

MURFREESBORO PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 5, 2022

12:00 NOON

MPRC Members Present: Mr. Eddie Miller, Chair
Dr. Gloria Bonner, Mr. Leroy Cunningham, Mr. Trey Duke,
Mr. Ronnie Martin, Mr. Tim Roediger, Vice-Chair,
Mr. Ricky Turner, and Mr. Don Turner (ex officio)

MPRC Member(s) Absent: Mr. Rick LaLance

MPRD Staff Present: Mr. Nate Williams, Director
Mr. Thomas Laird and Ms. Rachel Singer, Asst. Directors
Mr. Gary Arbit, Ms. Allison Davidson, Mr. Bart Fite,
Mr. Lareko Flowers, Mr. Kyle Goss, Ms. Susan Hicks,
Ms. Kristin Hopkins, Ms. Mitzi Hughes, Dr. Gernell Jenkins,
Ms. Priscilla Murray, Ms. Melinda Tate, & Ms. Dawn Thomas

Other(s) Present: Ms. Kelley Baker, Asst. City Attorney

After Mr. Miller called the meeting to order, Mr. Ricky Turner led the commission in a prayer and in the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Miller next presented the minutes of the November 3, 2021, Murfreesboro Parks and Recreation Commission (MPRC) meeting for approval. Dr. Bonner made a motion to approve the minutes as read, and Mr. Martin seconded. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

Dr. Gernell Jenkins introduced Mr. Lareko Flowers to the commission. She said that he made a great impression as a part-time employee at Patterson and will now be filling the position of full-time Assistant Recreation Coordinator there. Mr. Flowers thanked the City, MPRD, and Dr. Jenkins for giving him the opportunity for the position and for allowing him to continue making an impact on the kids.

Mr. Williams referred to the department's five-month finance report and mentioned that it had been a good year, so far, the busiest across the board. Mr. Cunningham said he was coming up on a year with the MPRC and that he appreciated the report and being updated on how MPRD is doing.

Mr. Williams next presented for approval a revised department Facility Holiday and Hours Calendar. He pointed out that the main changes were to the Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve closing hours for the following recreational facilities: Patterson, Sports Com, Adams Tennis Complex, and the St. Clair Street Senior Center, which will close at noon on Christmas Eve and at 5:00 p.m. on New Year's Eve. In the past, there have been varying closing times among the facilities. With the changes, the closing times can be consistent across the board. Dr. Bonner made a motion to approve the revised facility holiday hours for 2022 as presented. Mr. Roediger seconded, and motion passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. Kyle Goss, Aquatics Coordinator, requested approval to change fees at Sports Com's Boro Beach for private rentals in order to increase summer revenues by an estimated \$2,000. The current rate is \$400 (\$350 - city residents) for a 2-hour rental with up to 175 patrons. Included in the rental would be all the slides, play features, rock wall, diving boards, and 9 lifeguards. The proposed fees for said private rentals is \$450 (\$400 - city residents). Mr. Duke made a motion to approve the Boro Beach private rental fee increase. Mr. Cunningham seconded. Those voting "yes" were: Dr. Bonner, Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Duke, Mr. Martin, Mr. Miller, and Mr. R. Turner. Mr. Roediger opposed the motion. Motion passed by a majority vote.

Ms. Kristin Hopkins, Outdoor Murfreesboro Natural Resource Manager, requested approval to hire a professional ornithologist on a six-month basis to "conduct regular and thorough bird surveys for three designated" MPRD natural areas in order to help develop complete and informed management plans for the natural areas. Ms. Hopkins' staff has already conducted numerous plant surveys; however, solid data is needed for wildlife species in the pinpointed areas. She explained that plant and animal interactions are vitally important in any ecological study and that birds are an excellent bioindicator species because they are all around, studied widely, and susceptible to environmental conditions.

Dr. Bonner asked which three sites have been selected for the bird surveys. Ms. Hopkins said the sites would be: Murfree Spring, Sinking Creek at Oaklands Park, and either Old Fort Park or Gateway Island. Mr. Ricky Turner asked what kind of salary the professional would receive. Ms. Hopkins stated the ornithologist would get \$20/hour for 20-26 hours a month over the six-month period, which will include data organization. Ms. Singer explained that the ornithologist would be hired through a Professional Services Agreement. Mr. Roediger asked if the state might have someone who could conduct the surveys. Ms. Hopkins and Ms. Singer said that the State did not have the staffing or time to do the intensive studies needed. Mr. Duke asked if outside agencies have been brought in before to help with studies/surveys. Ms. Singer said the natural resource team is new and has not used outside services yet. She further stated that the current staff does not have the knowledge to do the studies/surveys themselves. Mr. Williams stated that the MPRD budget includes funding for surveys/studies.

Mr. Martin said that his understanding of the requested bird studies/surveys is that the work will help staff categorize what birds are present and absent in the specified areas in order to get an idea of how those environments should be managed to attract birds that are supposed to be there naturally. Ms. Hopkins agreed. Dr. Bonner thought the research/studies could be a unique opportunity to see if this type of information might be incorporated into the curriculums of the local schools so that more young people might be exposed to a new career path. Ms. Hopkins said that there has already been interest expressed by several youth regarding the field.

Mr. Cunningham asked if the department foresees the need to hire someone to continue the survey work if the initial work proves to be of value to the community. Mr. Williams said that

staff is not anticipating the need to hire someone to do ongoing studies. During the professional study, which is expected to last three years (six-months at a time), staff hopes to gain the necessary knowledge to conduct their own studies as needed in the future.

Mr. Roediger mentioned that environmental deficits could be due to factors that are apparent statewide, not just in the MPRD natural areas. Ms. Singer said that birds are a vital part of the food chain, and the data from local bird surveys could help the ornithologist and staff to determine what is on track in the park environments and what might be missing. Ms. Singer added that the surveys will give a good snapshot of what is happening environmentally within the designated park natural areas so that a management plan can be put into place in order to restore the areas to their natural environments. Mr. Roediger stated that he'd like to see the survey data, and Ms. Hopkins said that the Outdoor Murfreesboro staff could provide regular updates to the commission. Mr. Martin made a motion to approve the hiring of the professional ornithologist as requested. Dr. Bonner seconded, and motion passed by unanimous vote.

Ms. Singer introduced Ms. Dawn Thomas, the new full-time Facility Coordinator for the Wilderness Station. She added that Ms. Thomas has worked for Outdoor Murfreesboro on a part-time basis for the past five years doing program instruction and specializing in animal care. Ms. Singer said the department is lucky to have her.

Ms. Thomas thanked Ms. Singer and said she was happy to take on the position. Ms. Thomas then presented the next agenda item for approval: the first Nature in the Wild Art Show and Fair at the Wilderness Station set for Saturday, February 26, 2022. Artwork inspired by nature, whether in theme or medium, is being sought for the show. A fee of \$25 is being requested of each artist, with only one table allowed per artist to display and sell their work due to limited space; only 12 table spots will be available for artists this first time. Fees will help offset costs for the event. Staff hopes to offer the event annually to give the community an inside event to attend during wintertime. Dr. Bonner made a motion to approve the art show and fair along with the requested fee. Mr. Duke seconded, and motion passed by unanimous vote.

Ms. Allison Davidson, Sports Com Fitness/Wellness Coordinator, requested approval to offer her already established Ultimate Babysitters' Club to community groups. The Babysitters' Club has been offered for years as a weeklong summer youth camp at Sports Com and has been very successful. Babysitting safety, basic childcare, basic first aid, CPR and AED skills are included in the classes. Due to the popularity of the classes, several community groups/agencies have asked if the Babysitters' Club could be offered to their groups in modified versions of one or two-day programs, rather than for a week at a time. Ms. Davidson stated that the fees would only be requested to cover the cost of materials needed in the classes. She proposed the following two fee options:

Option One: Single-day Babysitting class: \$75 for 5 participants

Option Two: Two-day Babysitting and CPR/AED/BFA: \$160 for 5 participants

Mr. Duke asked if the various agencies requesting the classes are nonprofit. Ms. Davidson said that they are. Mr. Roediger made a motion to approve the private offerings of the Ultimate Babysitters' Club along with the two fee options presented. Dr. Bonner seconded. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

Ms. Priscilla Murray, McFadden Assistant Program Coordinator, requested approval of a Daddy-Daughter Dance to be held at Patterson Community Center on Saturday, February 12th, from 6:00-8:00 p.m., with a fee of \$15.00 per couple, and \$5.00 for each additional girl registered with a couple. The "dads" can be any adult male role models for the participating girls. The event will include music, poetry, food, photo booths, and various activities to allow the participants to gain memories to cherish for a lifetime. Dr. Bonner mentioned that there has been a lot of research indicating how positive daddy-daughter bonding can be. She said the event was very commendable and suggested that staff look into continuing the event. Ms. Murray agreed that staff hoped to offer the dance annually. Mr. Cunningham made a motion to approve the dance as presented. Dr. Bonner seconded. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

Ms. Melinda Tate, Marketing Coordinator, announced MPRD events/programs. She said that Sports Com's free online fitness classes, which have been available since the pandemic started, are still a huge success. They can be found on Sports Com's Facebook page. Ms. Tate invited all to attend the annual Polar Bear Plunge at Sports Com on Saturday, January 8th. An Arctic Adventure will start in the gym at 8:30 a.m., where games, snacks, and a costume contest will be held. The actual plunge will start at 10:00 a.m. Immediately following the plunge, participants may head to the indoor pool to get warm, if they so choose. The admission will be donations to Special Olympics or canned food for Greenhouse Ministries. Ms. Tate announced that the Buy One, Get One Free sale for individual monthly and yearly passes would be going on at Patterson and Sports Com through January 16th (at 5:00 pm). Also coming up is the Saturday Sampler Class at Patterson on January 8th, where different kinds of exercise classes will be showcased, and patrons can pick which ones they'd like to participate in. Just a facility pass will get those interested into the class. For the MLK Day of Service events, there will be three events. One will be the "Pack the Packs Sort-a-Thon" at Patterson on January 17th where volunteers and staff will fill backpacks with donated food items for school kids. Next there will be a Career Expo at Patterson on Thursday, January 20th, from 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. where there will be 20-30 employers present. And the last Day of Service event will be a workshop at Patterson on Tuesday, January 25th, called, "Make Every Dollar Count." Participants can attend for free and learn how to keep up with where their money goes.

Ms. Tate invited everyone to visit the Photography Exhibit titled, "Six Decades, Five Continents, One Eye," by Walter Lecroy in the City Hall Rotunda January 11 – February 24, 2022. She also mentioned that at Cannonsburgh, there would be a winter crafting class to make Wooden Spoon Snowmen on January 13th and Toddler Adventures on January 27th for ages 5 and under. She added that Outdoor Murfreesboro was offering Nature Journaling

on January 13th for ages 7 and up and a Wetlands Day Walk at Murfree Spring Wetland on February 3rd for ages 6 and up. Further, Ms. Tate announced that the Spring Adult Softball Meeting for team representatives is set for February 27th at McFadden Community Center at 2:00 p.m.

Coming up as well are a variety of activities and programs for seniors through the St. Clair Senior Center, including trips in the U.S. and abroad. The Senior Center has karaoke lined up twice in January and February, and beginning on January 10th, there will be a six-week course at the center called, "Eat Well, Feel Well, followed by "In the Garden" on January 16th, "Senior Feud" on January 20th, and "Ultimate Bingo" three times in January and February. Ms. Tate invited anyone interested to check out all the MPRD offerings at www.MurfreesboroParks.com. She also reminded the public and commission that there are 15 different MPRD Facebook pages with lots of information as well.

Mr. Miller said that the regular agenda of the MPRC was complete, and he asked if anyone had something to add under "Other Business." Mr. Don Turner said that he wanted to answer Mr. Leroy Cunningham's questions from the last MPRC meeting regarding the free Youth Golf program. He announced that everyone (golf staff and Golf Commission) was pleased with how the first year of the program worked out, with 430 kids signing up initially and 650 actually getting to participate for free. Mr. Turner added that 70 other kids took lessons on Saturdays with Ms. Emily Miller. Mr. Turner also mentioned that those involved in offering the free program for kids planned to continue as long as possible and that funding was already in place for ten years. Mr. Turner further said that Mayor McFarland hosted an Invitational Golf Tournament at the Stones River Country Club in October as a fund-raiser for the Kids Play Free program. Mr. Turner did not know the amount raised, but he had heard the amount was substantial. Mr. Leroy Cunningham thanked Mr. Turner for his information and stated that the program sounded good on paper and turned out to be a fantastic program. Mr. Cunningham added that he hopes the commission can help get the word out on the program for this summer. Mr. Turner agreed that more advertising was needed. Mr. Miller complimented Mr. Turner on his information. Being no more business, the meeting was adjourned.

Meeting adjourned: 12:46 p.m.

Minutes approved:

Mr. Eddie Miller, MPRC Chair

Mr. Nate Williams, MPRD Director