



Parks & Recreation Commission – MEETING MINUTES
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The regular meeting of the Parks & Recreation Commission was held on March 6, 2025, at 3:00pm the Parks & Recreation Administration Building, 2154 Landstown Rd, Virginia Beach, Virginia, 23456.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Phillip Hines called the meeting to order at 3:02 pm. A quorum was present.

ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Daniel Edwards (Vice Chair), Phillip Hines (Chair), Barrett Lankford, Ben Messer, Clinton Mills Jr., Myra Payne, Stephen Rockefeller, Eugene Towler, David Wiener, Debbie Wiggins
MEMBERS ABSENT:	Tommy Altman, Sebastian Johnston (Secretary), Kathryn Moran
LIAISONS PRESENT:	Cal Jackson-Green (City Council), Kristyn Worthley (Foundation)
CITY STAFF PRESENT:	DCM Ken Chandler, Michael Kirschman, Shirley Deibler, Chad Morris, Frank Fentress, Taryn Buckley-Thiel, Tiffany Cowell, Nicole Tsetsilas, LT Aaron Gregg

1. Resignation

No resignations this month.

2. Student Members

No new student members this month.

3. New appointees to P&R Commission

No new members this month.

MINUTES

The February 6, 2025, meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

HOUSEKEEPING

No housekeeping items were discussed.



AGENDA ADDITIONS

No agenda additions.

CORRESPONDENCE / PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Virginia Beach Tackle Football

Don Marcari, Great Neck Recreation Association, requested the Commission's support while seeking annual funding support from City Council. His organization offers tackle football to local youth, keeping costs low and never turning interested player away for lack of an ability to pay. The organization focuses on involving youth with football to help them succeed in life. Funding received from the City covers field rentals, EMS services, and other essential areas of the program. Mr. Marcari has requested and received support from the City annually for several years. With the Commission's support, he would now like to request stable funding from the City.

Mr. Marcari noted that his funding requests will continue annually, unless stable funding is acquired.

Q&A/Discussion:

- 1) Vice Chair Daniel Edwards asked for a definition of support. Mr. Marcari stated that support would be \$50,000 to \$60,000 this year.

He also asked if any funding provided from the City would flow through Parks & Recreation. Director Michael Kirschman stated that City Council would give any potential funding directly to Mr. Marcari's organization.

- 2) Commissioner Clinton Mills inquired about the type of training coaches involved with Mr. Marcari's teams receive. Mr. Marcari stated the head coaches are qualified with experience. The additional coaches may be parents and others from community that are willing to help.

He also inquired about the parent's sportsmanship behavior. He was informed that the parents sign a code of conduct, and their behavior is acceptable.

- 3) Programming and Operations Administrator Shannon Moore asked if the teams are aged-based. Mr. Marcari informed her that the teams are based on age and weight.

- 4) Chair Hines asked if the teams are Pop Warner. These teams are local players, not Pop Warner.

He also asked where the youth participants reside. The participants are from all over Virginia Beach, not just the Great Neck area.

What is the cost of Mr. Marcari's next known competitor? Unknown, but it is more expensive.

- 5) Commissioner Eugene Towler asked if there is any monetary support from the community. Mr. Marcari stated that his organization does not currently fundraise in the community but will in the future if necessary.

- 6) Commissioner David Weiner asked City Council liaison Cal Jackson-Green if a letter from the Commission would help Mr. Marcari's cause. He was informed that if the Commission wants stable funding for this group, a letter of support will be necessary to set the group up for success.
- 7) Commissioner Debbie Wiggins asked how many teams current practice with Mr. Marcari's organization. There are currently seventeen teams, but the goal is twenty teams.
- 8) Commissioner Steve Rockefeller inquired if the teams are full tackle. Mr. Marcari confirmed the teams are full tackle.

He also asked if there were scholarships available for participants. There are scholarships available.

- 9) Commissioner Myra Payne requested the total ask for this year. She was informed the ask is \$50,000 to \$60,000 this year.

Chair Hines stated that he will draft a letter of support from the Commission to be reviewed and voted on at the April 2025 meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Jericho Road Property

Chair Hines asked the Commission if they wish to support Aragona Village Civic League in their mission to have Virginia Beach City Public Schools Board transfer land at the now-closed Bayside 6th Grade Campus to the City of Virginia Beach and request City Council to have a park built on the site. The Aragona Civic League president, Lorraine Samko, presented on this topic at the February 2025 Commission meeting.

Vice Chair Edwards is aware of a Virginia Beach School Board - City Council committee. The Committee has two members from each group, as well as two representatives from the Aragona Civic League. They are identifying potential boundary adjustments to accommodate a potential park. The Committee will make a recommendation on how to proceed with the property this summer.

He clarified that the current ask is for the Commission to support the transfer of the Jericho property (Bayside 6th Grade Campus) to the City of Virginia Beach. With the land currently owned by the Virginia Beach School Board, and no decision on who the land will be sold to, he does not recommend a letter of support from the Commission be drafted at this time.

Director Kirschman supported Vice Chair Edwards assessment; a letter will not help until the issue is moved from the School Board to City Council.

Q&A:

- 1) Commissioner Rockefeller asked what the decision timeline for this property looks like. Director Kirschman advised him that a formal decision could come this summer after the School Board decides who will purchase the property.

Chair Hines will contact Ms. Samko and advise that there will be no action from the Commission at this time.

2. Recommending a fee increase to \$14.99 a month + Recommending opening rec centers until 9pm on Saturday and Sunday

Chair Hines called for a discussion on keeping the recreation centers open later and offering a monthly payment option, which would result in a higher annual fee than the current rate (VB resident = \$115). The increase rate would be to cover the additional costs of staying open later. The recreation centers would be kept open later to give the City's youth a place to go at night twelve months of the year, instead of just in the summer during the select nights of Parks After Dark.

Director Kirschman stated that staff positions and additional funding will be needed for this initiative to be a success. Only City Council can provide staff positions and additional funding. The Department could not make this ask without proper analysis, which does not yet exist. Additionally, he noted that, in offering this rate, the Commission would be proposing a large increase to adult resident membership rate.

Q&A/Discussion:

- 1) Commissioner Weiner asked if the recreation centers are operating in the red. Director Kirschman stated that the recreation centers are not in the red and are running well, funded by a 3.5 cent tax subsidy and revenue from the memberships.

He also asked what the department would need to make these proposed changes. Director Kirschman started that, without a full analysis, the department will not know the true cost and effects of these proposed changes.

- 2) Commissioner Ben Messer inquired on the hourly cost to run one of recreation centers. Director Kirschman informed him that each hour cost \$75,000.
- 3) Commissioner Towler inquired if a trial of later hours could be held at three of the recreation centers. Director Kirschman said yes, but staffing would be difficult as current staff, particularly part-time, are set to their current hours.
- 4) Chair Hines asked if just the pools could be kept open later. Director Kirschman advised that this move would receive complaints from members that use the other areas of the recreation centers.
- 5) Commissioner Mills suggested that staying open until 9:00pm may be too late. 7:00pm or 8:00pm should be considered if this initiative is moved forward.

Chair Hines proposed that the vote for the \$14.99 monthly membership and later recreation center hours be deferred indefinitely. Commission Weiner called for a motion to vote on these items. Commission Clinton Mills seconded. A vote was held with all in agreement. These items will be deferred indefinitely.

3. Recommending research, trial and error, and adoption of robotic mowers

Chair Hines inquired if the Commission would like to support the acquisition of robo mowers for the department. Park and Landscape Services Administrator Frank Fentress stated that the department

has three of these mowers already and they keep failing. He added that the department would be willing to further explore the use of robo mowers once technology has advanced.

Director Kirschman added that the department needs big mowers that can handle tall grass quickly.

Q&A/Discussion:

- 1) Commissioner Rockefeller inquired about where the robo mowers are failing. Administrator Fentress stated that this equipment has the same failures typically seen in Roombas (ie getting lost), they cannot handle taller grass, and they need an established perimeter to follow.

A vote was not held due to lack of interest in this initiative.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Pickleball VB

Chair Hines asked for details about the new Pickleball Virginia Beach (PVB) access for Virginia Beach recreation center members. Director Kirschman stated that anyone with an active recreation center membership can now play at PVB for free, Monday to Friday, 1:00pm.

PVB is located at 928 S. Birdneck Rd. PVB has 44 dedicated pickleball courts, lockers, showers, and a clubhouse with pickleball equipment for sale or rent. Interested members should bring their membership IDs to play.

2. LETA Fields

Commissioner Payne stated that members of the Seatack Civic League want to utilize the LETA fields, but have been unable to obtain access or a returned call from the department. Director Kirschman said they can call him directly if they do not receive an answer.

3. Lights at Great Neck Fields

Chair Hines was recently asked how a citizen could request lights be added to the fields at Great Neck. Planning, Design, and Development Administrator Chad Morris stated that adding lights creates issues in neighborhood communities due to the light spillover. Director Kirschman added that lights and noise at neighborhood parks can be contentious. Only with more than 50% neighborhood support could lighting be added.

STAFF REPORT

Tiffany Cowell, youth opportunities office coordinator, and Nicole Tsetilas, recreation supervisor, provided an updated overview of Parks After Dark. Parks After Dark is a key component of a comprehensive strategy of the Mayor's Youth Violence Prevention Task Force. Fostering a safe and enriching shared environment for the entire family, the event (Thursday-Saturday, 6-11 pm, June through August) invites the community to engage in recreational programming, sports activities, food, local resources, and employment opportunities to encourage healthy living and support positive youth and family experiences. With help from community partners, the program seeks to provide safe community spaces for families and positive interactions with law enforcement, encourage positive social interactions among youth and teens, increase participation in other available programs

throughout the year, and foster community pride and an appreciation for the environment. The positive emotional, physical, and social effects of the program are beginning to be realized.

The success of Parks After Dark highlights the importance of creating spaces where communities can come together. Beginning in summer 2025, the program will expand to two additional sites in the Green Run and College Park communities. The addition of these two new sites will further the program's mission of bringing together youth, police, and community members in a spirit of fun and fellowship to prevent negative youth outcomes.

LIAISON REPORTS

1. Active Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC)

Chair Walter Camp provided updates from ATAC:

- Mr. Camp has been appointment to the Virginia Beach Planning Commission and will be stepping down as Chair. The annual elections have been advanced to March 2025.
- Major Project News:
 - Over 18 months, \$44 million has been raised for the VB Trail. The project is 2/3 funded (8 of 12.5 miles).
 - The path at Three Oaks Park is nearly complete. There will be a dedication in May.
 - An economic impact study of the VB Trail is underway.
 - City Council funded Phase 3 of the Shore Drive project.
 - The project to add paths, bike lanes, and a kayak launch to Elbow Road is on schedule.
 - ATAC hopes to have the Historic Kempsville kayak launch incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan.
- Meetings:
 - April meeting moved to April 7, 2025, due to Virginia Beach Schools' Spring Break.
 - No May meeting – Bike Month.
 - The VB Trail tour will be rescheduled once weather improves.
- Public input
 - The Rudee Park survey is available online until 3/30/25. The survey consists of three sets of questions relating to specific areas of the concept design (The Rise, Tidal Terraces, and The Dunewalk): <https://speakupvb.com/u76062>.
- Other Updates
 - A City Council ordinance that will classify city liaisons is coming soon.
 - The state legislative report is coming soon.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

1. Director Kirschman informed the Commission that this department is on a roll with capital projects, Parks After Dark, memberships, and more.
2. The department is awaiting the City Manager's approved budget. Once the budget is released, he suggests the Commissioners look at what was and was not funded within the budget, as well as what funding outside groups received.

GOOD AND WELFARE

1. Commission Weiner asked when the Foundation Golf Tournament would be held. April 11, 2025, at Kempsville Golf Course.
<https://parks.virginiabeach.gov/about-us/parks-recreation-foundation>
2. The next meeting will be held at 3:00pm on April 3, 2025. The meeting location will be the Parks & Recreation Administration Building, 2154 Landstown Road, Virginia Beach, Virginia 23456.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Vice Chair Edwards called for adjournment. No one opposed. Meeting adjourned at 4:42 pm.

ATTACHMENTS (2)

1. Meeting Agenda – March 6, 2025
2. Parks After Dark Overview Presentation