

MURFREESBORO PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2023

12:00 NOON

MPRC Members Present: Mr. Eddie Miller, Chair
Dr. Gloria Bonner, Mr. Leroy Cunningham,
Dr. Trey Duke, Mr. Tim Roediger, Mr. Bill Shacklett (Council),
Mr. Kent Syler, Mr. Shawn Wright (Council), and
Mr. Don Turner (ex officio)

MPRC Member(s): Mr. Charlie Montgomery

MPRD Staff Present: Mr. Nate Williams, Exec. Director of Recreation Services
Mr. Thomas Laird and Ms. Rachel Singer
(Asst. Directors), Ms. Lynn Caldwell, Ms. Susan Hicks,
Ms. Kristin Hopkins, Ms. Mitzi Hughes, and Mr. Mark Owens

Others Present: Mr. Austin Maxwell, Council
Ms. Katie Driver, Asst. City Attorney

After the meeting was called to order, Dr. Gloria Bonner led the group in a prayer and in the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Miller shared that Dr. Bonner's mother, Gracie Turner, had passed away just last week and that she will be greatly missed. He added that he bet Dr. Bonner's mother had been very proud of her.

Mr. Miller announced that no one signed up to speak during the Public Comment part of today's meeting, and he then presented for approval the minutes of the August 2, 2023, Murfreesboro Parks and Recreation Commission meeting. Mr. Shawn Wright made a motion to approve the minutes as read. Mr. Kent Syler seconded, and motion was carried by the following vote:

Aye: Dr. Gloria Bonner
Mr. Leroy Cunningham
Dr. Trey Duke
Mr. Eddie Miller
Mr. Tim Roediger
Mr. Bill Shacklett
Mr. Kent Syler
Mr. Shawn Wright

Nay: None

Ms. Allison Davidson, Wellness/Fitness Coordinator, updated the commission on the very popular Community Babysitting Program offered at Sports Com for youths, which includes CPR, AED, and basic first aid skills. She explained that it started off as a summer camp

and is now offered year-round. Ms. Davidson further said that the cost of materials (manual and certification card) has recently increased, and she requested the commission's approval of the following fees for participants:

Option One, 6-hour Babysitting Class Only - \$100 for 5 participants

Option Two: 10-hour Class with CPR/AED/BFA info: \$250 for 5 participants

Mr. Syler made a motion to approve the Community Babysitting Program fees as presented. Dr. Bonner seconded, and motion was carried by the following vote:

Aye: Dr. Gloria Bonner
Mr. Leroy Cunningham
Dr. Trey Duke
Mr. Eddie Miller
Mr. Tim Roediger
Mr. Bill Shacklett
Mr. Kent Syler
Mr. Shawn Wright

Nay: None

Ms. Susan Hicks, Cultural Arts Supervisor, recommended approval for the home-school kids from Perform Murfreesboro's Youth in Harmony group to join the Middle Tennessee Vocal Association (MTVA), in which they will be able to participate in state events to celebrate their vocal talents and skills. Many City and County school kids already participate in the MTVA through their choir classes. Allowing this group of kids from Youth in Harmony to participate in the association will open more opportunities to them for exposure to high quality and engaging choral events. Ms. Hicks pointed out varying fee options that the participants would need to pay, depending on what they sign up for or are chosen for. Dr. Bonner made a motion to approve the Youth in Harmony's participation with the MTVA. Mr. Roediger seconded, and the motion was carried by the following vote:

Aye: Dr. Gloria Bonner
Mr. Leroy Cunningham
Dr. Trey Duke
Mr. Eddie Miller
Mr. Tim Roediger
Mr. Bill Shacklett
Mr. Kent Syler
Mr. Shawn Wright

Nay: None

Ms. Hicks also recommended approval of new fees for the Barfield Halloween Bash. She explained that staff wanted to give the option for patrons to buy wristbands for \$15 each,

(and \$10 each after the first band is purchased if multiple kids are in the family). Game tickets will also be sold as in past years – 2 tickets for \$1 and 12 tickets for \$5. She further said that with additional fees taken in for the wristbands, staff will be able to upgrade game prizes and make the experience even more fun than in other years. Mr. Wright made a motion to approve the new Barfield Bash fees as presented. Mr. Cunningham seconded. The motion was carried by the following vote:

Aye: Dr. Gloria Bonner
Mr. Leroy Cunningham
Dr. Trey Duke
Mr. Eddie Miller
Mr. Tim Roediger
Mr. Bill Shacklett
Mr. Kent Syler
Mr. Shawn Wright

Nay: None

Ms. Kristin Hopkins, Natural Resource Division Manager, gave updates as follows:

- 1) Murfree Spring Wetland Garden Project was started 20 years ago and serves as a place for natural resource education. Staff from several City departments and volunteers have been working to remove invasive plants from the area so that native plants may be planted in a future growing season.
- 2) Youth LED Project works with Holloway High School and Patterson Community Center youth to guide them in volunteerism, stewardship, conservation, sustainable living and community care. Staff wants to teach them how to incorporate food plants into a landscape; provide certification for their work in a future phase so they'll have proof of work experience upon graduation; and staff hopes to develop internships for the youth so they can be paid while assisting and gaining skills through the Natural Resource Division.
- 3) Invasive Plant Control (IPC) for Lytle Creek Project – The City has contracted with IPC out of Nashville. Funds for this project have been secured with matching funds through the State and funds from the Murfreesboro Water Resources Department. IPC, with help from City staff and volunteers, is leading the way with their expertise to get as much privet and honeysuckle as possible off of the 15 miles of greenway, since both are invasive. There is funding until next winter, and staff is hopeful to continue the project through the foreseeable future. Mr. Syler asked if parrot feather was still one of the invasive plant species along the greenway and if they are having any success getting rid of it. Ms. Hopkins said that it is an ongoing battle but there has been some success with such strategies as smothering and herbicides.
- 4) Tennessee Naturalist Program – This program was approved by the commission a couple of years ago. Two courses of 10 classes/30 participants each have been

held so far, with a third course beginning tomorrow. A different natural history topic is covered in each class. Each person who finishes the course and completes 40 hours of volunteer service in natural areas receives a certification as a Tennessee Naturalist. Almost half of the volunteer hours earned for this program were served in the Murfreesboro Parks system.

- 5) Volunteer Statistics – The local community continues to help in the Murfreesboro Parks system and has volunteered many hours, almost doubling hours from January-July 2022 (609 hours) to January-July 2023 (1,076.50). If a monetary value were attached to the hours worked, it would have been \$30,271.18 paid out using the state’s volunteer rate of \$28.12 per hour. Trash pickup in the parks and along the greenway is the number one area where volunteers help. Anyone wishing to volunteer with the Natural Resource Division may sign up at www.MurfreesboroParks.com. Besides for cleanups, other areas in which volunteers may help are with seed collection, native gardens, citizen science, native nursery, community gardens, and habitat restoration.

Ms. Hopkins announced that the next time she attends an MPRC meeting, she would like to give updates on her division’s bird survey, Youth LED program (with a few students attending the meeting), and the plant project. Ms. Hopkins mentioned that the recent Hummingbird Festival at the Wilderness Station was a great success and had doubled in size from last year. She added that the Natural Resource Division had their Fall Native Plant Sale at the event and sold \$3,127.00 worth of plants. Past years averaged \$1,500 in native plant sales. Ms. Hopkins said that staff was glad to have sent 665 native plants into our local community.

Dr. Bonner was pleased that the Youth LED Project included plans for students to earn certifications for what they learn when assisting the Natural Resource Division. Mr. Miller said that Ms. Hopkins’ division was doing impressive work. Mr. Williams added that Murfreesboro is fortunate to have natural resources that can be used for education, since most other cities do not have such resources available for public use. Mr. Syler mentioned that partnerships with other departments and groups have been helpful from the start in developing natural resource areas for public use. He said he was glad to see that the partnerships in Murfreesboro are continuing to keep natural resources in good shape and available to this community.

Ms. Lynn Caldwell, Marketing Coordinator, announced that the Marketing Division has had a change in strategies on getting the word out regarding MPRD’s programs and events. There are now more intentional postings to social media; City TV is helping to spread departmental information; and staff is sharing clear and consistent messaging about the department’s branding. Ms. Caldwell said staff is also keeping the website updated in order to lead people to the information they need.

Ms. Caldwell next presented a power point showing a community art project done at the Hummingbird Festival, which looks like a beautiful stained-glass piece. She agreed with

Ms. Hopkins about the event being very successful. Ms. Caldwell said Perform Murfreesboro's *Lion King* production is scheduled for September 7-10 at Patterson's Washington Theatre. Waterfest, a joint event with the County, is scheduled for September 15 at Old Fort Park. There will be a lot of educational activities and exhibits regarding water. The Greenway Art Festival, another popular event, is set for September 16, also at Old Fort Park. Further, the Murfreesboro City Closed Tennis Tournament is scheduled for September 21-24 at the Adams Tennis Complex. Mr. Miller said he was glad that MPRD has such a great staff and volunteers to make all the programs and events so successful.

Mr. Williams said that no October meeting is anticipated. Mr. Miller asked how things were going at the Miracle Field. Mr. Thomas Laird said that there were 120 athletes signed up to play this fall, with opening game day this Saturday, September 9th. He invited everyone to come out and watch. Games are scheduled for 9:00, 10:00, 11:00, 12:00, and 1:00. Mr. Miller said that the Miracle League is the best venue around on a Saturday morning (during their seasons). Mr. Miller also said that he has noticed that the Siegel Soccer Complex stays well used.

Being no more business, the meeting was adjourned.

Meeting Adjourned: 12:30 p.m.

Minutes Approved:

Eddie Miller
MPRC Chair

Nate Williams
Exec. Director of Recreation Services