

MINUTES

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

Wednesday, July 21, 2021, 7:00 PM

PRESENT: Kirk Barley, Vice Chair
Steve Morelli, Member
Sally Williams, Member
Ernie Landes, Member
Leon Bartley, Member
Ronnie Ritchie, Member
Samantha Bosserman, Member
Larry Curry, Chair

ABSENT: None

1. Call to Order

Mr. Curry called the meeting to order at 7pm.

2. Comments by the Public

Aaron Hill and Christy Simmons of Weyers Cave, Virginia were present and asked to address the Commission.

Ms. Simmons and Mr. Hill met with 8 other campers during the week of July 12 to discuss concerns, improvements, programs and events the group would like to see at Natural Chimneys Park.

Ms. Simmons provided the Commission members with lists that the group created at the previously mentioned meeting. She read from the attached list and fielded questions from the Commission members.

Mr. K Barley asked if Ms. Simmons would consider this list the product of a brainstorm session. Ms. Simmons stated she would. Mr. Morelli informed Ms. Simmons that he spoke with the County Attorney in regard to having an ice cream truck come out to Natural Chimneys Park. He was informed by the County Attorney if the County opens the door for one company they would have to open it to other food trucks as well. His suggestion was a very cautious and measured approach if this was pursued.

Mr. K Barley asked Mr. Wells, Parks and Recreation Director, if Natural Chimneys Park had a dedicated staff member to coordinate programs at the park. Mr. Wells stated we do not have a staff member, nor has the County ever had a staff member, solely dedicated to programming at Natural Chimneys Park. Natural Chimneys Park has a full time Park Coordinator, and 2 part time staff that work on a rotating schedule. Some years the number of staff has been as few as 1 or as many as 4. Those individuals work out of the

Visitor's Center.

Mrs. Williams inquired about a comment Ms. Simmons had made in reference to an item on the list about a tie dye session that took place over the July 4th weekend. Mrs. Williams inquired if the camp host, Anita Johnson, was the person in charge of the event. Ms. Simmons stated Anita was the one that coordinated the tie dye session with permission from the Park Coordinator. Ms. Simmons stated this type of event in years past had been offered on varying holidays throughout the camping season.

Mr. K Barley asked Mr. Wells what the camp host's job is and if they are there all the time. Mr. Wells stated the camp hosts are at the campground throughout the season. Their main job is checking people in after hours when the Visitor's Center is not open. They also keep an eye on the park when our staff is not there and help customers unfamiliar with the area about local places.

Mr. Morelli asked Mr. Wells if someone checks out of a campsite early, say at 8am, why can someone not come in to that campsite earlier than the 2pm check in. Mr. Wells stated there are numerous reasons. Mr. Wells said if we allow early check in if the site is available campers begin to assume they can always check in early. This can create a problem if the site is not ready if they arrive early. He stated staff does not know if those camping will be leaving before the 12pm checkout. He stated sometimes maintenance may need to fix something on the site or mow that site before the next guest comes in. Having strict check in times allows our maintenance staff the flexibility to get all of the sites ready for the next camper to come in at the 2 pm check in time.

There was discussion about potentially allowing early check in for a fee. Mr. Morelli asked if early check in was allowed before the Red Wing event. Ms. Simmons stated she felt she was being pushed out of her site before this event. She did not camp for the event but felt those involved in setting up Red Wing may have been on her site as there was red spray paint ground markings on her site.

Mrs. Bosserman informed Ms. Simmons the list she provided had a lot of fun ideas. Mrs. Bosserman told Ms. Simmons about her camping experiences through Virginia and beyond. Mrs. Bosserman informed Ms. Simmons she has never seen all of these amenities in one campground. She further stated campgrounds with more amenities tend to come with a higher price tag. If more amenities are included camping prices at Natural Chimneys Park may be increased. She told Ms. Simmons items on the list need to be prioritized and sorted on what can and cannot be done. Ms. Simmons said the campers want permission to be able to do some of the things on the list as well as help with getting word out about things they plan.

Ms. Simmons informed the Commission one of the ladies present at the campers meeting

plans to set up a Friends of the Natural Chimneys Facebook page as way to gather ideas to share with the Commission. Ms. Simmons said the campers would like to see something different occasionally.

Mr. Ritchie asked if campers would accept an increase in fee if some of the items on their lists were implemented. Ms. Simmons said the campers would be ok with the increase if the pool was included. Mr. Ritchie asked what if other items not already offered at the Park were offered; would the campers accept an increase in price. Ms. Simmons stated she would ask when the group got together at their next meeting.

Mr. Morelli asked how many people at the campers meeting want pool admission to be added to camping fees. Ms. Simmons stated there were 10 people total at the meeting.

Mr. K Barley asked if the group would be interested in extending the camping season if they knew there would be no pool and limited bathroom facilities. Ms. Simmons stated they would. She told the Commission about a campground in Winchester she had stayed at that had the campers fill their holding tanks by 9pm and then cut off water until 9am so the pipes would not freeze. Mr. K Barley asked what if there was no water from March to May. Ms. Simmons stated as long as campers knew up front and could fill their tanks before they arrived she felt they would be ok with it. Mr. K Barley stated our maintenance staff is not at the campground at those hours in the evening.

Mr. Morelli asked what the campers group meant in the list about moving the comments by the public to later in the Commission meetings. Ms. Simmons stated one couple present at the campers meeting had recently come to a Park and Recreation Commission meeting. That couple wished they had the opportunity to speak on items discussed after the comments by the public agenda item. Mr. K Barley informed Ms. Simmons public can always add to other items brought up after the comments by the public agenda item. Mr. Wells stated this Commission is an advisory only Commission, therefore it is not like some of the other Commissions so public has the opportunity to interject. He further stated according to the By Laws there has to be a formalized time for public to speak. The Commission agreed to keep the comments by the public item as the second agenda item going forward based off the discussion.

2.1 List of concerns, improvements, and events

[Chirsty Simmons 7-21-2021.pdf](#)

3. **Adoption of Minutes**

Kirk Barley moved to approve the June 16, 2021 minutes.

Leon Bartley seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

3.1 June 16, 2021 meeting minutes

[June minutes.pdf](#)

4. **Treasurer's Report**

4.1 July Treasurer's Report

Mr. Wells presented the Treasurer's report as written. There were no questions or comments on the report.

[2021 JULY Treasurers report.pdf](#)

5. **Director's Report**

5.1 July Director's Report

Mr. Wells highlighted the attached Director's report.

Mr. Ritchie asked if bus drivers need to have a CDL. Mr. Wells informed him drivers do not have to have their CDL. The number of passengers is low enough a CDL is not required. Mr. Wells stated those interested are given driving instruction and do a drive with staff to ensure the driver's comfort with the bus. If the driver does not feel comfortable after the drive staff are ok with severing ties at that point. We want our drivers to be comfortable with the bus.

Mr. Bartley asked how much our bus drivers are paid. Mr. Wells stated the pay will be increasing to \$12.25 per hour when we begin trips again. Mr. Morelli inquired about what the starting age is. Mr. Wells stated 21.

Mr. Morelli asked Ms. Simmons if their family likes the new pool out at Natural Chimneys Park. Ms. Simmons stated her children are small so her family has not used the pool. Mrs. Williams stated she really likes the new beach entry.

[July 2021 dir's report.pdf](#)

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

Mrs. Bosserman wanted to let Mr. Wells know she appreciates the Parks and Recreation staff for all they do. She informed the Commission July is Parks and Recreation month.

Mrs. Bosserman stated she volunteered for a shift at the Red Wing Roots Music Festival and had a really good time. Mr. K Barley stated he attended the festival on Friday evening and he really enjoyed the event. He stated he checked out the pool house and bathrooms within the pool house and felt they were very clean. He stated porta johns may be a possibility to increase capacity at Natural Chimneys Park in the future as they are not that expensive.

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

There were no Matters to be presented by Staff.

8. Old Business

There was no old business to discuss.

9. New Business

There was no new business to discuss.

10. Announcement of Next Meeting and Adjournment

Mr. Curry announced the next meeting for August 18, 2021 at 7pm at the Government Center.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:02pm.

Ronnie Ritchie moved to adjourn .

Leon Bartley seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.