

**COG PARKS CAPITAL COMMITTEE AND  
CENTRE REGION PARKS AND RECREATION AUTHORITY BOARD  
JOINT MEETING MINUTES- Approved**

July 11, 2019

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Lord called the joint meeting of the COG Parks Capital Committee and the CRPR Authority Board to order at 12:15 PM in the COG Forum Room with the following individuals in attendance:

Committee: Bruce Lord, Chair, Harris Twp.; Laura Dininni, Ferguson Twp.; Eric Bernier, College Twp.; Jessica Buckland, Patton Twp.; Charima Young, PSU

Board: Kathy Matason, Chair, College Twp.; Cindy Solic, Patton Twp.; Diane Ishler, Harris Twp.; Bill Keough, Ferguson Twp.; Jim Dunn, State College Borough

Staff: Pam Salokangas, CRPR Director; Jada Light, Office Mgr.; Jim Carpenter; Parks Mgr.; Jeff Hall, Sports Supervisor; Joe Viglione, COG Finance; Jim Steff, COG Director.

Others: Chris Hurley, resident and Steering Committee Member; Doug Erikson, Patton Township Manager; Deb Nardone, ClearWater Conservancy.

**2. CITIZEN COMMENTS-** No public comments.

Mr. Steff mentioned that there wasn't enough at this time for a quorum. The Committee would have to wait until another member arrived to vote on the minutes. Ms. Dininni offered to serve as a substitute for Mr. Miller as a Ferguson Township Supervisor.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Bernier made a motion for the Parks Capital Committee to accept the Meeting Summary from the April 11, 2019 meeting. Mr. Lord seconded the motion, which then passed unanimously.

Ms. Solic made a motion for the Authority to accept the Meeting Summary from the July 11, 2019 meeting. Mr. Keough seconded the motion, which then passed unanimously.

**4. MUSSER GAP TO VALLEYLANDS PROJECT**

Ms. Young from PSU and Ms. Nardone from ClearWater Conservancy felt that it would be helpful to have a more intimate conversation and share more information about this project for stakeholders. Ms. Young noted it is important to engage with the community to find out what they want to see happen. There were PSU students who gathered information on what is currently located in this area. The next step is to figure out what the community would like to see and what they feel is important to thrive in this area? There were some public engagement sessions discussing the public survey as well as some smaller work sessions. This project started with the 2018 spring semester and will continue through fall 2019.

Ms. Nardone mentioned that there were over 1,000 responses from the survey after asking the community their thoughts about what they would like to see happen. After the survey was completed, there were three public sessions held. PSU owns 365 acres

southwest of the Toll Brothers and Whitehall Road Regional Park properties. This area crosses Route 45 and goes to Musser Gap/Rothrock Forest. Once all the responses came back, the students gathered the ideas and made a list of the top five ideas or concepts. The second session they provided some ideas for the survey comments. The third session they developed the five final concepts or ideas. Idea #1- Habitat Creation. This idea is for grasslands. It is to maximize enjoyment and help the wildlife thrive. There will be a lot of habitat types. Idea #2- Socially Integrated Agriculture. This means preserving the farm lands and continue leasing to the farmer. Economically, it will also improve habitat and water control. The students also looked at some economical opportunity to possibly transition their crops from soy and corn to hops and barley for beer production that takes place in the area. Idea #3- Passive Recreation. The friends of Musser Gap wish to increase visitor extension. It should be a natural migration from Whitehall Road. It would involve hiking, biking, and bird watching. Ms. Nardone added that with all these concepts, all agreed on safe and slower traffic on Route 45. Idea #4- Water Resource Protection. This concept would increase water quality by preserving and protecting. This topic was the highest priority for the majority who responded. Idea #5- Minimal Intervention. This would be minimal change such as improving some traffic and trail system. Ms. Nardone mentioned that after reviewing the returned surveys, #4 ranked the highest priority, then #1, and #3. PSU is now taking these three ideas and looking at how feasible each one would be to implement.

Ms. Young noted that they are looking at what the next steps will be. PSU met with the Central PA Convention and Visitors Bureau(CPCVB) and the Chamber of Business of Centre County(CBICC) because they are looking for diverse interests and what appeals to stakeholders. This is going to help to guide the fall semester project for professors and graduate students. Different departments will be reviewing to determine the cost, implementation strategies, and maintenance. Ms. Young would like to keep all interest groups engaged. The goal is to be able to announce one or two ideas in the fall. Ms. Young would like to know what are the priorities or interests of the members of this Committee? They don't have to be one specific idea, they can inter-mix. What components from each idea do you like?

Mr. Dunn noted as a retiree from PSU in the agricultural area, there is a reason why people don't harvest hops and barley. You need a large amount for it to be adequate. No one in this area will purchase that. You would have to ship it and unlikely make any money from it. Ms. Young mentioned that that idea ranked the lowest, but it was an idea from the public, so it was listed. Ms. Dininni mentioned that she would like to still see something ag related but not crop specific.

Ms. Nardone mentioned that there were reforestation opportunities listed within a couple of the ideas. Ms. Salokangas mentioned that she had the opportunity to take the survey and participate in on the geo design. She added that a lot of what was talked about has showed up on several responses. Ms. Salokangas is excited to see where PSU will go with this. The same presentation will be at the "Lunch and Learn" on July 24.

Ms. Young has been having conversations with the CPCVB and CBICC about how to market the Musser Gap to Valleylands Project along with Whitehall Road Regional Park.

Ms. Buckland replied that she likes the idea of green space such as community gardens.

Ms. Young asked, how do we make the connection visible for out-of-town visitors to go from the town to forest, and the connection routes?

Ms. Nardone informed the committee that Dr. Barron, the President at PSU, had a vision from when he was a student at PSU; he was able to walk from Musser Gap, in Rothrock Forest, to Old Main. The important factor is for signage to let people know how to enter the path and utilize the space. Ms. Salokangas suggested that the Planning Agency be included. Mr. Bernier mentioned it would only be a short bus ride as well. On behalf of the college, he would like to thank Dr. Barron for including the COG for comments. Mr. Bernier then asked what the timeline was? Ms. Young stated that there is time for more discussion. We are not rushing this project. The group will be working on this project all of fall semester.

Ms. Dininni wanted to reinforce how important it is to have the safe crosswalk on Route 45. There could be potential partnership and dialogue with DCNR. It has come up that residents really do like well-marked access points. For example, currently for the Musser Gap parking lot on Route 45, there is only an orange flag with no signage. There needs to be a more visible gateway space. Ms. Nardone replied that the conversations are happening to increase interpretation and signage.

Ms. Ishler mentioned as a resident along Route 45, she likes the idea of slowing down traffic. As a resident of the area, she is not sure how to enter the Musser Gap area. More signage would be a good idea.

Mr. Keough noted that it would be a good return on investment making Musser Gap as educational as possible. This would include not only signs, but certain stations set up throughout the path. It may take a few years. This would encourage families on bikes with kids. It would allow multiple teaching moments. It would be different than just going to a state park. He noted that if the intention is to be made a destination, then the Visitors Bureau should have input. There should also be a parking concept study completed that is futuristic in size, not just for current demand. Mr. Keough noted that having amenities such as fruit trees or a community garden in that area would be mainly just feeding the wild animals. You would have to fence around everything. There is also significant and aggressive care needed to maintain fruit trees for public use. It is not a great site for a garden. Ms. Dininni agreed somewhat with this statement. There is essential need for maintenance and education for the public. There could be demonstrative garden for native plants.

Mr. Lord mentioned that there is a lot of opportunity for this area. He likes the idea of passive area and trails. He worries about the sustainability on idea #2.

**5. PARKS AND RECREATION REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE STUDY UPDATE**

Mr. Lord informed the Committee that the online public surveys are complete. The online survey data is included in the agenda packet. The mailed survey has been returned and will be analyzed. Mr. Lord is eager to hear the results. The consultants did an evaluation of the facilities. The general feedback is we are rich in parkland but lacking in cohesive signage. There is a large opportunity for Sidney Friedman Park and Hess Softball Complex. Mr. Lord is very pleased with the reports and the interaction with the consultants.

Ms. Ishler questioned the results to one of the online questions. It said 60% of the responses were students? It seems a little high. Mr. Lord replied, no, it says not students.

Ms. Salokangas informed the Committee that the prizes were awarded to people who participated in the Comprehensive Study. She informed the Committee that recently she met with State College Borough and there were some changes made with the rental process for Sidney Friedman Park. CRPR gave the oversight of rentals for events for the park back to the Borough. There was a lot duplicate paperwork. This area is more of an event site. As of right now, CRPR will still maintain the park but that may go back to the Borough in the future.

Mr. Salokangas stated that the timeline for the study is to have a draft in August with the results and send to DCNR. The comments will then come back to the Steering Committee and then go to the General Forum in November for approval.

Ms. Dininni thanked Ms. Salokangas for the update. The consultants gave a great tour. All the park signs should say provided to you by CRPR. Ms. Dininni would like to have everything worked out before discussing governance. It has not even been discussed yet. That needs to be prioritized before August.

Mr. Lord noted that August will only be the draft, it's not final. There are a lot of residents looking for an indoor facility. The Comprehensive Study is for everyone, not just the municipalities. September 10 scheduled for public meeting.

Ms. Salokangas mentioned that there is opportunity to apply for funding to keep the consultants for a longer period of time. If a governance plan doesn't get drafted at this time, we could use the funding to retain the consultants to further plan for governance at the next level. Mr. Lord noted that we would want to update this. Ms. Dininni appreciates Mr. Lord's comment. The consultants should be held accountable since governance was a part of what was paid for in the initial RFB.

**6. WHITEHALL ROAD REGIONAL PARK UPDATE**

Ms. Salokangas noted that she included in the agenda a bulleted list to give everyone an idea of the project's status. The Land Development Plan and variance request has been submitted to Ferguson Township. The Ferguson Township Board of Supervisors screened the variance request last Monday on July 1. Ms. Salokangas did not receive an invite this meeting, so she was not there to respond. She watched it on CNET and is relaying back

some information. Ms. Salokangas reported that she is preparing for the Variance Hearing that is July 23. There was a vote 4-1 Board of Supervisors vote not supportive of the request.

Ms. Dininni responded that Mr. Miller was the negative vote because of the storm water plan. There are a multitude of studies of shade and trees. Acknowledge that the project is over budget already. Work as partners to get shade within a few years. Ferguson Township is working on the variance process. Spoke with the tree commission on tree plan. Ms. Salokangas replied that you must obtain the variance before the plan can go forward. She would really have liked to have been at Board of Supervisors meeting. There was a lot of things that were said that she could have addressed. Ms. Dininni noted that it's a long process. There is some question that the previous variance requests follow the land development plan? Ms. Dininni mentioned that some staff will follow up with this to find out what that means and hopefully Ms. Salokangas will receive that information before the hearing.

Ms. Salokangas mentioned that the MOU has been signed between Centre Soccer and the Authority. The MOU with the Visitors Bureau is still in progress. The draft should be completed soon. CRPR did pull out of Tree Vitalize for 2020 because of timing and will be better aligned for 2021. We will re-apply for Tree Vitalize next year. We are still hoping to participate with the Keystone 10 Million Trees program.

Mr. Bernier wanted to remind Ms. Salokangas that in terms of more fundraising, there are elements of Hess Softball Complex and Oak Hall Regional Park that haven't been completed yet. Ms. Salokangas replied, yes, she is aware and working on it. Ms. Merrell is going to grant training. There will be much more fundraising to do in the near future.

**7. MILLBROOK MARSH NATURE CENTER LEASE**

Ms. Salokangas noted that the lease negotiations are finished. After the third addendum, it was decided to stay in the tenant lease for \$1 a year. The new lease terms (40 years) are contingent once we receive the certificate of occupancy for Phase II. PSU did put a caveat on that lease and is giving us until 2023 to fund and build that building. There is roughly \$615,000 in fundraising money. Ms. Kauffman has returned from leave, events and fundraising are starting again. Ms. Salokangas noted that the lease is included in the agenda packet. PSU was great to work with. This is the best lease we could do at this time. Ms. Nardone is also trying to align their easement with our lease.

**8. OTHER BUSINESS**

Matter of Record- Mr. Steff mentioned that the Finance Committee met with the Facilities Ad Hoc Committee. Everyone is in agreeance that there is not adequate space in the COG Building. That problem was signed over the Ad Hoc Committee. It's not feasible to add onto this building since there is very limited parking. It will be proposed to the General Forum on July 29 for CRPR to sign a lease for 2040 Sandy Drive to begin at the end of this year. There are a few questions for Risk Management about insurance. It has been endorsed by the Ad Hoc Committee and the Finance Committee. This will require a unanimous vote at the General Forum.

Ms. Dininni asked what the change would be in municipal contributions? Mr. Steff noted it would be an additional \$43,000 split throughout the five municipalities that participate financially in Parks and Recreation have been informed.

Mr. Lord wanted to confirm that this does not replace of the maintenance facility? Mr. Steff replied, no, and this is temporary until we find a big enough building for COG.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Bernier made a motion for the Parks Capital Committee to adjourn the meeting at 1:30pm; Ms. Dininni seconded the motion.

Ms. Ishler made a motion for CRPR Authority Board to adjourn the meeting at 1:30 pm; Ms. Solic seconded the motion. The meeting then adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Jada Light, Recording Secretary