

MINUTES

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING

5:15 P. M., FEBRUARY 19, 2019

A/V CONFERENCE ROOM

Caitlin Cook, Chairperson, called the meeting of the Charleston City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation to order at 5:15p.m., FEBRUARY 19, 2019, in the Audio/Visual Room in City Hall.

Committee Members Present:

Caitlin Cook, Chair
Chad Robinson, Vice Chair
John Kennedy Bailey
Jeanine Faegre
Bruce King
Pat Jones

Others:

Dale Goff
Igor Cappel
Rebecca Carbella
Ben Adams
Matt Sutton
Naomi Bays
Jennifer Pharr
Jane Bostic
Shannon Snodgrass
Jennifer Holley

The Chairperson called the meeting to order. A roll call was taken and it was determined that a quorum was present. Councilmember Cook stressed the importance of the committee to work with the department and as a team with goals and a cohesive vision. She introduced Jennifer Holley, Deputy Director of Parks and Recreation, and asked her to update the committee on what the department has been doing under the new administration.

Jennifer Holley explained that the P&R Department has been working on an audit of what the department has, what they do and how they do it. A priority, she explained, are some safety concerns. They are focused on getting buildings up to code, for example: emergency exit doors bolted shut and updating the bathrooms to be ADA complaint. Another priority is the swimming pool at North Charleston Rec Center. They are currently short staffed and are working to move people to positions who are the best fit for the jobs. She mentioned that they have promoted from within before hiring out. Councilmember Cook seconded that safety should be the top priority.

Councilmember Cook presented a map detailing the locations all the Parks and Recreation facilitates. She determined that there was a tremendous amount of public assets that are not being used to the best of their ability. A tour of those facilities for committee members will be scheduled.

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Councilmember Cook introduced Dale Goff and Igor Cappel from the Charleston Table Tennis Club. They had previously addressed Council on February 4, 2019 concerning recent rental fees at North Charleston Community Center the club is now required to pay. Committee members received copy of the email Mr. Goff had previously sent.

Councilmember Cook stated that certain groups/leagues had been using the facilities that had not been charged the fee stated in City Code (\$25/hr), and that they now are and will be. Mr. Cappel offered that they do not charge membership fees but rather dues to cover the cost of replacing equipment, which was discovered to be \$25/year and \$30/tournament. Councilmember Robinson asked how many players registered for the last tournament, and the answer was about 20 people. Councilmember Faegre asked how many members they have and how often the group meets, and the answer was 25-40 active members and once a month for 3 ½ hours.

The Table Tennis group questioned the City definition of “Open Play,” which was defined by Jennifer Holley as any activity that is free and open to the public without need to join a team or pay dues. Councilmember Faegre confirmed that the group had been meeting for 60 years without ever paying a fee. Councilmember Cook told the representatives that the committee would like to have a discussion before presenting options to the group. The consensus of the committee was that they are willing to work with the group to find an agreeable arrangement, but the Code, as it currently exists, should be followed uniformly and fairly.

Councilmember Cook asked the members to brainstorm goals, visions and values for the committee. Councilmember King stated that the focus should be on the youth; Councilmember Faegre strongly agreed, citing that children are having to cross 7th Avenue to the Rec Center without a walkway. She further stated that her personal goal is to get a donated van for this purpose. Jennifer Holley replied that the Department had a van. She further stated that she would like to have the Rec Center be an official school bus stop with a supplemental shuttle service.

Councilmember Robinson stated that to help solve the funding issue it was imperative to focus on tournaments. He further stated that a goal should be to have all fields turfed. Councilmember Pharr added that a Bigshots Tournament is looking to come to Charleston in June, which would bring in 150 teams. She has been charged with finding 10 courts for this purpose, and would like to be able to use some Department facilities for this purpose. Councilmember Cook said that the opportunity for local, young athletes to earn scholarships in this way is very important. Councilmember Jenkins made the suggestion that the committee look into a Regional Parks Commission, citing as an example Huntington.

Councilmember Faegre asked if the Parks and Recreation Department had a budget. Jennifer Holley answered yes, and that also of note, in the past the Department had neglected to pursue grant money. It is still undecided who in the department will be responsible for this, but they are currently working with MOECD. Councilmember Robinson added that they will need to be prepared and aware of any incoming grant

money to be able to act as quickly as possibly once it is received. He suggested setting up a smaller committee to begin collecting estimates for updates/repairs.

The discussion was directed to the handout given to the committee concerning the top priorities for needs and safety. Jane Bostic said that the administration is actively working to correct the ADA issues both in buildings and on streets. Responding to Councilmember Snodgrass' statement that senior citizens have not been a focus, Jennifer Holley responded that, in part, more staff is needed.

Councilmember Cook and the committee summarized that safety will be the priority.

Councilmember Cook motioned to adjourn the meeting. Councilmember Robinson seconded.

Meeting adjourned.