

Parks & Recreation Council

**Legislative Hall
House Hearing Room
2nd Floor
411 Legislative Ave
Dover, DE 19901
302-739-9194**

**Thursday, November 7, 2019
9:30 a.m.**

Council Members

Ron Breeding, Vice Chairperson
Bobbi Steele
Jim White

Ed Lewandowski
Isaac Daniels
Jan Durham

Joe Smack
Greg Johnson

Staff

Ray Bivens, Director
Greg Abbott

Esther Knotts
Matt Ritter

Eric Dawson
Wayne Kline

Brooks Cahall

I. Introductions/Announcements

A. Vice Chairman Ron Breeding called the Council meeting to order at 9:31 a.m.

Ray updated the Council on the Fenwick Island proposal and online survey. The proposal has been discussed at two Council meetings, a meeting was held at the Chamber of Commerce, a public meeting took place on October 2nd, and the online survey has received more than 600 comments and remains open until December 2nd. Ray shared the boards from the last meeting and the two latest maps.

The Federal Government will decide if a wind farm comes. The question remains as to whether or not Delaware State Parks will develop a partnership with Orsted. Ray responded to an inquiry from the Town of Fenwick on the same day it was received.

Greg Johnson stated that the Division is good at communicating with the public and that good communication is needed with this project.

Ray stated that another public meeting will be announced shortly and Orsted will be there to answer questions and address concerns.

Ed commended Park staff on the job they have done thus far in this process. He feels the Governor's Office and the Department need to let people know where they stand.

Ray shared that the MOU is a non-binding agreement.

Ron commented that much of the input the Division is receiving is from people not connected to Delaware. Ron asked what is next in this process. Ray said we will wait to review the data collected in the survey.

Ed stated that he had suggested to the Orsted representative that a resiliency plan be developed. He asked if Orsted was working on that. Ray said we have not seen anything on that.

Ray asked for public comment regarding the proposal. Thaddeus Fisher stated that he agrees that communication is great but that a lot of information is, “not there yet”. He feels, “that’s where people get lost”.

Ron reported that the Division had a good summer. He was pleased with the changes at the State Fair/DNREC Building. He would like to see the wildlife exhibit return.

II. Official Business/Council Activities

A. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Ron asked for Council approval of the August meeting minutes. Ed made a motion to approve the minutes. Isaac seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

B. Council Member Reports:

1. Fort Delaware Society – *Bobbi Steele reported.*

The Robelen Building needs a new fridge and water heater.

Long time board member Hugh Simmons has moved to South Carolina. He donated eight boxes of records to the Society. He continues to do research for the Society.

The past president of the Society Bill Robelen passed away in August. Martha Bennett lost her daughter in September.

They received new filing cabinets, completed the painting of the Robelen Building and continue to fill out applications for funding.

Current Park Superintendent Mike Hitch is transferring to Killens Pond.

The Society has not received a new project list yet. Bobbi will share the list at the next meeting.

The Delaware Civil War Society has reactivated. The Society will work with them.

The POW weekend went well and the Ghost tours are “going phenomenal”. Matt Ritter stated they have generated over \$500K.

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

Natural Areas Program Manager Jennifer Holmes is doing a fantastic job. The Council is happy to, “have her aboard.”

The next meeting is December 12th at 9:30 in the Rose Cottage.

3. Wildlife Management Committee – *Eric Dawson reported.*

Both ESP teams spent the majority of their time in the field conducting invasive species control using manual and chemical control techniques. The northern crew worked in Tulip Tree Woods and Amphitheater Woods at Brandywine Creek, the Nature Preserve at Bellevue, the Nature Preserve at Lums Pond, Rockford Park, Alapocas Run and the Carpenter area and Lovers Lane old forest at White Clay Creek. The northern crew has also been conducting Tree of Heaven control work in an effort to slow the spread of spotted lantern fly. The southern crew worked in both dune and forest habitat at the beach parks.

Reports of larval spotted lanternfly began coming in from the piedmont parks in late summer. In late August ESP put together SLF response kits for all of the piedmont parks that included tools and chemical and directions for park staff on how to control tree-of-heaven the primary host tree for this invasive species. We plan to kill all tree-of-heaven on state park property to reduce available host plants for this potentially extremely harmful agricultural pest. By early September large numbers of adults were being reported across the piedmont.

A total of 6 pairs of Piping Plovers nested at the point at CHSP during the 2019 season. These birds hatched a total of 12 birds of which only 8 fledged.

The Environmental Stewardship and Cultural Stewardship (Cultural Resources Unit) Programs conducted a joint training with the new crew of Veterans Conservation Corps members at park locations throughout the state. At each site Environmental Stewardship and Cultural Stewardship staff presented information about the natural and cultural resources at each park and led a work project.

4. Resident Curatorship – *Joe Smack reported.*

There has been one new inquiry regarding the program.

At the Cleaver House the electric is on, a sump pump is running in the basement to keep it dry, wooden access steps were added to make entry easier and a structural assessment was completed.

At the Warrington House an assessment will be completed.

Jim Hall and Katie Wilson attended a New Castle County Historic Association workshop and presented on curatorship agreements.

Maryland's curatorship program is being audited again.

III. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

IV. Staff Reports

1. Policy/Legislation – *None reported.*

2. Section Updates – A handout was provided to the Council and highlights were discussed by section managers.

A. **Office of Administration** – *Greg Abbott reported.*

The Division lost a talented staff member; Division photographer April Abel passed away on September 8th.

The Division is reducing the types of annual passes offered to three (Resident, Non-resident, Corporate/Exempt). The Division is preparing an RFP (Request for Proposal) for the Campground Reservation System. A “print on demand” option will be included in that RFP to assist the Division with managing inventory.

Sale of park passes begins online on Black Friday and in park offices on December 6th.

The Division intends to install 20 additional Park automated fee collection machines in 2020. Over \$124K has been collected by the machines. There are very few issues with the machines. Automated fee machines are convenient for customers and make revenue collection easier eliminating the need for dual control. They have eliminated theft. They are user-friendly and easy for staff to maintain. Each unit costs \$6900K. The machines are durable and withstood flooding this summer.

The Division’s social media work continues to grow. We have focused campaigns. We ran a promotion with the University of Delaware and captured 100 new email addresses. The Division contacts 75,000 people each month through email.

The Division’s website won a National Association of Government Web Professions award. The Division won in the State/Federal category and was recognized for its organization, informative content, wide variety of information, and the small size of its team.

B. **Operations, Maintenance, and Programming**- *Eric Dawson and Wayne Kline reported.*

Wayne reported that there are two rangers in the academy. One will be assigned to White Clay Creek and one to Wilmington State Parks. Two additional ranger positions were granted through the budget cycle, an enforcement trainee and an enforcement officer V (EOV). John McDerby from Fish and Wildlife was selected to fill the EOV position. New Castle County is fully staffed.

Interviews are in process for two enforcement trainee positions (Cape Henlopen and Delaware Seashore). These new hires will enter the academy in March.

The canine program is running strong. LEO is fully crossed trained with patrol and explosive detection. Vos is being cross trained for patrol and drug and narcotic detection. The canines and their partners are doing a great job with outreach. The Friends of Cape Henlopen are making donations on a quarterly basis to help with costs.

Joe Smack requested that a canine officer visit the Ferris School for a demonstration. Travis and LEO will plan to visit in the spring.

A new forklift arrived at the Indian River Marina. The forklift was purchased using Volkswagen settlement funds.

The Division was selected to receive the 2019 NASPD President's Award for Innovation at the annual conference. The award is in recognition of the establishment of a public-private partnership and the collective efforts to convert the abandoned National Vulcanized Fiber plant into a destination where the public is able to recreate and enjoy preserved historic and cultural resources.

Park visitor Carol Stapleford Stiltz sent kudos to the Division for an "amazing act of kindness" she witnessed while visiting the beach at Delaware Seashore State Park. Ms. Stiltz noticed a lifeguard helping an elderly visitor to the water's edge. She stated, "it was one of the kind[est] moments I have seen in my life".

Eric shared the most recent central office and northern region staffing changes with the Council.

C. Planning, Preservation, and Development – Matt Ritter reported.

The bid opening for the lemur exhibit at the zoo was held on Thursday October 10th. The Madagascar Exhibit should be completed in early July 2020. The utilities will be a challenge and the cost will be \$3.5M.

Park improvements at Bellevue State Park were funded through the 2020 Bond Bill. Projects will include paving, improvements to the track, stabilization of the Percheron Barn, and a new roof for the Hunter Barn. Earlier this year, a restroom was installed in the Hunter Barn.

Improvements will be made at Fort Delaware including renovations to the tram path and construction of a pavilion and a maintenance building.

Matt Ritter introduced the Division's new Construction Project Administrator, Brooks Cahall. Erick commended Matt and Brooks for their good works. Ron agreed that Brooks is doing an excellent job.

Jim White asked when the bridges would be completed at Auburn Heights. They will both be completed by the end of the year.

Matt shared that the Tri-valley Trail is up and running and is hugely successful.

V. Land and Water Conservation Trust Funds

Bill Miller updated the Council regarding the ORPT grant program. Seventeen municipalities and counties applied for funding to complete 11 park projects and 6 trail projects. The money will be awarded based on the merit of the projects. Six committee members reviewed the applications. The Council was pleased that all projects will be funded because for the first time in the history of the program, the requests did not exceed the available funds.

VI. Old Business

Bill gave an overview of the White Clay Creek master plan proposal and updated the Council on where we are in the process. The Division is working with the Krantz family regarding camping issues. The Division will seek another area in the park to locate a traditional campground. Jim commended the Division on the great job they did with the master plan and in “hearing the public’s comments”. He said that, “the fact that [the Division] could drop back and reevaluate is the sign of a great administration.”

The Division anticipates a “huge push” when surf permits go on sale in early December.

VII. New Business

XI. Upcoming Events

A. 2020 Parks and Recreation Council Meetings

Meetings are scheduled for February 13th, May 7th, August 6th and November 5th. Locations to be determined

B. Annual State Parks School- February 18th – Dover Downs

C. Election of Officers – Will take place on February 13, 2020.

XI. Meeting Adjournment

Joe thanked David Bartoo for his work on revitalizing the trail for DHSS. This trail will be incorporated into the self-care program. Joe invited the Council to come walk the trail.

Jan thanked the Division and commented that everyone does a great job.

Bobbi stated that the Hugh is attending the Atlanta Civil War roundtable and will be promoting Fort Delaware and Delaware State Parks.

The acting chairman called for a motion to adjourn. Ed Lewandowski made a motion to adjourn, Isaac seconded the motion. The motion was unanimous and the meeting adjourned at 11:07 a.m.