



GWINNETT RECREATION AUTHORITY
Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 11, 3:00pm

Meeting held at the Gwinnett Environmental & Heritage Center (2020 Clean Water Drive, Buford) and virtually via Webex

Present in person: Brad Alexander, Pam Cox, Rick Keenan, Eric Thigpen, Derrick Wilson
Present via WebEx: Robert Daniels, Robin Kamara, Loretta Mirandola, Kim Ulrich

1. Call to Order
2. Welcome/Introductions
3. Approval of Agenda
{Action: Approved; Motion: Alexander; Second: Wilson Vote: (9-0) Alexander-Yes; Cox-Yes; Daniels-Yes; Kamara-Yes; Keenan-Yes; Mirandola-Yes; Thigpen-Yes; Ulrich-Yes; Wilson-Yes}
4. Approval of Minutes
{Action: Approved; Motion: Daniels; Second: Mirandola Vote: (9-0) Alexander-Yes; Cox-Yes; Daniels-Yes; Kamara-Yes; Keenan-Yes; Mirandola-Yes; Thigpen-Yes; Ulrich-Yes; Wilson-Yes}
5. Election of Officers
The Recreation Authority made a motion to appoint Robert Daniels as the Chair of the Recreation Authority.
{Action: Approved; Motion: Kamara; Second: Mirandola Vote: (9-0) Alexander-Yes; Cox-Yes; Daniels-Yes; Kamara-Yes; Keenan-Yes; Mirandola-Yes; Thigpen-Yes; Ulrich-Yes; Wilson-Yes}

The Recreation Authority made a motion to appoint Eric Thigpen as the Vice Chair of the Recreation Authority.
{Action: Approved; Motion: Alexander; Second: Wilson Vote: (9-0) Alexander-Yes; Cox-Yes; Daniels-Yes; Kamara-Yes; Keenan-Yes; Mirandola-Yes; Thigpen-Yes; Ulrich-Yes; Wilson-Yes}

The Recreation Authority made a motion to appoint Lindsey Jorstad as the Secretary of the Recreation Authority.
{Action: Approved; Motion: Kamara; Second: Alexander Vote: (9-0) Alexander-Yes; Cox-Yes; Daniels-Yes; Kamara-Yes; Keenan-Yes; Mirandola-Yes; Thigpen-Yes; Ulrich-Yes; Wilson-Yes}
6. Meeting Schedule Discussion
The Recreation Authority made a motion to meet on the second Thursday of every month from 3:00pm to 5:00pm with an in-person option at the Gwinnett Environmental & Heritage Center and a virtual option via WebEx.
{Action: Approved; Motion: Mirandola; Second: Wilson Vote: (9-0) Alexander-Yes; Cox-Yes; Daniels-Yes; Kamara-Yes; Keenan-Yes; Mirandola-Yes; Thigpen-Yes; Ulrich-Yes; Wilson-Yes}
7. Gwinnett Environmental & Heritage Center Sensory Treehouse Plan
Anthony Pappas with the Foresite Group shared conceptual plans for the approved future Sensory Treehouse. The Treehouse aims to address the community needs for all ages and

abilities. The design allows visitors of varying ages the ability to engage in nature and learn about the tree canopy in a way that they would not otherwise could do so. An assortment of appropriate programs will promote children with disabilities to live healthier lives and develop a strong foundation of learning opportunities while building socialization skills.

This project recognizes the needs of Gwinnett's multigeneration community. Visitors of the treehouse, such as students, will have access to a wide range of materials and textures, ranging from rough to smoother, hard and soft, warm and cool, as well as light and dark. There will be opportunities to discover the many melodic sounds of nature. These sensory features will provide the perception of all the elements that one would experience climbing into a tree canopy. It is by engaging children in the sensations of the ecosystem that they will be able to reconnect with nature and challenge their senses to the physically, mentally and socially adaptive.

The project will include an amphitheater learning station, tree deck with avian overlook, water deck, pollinator deck, exploration deck, restroom building and enhancements to the outdoor classroom area.

8. 2020 in Review

Reimagining our Park & Recreation Agency

Deputy Department Director, Mark Patterson, started the overview of Gwinnett Parks and Recreation's accomplishments throughout 2020. He covered strategies of the Comprehensive Masterplan highlighting recreation programming, natural and cultural resource management, financial plan, marketing strategy and GAD analysis results. Masterplan public survey response and steering committee feedback included strong appreciation for the "Gwinnett Standard," continuing to position parks as essential services, enhancing marketing, communications, convenience, and accessibility, protecting access to natural areas and prioritizing facility, amenity, program and activity investments.

Mark reviewed impacts of the global pandemic and how resilient Gwinnett Parks and Recreation was. This included increased park usage, changes to amenities such as more leisure experiences and impacts to programs. Affects to staffing as parks remained opened, hazard pay provided to field employees and staff reassignments to keep Gwinnett working. Finally, Mark highlighted new initiatives in 2020 such as ordinance modification to become a tobacco-free park system, food forest and pollinator garden installments, technology use and launch of social media in February 2020.

Recreation Operations

Deputy Division Director, Chris Minor, presented a year in review of recreation which included statistics on summer camp, general programs, participants and rentals. Recreation centers hosted elections, COVID-19 testing and American red cross blood drives. To comply with CEC guidelines and Governor's orders, rentals were modified to different room capacities, layouts, food service operations and social distancing standards. Chris explained the essential role Gwinnett Parks and Recreation played in the Summer Food Service Program, providing 388,015 meals at 33 sites, utilizing 3,017 volunteers. Aquatics modified swim meet operations by working with Gwinnett County Board of Education and accommodated Rockdale County, Fulton County, city of Buford and Swim Atlanta within the facilities. By switching to an online-reservation system, aquatics welcomed 46,002 lap swimmers, 40,690 leisure swimmers, and 813 rentals. Beginning March 2021, modified swim lessons will be offered at year-round Aquatic Centers. More than 150 COVID mitigation plan were approved to provide safe and healthy athletic experiences to both youth and adult associations and leagues. Finally, another technology advancement of online court rental launched, and more than 970 tennis/pickleball court reservations took place in 2020.

Natural & Cultural Resource Management

Deputy Division Director, Sarah Barlow, provided the authority an overview of 2020 accomplishments. Intimate wedding rentals increased, courthouse craft nights and modifications to traditional in-person special events such as Lighting of the Tree. Volunteer Resources accounted for 20,772 hours, restoration of two acres of pollinator habitat and removal of invasive species, 2,590 hours of court-ordered community service and 13 Eagle Scout projects are currently in review. Special projects completed by staff included the Ivy Creek Greenway pedestrian guardrails, assisting with partner food and supply transports, Vines Park Asian Garden trail and wildlife management of trapping, banding and relocated 38 Canadian geese in partnership with Animal Welfare and Enforcement and Gwinnett Corrections. Sarah also highlighted the processing of 17 new artifacts, two new exhibits in the Gwinnett History Museum in the Lawrenceville Female Seminary, programming at Freeman's Mill Park interpretive exhibits, mobile programming such as Swing into Science and Toddler Treks and finally virtual field studies for k-12.

9. Comments from the Audience

10. Adjournment

Next meeting: Thursday, March 11, 3:00pm

Gwinnett Environmental & Heritage Center (2020 Clean Water Drive, Buford) and virtually via Webex

Notice is hereby given to persons interested in serving as a member of the Gwinnett County Recreation Authority to apply to the Board of Commissioners of Gwinnett County to request consideration be given to you for appointment to the Authority. Requests should be addressed to Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners, 75 Langley Drive, Lawrenceville, GA 30046.

As set forth in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Gwinnett County Government does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the admission or access to, or treatment or employment in its programs or activities. Susan Cannon, 75 Langley Drive, Lawrenceville, GA 30046 has been designated to coordinate compliance with the non-discrimination requirements contained in Section 34.107 of the Department of Justice regulations, information concerning the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the rights provided thereunder, are available from the ADA coordinator.

Gwinnett County Government will assist citizens with special needs given proper notice (seven working days). Any requests for reasonable accommodations required by individuals to full participate in any open meeting, program or activity of Gwinnett County Government should be directed to Susan Cannon, 75 Langley Drive, Lawrenceville, GA 30046 or 770.822.8165.