



POTTSTOWN METROPOLITAN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

140 College Drive, Pottstown, PA 19464 | PARRCoordinator@gmail.com | 484-945-0200

PARRC Meeting Minutes

July 22nd, 2020

4:00 p.m. – 6:12 p.m.

a Zoom meeting

In Attendance:

Cathy Paretti, Upper Pottsgrove Township
Michael Lenhart, Borough of Pottstown
Bill Keohane, Lower Pottsgrove Township
Jay Erb, North Coventry Township
Karen Nocella, East Coventry Township
Craig Lloyd, West Pottsgrove Township
Charlie Valentine, West Pottsgrove

Scott Hutt, West Pottsgrove Township
Craig Colistra, PAHWF
John Cover, MCPC
Marley Bice, MCPC
Barbara Heller, BerryDunn
Dustin Schreiber, Research Intern

Meeting notes:

1. Introductions were made - Scott Hutt, new Township Manager for West Pottsgrove.
2. Meeting minutes from June 24th, 2020 were revised in the Partner Updates by North Coventry Township. They were approved as amended.
3. Hazardous Tree Policy update – ECT has not looked at it any further; UPT will look into it with the possibility of developing a policy; the Borough has not looked at it any further and WPT's Public Works does evaluations after storms. Their Risk Management Policy holder suggested using an arborist to evaluate their trees.
4. Research Report – Comments were positive about the report and members were appreciative of the detail.
5. Intergovernmental Agreement – M. Bice received comments from NCT and they want to use a Resolution instead of an Ordinance to pass the ICIA. UPT wants to do a Resolution. WPT, the Borough and ECT are adopting it by ordinance and will advertise it. M. Bice stated that members can adopt it as they see fit as the ICIA does not mention adoption by Resolution or Ordinance and does not have a signature block and as long as they all reference the same document the same way. M. Bice will develop a sample Resolution to send to member solicitors. M. Lane will touch base with DT to get a status report on their adoption of the ICIA.
6. Strategic Plan - Barbara Heller reviewed the S.W.O.T. document sent to members for review.

Strengths - Members agreed that the list of the strengths was a good start.

Weaknesses - Comments included ways to promote success through social media, Facebook or a webpage...we need to get awareness of PARRC out to the residents. B. Heller stated that 33% of households don't know about what their Park & Rec agencies are offering. There is so much information out there she wonders if there is too much marketing for people to pay attention to, or not enough in the right places. Online engagement platforms get 4 times more people involved with planning. There was also a comment concerning more communications between PARRC meetings needs to be improved, especially with important issues. Do we need to form subcommittees or establish other check-ins? We need to put a process in place.

Opportunities – Comments included we need more regional planning. The Tri-County Trail Study was completed and needs to be implemented. Do we want to increase the size of PARRC? Some felt it might not be a good thing idea, but others do not. Policies need to be more consistent across the region; rentals, fees for fields and programs, etc. B. Heller asked if it was important for municipalities to have a Park & Recreation Board. M. Lenhart stated yes, they do not have a formal one but the Pottstown Park Foundation acts as one for them. The impact of Covid19 has increased the use of trails but has changed the municipalities operations to



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provide services. With more people around there is an opportunity to get more people involved with parks. B. Heller stated that Covid19 has brought to light inequities in providing services to those residents not normally addressed and if we should be looking at providing services through an equity lens to increase access. It was suggested we partner with school districts to increase access to public amenities. B. Heller stated that in her experience, each school district is different and there could be great or terrible relationships. The 10-minute walk initiative was brought up and C. Colistra stated that he is trying to get municipalities and school districts involved. UPT has signed on to the project. It was suggested we try to increase the diversity of our users as the Research Report showed a balanced age of users.

Threats – Members were concerned with a decrease in available grant funds. They were also concerned in succession planning and replacing M. Lane when he retires. They want to have something in place and for him to make a smooth transition with a new Coordinator. With assistance from PAHWF and Sue Landes, PARRC used a consultant to help them acquire a Coordinator 6 years ago. J. Cover stated that unlike the MCPC that is a larger organization, PARRC is a small organization and there is some institutional memory but the PARRC members will have to help the new Coordinator transition as well. It is not advantageous to have institutional memory lie within one person. It is being done now with assistance from PAHWF and MCPC. PARRC needs to learn how to develop institutional memory. It is working with the PMRPC as they have learned to develop it. If PARRC can get Douglass Township, Berks County, to be a member there would be 8 members and a new assistant for the Coordinator. It would also be a tri-county park system. It was asked if PARRC was 8 members, would we all have to re-adopt the ICIA? The current ICIA only has 7 PARRC members listed so a new ICIA would have to developed and the new member listed. B. Heller went over M. Lanes comments. He added another one for consideration which concerned more sharing of projects or a programs “lessons learned”.

We discussed the items in the Brainstorming list:

Marketing Conditions - We may want to consider non-traditional sports or activities in the future. The Aspen Institute is a think tank that addresses some of the world’s complex problems and has a focus area on Health and Sport. While the use of outdoor spaces has increased, Covid19’s impact to travel teams has caused problems in their sustainability. B. Heller stated that 40% of private child-care facilities will go out of business because of Covid19. In Texas, robots are lining soccer fields. The PAHWF has been helpful to the region for increasing the connection between parks and recreation and health/wellness and mental health. In Tacoma, they are coproducing services with a separate entity that handles all art activities and risk management.

Technology – Programming – do we need to add GIS to act as an asset management system to promote and tout assets and direct people to parks? Do we need to have more media presence? Can we add Wi-Fi to parks? They would be hot spots for people to work remotely in the park and in recreation centers for the telecommuter.

Marketing Sophistication – Does the name PARRCommittee need to change to PARRCollaborative? If Douglass Berks comes on board, do we change the name to “Tri-County Recreation Council?” Some agreed that PARRC was a good acronym. It was also suggested that we have a lasting or visible event that a lot of people can see.

Community Changes – Population diversity is slowly increasing with the White Alone category decreasing. Income is projected to increase. Park design – how do we accommodate for youth and older residents? PARRC needs to take a more regional approach to services. It will take money to implement the Strategic Plan. The political and socio-political environment is everchanging.



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We discussed the Mission Statement – The members reviewed a revised Mission statement and thought it was good, the new one was short and to the point of describing our purpose and why we exist.

We discussed the example Action Plan – It show initiatives and time priority and who is responsible for executing. PARRC needs to be disciplined to implement and we need to exert accountability.

7. PARRC Facebook page – M. Lane state that he has not been keeping up on adding announcements to the Facebook page as he has concentrated on the new PARRC website, there aren't many event/program announcements to add because of Covid19 and he sends Covid19 info to each municipality. He also discussed that SRG has a fulltime Marketing Director that keeps up with SRG's website and other social media platforms. It was suggested that when PARRC becomes an independent entity, we consider hiring a marketing/media coordinator.
8. PARRC Research Study – D. Schreiber is continuing with observations and surveys of users. Liz Willow is assisting with observations in ECT and is using a shortened version of the observation form that is more user friendly that she helped revise. B. Heller asked if the evaluation of the recreation programs will be done in time to include in the Strategic Plan. It was stated it should be ready by then.
9. PAHWF Fall Grant round – It was discussed that several projects were being submitted for funding consideration. K. Nocella discussed the Ellis Woods Bridge Engineering project and M. Lenhart stated he would send her an example of an RFQ and C. Lloyd stated he would share bridge fabricator information.
10. PEC/DCNR Trail Celebration grant program - A \$500.00 grant opportunity sponsored by PEC and PA DCNR to celebrate trails was offered and ECT submitted a grant for their Ellis Woods Fall Trail Festival on 9/26/20 to cover some costs.
11. Coronavirus mitigation measures in each municipality –
 - UPT – Heather Park and trails are open.
 - ECT – All parks are open and the trails are heavily used. K. Nocella stated she put “rules for the road”, (trail etiquette) during the pandemic on her township Facebook page; be safety conscious, slow down, and be aware of horses.
 - Borough – Not much has changed. Rentals for pavilions are available but they are not being used. Basketball courts are open but are moderately being used. Spray park not open.
 - WPT – Parks open. They are renting pavilions but are limiting the number of users. They put up laminated signs with coronavirus rules. Murgia Park experiencing a lot of use, especially to cool down in the creek.
 - LPT – They may open when they go to the green phase.
 - NCT – The parks are open; playing fields are open; pavilions are rented and are limiting the numbers to 25; they are disinfecting their playgrounds and have lined up an outside contractor to do. The playgrounds are taped off, but they keep getting ripped down.
12. Updates from the PARRC members:
 - a. Pottstown Borough: M. Lenhart stated that they are struggling with programs and events and cannot provide to sponsor events in the parks. All their primary events scheduled in the spring and fall were cancelled until September and they may have to cancel them after that date as well. He is not sure if the Pet Fair will occur this summer as vendors will not commit because of Covid19 uncertainty. They are planning for a shorter Vietnam Veterans event on Memorial Island and will have chairs and participants at appropriate social distances. C. Paretto stated it will be their 5th year and they would like it to occur.
 - b. Douglass Township: No updates.



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- c. North Coventry Township: J. Erb stated there were no updates about parks but a member of their Park & Rec Board, Patti Werth, is a new member and Secretary of the Valley Forge Audubon Society. He also inquired if PARRC could do a bird walk on a regional basis? K. Nocella inquired if Patti could do the bird walk for the Ellis Woods Fall Festival if their speaker could not make it. K. Nocella stated she would send an email to Jay that he could forward to Patti with the request.
- d. Upper Pottsgrove Township: Althouse Arboretum is planning on having their summer camps with Social distancing restrictions. They have given pool noodles to each camper to remind them of the distance to keep apart. Many other programs have been cancelled but they had the Mushroom Walk and it sold out. They had the Dog Days of Summer event where businesses catering to pets were there selling goods and pet shelters were there to dogs to be adopted. The Farmers Market will be held on the second and fourth weekends in August. The organic farm at Prout Farm Park was able to donate 130 pounds of food to the Sunflower Café, CSA shares and to needy residents. The UPT police force would deliver the food to the residents. The Inclusive Playground design has been chosen for Hoffman Field Park and it will be discussed at the next Park & Rec Board meeting on August 11th. The Pottsgrove Recreation Board has donated funds for a design consultant. M. Lenhart inquired if UPT could share the list of vendors so they might coordinate a regional pet fair.
- e. East Coventry Township: They added to their Facebook page the opening of a new mile long trail on a 24 acre rehabilitation animal farm on Schoolhouse Road. There is no parking, the trail goes along the edge of the property and no dogs are allowed. They are planning on adding benches and a boardwalk this fall.
- f. West Pottsgrove Township: The materials have been received for the playgrounds at Vine and Howard Street. The orders for the picnic tables have been placed. The concrete walkways and pads were poured on Monday.
- g. Lower Pottsgrove: B. Keohane stated that they will be using funds submitted by the Sanatoga Green developer as match for the Gerald Richards Park project. They are planning to re-bid the project within the next Friday.
- h. MCPC: John Cover retiring this Friday. M. Bice sent out Circuit Rider dues this week to cover year 2 of the five-year contract that starts September 1st. K. Nocella stated that the MOU for the ICIA between SRG and PAHWF needs to be updated. The PARRC procedures also need to be updated. The mini-grants for the Borough, DT, ECT and NCT close the end of August. The second round of the PMRPC grants need to have engineered plans done. "Restart Montco" has been added to the MCPC website which outlines guidelines for reopening during Covid19. 12 resource sheets were posted.
- i. PAHWF: C. Colistra stated that the PAHWF website has seen an increase in visitation by residents searching for nearby parks. Ironstone Park in Boyertown received a lot of searches. It was inquired if PAHWF could add a link to the PARRC municipalities websites. They also updated their website. It was also inquired if the new PARRC website could link with the PMPRC and PAWHF websites. He also stated that when anyone types in Pottstown, the PAWHF website comes up first. B. Keohane said there was a science to words and content in a website and that "search engine optimization" was used to direct searches to websites. It was inquired if PARRC could hire a consultant to optimize all of the PARRC member websites. K. Nocella stated that a consultant was updating their park and Recreation website. When PARRC becomes independent, it might be prudent to make all the website more user friendly. D. Schreiber stated that the entire website should be easy to navigate.



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Adjournment: 6:12 PM

Recorder: M. Lane

2020 Meeting Schedule

(All meetings to be held at 5:00 PM in the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation Conference Room, 152 East High Street, 5th floor, Pottstown, PA 19464):

<i>January 22</i>	<i>February 26</i>	<i>March 25</i>	<i>April 22</i>	<i>May 27</i>	<i>June 24</i>
<i>July 22</i>	<i>August 26</i>	<i>September 23</i>	<i>October 28</i>	<i>December 3</i>	

Next meeting: August 26th, 2020 Zoom meeting at 4:00 PM