge of what the costs are, but with 241 acres of property, we get a budget of about \$2,500,000.00, which is about a tenth of the County budget. We do bring in revenue, which is about 11% of our operating budget, but it does not come back into the parks budget, it goes into the general fund. I do have budget concerns.
- We have 5 buildings in Rose Tree, 2 buildings in Smedley Park, the senior center in Upland Park, buildings on the Don Guanella site, buildings on the Little Flower Manor site, buildings that need constant maintenance and attention. We do not have trade folks on our staff, our employees who work for us are groundskeepers, who belong to a union.

We have vacancies that we have to fill, I have a timeline on that. I just feel I need to let our advisory board know how the whole picture is looking. Last year we got some extra dollars, we picked up 2 positions, I have asked for 2 more. We have a lot of work to be done in Don Guanella, a lot of trail work, a lot of leg work, the machinery in those trails. To be fair, the Budget director has a job too, so does the Administration. The other thing that I want to bring up is that we are now responsible for maintaining the Briarcliff Firehouse, which the County purchased last year in Darby Township. It is a lot of property, and we handle it all in house. The building may become a Community Center, which has a lot of potential for the surrounding community. They would like to run programs out of there, this would all cost money, the rec business cost money. To operate the Redwood Center, the Summer Concert Program and any rec program, you need people to run it that are in that business. Councilwoman Elaine Schaeffer and most of the other members of Council are pro-trail, pro-open space, pro-park, pro-recreation. The issue is that it is hard in a half an hour to explain to the budget office all of the pieces of the puzzle. We are service oriented here. There has been some return on environment studies done, health impact studies of active park programs, and the economic impact of it all. These buildings need constant work, we're moving toward electric equipment, we need fuel, propane, etc. Parks is in the fun business; people enjoy these amenities. There has been additional park land added at the same time as budget constraints. I have been going through everything over the last 2 years systematically of what we have, inventory, structures, etc. At Don Guanella, we are handling it, but long range, with the master plan and all of the amenities that are going in there. My thought is, programming there, that's the final plan, you're going to need dollars. I've been here for 30 years, 29 years as Parks director. I can tell you for the last 4 years, we've had a great support system with Elaine Schaeffer, it's been tremendous. We have a new interim Executive Director, who understands parks, asked me about Briarcliffe Firehouse property, they were paying a lot of money to a company to cut that property, and now we are maintaining the grounds. That becoming a Community Center is very appealing. I think that's a great idea and we can bring in college students and young people to run the programs at the center that are from the area. It will service Darby Township, Briarcliffe, Darby, Lansdowne, Collingdale, all those surrounding communities would use this center.

- We have Don Guanella that is going to get built up, we have Phase 2 of Chester Creek Trail, Phase 2 of Darby Creek Trail, all of them, they are constant maintenance.
- The Park Board has been a great support system for the last 4 to 5 years in terms of bringing in great ideas and the message that the county park systems had been neglected for a long time. Although in the last 3 years, our capital investment has been tremendous. This playground was on target to be a tot lot, a councilperson wanted more, and it became a destination playground. It's a great investment piece of property the county is getting out of it. The investment in Little Flower Manor, the investment in Upland Park, the investment into the trail program, is all good things, but that has nothing to do with day-to-day operations. We get revenue from the summer concert donations, the golf course, the garden program, again 11 ½% of our budget. Yearly 30 to 35 thousand people come thru the gate of Rose Tree Park and that does not include the summer concerts, cross country or the Festival of Lights. The Juneteenth celebration is

the unofficial start of the summer program. I have to say especially in the last 2 years, because of the great support we get from our Public Works Director with all of the Capital improvements come from, and our planning department and our soil conservation district, but mostly these major projects come right out of the capital budget from bond money. There are thoughts about starting fees, but again, who do we charge? There are a lot of youth groups who are just making it financially. It's a complicated argument. Do we charge schools for their cross-country programs run through here, the second largest in the state? Haverford Reserve is charging large fees. It would be difficult to charge fees since we haven't charged for such a long time. The County has some new expenditures, the County Health Department is a new expense, the prison, the move to electric vehicles. Fair Acres has a lot of expense. We would like to start a subcommittee to run numbers for operational costs to present to council for budget purposes for Parks. We could provide data to support our budget requests.

- We have constant need to update, buildings have to be up to code, just constant expenses.
- **Deputy Directors report.....Anne Stauffer**
 - I would like to identify an area for open meadows here at Rose Tree Park for native plants. I took a walk with Karen Wilwol, and it was very educational. We got some No Mow Zone signs made and we need to educate on the value of not mowing. I would also like a little No Mow Zone area at Smedley Park.
 - Delco Arts Week is coming up. Derrick and Beth are planning and event at the Redwood Community center as part of the Delco Arts Symposium. This is the first time since it's inception that we will actively be a part of it.
- **Old Business**
 - Our next park visit will be Upland Park on October 11th. It will be nice, there's a lot to see with the new playground, the new football field and the renovated Redwood. The Employee Appreciation event will be done there.
 - The Little Flower groundbreaking was in July. There was a County Press release.
 - The Rose Tree Park playground opening was in August. Everything went well, the playground is getting a lot of use.
 - The Jaisohn Memorial opened again in August after the renovation. There was a reopening ceremony.
 - Elaine Schaefer has passed the naming of Little Flower Manor to the Park Board.
- **New Business**
 - We have had complaints about the noise from the playground during Summer Concerts from concert patrons, workers, and the musical groups. The noise is especially loud in the ADA accessible area since it is right next to the playground. In calling other recreation programs, the standard seems to be to shut down the playground during shows. The playground needs to be closed during outdoor concerts. We need to come up with a way to explain the playground closure during shows, meetings, etc. The playground does need a gate so it can be locked at night because that can be a liability issue.

- We are working with the Public Works Director for the updates / new bathrooms. They will have to be ADA accessible.

- **Discussion**

- There was a second public opinion survey done for Don Guanella. There is going to be a name the park contest. There was a public meeting with County Council and also a committee that was formed. We received over 500 applications for the spots on the committee. It's been a process over 18 months, and it's been a transparent process. We do have the draft of the master plan. The Park Board can advise the Friends of the New Park. The Marple Greenspace group, who had been working to save the park as green space would have to work with the Friends of the New Park or get in touch with Parks & Recreation Department or the County to be part of the Friends group.
- We should set up a subcommittee to work on guidelines for starting Friends Groups to help them organize.
- Kathy and Marc will set up a working group to talk about the budget prepping for next year.
- We will look at having our Park Board social gathering closer to the holidays.

- **Meeting adjourned: 1:10 pm**

Meetings:

January 11 – Zoom

March 8 – Zoom

May 10 – Hunt Club

July 12 – Hunt Club

September 13 – Hunt Club

November 8 – Hunt Club

Park Visits:

February 8 – Mineral Hill

April 12 – Little Flower & Darby Creek Trail

June 14 – Rose Tree Concert - canceled

August 9 – Don Guanella - canceled

October 11 – Upland

December – Rose Tree Festival of Lights on opening night