



PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Monday, January 22nd, 2024 6pm

Ruby Fulbright Aquatic Center – Large Meeting Room
120 Paul Franklin Road Clarkesville, Georgia 30523

Roll Call

- Joe Elam
- Peggy Fortson
- Cassie Head
- Angela Haughton
- Keith Deyton
- Andrew Gailey (outgoing member)

Old Business/Minutes

1. No Old Business

New Business/Current Events

Introduction & Welcome – Parks and Recreation Director, Brooke Whitmire

Each member introduced themselves & how they got to the Recreation Advisory Board.

1. Written Report 2023 Wrap Up – Director, Brooke Whitmire

Director Whitmire read through written report (attached) – spoke about growth of youth sports participation, specifically basketball season since they are playing right now, spoke about how transition between basketball to volleyball will be challenging because of space with only having the two gymnasiums to use

Director Whitmire then gave a brief description of our Fitness & Programs Specialist position & duties – having someone who coordinates programs, special events, fitness classes, and oversees the fitness center has allowed the Parks and Recreation Department to offer 4 new diverse programs, looking to bring in a new karate instructor, Zumba instructor, and a yoga instructor

Director Whitmire explained how staff took many weeks to research fitness membership pricing, etc when taking in the fitness center last year. Prices were compared from all agencies within our GRPA district from White County, Frances Meadows in Gainesville, Oconee County, to event the YMCA's in our area. Whitmire expressed gratitude and pride for how in depth staff was able to get when developing the pricing structure. Cassie Head mention modeling things after the way Frances Meadows does things & there was some discussion on how our current framework could or could not support that. Whitmire expressed the desire to grow toward the framework of bringing instructors in as Part Time employees, that way classes could be offered as part of membership fees, similarly to



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Frances Meadows. However, there would need to be significant changes and requests made to Part Time employees and funding for the Parks and Recreation Department in that area. Whitmire also explained that the Parks and Recreation Department was able to add a Swim Instructor position to their roster last year. They have one swim instructor on staff, but it is a seasonal position since that person can only work during the summer around their school schedule. She also explained that if the Parks and Recreation Department were able to add more Instructor positions, their hourly pay would be directly covered by any registration fees taken in. These part time positions would be different in that they would not have regularly scheduled hours outside of the few hours they would spend directly instructing classes, so the “hit” to the budget wouldn’t be that big & would 100% be covered by registration fees.

- a. Youth Sports Participation
- b. Fitness Memberships
- c. Aquatic Programs
- d. Gymnastics Programs and new teams
- e. Completed & Upcoming Projects
 - i. Basketball scoreboard install
 - ii. Website Buildout
 - iii. Re-conditioning of Aquatic Baseball/Softball fields
- f. Grant Application – GRPA’s New Initiative
- g. Basketball Season Update – numbers & upcoming events

There was some discussion around the Gymnastics Facility location, how the entrance is right beside the bowling alley & bar area & parking is VERY difficult. Director Whitmire also discussed how the programs are outgrowing the current square footage with new programs added. Whitmire spoke about how if we could build the Gymnastics program a building for themselves it would open up more possibilities for new revenue generation with the ability to not only grow participation, but also host regional meets, parties, etc.

There was discussion over use of the pool. Director Whitmire explained what the school has use of which is determined by the facility use agreement the county has with them. In the Fall there are 3 teams that utilize the lap pool, the high school team, Piedmont College, and the youth team. Whitmire explained that each entity pays for use of the facility and the desire to update terms of each to be more uniform. Cassie Head explained that the youth league also runs meets help at the aquatic center for both their league and the high school. Cassie stated that people involved with their programs are the only one’s in the county who know how to use the software. They rely heavily on volunteer involvement by parents from

their programs to run timers and other things needed for events where many other locations pay their timers. Whitmire stated she believed there was a small payment made, around \$500 to the person who runs the timing for any youth meet. There was also discussion about the county purchasing the touch pads, while the youth league owns other parts of the timing system. There was other discussion about other youth swim programs in the county.

Whitmire described the recent maintenance that was conducted on the lap pool. She went into some detail of the history of the pool and how it had been changed over the years. Since there had been many mechanical changes to the machinery since it was built over 20 years ago, there was a lot of "on the job" learning that happened during the correction made to the pool. Director Whitmire spoke about how all of the parts which needed replacing were put in by a commercial pool company who was well experienced and recommended to us. They made sure to replace needed parts with stainless steel and other materials appropriate for our pool.

There was also some discussion about how the maintenance of the parks and recreation department is funded. Whitmire clarified that there are some parts of the buildings maintenance that is shared between Parks and Recreation & Facilities Maintenance. There was also discussion about the cost of replacing the ballfield lighting at the facilities. Whitmire stated that currently, it would take (at minimum) at least \$250k per facility to update lights, which heavily impacts the CIP budget. A member asked if there was a grant person employed by the county and there was some discussion about grants and discussion about fundraising that could potentially be led by the Advisory Board.

Peggy Fortson brought up the need for more people who want to see maintenance improve and more progress to be made to show up to meetings and budget hearing, etc so they can gather more information on how these things work. Cassie & Angela brought up the need for further education to the community on what the needs are and how we could get there.

Whitmire brought up CIP projects that had been completed/started. Gymnasium scoreboards have been replaced with new LED boards, all lights in the the Gymnasium have been replaced with LED lights. Peggy mentioned how wonderful the lighting in the gyms are now. Whitmire explained the new project coming up to re-condition the baseball/softball fields at the Aquatic Center complex. Infields are going to totally reconditioned, so the Parks and Recreation Department will be able to use the fields more many more things like 3-4 tball, 5-6 coach pitch, but the largest addition will be the ability to host tournaments on the fields once they are updated. Whitmire stated how excited they were to already have tournaments lined up for the Spring & the department is very hopeful there will be more revenue & positive economic development.

There was further discussion about economic development and Andrew Gailey brought up the importance of showing the positive impact of bringing thousands of people out to the parks for tournaments, etc.

Cassie Head asked if there was going to be another Swim Safety Day hosted at the Aquatic Center and said that the Hurricanes would be very interested in helping for the Spring Day.

Peggy Fortson asked if we had any idea how much funding was needed annually for scholarships. There was discussion over how the scholarship process works and where the money comes from. Director Whitmire also stated that they had been connecting people with outside sources who could help provide funding directly to parent to purchase equipment or cover a remaining cost of participation if needed. One community person, Ashley Mulkey, has created an organization called Aspiring Sporting Chance which helps kids get registered for sports.

Keith Deyton asked about advertising registration periods directly to schools more. There was discussion around how the Parks and Recreation Department could potentially get the schools to send flyers out digitally with a robo call/text/email with flyers directly out to parents. Angela Haughton asked if the Parks and Recreation Department set tables up at open houses, etc. Director Whitmire mentioned that no one had reached out to her yet, but she could check on how they might be included in that.

Joe Elam asked what can the board do to help? Peggy Fortson mentioned board members be assigned specific sports they could be a representative for so parents could reach out directly to one of them with questions, comments, concerns. There was also discussion about how the department could create more PR. What kinds of employees, volunteers, etc would the department needs to get that done? Peggy brought up reaching out to Mr. Wallace at the High School. He oversees the media program at the high school & there could be potential for the Parks and Recreation Department to work with them for a student project.

2. 2024 Remaining Meeting Dates – all held at Habersham County Administrative building beginning at 6:00p
 - a. February 20th
 - b. March 19th
 - c. April 16th
 - d. May 21st
 - e. June 18th
 - f. July 16th
 - g. August 20th
 - h. September 17th
 - i. October 15th
 - j. November 19th
 - k. December 17th

Upcoming Events

1. Hosting GRPA District 7 All Star Basketball Tournament for 8U Boys & 12U Girls teams – February 22nd – 24th
2. PuzzlePalooza! – February 14th – we have a series of PuzzlePalooza! events planned quarterly, upcoming dates are May 24th, August 16th, and December 6th
3. Spring Sports Registration for 3-14 year olds runs through February 5th
4. Jurassic Empire Coming to the Dewey Tench this weekend
5. NE Georgia Car Part Swap Meet – February 10th
6. Pickleball “Dink Your Heart Out” benefit tournament – February 14th with luncheon

7. RK Gun Show – February 23rd
8. March Member Initiative – “Run/Walk a Marathon” in March! Fitness membership members track milage through the Month of March to complete a marathon. Finishers will receive a prize & shoutout on Facebook
9. Bi-Annual - Kids Consignment Sale – March 10th – 17th
10. Mountain Top Jeep Invasion – March 23rd

Adjourn

Motion by Angela Haughton

Seconded by Peggy Fortson

Time: 7:49p