

PARKS AND RECREATION COUNCIL MEETING

**LOCATION: Biden Center
Cape Henlopen State Park
15099 Cape Henlopen Drive
Lewes, De 19958
302-644-5005**

**Thursday, August 2, 2018
9:30 a.m.**

AGENDA

Council Members

Ronald Mears, Chairperson	Ronald Breeding, Vice Chairperson	Ed Lewandowski
Joseph Smack	Jan Durham	Brenda Bramble
Jim White		

Staff

Ray Bivens, Director	Matt Ritter	Matt Chesser	Greg Abbott
Bob Ehemann	Wayne Kline	Marian Serat	Abby Shepard
Alex Huey			

Public

Kathy Casey First State Pickleball

I. Introductions/Announcements

A. Chairman Ron Mears called the council meeting to order at 9:33 a.m. and outlined the agenda for the meeting.

II. Official Business/Council Activities

A. Approval of Minutes

Ron Mears asked for Council approval of the February and May meeting minutes. Brenda Bramble made a motion to approve the minutes. Jim White seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

B. Chairman's Report

Ron Mears was appreciative of being able to get together and discuss the good things that are happening in the Parks system.

C. Council Member Reports

1. Fort Delaware Society- No report was given

2. Natural Areas Advisory Council- *Ed Lewandowski reported.*

Eileen Butler was recognized for her efforts and services in the council as she has moved on to another position. Council will be working on submitting comments for the White Clay Creek State Park Master Plan. Some members have been attending the public open houses.

3. Wildlife Management Committee- *Clyde Shipman was in surgery therefore Matt Ritter reported.*

Hunting permits and locations are being put together. The locations will be the same as in previous years and include Cape Henlopen, Delaware Seashore, Holts Landing, Trap Pond, Fort Delaware, the Grassdale area, and White Clay. This year, only archery hunting will be allowed at Brandywine Creek (similar to White Clay).

Pat Cooper was contacted by the USDA about a nutria eradication project. They have a nutria detection dog and want to come out to Fresh Pond at Delaware Seashore to do some research.

Ray added that deer hunting on Sundays was expanded by the General Assembly. Parks has the ability to allow Sunday deer hunting but at this time, steps have not been taken to allow it. Public meetings would need to be held to allow for public input. Fish and Wildlife are opening areas owned by their Division but they are staying away from horse trails.

4. Resident Curatorship Committee- *Joseph Smack reported.*

H.B. 356 was signed and passed by the Governor last month. This was a “clean-up bill” that allowed the Resident Curatorship Program to operate legally without any contest from the Landlord Tenant Code. The bill also ensures that properties will revert back to the State after the family is no longer capable of living in the property etc. The Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs has proposed a regulation which would include the Resident Curatorship Program in the Tax Credit Program. Public comment is being accepted on this proposal until early September. The tax credit for historical property is \$4,000 a year for five years. This regulation would allow resident curators to apply for this credit.

Ron Mears asked what the genesis of the bill was. Joe responded that it was a clean-up bill that the Division (Cultural Affairs) initiated. Ray mentioned that the Attorney General was doing a review the program and our agreements and felt that it strongly conflicted with the Landlord Tenant Code. The AG’s advice was that no agreements be signed until the program was formally recognized in law. The Curatorship Program was started under the Minner administration and was authorized by the Governor’s office however, there was nothing in law regulating the program.

Joe stated that Cultural Resource Manager Jim Hall would be in contact with the potential curators for the Warrington house. They are in Thailand.

The Sussex County Land Trust has completed their work on the Wolf House. They have received their certificate of occupancy and Jim hopes to do a walk-through in the next few weeks.

Jim Hall made a presentation, to about 50 people, at the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Conference in June and spoke about the Resident

Curatorship Program. Jim will also be providing guidance to staff at New Castle County regarding public/private partnerships as the County is looking to start a curatorship program to preserve some of their properties.

Jim Hall was interviewed for a *Delaware Today* article that will highlight the State's preservation tactics.

At the Ferris School Campus there is a 200 year-old farmhouse that the Department of Services for Children Youth and Their Families (DSCYF) is looking into for a public/private partnership. Jim will be touring the farmhouse which was the original Ferris School for Boys and has some architectural features that are rare in Delaware. DSCYF wants to preserve this and turn it into a mini-museum/conference room for the department.

III. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

IV. Staff Reports

A. Policy/Legislation- Ray Bivens reported

Ray shared that for the first time in five years, the Open Space Program was fully funded. Also, about four years ago, Senate Bill 75 passed which changed the way the Land and Water /Outdoor Recreation Parks and Trails Program (formerly the Delaware Land and Water Conservation Program) is funded. The endowment is continuing to do well. Ray mentioned that \$1 million goes into an infrastructure account now and in December it will be split between Parks and Recreation and Fish & Wildlife. This is the first time this has happened, therefore, there will be an additional \$700,000 in funding available.

Ray explained the door opener process stating that once a year Parks is allowed to ask for funding for new/emerging needs. The Division requested a new ranger at the beach parks because of the popularity of the campground, surf fishing etc. at Delaware Seashore State Park. Parks was granted a new position, which will be paid for by Parks generated funds (ASF funds) not General Funds. The Department is in the process of establishing the position. For the first time in eight years, our compliment of positions has grown. Ray stated that the last time a position was added was back when Auburn Heights was coming on board.

Several small projects were funded in this year's budget including \$125,000 for improvements at the tennis and basketball courts located on Levering Avenue in Wilmington. There is currently no parking area near the courts which are in need of much attention. The funding will aid with the planning of the project. The money came through the Grant in Aid portion of the bill. During Ray's tenure as director, this has not happened before. Many of our non-profit organizations such as the Friends groups that receive Grant in Aid received an increase. The Fort Miles group, for example, received a \$5,000 increase.

Last year, the Division received \$2.1 million to take care of all of our capital projects. This year, through the Bond Bill, \$1.3 million in funding was dedicated to the Biden

Center. Matters that need to be addressed in the Biden Center are the life-safety needs such as elevators, fire escapes, fire suppression etc. The plan is to renovate the Biden Center so it will be a functional training center for youth and for DNREC staff. This would involve changing the current dormitory-style restrooms to a more contemporary style, adding suites, and creating a larger conference space to accommodate 100 people. The PPD (Planning, Preservation and Development) team has already started the planning and is soliciting a firm to help with design. ADA accommodations are needed as the building dates back to the Cuban Missile Crisis era.

This year's budget included a line item titled, "Historic Sites/Fort Miles". The \$500,000 in funding is dedicated to Parks' Historic sites; \$250,000 will go to Fort Miles to plan the exhibits for the front half of the bunker. The remaining \$250,000 will be split between projects throughout the state with particular attention given to projects where our Friends groups have matching grants. The Friends of Bellevue are looking to do improvements to the Mt. Pleasant meetinghouse at Bellevue. The Delaware Seashore Preservation Foundation received a \$160,000 Longwood Grant for the Tower 3 project.

Last year's rehab line was funded at \$3.5 million; this year it rose to \$4.5 million. This money is split between Fish & Wildlife and Parks and Recreation.

The budget included raises for state employees and an increase to the minimum wage. Our Division's salary scale for seasonal employees was created to include minimum wage plus a set amount. For example, a Park Patrol Officer's salary is equal to minimum wage plus \$2.50. Therefore when minimum wage increases, our entire seasonal salary scale increases as well.

DNREC's future policy initiatives include expanding the role of our seasonal Park Patrol Officers (PPO). In addition, the Department is looking into installing fee machines. A pilot program will begin later this month at Holts Landing and Alapocas State Run Parks. The Division is working with the same company that installed the fee machines at the Ocean City Inlet and Rehoboth parking. As these fee machines roll out, there will be a need for more officers to write tickets for not paying the fee machines. In addition, it will be helpful to have more officers with ticket writing authority to assist with enforcing Park rules. For example, right now if someone does not have the proper surf fishing equipment, the PPOs can stop them but then a ranger has to be called to issue a ticket or warning. The General Assembly will need to approve a request for PPOs to issue tickets. Once approved, additional training will be given to State Park Patrol Officers to issue citations.

Ron Mears asked if fee machines would have an automated arm. Ray responded that they would not have one. The machines will be similar to an ATM and visitors will pay at the machine. This will eliminate the possibility of the arms being broken. Visitors with annual passes can go through easily as well. Ron Mears asked what type of payment the machine would accept. Ray responded visitors will pay by credit card; no cash will be accepted. This would help in these machines not being a target for

theft and damage. The feedback from other state parks that are using the machines has been positive. Ron Mears mentioned that some visitors might not be interested in using these machines. Ray responded that Parks might get more visitors with them. Ray shared that the Division has received notifications that visitors would like to pay the entrance fee but they are not carrying cash.

Ron Mears asked what the fine is for not paying a park entrance fee. Chief Kline answered that it is a civil violation and a \$20 fine. He stated that legislation written a few years ago allows the Department to assess the cost of the daily entrance pass at all parks. For instance at a beach park, the fine is \$20 plus \$10 if you are an out-of-state visitor. Court costs are added to all citations which total \$36 for an out-of-state vehicle. Ray continued that the Department has the ability to raise these fines. He feels the fines should be steep enough to deter visitors from taking a risk and breaking the rules.

Chief Kline mentioned that the Secretary has a “fine range” for the parking violations of up to \$25. The Department might need to change the code or legislation to give a higher range. As of right now, the maximum charge for a handicap parking violation is \$25. If the code is rewritten to give Park Patrol Officers the ability to write tickets, the range should be changed. Ron Mears mentioned that it is up to the Secretary to make the determination for fees. Chief Kline agreed, for civil violations. Ron Mears inquired about park violations going on a visitor’s criminal history. Chief Kline responded that they are environmental violations therefore yes, some violations do go on their record and some do not. About 60% of regulations are environmental violations and these do not go on your record for the first offense. There are violations in the regulations that will go on an individual’s record and are stated as unclassified misdemeanors. Most of the conduct violations are considered unclassified misdemeanors and will go on an individual’s record.

Ron Mears asked if there was further discussion on firearms. Ray mentioned that the Department is currently in court again. The zones were challenged. The case was heard in Superior Court about a week or two ago. It is now in the waiting stages. There currently have not been incidents. There was one gentleman who walked into Deerfield with open carry. Open carry is not allowed at Deerfield but he thought he was walking into private property and did not realize Deerfield was part of the Park system. There are only a few places within the Division where open carry is not allowed, for instance, the Zoo and Nature Centers. Ray asked Chief Kline if there have been any other issues. Chief Kline was not aware of other issues.

B. Section Updates- A handout was provided to the Council and highlights were discussed.

a. Administrative Services- *Greg Abbott shared highlights from the Park Council Report (25:35)*

Marian Serat was hired as the Administrative Specialist II in the Office of Administration. Marian has more than seven years of experience working in administrative support and customer service; has three years of experience working for our Division; and has a Bachelor’s Degree in International Relations.

Abby Shepard was hired as the Marketing Director for the Division. In addition to a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Notre Dame, Abby has five years of experience in marketing and promotion. Since 2016, Abby has served the Division, first as the digital media manager and then as the acting marketing director.

Alex Huey was hired as the Marketing and Communications Specialist. Alex recently graduated from University of Delaware and is working on his Master's in Business Administration and handling digital and social media as well.

Since April 18, the website has been visited by 2,090,078 visitors who collectively viewed 1,535,176 pages.

Joe extended kudos on the launch of the new webpage. He attends a conference call every Wednesday for the Public Information Officers for the State of Delaware. During this week's call, Mike Mahaffie talked about the redesign and shared a screenshot of the new webpage.

On August 1, Delaware State Parks' new web page launched. It is available for viewing at <http://beta.destateparks.com/>. This project was four years in the making. The goal was to make the site more user-friendly and more mobile-user accessible.

The 2017 Annual Report was sent to print. Copies will be shared at the next meeting. Also, the Park Visitor Welcome Guide came out Memorial Day and it is now brochure size. The Corporate Pass brochure was also printed.

The Division had 136,337 volunteer hours, which is a new record and is equal to about 72 full-time employees. Greg shared the breakdown of the volunteer hours per Park and the types of activities volunteers perform. Cape Henlopen had the most volunteer hours with 23,487 hours.

The Youth Conservation Corps Program includes 61 members and five team leaders. They are working all over the state, including at the camp store at Cape Henlopen.

The Internship Program continues to bring the best and brightest from all over the country. Abby Shepard, Marketing Director, came to the Division as an intern two years ago from Notre Dame and is now a full-time employee. The goal of the Division is to interest others in working for State Parks and helping them transition to employment. Some quick statistics include the Division having interns from 15 states ranging from Texas in the south, Washington in the west and Maine in the north, essentially covering the entire United States. The average age for interns is 21; youngest is 17; oldest is 32.

The Veterans Conservation Corps (VCC) continues to do great things. They are completing projects all over the state. VCC members are retired veterans or

family members of veterans. The goal is to train them and help them transition into full-time employment.

Greg shared the Friends groups update section in the Parks Council report. He stated that the Division had been asked to give Friends updates. Included in this report is information submitted by the Friends groups regarding activity for the period from April to June.

Cumulative revenue from entrance fees (annual passes, surf permits, lifetime passes, and daily entrance tickets) is essentially unchanged from FY17 to FY18. Greg pointed out that this level of consistency allows for budgeting and efficiently managing the internal budget.

Revenue from camping reservations for FY18 was \$3.1M. This is 40% above the of \$2.2M from the same period in FY17. The growth is directly attributable to two factors: the higher occupancy rates and fee structure at Lums Pond State Park due to the availability of three point hookups and the first full-year of reservation availability for Cape Henlopen State Park's upgraded sites with higher fees. Greg shared the Camping Revenue Chart. He mentioned that the focus has been "occupancy during the week" and staff is looking into ideas to try to continue to increase mid-week camping especially in the inland parks. Jim White asked to clarify the chart and months listed. Greg mentioned that not all months were included.

One focus of the Business Services section is an RFP for campground reservation system, which also includes ticketing and point-of-sale. The current contract with Active/Aspira expires in November 2019. Staff is going through significant negotiations in trying to get the information they need. There are thousands of people in the system and information is not coming in as quickly as intended.

An RFP will be announced for Facility Management for Events, Catering or Food Services – these contracted services will replace our Division-managed Catering and Wedding Program at the following facilities: Bellevue Hall, Judge Morris Estate, Cauffiel House and Blue Ball Barn. Essentially, the Division is looking to have someone manage these facilities. Historically, once a third party comes in and is in charge of marketing and managing, it works. There is a solid RFP going out and bid results should come in by the next meeting.

The renovation and opening of the campground store in Cape Henlopen generated in \$130,950.41 in FY18.

Abby Shepard and Alex Huey shared hand outs and presented two marketing videos projects. The first video featured the Big Chill Beach Club which opened last year at Delaware Seashore State Park. One of the problems at the Big Chill was visitors were not content that they had to pay an entrance fee to visit the restaurant. There were complaints as they did not understand why they had to pay the entrance fee. Rangers and fee booth personnel were constantly being asked about this. In a partnership with Big Chill, the marketing team's video shows a

visitor's experience to justify the entrance fee. There was also a contest associated with the video for which Big Chill donated a \$100 gift card. In order to enter the contest, people were required to comment on the video and share the post on social media. The total reach for the Big Chill video was 157,974 views, 2,291 reactions (meaning anyone "liking" the video on Facebook) and over 1,000 comments and shares; which meant that over 1,000 people entered the contest. After the video campaign, there was a significant decrease in complaints as reported from the field staff. It was a successful campaign and it did not cost anything as the video was filmed and edited "in house" and everything was done via social media. The gift card was mailed out with an annual pass. Brenda Bramble commented about complaints she had heard about last year with the elevator at Big Chill. Greg Abbott responded that this issue has been addressed. Ray Bivens stated that the ranger position that is now at Big Chill is sustainable because of the revenue that has been generated. Greg stated that \$310,000 in revenue was generated last year through parking, the contract fee, and a percentage of their gross profits. Matt Ritter added that this figure will rise in the coming year because last season was condensed. In addition, they have expanded with concerts and as of two months ago, 67 events (weddings, special events) had been planned. Ron Mears asked if there was anything that could be done to address the parking. Ray responded that every square foot is being utilized. If anything could be done, it would have to be an elevated parking lot. Ron Mears mentioned that he went last year on a Thursday afternoon and it was crowded. Ray mentioned many visitors are now going to Towers Beach (closer to Dewey) which has help with the parking situation. Last year, the Towers location was only at capacity one time. There are higher numbers at Towers Ocean, which is surprising since it is closer to Dewey. Ron Mears asked if there has been contact with DART. Ray answered that there is a bus stop. Matt Ritter also mentioned that there is one on the other side of the campground but not many people use the bus system. Ron Mears asked if it would be feasible for visitors to park by the Towers and then take a shuttle to the South East Day Area. Matt Ritter responded that when Big Chill is at capacity there is a 2-hour wait time therefore it works out as the beaches are also at capacity. Ron Mears concluded there is no easy solution for parking.

Ray mentioned the retail shop that opened. They are selling a "Tower shirt" and a portion of the proceeds are going to the Delaware Seashore Preservation Foundation to highlight them.

Matt Ritter mentioned that Big Chill was allowed to expand on the top floor and with food and beverage service. There was also talk of expanding downstairs to be able to have food "on the go". The turnover will help with the parking as well.

Alex Huey made a presentation about the video campaign done early in the summer for Cape Henlopen Fishing Pier. This past winter, the pier had been damaged by ice forming and the end of the pier had to be removed. Dave Beebe from Lighthouse View Bait and Tackle (concessionaire located at the pier) had complained that his sales had decreased because visitors thought that the pier was closed. Therefore the video was done to show that the pier was open. Over 16,000

people were reached.

Ron Mears requested an explanation of how the bait machine at the pier works. Matt Ritter explained that it works like any other vending machine. Live bait is dispensed (worms, live minnows, lures). An outside vendor is responsible for the upkeep and stocking of the live bait in the machines.

Ron Mears asked if there are any long range plans for the pier. Ray stated that the Division, as it has done for years, is requesting capital money for the planning of a replacement pier. Ray added that Fish and Wildlife sees the pier as “one of the most heavily fished structures in the entire state”, (which it is) but the cost to replace the pier would be \$10-\$15 million. Ron stated that, “we have been putting band aids on it for years”.

The Division received a \$40,000 sponsorship for the concert series from the Office of Highway Safety.

- b. **Operations, Maintenance, and Programming**- *Matt Ritter shared highlights from the handout.*

Lums Pond and Killens Pond campgrounds were full the weekend of April 14 and 15, as were the Cape Henlopen and Killens Pond cabins.

The week of April 26, Purdue volunteers and Trap Pond staff did an outstanding job of removing 1,100 pounds of trash including two recliners, two television sets, and 23 tires.

Delmarva Stargazers hosted their Annual Star Party at Trap Pond where they captured a picture of the Blue Horsehead Reflection Nebula.

The American Birding Association held a sold-out birding cruise on May 25 at Fort Delaware.

Environmental Stewardship staff and volunteers conducted the monthly evening Heron Survey from Battery Park in Delaware City on May 30. They recorded a “first time” total of ten species and 1907 birds.

Fort Delaware debuted a new program, *Story of a Prisoner*. This has been a neat addition because people have been able to follow the story online through social media and it “draws people in.”

Trap Pond held a successful “Jeep Jamboree” program. They have held several events with the Friends and Chamber of Commerce which have increased revenue and have also filled the campground to capacity. They also had a concert (sponsored by 88.7 the Bridge) to which the band *Consumed by Fire* brought in over 1300 visitors on a stormy night.

Ron asked what the Jeep Jamboree consisted of. Matt Ritter shared that this year

it was just a Jeep show but that the Division is considering adding a skills course. The course would need to be set up in an area that would not be damaged by the vehicles. The Division is considering building the course on the black top.

A copperhead snake was found on the sidewalk at Trap Pond this summer.

Teresa Pierce, First State Heritage Park, won the 2018 National Association of Interpretation Shining Star Award for Region II.

The Brandywine Zoo caught a river otter on the camera trap set up by the Christiana Mall as part of the urban wildlife monitoring project, and a Kookaburra, the world's heaviest Kingfisher species, was loaned to the Zoo for the season. The Zoo also had kestrels hatch and they were released into the wild. Because this is the first time this has happened in Delaware, the Division had to "jump through some hoops" to make it happen.

Jan Durham mentioned that the Zoo Administrative Specialist, Sarah Zweigenbaum, transferred to the Central Office. Matt confirmed that she had moved to PPD and that it was a good move.

Ron Mears asked if we had a "big draw" since we lost the tiger. Matt said it has been tough because we don't have a "big animal" to draw people in. The Division did bring in the Red Pandas which people enjoy seeing. The Division is finalizing the master planning process for the Zoo and will be starting Phase I of the plan which is the Madagascar area where the llamas are. This area will house the lemurs. In addition, the Division will be building a quarantine building which is a must have for our accreditation. The next several years will be transition of construction. Parks staff will need to engage our visitors in next-level experiences such as feeding animals. Visitors want to see animals but they also want to feel special. Zoo staff is training many of the animals for these up-close interactions. There is no longer a monkey house at the zoo. The plan for that area is to expand the education and administration areas. Currently, administrative staff is housed in the middle of the Zoo.

The Jasper Crane Rose Garden Volunteer Team volunteered more than 300 hours this spring, weeding, edging, mulching, pruning and "deadheading." The condition of the Rose Garden continues to improve. It looks the best it has in decades.

More than 3,500 visitors enjoyed the 98th Wilmington Flower Market at Rockford Park. They enjoyed live music, a variety of food vendors, local artisans and vendors, as well as many plant varieties for sale.

The Bellevue concerts have been very successful. One concert brought in over 6500 visits. During Sunday concerts, visitors can enjoy a small beer garden and multiple food trucks. Ron Mears asked if there is a fee in addition to the entry fee. Matt said no and stated that sponsorships really help to offset the cost of concerts statewide.

Jim White asked about the Trap Stock event. Matt stated that originally the event was being held in our Parks but because of permitting issues it was moved.

Lorraine Fleming was recognized as a Pioneer of Preservation.

During the week of May 24, White Clay Creek received a very generous donation of \$2,500 from Mike Nardozi for use in encouraging and supporting youth hunting. The Park plans to use the money to build a double hunting stand in White Clay Creek. The Division hopes to eventually install accessible and double stands at every park where hunting takes place.

Staff continues to find interesting “stuff” at the NVF site. This has provided opportunities for the Division’s archeologist to work in the area.

Staff at the Lifesaving Station is offering weekend getaways for park visitors. They are packaging deals to include tours/programming, accommodations, and meals.

A Friend’s group member (Ernie Felici) from Delaware Seashore hosted the Coastal Delaware Marathon. He has been running this event for many years and, for each of the last four years, has made a donation to the park in amounts ranging between \$20,000 and \$30,000 for the preservation of the Tower. Ernie also won an award as an outstanding volunteer this past year.

A record number of people visited the *Delaware Goes to War* program at Fort Miles.

Staff from the National Aquarium released a rehabilitated seal back into the wild from the beach at Delaware Seashore.

For the 9th year in a row, eighth graders from Indiana visited Delaware Seashore State Park. For many of the students, this is the first time they have seen the ocean.

Ron Mears commented that students from Providence Creek Academy went to White Clay Creek to volunteer. He stated that the environment sciences teacher from Providence Creek used to work for Delaware State Parks.

A pineapple grenade was found at Cape Henlopen near Fort Miles. It was not active. The explosives unit was called in to explode the grenade; while they were in the park they checked the entire area between Fort Miles and the Pinelands Trail. Matt stated that he thought during their search they found one more grenade.

Staff at the Marina held the “Kids Catch All” tournament and more than \$10,000 was raised for the Lyme Disease Foundation of Delmarva.

Matt encouraged the Council to take time to read the kudos for the great work that is being done by staff.

The Town of Lewes had a fireworks display. It's a great event and many of the spectators viewed the display from Cape Henlopen. However, when they tried to leave the park, it took almost four hours to get out of the Park. Matt shared, "this is not our event so many of the issues are out of our control but we do have some snags to work through."

At the annual meeting of the Archeological Society of Delaware, Division Archeologist John McCarthy was recognized for his work, especially for the Time Travelers Program. Matt shared what the Time Travelers Program is and where public digs will be held in the near future.

Matt commended our lifeguard staff on the amazing job they do throughout the summer.

The Division will be selecting two K-9 partners for Park Rangers Lister and Ditmore.

Council asked if loggerhead sea turtles nest on park property or if they are moved to park property. Matt stated there were "70 some" eggs in one nest and Ray stated he thought they had been moved to our property so they wouldn't get disturbed. Jim White stated that he believed that Fish and Wildlife is taking care of that.

c. Planning, Preservation, and Development- *Matt Chesser shared highlights from the handout.*

The Division is working on masterplans and trail concept plans for trails in several parks.

The FY18 grant cycle kicked off with a March invitation letter sent to all eligible recipients (counties and municipalities). There were 29 pre-applications submitted to the Division totaling \$3.7M in ORPT requests. On June 11, the Joint Council Grant Review Committee, including Park Council members Clyde Shipman and Ron Breeding and Council on Greenways and Trails members Charlie Emerson and Gary Kirk reviewed the 29 pre-applications. The FY18 funding available for local grants is \$1.04M. Letters were sent to all applicants with applications due September 14.

The Division continues to work on the SCORP (Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan). Surveys have been completed and the SCORP is due to the National Park Service in September 2018.

Many staff attended the third (of four) master plan public meetings (open houses) for White Clay Creek State Park. All of the meetings have been well

attended. Comments will be collected at the open houses, through online surveys, and via email. Matt invited Council to attend the final meeting on August 20th. Ron Mears asked how many people attended the last meeting. Ray stated approximately 100 people attended and Matt Chesser said that approximately 80 people have been in attendance at each of the meetings. Matt Ritter commended staff on a job well done and said that the meetings and the process has been well-run.

The plan for the Lovering Avenue Courts will include basketball, tennis, bocci, pickleball, picnic area, trails and a dog area.

The Division is excited to be working with the Lenape Indian Tribe and a private conservation organization to purchase a 12.6-acre parcel in the Fork Branch Natural Area in Dover. Ron Mears asked if there was a press release about this property recently. Matt stated that the press release was about an adjoining property and Ray stated that there was a *News Journal* story and video but that the Department had not put out a press release yet because we don't have a signed contract. Jan thanked the Division for their help with this project.

Matt discussed the many projects taking place at Auburn Heights/NVF and stated that many of these projects will be completed in the next month. The new bridge and boardwalk both look amazing. Ray stated that the Division hopes to make an announcement in October about our newest state park; Auburn Valley State Park. At that time, the Division intends to honor Tom Marshall for his contributions to Delaware State Parks.

Jim White asked if the Division will be working on the "problem with the geese" when we are working with the wetlands. Matt Ritter stated that there are several parks that are experiences problems with geese. Ron Mears said that they closed down the areas in Bombay Hook where the farmers used to put wheat. He shared that, "now that it has gone back to its natural state there is no place for these geese to go." Jim stated that he is concerned with the resident geese and Matt Ritter said the Division will continue to work on that issue. Matt Chesser stated that the Division will be adding about 12 acres of wetland to the area.

The railroad turn table will be shipping from Chicago. The Division is essentially only paying for shipping; the bridge was acquired at nearly no-cost to the Division. The turn table was built in 1902 and is historic.

The railroad tracks near the entrance of Cape Henlopen have been removed and that area is being converted into a trail. This is being done through a partnership with DelDOT and will connect Cape Henlopen State Park to the Town of Lewes. The Division was able to "piggy back" a contract from DelDOT so the project moved quickly; the discussion took place and about two weeks later, the tracks were being removed. Ron Mears asked if there would be overpasses; Matt said there would not be any. There will be some

added safety features to alert motorists to the presence of trail users. The project should be completed this fall. Ron asked if the trail would be black topped. Matt said in order to accommodate the volume of users, it will be a 12 foot wide, black-topped, trail. Enforcement on the section of the trail from the Park entrance into Lewes will be the responsibility of Park Rangers.

Ray shared that the Division is, “trying to get out of the wastewater treatment business”. The plant at Cape Henlopen is quite old and the Division has been in negotiations with Lewes and Sussex County. With the help of AECOM, the Division will be selecting to connect to a public plant and in a year or two will be shutting down our treatment facility. Ray said if our treatment plant were to shut down in August, it would not be a good thing. Matt shared that the area could be used for other purposes once the plant is removed.

An upcoming big project is the pedestrian walkway at Killens Pond. The proposed walkway would be similar to what is located at Trap Pond. In addition, there will be some improvements to the boat ramp; it may be upgraded or moved.

Jim White asked if the temporary parking area at Alapocas near Bancroft Mills will be reopened. Matt shared that the Puccini/Pollin Group will be building a new parking lot and a new entrance plaza into the park. Jim asked when this will be completed. Matt stated three years and Ray shared that will take place during the final phase of construction. Ray stated that the Division never had access to the area except through a private road. The Puccini/Pollin Group has granted the Division full access coming through the development. As the development is built, there will be a 25 car parking lot there. They are already working on renovating the pavilion on the other side of the bridge and installing a bathroom there. Jim asked if there were any temporary plans for parking at that location and Ray said that in the short-term, this is a bad situation because there is no parking there but in the long run it will be a good addition. By swapping this land, the Division will receive about \$600,000 worth of improvements and will have full ownership of the dam. The Division would like to seek federal funds and remove the dam.

Ron Mears commended PPD staff and specifically Matt Chesser for the work that is being done at Auburn Heights. He said that a tremendous amount of work has been done there. Matt stated that it was a team effort.

Ron asked if the Division will be involved in the Delaware City master plan process. Matt Chesser stated that the Fort DuPont Redevelopment Corporation (FDRC) was created. FDRC has a board and the cabinet secretary is a board member but that the park superintendent attends the meetings. The Division has interactions with the FDRC so we will be involved in some respects but FDRC will be making many of the decisions. The Division was involved early-on with the concept/planning and design but now that there is an agency there to run the project, we will not be intimately involved. The FDRC is still operating under the master plan which was

agreed to by many state agencies. Matt Ritter said that the Division currently manages two duplexes (as staff residences) and the Grassdale area where the office is located. He stated that once the contract is signed, the FDRC will manage most of Fort DuPont. Our Division will manage the woods and the trail. Ray said that FDRC owns it all but that we have the rights to continue using certain areas. There have been “very preliminary” discussions about turning the POW barracks into the State Park office and adding a small museum. He said that, “our footprint will be very different” in that area. We will be operating the woods but the boat ramp will be managed by the corporation. Ron Mears asked if we will have to go to the legislature to ask for funding for this area. Ray said we would not. Matt Chesser added that in some ways, this area could be operated similarly to the First State Heritage Park where we are only responsible for interpreting the space.

Ron Mears asked what is happening at Summit North Marina. Greg Abbott stated that we are making some small strides there. They are working on safety reports and some needed safety improvements. The dredge is onsite and ready to start dredging this fall. The permits that are needed from the Army Corps and DNREC Subaqueous Lands are either in hand or about to be. We continue to have some challenges getting their required fiscal reports. Ron Mears asked if they still owe us money; Greg said at this point we don't know because we don't have their financial information. Greg said we are making incremental progress but it is slow. Ray added that the restaurant onsite is “doing gangbusters” and they couldn't have selected a better partner. Numbers seem to be increasing and the dredging project was a huge improvement. The Division does not see any of the revenue from the restaurant.

V. Land and Water Conservation Trust Funds - Bob Ehemann gave an update on the program.

The 2018 grant cycle kicked off. A letter went out to 70 municipalities and counties. We received 29 pre-applications requesting \$3.7M. The grant committee (Clyde Shipman and Ron Breeding from the Parks Council, and Charlie Emerson and Gary Kirk from the Council on Greenways and Trails) got together to review and screen all of the pre-applications to determine the ones that met eligibility requirements (scope, timing and match for projects). Bob sent out response letters and applications will be due September 18th. At the November Council meeting, Bob will make a presentation and Council will review and make recommendations. Ron Mears asked if Bob needed anyone else to serve on the committee. Bob responded that Jan Durham was supposed to be present but that she had a family issue arise and wasn't able to be there.

VI. Old Business

A. First State Pickleball Update

Kathy Casey, President of the First State Pickleball Club shared with the group that pickleball (one word) is wiffle ball that is played with an oversized ping pong paddle, played over a net (similar to a badminton net) dropped on the ground. Ron recapped that the Council had a brief introduction last year that was very interesting. Kathy stated that pickleball is growing rapidly. DNREC and WRT are doing a feasibility

study to determine the appropriate site to create 24 outdoor pickleball courts and 12 indoor pickleball courts. The courts should reflect two things; availability to the entire community and getting more young people engaged as pickleball is a multi-generational sport. The primary audience has been people aged 50+. Many of these folks are grandparents whose grandchildren's first question in the past was, "when can we go to the beach?" Now their first question is, "when can we play pickleball?" This is a great opportunity for Sussex County to "take care of all the people that take care of us [the grandparents]". Pickleball would give those that work and the tourists a highly active thing to do. Kathy stated that pickleball could compete with Match.com for dating services because it is a very social game with close proximity. The feasibility study is 2/3 done. Pickleball was ranked 20th on the SCORP survey. In Sussex County, pickleball was selected by 18% of folks as an activity they would like to have available when recreating. These were the highest results in the State and this was the first time pickleball was included on the SCORP survey. Ray said that Kathy and her group have been great to work with. He said that the feasibility study has identified three sites; two of them are on state land, the number one site is privately held but the Sussex County Land Trust is working on acquiring it and may have a contract this week. Sussex County approached the LWCTF program for a grant to help pay for the site. The site is located mid-way between Georgetown and Lewes. Ray said this site has the potential for a rail trail as well and may be a site where the Open Space Council plays a role. Ray explained that the report is not being shared because until this is "a done deal", there is a need to be vague.

Ron Mears asked where we stand on Wolfe Neck. Ray said most of the details for the trail and the change-over of the water treatment plant have been ironed out with Sussex County but the deal has not been signed yet. Wolfe Neck was being considered as a pickleball site but the study indicated it was not the most optimum location. The study ranked the sites based off of road and congestion, how many people live within a certain distance, and the proximity of the current membership to the site. WRT did a really good job with the study. Based on the criteria, Wolfe Neck was not one of the top sites. Ron Mears asked if Kathy was only advocating for Sussex County. She said she is only advocating for Sussex County, specifically in the Rehoboth/Lewes area because that is where the greatest percentage of players are (82% of their membership is in the State of Delaware). The focus of the study is for this area. Ray stated that at the Yorklyn Day, members of the pickleball community provided demos to introduce pickleball to attendees of the event. Ray mentioned again that the plan for the Lovering Avenue site includes pickleball courts. The community, which is right across from a senior park plaza, identified the need for pickleball in the area. Ron Mears asked how much it costs to put in a pickleball court. Kathy said it is between \$30,000 and \$40,000 which includes lighting, fencing, etc. It can be much less expensive if you have an existing surface that would be appropriate. The technology has changed, if you go into a gymnasium or onto a pickleball court, they will be a little bit softer than a tennis court. This is easier on your back and legs. The surface which is approved by the USAPA is called Deckoturf. It is a surface with a little bit of spring to it and is much more compatible to the human body than hardwood. Ron Mears made the statement, "when we go to the legislature for money, you will go with us". Kathy said, "I will be right there." She feels this is a really exciting thing. She shared information regarding the AARP Longevity Project which

speaks to the idea of how essential community is. "One of the things that is important to all ages is, we have to stay socially connected; we have to have eye-to-eye contact. It's what keeps our brains healthy and our overall well-being. That, diet, nutrition, and exercise are the key to a long life and that is what we want to see here. Pickleball is inexpensive and keeps people engaged in physical activity. You don't have to belong to a team. You just show up." Ron Mears stated that once it gets started, it will generate interest. Kathy agreed, it's a word of mouth kind of thing. She said, "Once you have the opportunity to get on the court and play, it is highly addictive. It could be the sound of the ball or the laughter but it is a really good thing for overall wellness." Ray intends to share the full report at the November Council meeting. Matt Chesser stated that his staff will be having a team building exercise in August and will be playing pickleball. Bob Ehemann shared that on a tennis court you can have 4 people playing, in that same amount of space, 16 pickleball players can be playing.

VII. New Business

A. Surf Fishing Permits - Discussion

Ray stated that we have had ongoing discussions with the beach access coalition and every year (for decades) the Division attends a meeting with Delaware Mobile Surf Fishermen (DMS) and legislators. This year the Division hosted a "stakeholders meeting" on a Friday night at the Indian River Marina. The conference room was totally packed. Two representatives from each community that has a crossover agreement with the Division were invited to attend. Rich King, members of DMS, and folks from the surf fishing industry were invited to attend to have a discussion on the issue of surf fishing. The coalition was well represented and members of the community were in attendance. Ray said the "war that is happening on social media" is not helping anything. Ray and Chief Wayne Kline spent the 4th of July on the beach. On the 4th of July, there was plenty of room on the beach for everybody. As of yesterday, there is a story on DelawareSurfFishing.com about surf fishermen getting harassed by renters who are saying "you are not allowed to set up in front of my place." This is adding fuel to the issue and Ray is starting to get emails and complaints about the issue from both sides. The Division has agreed (as announced by the Secretary) to put a cap on the number of permits issued (17,000). Last year, the Division issued 17,300. Also, it's been four years since the Division raised the surf fishing permit fee. The fee is the best tool the Division has to manage this issue. The Office of Business Services is currently doing an analysis to determine how the cost of our surf permit compares to similar permits sold in surrounding states. At the November meeting, the Division will come to the Council with a recommendation for an increase in the surf fishing permit fee. Prior to any fee increase, information will be shared with the public. The Parks and Recreation Council would have to agree/support the proposed fee and the Department Secretary would have to sign support it as well. After speaking with the parties involved in the conflict, it does not appear that the "hard core" fishermen are at fault. The Division believes that renters are not being told by the rental agencies that this is a multi-use beach so when they spend \$3000 for a week's rental, they don't want to see someone camped out in front of the property with a tent and barbecue grill, etc. Wayne and Ray observed people being respectful and staying "in their different areas". Last year, at this time, people were digging trenches that trucks would get stuck in to create a problem and people

were setting out 15-20 chairs to claim the area in front of their houses. This year, folks said that things seem to be improving, Ray hopes this trend continues. Matt Ritter added that the actively engaged fishermen are equally upset with the “not actively engaged” fishermen (those who set up poles but aren’t actively fishing). There are not enough enforcement officers in the Coastal Region to effectively enforce the rules. There are five Park Rangers assigned to the region but they can’t cover all the shifts and also respond to issues in other areas of their park. Seasonal Park Patrol Officers cannot write tickets so they are hesitant to engage fishermen that are breaking the rules. The Division marketing section will be developing videos about etiquette on the beach and how to share the beach. The Division feels the videos will be helpful.

Wayne had previously shared information with Ray regarding an incident that happened the day before involving two surf fishing vehicles. One group were “hard core” fishermen, the other were “not so hard core”. A gentleman from the “not so hard core group” let his dog defecate on the beach and was burying it. A young lady from the “hard core” group walked over and punched the gentleman in the face. Ron Mears said he hears these types of stories all the time.

Ray asked for the Council’s initial thoughts on raising the surf fishing permit fees. Ray said about 1000 firefighters receive free permits. Ron Mears said he is not in favor of putting a lot of fees on people, “people are just barely getting along now and 17,000 at \$80 per shot... but again all 17,000 aren’t paying.” Ron said in his opinion, “he doesn’t see why it needs to be raised”. Council asked what the fees are in surrounding areas. Greg said that some of the fees are, “significantly higher than we are.” He shared that in NJ they have a three-day permit and it is more expensive than our annual permit. Ray said that our permit also encompasses an annual pass so if you subtract the \$30 fee for the annual pass, for the right to fish, it costs \$50 per year. Some people don’t see it that way because all they do is fish. Ron Mears asked what our proposal is. Ray said we were considering \$10.00 per permit for Delaware residents and \$20.00 for out of state residents. Ron Mears said, “oh okay, I thought maybe you were talking about doubling it”. Ray said it depends on what that fee proposal comes back at. Jim White said he would, “definitely be in favor of raising it because the value is there.” He stated it takes a lot of effort to manage that [surf fishing] plus, “it is an amazing privilege to drive on the beach”. Joe Smack said he would be in favor of raising it too and commented it hadn’t been increased in four years. Ron Mears wondered if raising the fee would allow us to get additional enforcement. Ray said we would have to run the numbers but that Wayne would be supportive of that. Council discussed an incident where a beach visitor took their Tesla out on the beach. Ed Lewandowski stated, “if the fee was raised by \$20 and the Division had 15,000 paying customers, the increase in revenue would total \$300,000.” Ed felt the Division should be able to support an extra enforcement officer with that money. Ray stated that getting the authority to hire another ranger may be an issue. Ron Mears said if we raised it to \$100, that’s reasonable. Ray reminded Council that whatever the increase for Delaware residents, the increase will be doubled for out of state residents. Joe suggested raising it \$10 now and \$10 again in four or five years.

Greg shared information about the proposal from a small businessman who wants to rent his four-wheeled drive vehicle out by the day or the week. The vehicle would be equipped with a surf fishing permit so that visitors could access the beach (using the rented vehicle). The Division is trying to determine how to manage this. As proposed, this program could be considered an outfitters permit or a special use permit. The Division is evaluating this in a pilot program. There is no way to know if the people going out on the beach know how to drive on the beach or if they have the proper equipment. If there are any issues with renters, the Division will pull the tag of the vehicle's owner. Matt Ritter stated that one concern is lack of control. Matt Chesser suggested the potential of creating a commercial (\$300) license for folks who will be renting out vehicles equipped with surf fishing permits. A rented vehicle has the potential of making multiple trips where the typical user may make limited trips. Greg shared that the business is going to be charging \$200 per day for the privilege of driving a four wheeled drive vehicle and \$700 per week (5 days). Ron Mears commented that they will tear the beaches up; there will be a lot of environmental damage.

Ed asked if there is a vendor who sells bait on the beach. Greg said our current vendor has asked if he can sell bait on the beach when there are tournaments taking place. The Division is still contemplating this.

Ron Mears asked about the bathrooms at Lums Pond near GoApe. Matt Chesser shared that they have been completed.

VIII. Upcoming Events

Ray shared that the next Parks Advisory Council meeting will take place on November 1, 2018 at Lums Pond so Council can see the completed campground.

Representative Melanie George-Smith donated \$250K in community transportation funds toward park playgrounds. Ray stated that when all the proposed playgrounds are completed, we will have spent more in playgrounds over the last three years than any time in the history of Delaware State Parks. This is much needed. The biggest complaints at Lums Pond campground are: 1) "they [visitors] can't get in there, and 2) there is not a playground".

Other events may include: the naming of Auburn Heights as a State Park, Parks School (February 21, 2019), the dedication of the playground at Trap Pond (September 18th at 2:00.) Ray stated that the Friends of Trap raised all of the money for the playground and that Representative Dukes and Senator Richardson contributed CTF funds. Ron Mears asked Brenda Bramble if she could attend the dedication; she stated she could.

Ray stated that the Department Secretary wants to meet all of our Councils and that he is tentatively scheduled to attend the next meeting.

Ron Mears wondered if it would be feasible or practical to invite a Friends Group president, when we are in the area, to come in and give a little run down on what they are involved in and how active they are. Ron stated that, "they are a big help, we all

know that". Ray stated that the Fort Delaware Society has a dedicated seat on the Council but they haven't been able to attend regularly, it would take an act of the General Assembly but it might be possible to change the statute to allow that. Ron stated that Chazz had talked about that in the past.

Ray introduced Park Superintendent Grant Melville and shared some background history about Grant's career.

Greg shared that lunch was being provided by Jay Vending.

IX. Adjournment

Ron asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The Council voted unanimously to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.