

Recreation Committee Meeting

April 17, 2025

A meeting of the Recreation Committee was held on this date beginning at 2:03 p.m. at 80 Broad Street and over video conference call.

Councilmembers Present: Councilmember Caroline Parker (Chair), Councilmember William Dudley Gregorie (Vice-Chair), Councilmember Jim McBride, Councilmember Keith Waring, and Mayor William S. Cogswell, Jr.

Staff Present: Jason Kronsberg, Director, Parks; Laurie Yarbrough, Director, Recreation; Elizabeth Dieck, Chief of Staff; Daniel Riccio, Section Chief, Community Services; Julia Copeland, Corporation Counsel; Magalie Creech, Assistant Corporation Counsel; Katie Dahlheim, Assistant Corporation Counsel; Hampton Logan, Executive Assistant and Special Projects Manager – Chief of Staff; Jennifer Cook, Clerk of Council; and Wanda Stepp, Clerk of Council's Office (recording).

Also Present: Councilmember Mitchell.

Chairwoman Parker called the meeting to order.

Chairwoman Parker opened the meeting with a moment of silence.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Mayor Cogswell, seconded by Councilmember McBride, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the March 24, 2025 Recreation Committee meeting.

Public Participation:

None.

Old Business:

- a. **Recreation Ordinance review/update:**
- b. **Recreation Commission appointments and meeting schedule:**

On a motion of Councilmember Parker, seconded by Mayor Cogswell, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the Recreation Ordinance updates and bring to Council.

- c. **Volunteer and participant/parents' surveys:**

Ms. Yarbrough said they were preparing their spring surveys currently which would go out the second week in May to all their parents and coaches to get feedback on uniforms, officials, ballfields etcetera. Additionally, they would have their summer camp surveys ready to go as they got into the summer camp business on June 2nd. They continued to get feedback from parents, coaches, and volunteers in their program regularly. Chairwoman Parker asked if the other Committee members had received the information. Ms. Yarbrough said Chairwoman Parker was the only one that specifically requested the survey results, so she sent them to Chairwoman Parker. If Chairwoman Parker wanted her to break them down in an easier to see way, she could do that and share them, but they had discussed them. Across the board, they scored 95% and above on people thinking the City provided a good program at a good price. They got hammered

on not having enough gymnasium space. Once they start games in January, there wasn't enough space for practices which was something they heard from parents and coaches regularly. Chairwoman Parker said field availability was the one that stuck out and it would be interesting to see in the spring. She felt like a few more fields had opened. Ms. Yarbrough said they had more outdoor space than indoor space especially now that the time had changed. They were able to go longer in the evenings on the fields without lights as they did have school fields or neighborhood playgrounds they could use, and they could still get practices in. It was difficult with having four gymnasiums. When they got a new gymnasium on Johns Island for Councilmember McBride and his constituents, that would help to take ease off. Also, they had already met with CCSD, and they knew what to expect next year from them. Chairwoman Parker asked if there was an update. Ms. Yarbrough said they were going to let the City use some middle schools, but no high schools. They would be able to have two nights a week of middle schools use from CCSD, so that would be more than they ever had.

d. Discussion re: QR Code at City parks for citizens to utilize and provide feedback:

Ms. Yarbrough said she wasn't sure how feasible this idea was going to be, but she had talked to the Chief of Staff to see if they could get placards with phone numbers to put on their park rule signs. 99% of their active parks had park rule signs posted at visible spots where they could put something on that post to give feedback from non-program participants, people that just came out to use the park or use a tot lot. That was something they could explore if the Committee would like them to. Mayor Cogswell said they hadn't ignored having QR Codes as they had been looking into different options. It could be relatively easy, but they needed help on their platform particularly like their website. It was cumbersome, so it was part of a bigger fix. He liked the idea of having quick digital capabilities for feedback. When they were going through the process on IT upgrades, it was anticipated to be a component of it. Chairwoman Parker said a lot of the pocket community parks had people who utilized them every day and they were the eyes and ears on the ground. She thought it would be a helpful tool for when they saw something, and they could say something. She knew a lot of them had a contact at the City but a lot of people might not. Ms. Yarbrough said she would be happy to work with Mr. Kronsberg to get placards they could put on the posts of existing signs that might get that started. Chairwoman Parker said it might be something for IT. Councilmember McBride reinforced that he thought it was a great idea. He knew there was a lot of work on the back end on the IT side. He could imagine someone walking up to any park, scanning the QR Code, and not only learning about what the park included and issues with the park, but programming. They could see what events were coming up on their phone. Most people didn't sign up for newsletters.

e. Discussion regarding status of Longborough Dock negotiations:

Mayor Cogswell said they had drafted a letter to the HOA making the offer of funding them a million dollars and letting them run with the permit and building the facility. The condition being that there would be public access on the dock to the water. He had done edits to the letter the previous day and it would be going out that day or the next. He was happy to share it with Councilmember Gregorie, as he had been interested in it, as well as the rest of the Committee. It was also going to their attorney for the HOA. They were sending them a formal proposal as they hadn't gotten a response from them in previous requests. Whether or not they would accept it or what conditions would be brought back to Council.

Councilmember Gregorie said he had talked with Ms. Copeland, and she had told him about the letter. He said they had moved forward with the Eco Corridor. The Longborough Dock area had not been included in that, but it would be great if they could. He understood it was private currently,

but it would be great if they could work out something with them as they moved forward with trying to pull the Eco-Corridor together as it was a natural fit. It had been a considerable amount of time and it was their board that had been holding things up all these years. The Wagener Terrace Neighborhood Association was ready to start using it as well as East Central. People went back there to crab and for the last ten years they had been prohibited from doing so. He hoped the Committee was ready to take action to move forward so the public could appreciate that space on the water. Mayor Cogswell agreed, and on the Eco-Corridor, he thought that made a lot of sense and he was glad to try and incorporate that into the pathway.

f. Status of landscaping for the James Lewis Apartments:

See item i. below.

g. Status of landscaping along Cleveland Street:

h. Request for the power washing of cinder block walls surrounding College Park on Grove Street and Rutledge Avenue:

Councilmember Gregorie said as they moved forward on The Citadel piece, that his assistant was working with Ms. Dieck and General Walters' assistant to pull a meeting together to talk about the maintenance and potential code enforcement issues. Mayor Cogswell said they didn't have a date yet for the meeting between the President of The Citadel, Councilmember Gregorie, and himself. There was also going to be a potential staff meeting with Ms. Dieck and the Chief of Staff at The Citadel to preface the conversation that they would have, but also, they have apparently some potential ideas for College Park. He didn't know what that entailed, but hopefully they would learn more about that at the meeting. College Park did invite a lot of potential as to what it could be for that community given the size and scale of it. Councilmember Gregorie said it would be great to hear the results of that meeting.

i. Discussion regarding Martin Park and the ground in front of the James Lewis complex:

Mayor Cogswell knew this was something Councilmember Mitchell had been focused on. He met with Parks, and they were working on a general plan for Martin Park based on schematics that were done a couple years ago. He was happy to share those with the Committee in relatively short order. It tied into the landscaping along James Lewis Apartments and really the entire streetway and tied into the park. Some ideas that had been contemplated on Martin Park, in particular, was eliminating the baseball diamond, which wasn't regulation and not used, and making it be a multi-purpose field, putting a splash pad in for kids at the end of the park, doubling the community space of the building that was there, but not tearing the whole building down and building something new. That would be extremely expensive, so adding a significant square footage to it. Those were some of the bigger moves that were being contemplated that would be brought to the Committee to review.

j. Recreation spring and summer programming updates:

Ms. Yarbrough said they were in their spring season currently. The public schools were on spring break that week and the Catholic church schools and private schools were on spring break the prior week. They had to juggle their schedule, but they still had kids playing sports. Their tennis courts were filled up with 1,500 kids playing in their elementary tennis program, which would go to the second week of May. Their 330 SMRT swimmers had just ended their short course season and would be kicking off their long course season, which would put them at MLK for the majority

of their swimming. They were no longer renting the St. Andrews pool as they were back at W.L. Stephens with the water heater and temperatures rising. After that week, they would have hosted 20 spring and Easter events throughout the Charleston communities including one that day at McMahon playground. The next day they were hosting an egg hunt on Johns Island and there would be one at Bees Ferry and Thomas Johnson. Martin Park had one on Saturday, as well, that the community was putting on and the City was partnering with them. They were able to work with the South Carolina Youth Lacrosse Group that was renting fields to defer the cost down of the field rentals. They would be coming to four of their summer camps and doing lacrosse with the summer day camp kids who had never played lacrosse which would be great exposure. They were also working on the USDA Summer Lunch Program that they hosted every year, which would be coming to Council in May, as they started their summer camp season on June 2nd. The first summer lifeguard orientation was the prior day. They were onboarding 26 lifeguards in addition to all the summer counselors they were hiring. They were keeping HR busy, so they were ready to open pools on Memorial Day weekend. Chairwoman Parker thanked Ms. Yarbrough for all their hard work and commended Ms. Yarbrough on the lifeguard program. They had gone from not having any lifeguards and having to close pools to having 26 new ones coming onboard. She asked how many kids they had been able to accommodate for swim lessons this summer. Ms. Yarbrough said swim lesson registration was in the month of May and they would have lessons in the mornings and late afternoons. A lot of people wanted the late afternoons or early evening classes because they worked, which was why they did a lot of swim lessons with the summer camp so that parents didn't have to be there.

k. Thomas Johnson Park requests/discussion:

Chairwoman Parker said this was in her district and that they had a big pickleball community. Mr. Kronsberg said one of the requests was a picnic table and that was being assembled for delivery hopefully next week. That was the fiscal report and then there was also the court resurfacing that would be forthcoming when that contractor started. There were additional requests that he didn't have any updates on. Chairwoman Parker asked if it was the basketball court that was being resurfaced as the tennis court was just resurfaced due to cracks, so it was fairly new. She asked if they were able to send that contractor back out. Also, she knew there was a request for making the dominant lines the pickleball lines. Mr. Kronsberg said typically the older courts the deep foundational cracks that had been there for a long time would reappear in weeks and months after a repainting even with the crack repair. The nature of the old concrete that was overlayed with asphalt at some time, so the ultimate solution was to demolish and reconstruct the entire court. That was the only way to eliminate cracks from resurfacing when they repaint. It was not a quick or easy fix. They would have to include that into a future project. He and Ms. Yarbrough did talk about the painting of lines and making the pickleball the dominant lines, and they thought the contractor could address that within the contract when they were there. She knew the bathrooms looked great. She asked if there were any updates on the other interior portion and if there were more updates happening. Mr. Kronsberg said not currently. They didn't have any other projects identified unless there were needs that Recreation had added. They tried to repaint periodically, pressure wash the exterior, and the interior would be up to Recreation. Chairwoman Parker said the bathrooms looked wonderful and asked if they were having any other restroom concerns. Mr. Kronsberg said everything was working currently.

l. Johns Island Recreation Center discussion (Requested by Councilmember McBride):

Councilmember McBride said the Selection Committee had selected the construction manager, and a while back had selected the architect which was awesome. He asked when the public input

part would be coming up so that the public would know. Mr. Kronsberg said as soon as they got the full design contract approved at Council then they would map out the entire process of citizen and stakeholder engagement and nail down a timeline for design and construction. Hopefully, they would be getting that contract soon for approval.

m. Discussion re: W.L. Stephens Aquatic Center timeline (Requested by Councilmember McBride):

Councilmember Waring said that he, Councilmember McBride, Ms. Yarbrough, and City staff participated in the final selection of the construction companies earlier that week. They made good progress moving the ball forward on that.

New Business:

Councilmember Gregorie said the Hazel Pinckney pool was probably 60 or 70 years old. He asked if they could get an assessment of its status to get a sense of where they were on that. It was old and needed to be replaced. He knew it hadn't been included in any of their discussions with respect to the bond, but it would be nice to know the lifecycle of a pool was and if that had been reached. If it had, did they have plans for replacing it? Chairwoman Parker asked if that item was identified in the Master Plan. Mr. Kronsberg said it was evaluated during the process, and he would look at it and see what the recommendations were. He knew they had emptied the pool and resurfaced it ten years ago. They chipped out the entire surface, replastered it, and put in new tile line work. They had done some work in the locker rooms over the years, but they could evaluate it and bring back a summary.

a. Capital Projects updates:
b. Maintenance updates:

See attached Exhibit A.

Chairwoman Parker said there were over 5,000 people playing sports in the City and that the City carried the weight of the Lowcountry when it came to recreation. They had some private groups but the City had a heavy load to carry. She commended Mr. Kronsberg and his staff. Everything looked great and this was what families were doing in this season of life. Mr. Kronsberg thanked Chairwoman Parker and said they had a good team, so kudos to the team. Chairwoman Parker thanked Mr. Kronsberg for the concrete walkway on James Island that had been completed. It was long overdue, but it was wonderful. Also, the bathrooms looked so much better, the concession stand was open, and, hopefully, one day they would use it as a speaker box and that would be next on the list.

c. Discussion re: Peninsula Basketball Camp (Requested by Councilmember Mitchell):

Councilmember Mitchell said that this basketball camp was in service for years under the Philip Simmons Basketball League and they were getting ready to crank it up again. Years ago, Council had voted to make sure this basketball tournament was funded every year. He wanted to make sure they were still going to have it in place. Previously, the basketball tournament had been called off as so many things were happening in the community, and they didn't want to put the kids in harm's way. Now they were taking applications for it again so the young people would have something to do as soon as they got out of school. This was one thing they needed to get back on the Eastside. They didn't want to see any tragedies happen. He had been pushing to get things

ironed out for this year. Ms. Yarbrough said Mr. Jones had put in a permit back in December to use Mall Park for the Philip Simmons Summer Basketball League again this year. That permit had been approved at no cost, so he would have the Mall Park facility ready to go starting with his June dates. The City would supply a staff member to open the playground building, keep the restrooms clean, and be on site. Mr. Jones and his concerned citizens of the Lowcountry/Peninsula had been the ones that ran the league, and they would continue to do that. She and Mr. Jones had met on two occasions, and she had his signed program agreement. He was ready to do everything he needed to do and the City was ready to take care of the things they had. The City had continued to approve that permit even though he hadn't ran the league since 2019 due to COVID from 2020 on. She knew he would be working to get registrations in so that he could get uniforms ordered and those kinds of things, which he had already said he would be paying for. She was ready to go, and they would be there with basketball equipment and have the park clean and ready to go on June 14th.

Councilmember Mitchell asked who would be paying for the referees and if that money was still in the budget. Ms. Yarbrough said that money had not been in the budget since 2019. Councilmember Mitchell said he understood that, but since they had voted on and approved to do it every year, it seemed like that should have been put back. During COVID, everything slowed down and with a lot of tragedies happening on the Eastside he had told them not to do anything to put any young people in harm's way. Ms. Yarbrough said it was not put in the budget for this year because they didn't plan for it, but she could get with the Chief of Staff, Dan Riccio, and the Mayor to try to determine the cost. The one thing she would need before she could order any uniforms, if that was what the City was going to do, she would have to have the verified registrations. Mayor Cogswell said it sounded like the uniforms were not an issue and the City was providing the courts and City staff at no charge to be there to open the facility at no charge. He asked Councilmember Mitchell if he was asking for referees. Councilmember Mitchell said he was and that referees had to be there. This had been voted on by Council and they had that place in the Recreation budget to make sure that it was done. He thought Ms. Yarbrough knew about that portion and the way it was done before. He didn't know how they were doing it now, but all of it had been taken care of previously as they had put money in the budget to make sure it was funded. He was just asking as he didn't want this to come up later as they didn't need any more problems. Chairwoman Parker asked if Mr. Jones ran the program. Ms. Yarbrough said Mr. Jones ran the program. He took the registrations and the fees from the teams. It all went to the concerned citizens and not to the City. Chairwoman Parker asked if the City provided the uniforms. Mayor Cogswell said the City did not provide the uniforms. Councilmember Mitchell thought at one time the City used to provide the uniforms. Ms. Yarbrough said they did back at one time. Councilmember Mitchell said it must have changed as it had been funded every year in the budget to pay for the uniforms, referees, and having staff there which was giving back to the community. Ms. Yarbrough said she was happy to work in any direction they put her in. It was about \$15,000 to \$18,000 a summer to run that league if the City was going to take on all the expenses. Councilmember Mitchell said he would check into it as he didn't think it would be that much anymore. If it was being done at other places, then they were going to have problems and he didn't want to have problems this summer. Chairwoman Parker said it was a great program. She wished it was offered all over the City, but it sounded like it wasn't. Ms. Yarbrough said there was a league at Forest Park in the summer that was run independent of the City. The City permitted it and it was an independent basketball league that was run in West Ashley. Councilmember Mitchell said he had people call him from West Ashley that had problems after basketball had started with a shooting as well as other things. They had to look at things carefully because of that change, but he would get with the Mayor on this and other things pertaining to this area.

d. Stephen Washington Park Updates:

Mr. Kronsberg said he had been meeting with the Triangle Community Association and Ms. Inez and Ms. Henrietta. They had settled on the components of the park that they would like the City to start on. He had brought to them a proposal for a playground and vendor created renderings. They were excited about that, and they looked forward to hosting a meeting on May 14th with the Triangle Association people to get a consensus on what that work would entail and then they looked forward to working with the City to get the work completed.

With there being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 2:47 p.m.

Submitted by Wanda Stepp
Clerk of Council's Office