

MINUTES

Parks and Recreation Commission of the Augusta County Parks and Recreation Commission

Wednesday, September 20, 2023, 7:00 PM

PRESENT: Larry Curry, Vice Chair
Sally Williams, Member
Leon Bartley, Member
Ernie Landes, Member
Kirk Barley, Member
Samantha Bosserman, Chair
Anne Gordon, Member

ABSENT: None

1. Call to Order

Mr. Curry, acting as Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:02pm.

Mr. Curry stated Mrs. Bosserman was out of town for work and would like to join the meeting via phone.

Kirk Barley moved to approve Mrs. Bosserman to participate in meeting remotely .
Ernie Landes seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

2. Comments by the Public

Two students from Riverheads High School were in attendance for a Government class requirement.

They were Bradley Alexander- Goncalves and Chloe Burnette.

3. Adoption of Minutes

3.1 August 2023 minutes for approval

No amendments or comments regarding the August 2023 minutes. [August 2023 minutes.pdf](#)

Leon Bartley moved to approve .

Kirk Barley seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

4. Treasurer's Report

4.1 September 2023 Treasurer's report

Mr. Wells presented the report as written. He did add the capital expenditures request for 175 new picnic table and fire rings for Natural Chimneys Park and Campground has been approved. The procurement process has begun.

[2023 SEPTEMBER Treasurers report.pdf](#)

5. Director's Report

5.1 September 2023 Director's report

Mr. Wells highlighted the Director's report.

Mrs. Bosserman asked what the County plans to do with the old picnic tables and fire rings as they are replaced. Mr. Wells stated the lumber is treated in the picnic tables so the plan is to mix and match to save as many as they can and place the tables in areas of the parks that may need them. Some may be auctioned off and the ones that cannot be salvaged will be recycled.

[September 2023 DIR's report.pdf](#)

6. **Matters to be presented by the Commission**

Mrs. Gordon updated the Commission members on her meeting with Rebecca Breeden, of the New Hope Weyers Cave Youth Sports Association. She will share her notes from that meeting with the Commission in a hope to add a discussion to next month's agenda for a recommendation for funding for some projects. She stated she felt the organization/parents have put in a lot of work on their own and have gotten some work/items donated. There was some discussion about the needs and further action. Mrs. Gordon has a list of prioritized items as well as dollar amounts for those items which she will email to all Commission members. Mr. Wells informed the Commission to advise him if they would like to have a discussion added to next month's agenda.

Mrs. Gordon then informed the Commission she has also been in touch with Blue Ridge Community College about a potential partnership for gym use. The hope would be to come to an agreement about using the college's recreation building after hours or on weekends to hold activities. Mr. Wells stated he would reach out to her contacts at the college to inquire further.

7. **Matters to be presented by Staff**

Mr. Wells informed the Commission members they may be contacted for input on future recreation planning as part of the beginning effort of the County's Comprehensive Plan. He stated if Commission members would like to give additional input or serve in a greater capacity they can let him know or contact the Community Development office.

Bradley Alexander-Goncalves asked if he could speak. He asked what Parks and Recreation will be doing to increase community engagement for the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Wells stated Hill Studio, the group developing the plan, will conduct town hall meetings to get input. Parks and Recreation will not conduct those events. Those events will be publicized and will have maps and drawings for the public to see. Online surveys will also be conducted with targeted questions. Mr. Alexander-Goncalves asked how those events will be advertised. Mr. Wells stated the events will be publicized via direct mail as well as social media and press releases. Mr. K Barley informed the students of the County's meeting page located on the County website. He explained that this allows you to sign up to get notifications through email of things happening in the County.

Mr. Alexander-Goncalves asked why Parks and Recreation would not be involved in the plan/ development. Mr. Wells stated Parks and Recreation will have some input on certain aspects of the plan. Those items would specifically be topics pertaining to recreation or tourism. Mrs. Williams informed the students that with the Comprehensive Plan spanning 2024-2044 the students may be more interested given this will project where industry and growth is coming and leaving the area. It would be good for them to familiarize themselves with how zoning works and why it isn't always easy to change what a property is zoned for.

Mr. Wells stated the second item he wanted to bring to the Commission's attention pertains to the Rockingham County Rec Center. He stated he spoke to the Director of Parks and Recreation in Rockingham County, Kirby Dean, to see how they were able to fund the new construction. There was some discussion about that strategy and how those similar funds are allocated in Augusta County. Mr. K Barley asked if Augusta County had a destination place for tourism similar to Rockingham County. He stated his intention was to get folks thinking in that mindset. Mr. Wells stated at this time Natural Chimneys Park and Campground would absolutely be one. Mr. Wells shared with the Commission the "FAQ's" that Rockingham County had published on their website, www.rockinghamcountyva.gov.

He specifically drew attention to the first part which reads:

1. **Funding**

It has been said that the Rockingham County Community Center (the Center) will be funded from "taxpayer dollars". From the beginning, the Center was proposed only because the County would not need to use general fund, or "taxpayer", dollars for the project. Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) revenues will be used.

TOT is collected by the proprietors of short-term lodging, such as motels and hotels. It is similar to the food and beverage tax and the sales tax in that the TOT is paid by the customer, not the proprietor. The customer often is from outside the area.

Rockingham County has set its TOT tax rate at 5%. Forty percent of that rate, or 2 of the 5%, can be used by the County for any purpose it chooses. It goes into the general fund. The remaining 60%, or 3 of the 5% rate, must be used for "tourism and travel, marketing of tourism or initiatives that, as determined after consultation with the local tourism industry organizations, including representatives of lodging properties located in the county, attract travelers to the locality, increase occupancy at lodging properties, and generate tourism revenues in the locality". Va. Code Section 58.1-3819.

Proprietors in the tourism and hospitality industries, the constituency assigned by the State Code as the stakeholders in the 3% TOT rate, have been consulted and are very excited about using TOT funds for the Center because they believe it will attract travelers from out of the area who will stay in their facilities. For example, the largest tourism

property owner in the County has delivered to the County a letter expressing its strongest possible support for the project, and has informed the County that, if the County builds and operates the Center as proposed, the proprietor will build a 150-unit hotel, rather than the currently planned 120-unit project.

However, because the Center will also be used for activities and events other than those related to travel and tourism, portions of the funding must come from sources other than the 3% rate. Funds from the 2% rate of the TOT may be used because funds from that portion of the TOT revenues go to the general fund. Projections show that all the costs of building the Center can be provided for from the 5% TOT rate and there will be money left over to conduct other tourism and travel related projects.

8. Old Business

No old business to discuss.

9. New Business

Mr. K Barley inquired if notification regarding a public comment session to hear feedback from citizens about a possible fee increase at multiple National Forest recreational sites was sent out by the County. Mr. Wells is not aware of any notification being sent. Mr. K Barley expressed his concern that word of mouth would be the only way for citizens to find out about the potential increase and share their comments. Mr. Wells stated he would need to check with the County's Communications Manager, Mia Kivlighan, to see if anything was shared by the Forest Service with the County. Mr. Wells will look into the matter and let the Commission know at the next meeting.

10. Announcement of Next Meeting and Adjournment

Mr. Curry announced the next meeting will take place on October 18, 2023 at the Government Center at 7pm.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:16pm.

Ernie Landes moved to adjourn .

Kirk Barley seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.