

Virtual Recreation Committee Meeting

**May 23, 2022
Minutes**

A meeting of the Recreation Committee was held this date beginning at 4:00 p.m. over video conference call.

All media were advised of this meeting.

Councilmembers Present: Councilmember Shealy (Chair), Councilmember Gregorie (Vice-Chair), Councilmember Sakran, Councilmember Bowden, Councilmember Parker, and Mayor Tecklenburg.

Staff Present: Jason Kronsberg, Director, Parks; Laurie Yarbrough, Director, Recreation; Julia Copeland, Deputy Corporation Counsel; Melissa Cruthirds, Assistant Corporation Counsel; Wanda Stepp, Clerk of Council's Office (recording).

Also Present: Councilmember Shahid, Daniel Strickland, and Lance Tyner.

Chairman Shealy called for a moment of silence.

On a motion by Councilmember Sakran, seconded by Councilmember Gregorie, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the March 7, 2022 Recreation Committee meeting.

Charleston Tennis Center and Maybank Tennis Center (Presentation):

Chairman Shealy said Daniel Strickland and Lance Tyner were both avid tennis players who used the tennis facilities a lot. Mr. Tyner said he had lived in Charleston about ten years and he was a financial adviser. He was an avid tennis player who enjoyed doing anything he could to promote the community and good health in the community. Mr. Strickland said he had lived in Charleston for almost eight years. He was also an avid tennis player and had a coaching background. He was an educator in Berkeley County, but he lived in Charleston County in the City limits near Maybank Tennis Center (Maybank). He had coached for 25 years and he enjoyed playing tennis in Charleston's large and growing tennis community.

Mr. Tyner said it was great that Mayor Tecklenburg recognized the contribution tennis had made to the community by naming May as Tennis Month. He and Mr. Strickland wanted to share a specific need at Maybank. Maybank was in one of the 12 districts Council represented, but it was important for every one of the districts. The Lowcountry Tennis Association was their local tennis association which incorporated all 12 districts. It was the sixth largest tennis association in the United States. Charleston was up there with Chicago, Atlanta, and Dallas. Charleston was the only non-major metro market. Charleston was larger than Charlotte and a lot of other large cities in participation in tennis because every one of Council's districts had participation in the league. Every one of those members played tennis league matches at Maybank. They had home and away matches with Collins Park, St. Andrews, Charleston Tennis Center, and Daniel Island Club throughout all of the districts that had tennis facilities that sponsored teams, and they came to Maybank for their matches. One of the issues they had recently was they had a

match scheduled for 7:30 p.m. that wasn't able to start until 9:00 p.m. If people came from Daniel Island or Dorchester and drove all of the way to Maybank and waited an hour-and-a-half just to get onto a court to start, that was 16 adults doing that on a weeknight. There was a big shortage of courts particularly at night and on weekends. Since the onset of COVID, they had seen a market rise in their communities of increased obesity, anxiety, and depression. Tennis programs were a good tool, one of many, utilized to get outdoors and improve each of those problems that all had a cost to society. It impacted the youth, as well. There were youth programs, high schools used those tennis courts, there were programs that served underprivileged youth, and it also affected tourism. Charleston was increasingly known as a tennis town and was one of the top cities in the United States that drew tennis people. People came to watch tennis, but they also came to play and participate. On a daily basis, there were times when people were turned away from the courts because there weren't enough spots on the court.

Mr. Strickland said the Committee was well aware that Charleston was experiencing a lot of growing pains. It was one of the fastest growing cities in the southeast as well as the nation. One of the reasons that people moved to the area was for recreation and tennis. There was a long history of tennis in Charleston with juniors, adults, and also professional tennis with the Credit One Open that was renamed. Charleston had been named America's Best Tennis Town in 2010 and had competed with 81 cities. He used to serve on the USTA Board in Columbia and they had presentations from Charleston. Representatives came and presented to the USTA. In March, it came out that over the past two years tennis had grown by 27.9% and had seen an increase in participation with over four million more players since 2019 that had joined. The question was why they were moving toward tennis. It showed that Charleston was the sixth largest local tennis league in the United States. Charleston had over 500 new tennis players registered in 2022 just in the spring. They had 50 more tennis teams registered through the LCTA than spring season of last year. Maybank was experiencing all of that growth. They saw that it was a large increase at all levels of play which included juniors. The USTA had done a good job of communicating through COVID that tennis was a great way to play a sport safely. Maybank had seen an increase in memberships during that period of time over the past three years and they were over 400 members. More members had caused a strain on their court availability. Many of the junior programs, especially at Maybank, were restricted to using four courts because of the number of adults coming on the courts at that particular time. Adult league teams were forced to play at other facilities. They had teams that signed up at Maybank, but then were told they had to play somewhere else. More players meant current restroom facilities were at a strain because they couldn't meet the demand as they weren't built for that, not just their facility at Maybank, but they saw it at other places, as well. The Charleston Tennis Center and Bee's Landing were also experiencing it. COVID had hit the tennis community in a positive way because they saw a lot more growth within tennis.

The five clay courts at Maybank could be a remedy for what they saw with the numbers going on at Maybank. Maybank was taken over by the City in 2012. Renovations were completed in October of 2012 and that was when they added five additional clay courts. At that time, they did not add lighting to those courts. Lights on the clay courts would help alleviate some of the overcrowding they were experiencing because a lot of the play went on at night. Putting lights on the five clay courts would definitely help alleviate some of that growth. He knew it would be a large expenditure, but in getting a couple of quotes they could see what the cost of five courts would allow them to put lights on. They had gotten bids and the approximate cost was anywhere from \$22,000 to around \$28,000 per court and that did not include wiring and labor. They asked that the City provide funding for installation of lights on the existing five clay courts at Maybank and also fund the One Charleston Parks and Recreation Master Plan created a couple of years

ago. He had many of his players make sure they filled that out because a lot of the questions pertained to tennis facilities in the area. They realized it would be an expenditure for the City, but they were also bringing something to the table. They had a possibility of receiving grant funding from USTA. There was one grant from southern and one from national, and it was called the Facility Services Grant. They also had some individuals on their committee that were willing to get company sponsorships or donations to make it happen. He thanked the Committee for their time and he appreciated the Committee letting them come into the meeting.

Mr. Tyner said in looking at various options they felt that adding lights at Maybank they wouldn't have to buy land or build courts and that would be the most cost efficient way of alleviating overcrowding at the peak times which was in the evenings. Mayor Tecklenburg thanked Mr. Strickland and Mr. Tyner for their willingness to help improve the City's facilities. He asked if there were any other locations around the City that were in a similar situation where lighting would help. Mr. Tyner said most of the other facilities were already lighted so there wasn't unlighted courts they could simply do that to create additional courts.

Ms. Yarbrough added that the only other place that the City had more than two tennis courts, and they always had to have three tennis courts and in some cases four or five courts to play a league match, was Lenevar. It was the only four-court complex in the City not lighted, but everything else the City had lights where they had more than two courts and could play those league matches, so they kind of tapped out on all of the spots. She also thanked Mr. Tyner and Mr. Strickland as they met with them and their teammates, other members at Maybank, and tried to go through some things that would help in the short term. She hoped those things had helped. They started allowing Maybank members to play at the Charleston Tennis Center if their courts were booked at Maybank. If there were open courts at the Charleston Tennis Center, they could go over there. They were going to look at how they limited the number of teams and grandfather all of those teams in so they didn't overburden the teams that were playing out of there, but it was a finite amount of resources. They had X number of courts and those were available X number of hours and once those were programmed out, they couldn't do anything else. She appreciated Mr. Tyner and Mr. Strickland rallying some folks instead of just being upset, and coming forward with some great ideas.

Councilmember Shahid added his support. He had been approached by several constituents regarding the lack of lighting at Maybank. Also, he had talked to Ms. Yarbrough about the Charleston Tennis Center and the need to upgrade their lighting system, and she may consider a proposal. He offered support for the needs of lighting at Maybank and other facilities, and an upgrade and replacement for some facilities, as well. He knew funding would be the number one issue. It was understated the impact that recreation had on the community and it was one of those livability issues that whatever they could do to support folks who were advocating it, they needed to get behind them as fast as possible. Mayor Tecklenburg said there were a couple of locations, one on the Greenway and one at Lenevar that they wanted to add a streetlight and there was far distance to the nearest regular electrical service so solar streetlights were installed and they worked well. He wondered, since most of the play time he guessed would be before midnight, had anybody looked into solar lights. He said it might be worth exploring because the installation was cheaper. They didn't have to wire them. Ms. Yarbrough said she would check with Mr. Kronsberg and make sure they did some research on it. She wasn't aware of any solar lighting that would get them to the amount of foot candles they would need to play tennis safely at night without lighting, but they would definitely check into it. Maybe that was something that was on the horizon. Mr. Strickland said in his research there were some facilities that had begun to do that. He was not sure about the capacity of that and the lumens that they would be able to create would be enough. Through his research he found that the LEDs were more cost effective

in the long run versus what they had been currently using. Ms. Yarbrough said they were the old GE lights and they had shoebox lighting in some of the other places, but the LEDs were what worked well now. She knew that the Town of Mt. Pleasant installed all LED fixtures at their Whipple Road facility and players were happy with those. She said that was what they were looking at for future lighting. Mr. Strickland said one other good point about LEDs was there wasn't much spillover into the neighborhood. Most of the lighting was concentrated on the courts.

Chairman Shealy asked if the matches ran late due to the length of matches or the weather, and if it was a normal thing for matches to run over during a tournament. Mr. Tyner said they found they had a lot of propensity for matches running late and causing them to wait up to an hour, hour-and-a-half past start time particularly for the 7:30 p.m. matches. They had a 6:00 p.m. slot and a 7:30 p.m. slot. Any of the 6:00 p.m. slots, whether it be for traffic or just match time, it just pushed it out. It was hard especially for the other constituents who drove 30 to 45 minutes to Maybank to wait an hour-and-a-half to play, then play, and then drive back home and have work the next day. Ms. Yarbrough said they played the women's matches in the fall and spring at 6:00 p.m., so if there was a women's match in front of the men's matches that should start at 7:30 p.m. that ran long. When they only had eight lighted courts at Maybank and two of them were being used for instruction, those six courts were what they waited to get on, so they were pushed back. Right now, they were in mixed doubles and most of those matches started at 6:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., as well. It was a little better in mixed season as it played a little faster, but they had a lot of people playing, a lot of teams in a lot of age groups, which was a great problem to have, and they were stacked up on those courts until they opened.

Chairman Shealy said it was a great presentation and a lot of good information. Councilmember Gregorie asked Ms. Yarbrough if that was something she was going to include in her 2023 budget. Ms. Yarbrough said it had been on the unfunded list for a while and it was a part of the Master Plan, as well. It was noted as a need, so it was clearly already there, but they could make sure it was re-highlighted when Council went through the budgeting process to look at that and make some kind of priority for it. Chairman Shealy said, as the Mayor announced at City Council a couple of weeks ago, it was National Tennis Month and they announced that as the National Tennis Month in the City, as well.

Aquatics Update:

Ms. Yarbrough said not only was the City having trouble finding employees, but it had especially hit the City's Aquatics Program as well as all over the nation. There were pools in Arizona that would not even be open over the summer. She got something from PRC that they would have to change their schedule for some of their water parks which was a revenue maker, so they had to change that schedule and that definitely would affect the revenue they brought in. It also affected the City's swimming pools. She said they had closed the gap in the last week on their seasonal lifeguard hiring and those folks were going through the last parts of orientation. Most of them were high school or college students so they wouldn't get those young folks to the City until after Memorial Day, but all four pools would be open on Memorial Day weekend for family and recreation swim which was good. They would be able to meet all of the DHEC requirements and safely be open. They would open all four pools on a full schedule starting the week of June 6, so as they brought in those seasonal lifeguards, they would be able to have the pools open. They would have them open six days a week at all four pools. They had times for water fitness, recreation swim, and for laps swim. All of the groups would have opportunities to use the pools and she felt good about that.

A negative was that they did not have enough water safety instructors on their staffing. A lifeguard was the lowest level of certification and in order to be a water safety instructor and teach lessons, they had to have a certification above that lifeguard status. She said they had a shortage of those folks so they would not be teaching swim lessons during the summer to the public. They did not hold registration. They taught in the spring at MLK and they hoped to be back teaching in the fall, but the summer months were going to deplete them just to be open six days a week from early in the morning to evening for families to use for a safe swim and to bring children to, and for seniors to exercise. She wanted to make sure she shared that scheduling with the Committee in case they had heard from any of their constituents. She knew there were a lot of folks ready to get back to W.L. Stephens. She was anxious to get that pool back open, as well. It was a beautiful pool and now that it had been renovated, it was a great resource, but they had not had the staff to have it open and rather than go to a daily schedule where they had to go back and forth between being open and closed, they closed that pool until Memorial Day. They were only swimming out of MLK. The new schedule would be on the City's website starting Memorial Day weekend. She told the Committee to please encourage folks to come out and use the pool. She would much rather they swim at the City pool than at an apartment or hotel pool, or some kind of water that didn't have any lifeguards. They wanted to avoid any drowning or tragedies over the summer, so using a pool with certified lifeguards and that met DHEC standards were right where they wanted to be. They would be able to do that.

Councilmember Sakran asked Ms. Yarbrough when W.L. Stephens would be open. Ms. Yarbrough said it would open Memorial Day weekend and part of that week. Then, starting on June 6th it would have a full schedule like Herbert Hasell and the James Island Recreation Center pool, so they would have all four pools going full, by June 6th. Councilmember Sakran said if there was anything he could do for the school district or PRC, he was sure she had great relationships with them, regarding the lessons to let him know. He said they probably required specific qualifications. Ms. Yarbrough said that was right and she appreciated the offer. She said they started in January trying to hire for the summer. They had been to all of the schools. She was over at James Island Charter High School and saw their flyers hanging on the wall. They had been to Burke. They had tried to get the word out through the neighborhood associations. The lifeguards had to be at least 16 years old and have some level of swimming ability, and then they would do the training if they were able to meet the qualifications. They were also doing a \$200 sign-on bonus for anybody that would come work for them over the summer. They tried to offer everything they could. She was thankful to HR and Finance who gave them the ability to do that because it was the one position in Recreation that she couldn't budge the numbers. DHEC said if there were 51 people swimming at MLK pool, they had to have six lifeguards on the deck. Six lifeguards from 5:30 a.m. until 8:00 p.m., six days a week, they just didn't have enough. She would certainly do that though. It wasn't too late if someone still wanted to get certification or if they had lifeguarded before and were looking for a summer job, to please send them to their website. They were anxious to fill as many positions as they could. She didn't want to turn away people over the summer. She wanted the pools opened, but she also knew that it was her responsibility that they were safe.

Chairman Shealy asked how long it took to get trained if they had no experience. Ms. Yarbrough said if they were a swimmer and could pass the basic swimming portions of it, swimming 300 meters, being able to lift a brick out of the deep end and pull it up, if they could physically do those things, then the training part, the online part, and the training part on deck, it took a weekend. If they didn't have those swimming skills, it would be difficult. Sometimes they got swimmers from PRC that wanted to be beach lifeguards. A beach lifeguard had to be able to run a mile in six minutes. They got a lot of folks that were great swimmers and lifeguards, but they couldn't run a mile under six minutes. They talked to them to make sure anybody that didn't

meet their open water regulations, that they had contacted them. They talked to all of the folks around all of the pools, North Charleston, PRC, St. Andrews, and Town of Mt. Pleasant. Anybody who had lifeguards looking for a second job, they had shifts available, so they were very open to that. Chairman Shealy asked if they were paid during the training. Ms. Yarbrough said they were paid for training and they paid for the training. Before COVID they actually paid to take the lifeguard certification and then the City hired them, but now the City would pay them to do the certification and would give the sign-on bonus if they signed on with the City. She said there was a lot of incentive for someone looking for a summer job. Councilmember Sakran asked if anyone interested should contact Ms. Yarbrough. Ms. Yarbrough said that was correct and they could call the Recreation office at 843-724-7327. She said the website had job listings on there and they could move them on through as quickly as possible.

Councilmember Parker said she knew it was a national problem, but it wasn't just pay because at the last meeting Ms. Yarbrough stated pay was good and with paid training etcetera but moving forward it was something they continuously saw in the City. She asked Ms. Yarbrough if she thought it was going to be a continuous problem and if it was still just private sector was paying more. Ms. Yarbrough thought that two years of COVID and not doing any lifeguard certification classes had put all of them behind the 8-ball. She thought there were a lot of young people that used to work in jobs at summer camps, at swimming pools, the golf course, and all of those kinds of places that when she was a young person growing up, that was the job they wanted. It was a coveted job and now folks didn't want those jobs whether they were doing school things or traveling in the summer or some of them worked their own schedules doing Uber Eats or DoorDash. They could work for four hours, get Venmoed to their phone, and they got paid immediately. Nobody told them they did the job wrong or they had to wear that shirt. She thought there were a lot of things, but one of the things she thought the City and the City's HR Department would have to help them do was go out and target a new group of public servants. Folks that wanted to come in and work in the public sector that understood how important it was to provide services, to be firefighters, to be first responders, and all of those kinds of things they all did. There used to be a lot of folks clamoring for that and it wasn't the same now. She thought it helped the more they could make the jobs attractive in pay. She said they would think \$14.50 an hour would be enough to turn somebody's head, but it wasn't always. They had people leave them for \$.20 an hour more to go lifeguard in another community so it was just one of those things. If they could make the job a great experience, she thought that helped. People who were happy would stay where they were. She thought it was just a lot of things going on. She hoped it would improve and that they didn't face it forever. They would try to teach as many lifeguard classes as they could. It would be great to get kids back in school swimming again through lessons. Burke used to come and do swim lessons with them before COVID. They hadn't done it since, but they used to always hire several high school juniors and seniors to come work at the pools. It was great. They lived in the community and they would come work at the pools, but Burke hadn't been able to do that. Sanders-Clyde hadn't been able to come over for laps. If they didn't have five-year olds swimming, they weren't going to be swimmers when they were 15.

Councilmember Parker said she just wanted to touch on it. Obviously, they wanted the pools open and it sounded like they had filled a lot of the gaps, but she was more concerned with the swimming lessons when she pulled up to the James Island Recreation Center. It was a really disappointing thing to see. Charleston was surrounded by water. It was something she brought up in the Commission on Women meeting because for a lot of the moms in the area, there just wasn't affordable swim lessons. Not having swim lessons hurt the young kids in the City. It was a safety thing, so to not be able to provide that was disappointing. Ms. Yarbrough agreed and it was one of the hardest calls she had to make in not doing registration because she didn't want

families lined up for four hours in the middle of the night to get a spot only to tell them in three weeks they didn't have enough people come in. She had not seen the number of hirings over the months of March and April to tell them that something would change going into May. She understood and she was disappointed too. It broke her heart to see the sign up too. She said how they moved past it was trying to get some swim lessons going back into the fall. The families who had opportunities and could make choices there were private places they could go to get swimming lessons. It was the families that depended on the City economically, affordability, and proximity who depended on the City to be there. They were the families that would miss out on the swim lessons, so those were the ones that really broke her heart. She wasn't happy about it, but she wasn't resigned to it. She was very torn about it too, but at the end of the day, she needed to make sure the pools were open because some people didn't have air conditioning, people didn't have money to go away for the weekend or even go to the beach, so they needed to be open and that was the one mission she kept out there.

Councilmember Parker asked Ms. Yarbrough about the training for the swim instructors and had they reached out to local churches and places like that that may understand the importance of public service. Ms. Yarbrough said they had gone in every direction and the Mayor had given HR the green light to go. They had job fairs in the City, they had gone to job fairs, they reached out to neighborhoods, and they reached out to churches. She had personal friends that taught at the College of Charleston and at The Citadel, and she reached out to all of them and had gone and talked to classes. She tried to do it in the traditional way that they always found their employees, but in order to be a water safety instructor, they had to be a lifeguard and then they had to have additional training for water safety instruction. If they had a water safety instructor, they could lifeguard and teach certified classes. If they had a lifeguard, the only thing they could do was be in the chair and lifeguard. They didn't have enough hands on deck to teach classes the way they needed to and to train people safely to teach classes. She didn't have those resources.

Councilmember Parker said they had to pass the lifeguard training and then what was the additional training. Ms. Yarbrough said it was water safety instructor training which was an additional training that required more time and more ability. They weren't only just on the stand scanning for someone. They had to be able to teach the strokes and water safety. They had to be in the water teaching. She said not everyone was a teacher as being a teacher was a special skill. A lot of folks that were good lifeguards didn't make good instructors. Councilmember Parker asked how long the water safety instructor training was. Ms. Yarbrough said she wasn't sure, but it was longer than a weekend. She said they hadn't even had anyone come through as a certified lifeguard asking for that class, so they weren't even through step one to get to step two. She said they did have two instructors on their staff that could teach water safety instruction, but she didn't have anyone in the system currently eligible to go through that training. Councilmember Parker said to be eligible they had to pass the lifeguard training. Ms. Yarbrough said they had to pass the lifeguard training and then they had to get the second part of that training and it was a lot harder. There were a lot more rescue things involved in it, more medical and first aid, and those kinds of things. It was a much more difficult certification to have than just the lifeguard. Councilmember Parker asked what the pay scale was on that. Ms. Yarbrough said it was another dollar an hour, so it was up over \$15.

Councilmember Gregorie asked if the new aquatics center in North Charleston had an effect on the City's staffing or were they having similar problems, as a City, in terms of staffing. Ms. Yarbrough said she couldn't answer as to their total day of how they set up. They could close sections of the pool and keep other sections open, and reduce the number of lifeguards, so she didn't know exactly how many hours a day they ran them. They paid more than the City. It

wasn't a lot more but, again, they had had a couple of people leave the City in the last month or two over an additional \$.20 an hour. At about the same time the City got to the \$15 an hour point, North Charleston and Mt. Pleasant jumped over it and did a little more. It was a brand new facility and sometimes folks liked to work at brand new places and all of those kinds of things. She thought there were a lot of things. She thought that was a great question as to what happens when a big place like that came in. Did it create more demand or did it have more people being trained? She hadn't seen the fruits of more people being trained out of the new place coming into the community.

Councilmember Parker asked the Mayor what he thought about seeing the signs on the recreation buildings limiting another Citywide service. Mayor Tecklenburg thought they had a real challenge as Ms. Yarbrough just went to great length to explain and they had to make some choices to keep the pools open. He suggested they do everything to partner with some other organizations. He asked Ms. Yarbrough about a partnership the City had with a non-profit that did training with Title I schools and if they could partner with someone like that to pick up the pieces. Ms. Yarbrough said that was the LAPS Program that worked with Title I schools and specifically they worked with Meeting Street Academy and Sanders-Clyde in the area. She said they had not been able to get back in the schools since COVID. She reached out to Shannon O'Brien, who was no longer the Executive Director of LAPS, but she reached out to try and find any of her folks looking for summer employment. Ms. O'Brien gave Ms. Yarbrough a list and they did reach out to all of those folks. They tried their swim team and they had a few members 16 or over that had agreed to come work as lifeguards for the summer which had helped.

Mayor Tecklenburg asked about the YMCA. He knew they didn't have a facility in the City, but he still hoped they would one day up in Berkeley County. That was where he learned to swim when he was a kid, not with the City government. Ms. Yarbrough said they could reach out to the YMCA. The YMCA was a different kind of pool than a public pool, so their lifeguard requirements were a little different. Their swim lessons folks were the same though. She could reach out to see if they had anyone they would be willing to let them get some information from. Mayor Tecklenburg said the City could let them provide the program and just give them a certain space and time. If anybody had any suggestions, the drawing board was open.

Councilmember Gregorie asked if the City still had a partnership with Burke High School and if that yielded any potential. Ms. Yarbrough said it had in the past, but because of COVID Burke and the schools had not been in the water at all. The last couple of times they worked more closely with Burke they hired some folks at Herbert Hasell, but they hadn't had that relationship because of COVID. She said maybe as soon as that all went away they would get more kids from school back in the pools.

Councilmember Sakran thought it was important to understand it was not a Park and Rec issue. It was happening throughout the region and throughout the State. It was something he dealt with every day. It was bad and it was still bad. They had a difficult time hiring after school folks to work in the after school programs. He just wanted to make sure that the Committee was all aware that it was an economy shift as it had changed drastically over the past year. He didn't see light at the end of the tunnel. From his team in terms of hiring for summer camps, they were having a difficult time hiring for summer camps and they had to make tough decisions to limit the number of camps because they couldn't find the right numbers of staff in previous years. He thought they needed a new approach. At the school district, they called them temporary hourly employees and how to recruit them, so he thought it was a discussion for the HR Subcommittee. He thought they needed a separate strategy on how to recruit the folks. When budget time came around, he thought they needed to have an honest discussion about making

sure the City paid competitive wages. At the end of the day, Councilmember Parker was right. Their constituents didn't know and when they saw a 'Closed' sign, they just got mad and asked why it wasn't being offered. They didn't understand all of the nuance of these conversations. When it came to budget time, he encouraged all of them to dig down and ask those questions for the City's part-time temporary employees and for giving them the boost they needed for the City to be competitive with Chick-fil-a, Walmart, and Target. He said \$14 an hour wasn't cutting the mustard when they could go work for Uber Eats.

Chairman Shealy asked if it would be possible to reach out to the Coastal Carolina Aquatics Association and other swim teams. Ms. Yarbrough said that was the summer swim league and all of those teams were swimming summer league or practicing for it. Most of them would be younger kids that only swim in the summer. Coach Michael and his staff had done a really good job with their SMART team with the older group that they could do that. She said they could keep pushing the message out. If she didn't hire people until later in June, then they could do something at the end of the summer. She was happy to pivot that way, as well, but she just knew they were not in position to have families looking for that program beginning in June like they wanted it. Councilmember Parker said she didn't mean to keep it going, but she thought it was important. Once again, it sort of seemed like a City service that, it was the elephant in the room. They all knew the economy was bad and everything was changing in the job market, but this was why they had to keep having the discussion and make sure it was a priority. Like Councilmember Sakran said, those were just the calls they got all of the time. Their taxes were the same, but their services were going down, so they had to have these tough conversations as Councilmembers because it was their job. Ms. Yarbrough said that was one of the reasons she asked Chairman Shealy to put it on the agenda as she wanted to share this update, not because she wanted to have this conversation or she wanted to drag the Committee through it. She thought it was important that they understood it all and could ask her questions because she had wrestled with it and tossed and turned at night trying to figure out some other way. She reached out to other recreation directors in the area and across the State to see what they were doing. There had been some conversations about the privatization of swim lessons but, again, she thought it would get back to the economy. If they privatized swim lessons and it cost more money, it would just cost the community more to take those lessons and then they still left behind those people that needed them the most and families having to make choices. She didn't know the answer, but she didn't think they should wave a white flag and quit. She would keep charging along with it.

Update on Parks and Recreation Master Plan:

Mr. Kronsberg gave a brief recap on the Plan which was adopted by Council last year. It was a long Plan with lots of good information. They conducted in-person engagement in 19 different locations around the City. They met with stakeholder groups like the tennis group they heard earlier. They conducted statistically valid surveys with over 600 household responses. They had over 2,400 responses through web surveys and also did a mind mixer engagement platform online. They had really good feedback from the communities in a difficult time as they conducted it during COVID. The team also prepared a social needs and conditions index which was mapping-based on census track of ten socio-economic and demographic neighborhood characteristics which highlighted areas of the City that would benefit from public services and programs. That included a long list of items that included parks so that social needs and conditioning index identified areas in the City that they should focus their work on. They also prepared on-site inventories and conditions assessments of all of the Parks and Recreation facilities, analyzed population productions with the Planning Department, and mapped out needs over the next ten years based on NRPA national standards based on population. He said

that was kind of the Master Plan in less than five minutes. It was a robust document. The Plan took all of that information and mapped out needs of the City over the next ten years based on those population projections as well as what their facilities needed from a deferred maintenance point of view. What they planned on doing now, and it was already a part of the contract with the consultant team, was the implementation phase. They would re-engage the consultant team and work with them to come up with a number of different recommendations on how they could start the implementation phase of the Master Plan and how much it would cost. Then, they would work with the Mayor, Amy, and Council to figure out a way to fund all of that work. It would be a series of options. It would be the big wish list and then it would probably be something that they thought they could get accomplished in the next five, seven, or ten years. Although the list was long and comprehensive, there was only so much work they could actually get done. That was the big picture of where they were. Ms. Yarbrough and he would re-engage with Tom O'Rourke and in the next month or two they would bring back a list of projects to the Committee and determine a way forward.

Councilmember Sakran asked if there was any discussion on potentially floating that to a bond referendum at some point in the future. Mayor Tecklenburg said they had discussed that and Council could actually approve a bond without having a ballot referendum. He said the Master Plan was kind of envisioned that it would run out through 2030. The timing of it when it came to them was right before the election last year and the thought was if they had a referendum to ask the citizens' approval to take on some additional bond indebtedness which meant they would have to approve a couple of mills in order to pay it back. They thought they had time to do that, but Council did not approve it at that time, so they could go back. It would be a year from November before there was a municipal election. He had asked Ms. Copeland as to whether they could put a municipal referendum on the General Election when it wasn't their year, but he thought it was way too complicated. That was one option, but that was a whole year plus from now. The other option, if it was the will of Council, was to commit the millage and do the bond so they could vote on that. Councilmember Sakran said so they could potentially take action and vote on it now with the understanding that they would initiate that bond and put it on the ballot two years from now. Mayor Tecklenburg said they didn't even have to put it on the ballot. It was a good thing to do to get the community support, but if they believed their constituents would really like to see that, see those improvements, and see those park facilities added, they could take that action. They didn't have to have a referendum. Councilmember Parker asked what the deadline would be for the referendum to get it on for next year. Mayor Tecklenburg said it wouldn't be this year. To get it on the referendum next year, he would have to get Legal to verify, but it was something like August before the November. Councilmember Parker said they wouldn't have to work on it this summer, it would have to be done by next August. Ms. Copeland said that was correct and that the general deadline was 90 days prior to the ballot. Councilmember Parker said she thought it was something like a year from a previous discussion, but that wasn't the case it was 90 days out from the election. Ms. Copeland said the County Election Commission would like to have the language for the referendum 90 days out, so that was the first deadline. Councilmember Parker asked if there was some other deadline for a year in advance. Ms. Copeland said for the County yes, but for referendum questions they required to get the language 90 days out. Councilmember Parker said to have it on the ballot November 2023. Ms. Copeland said that was correct. Mayor Tecklenburg said it was best to wait until the last minute though.

Councilmember Gregorie said in order for them to do a referendum or anything, he thought they needed to look at the totality of circumstances to determine where their priorities were. It might be Recreation, but there were a number of others. He said they had to look at the totality of circumstances before they made any determination with regard to a referendum on any

budgetary matter. Councilmember Sakran asked Councilmember Gregorie if they would have to weigh the options of what a referendum of some of the recreation projects versus a referendum on affordable housing. Councilmember Gregorie said it could be. Councilmember Sakran agreed and he just wanted to know what the timeline was in terms of trying to get something on the ballot or if they even needed to. It sounded like they didn't need to do that.

Chairman Shealy said they looked forward to having Mr. O'Rourke speak with them at an upcoming meeting on priorities and a list. Chairman Shealy asked Mr. Kronsberg if that was the next step. Mr. Kronsberg said they would come back to the Recreation Committee or Council could do a full workshop and come up with a list of projects based on the recommendations of the Master Plan. The biggest thing was what they could get done in five, seven, or ten years. If they looked at fire stations, it took a while to get a fire station funded, the land purchased, and the project built. He said they would come back and work with the Committee to figure out what the list was, the amount, and figure out how to fund it. Councilmember Gregorie asked Mr. Kronsberg if they had talked about somewhere around \$80 million or \$100 million at least. Mr. Kronsberg said the Master Plan identified about \$50 million in deferred maintenance and another \$200 million in needs over ten years. He said they did talk about a list of recommendations that crossed the entire City and that was a little bit over \$100 million, but they knew they didn't have the ability to get that much work done, so they would have to figure out what they could get done based on how many people they had looking at the future of the public safety facilities, the work they had prioritized over there, and figure out how to spread the wealth.

Update on Enterprise Manager Position:

Ms. Yarbrough said a couple things they were going ahead and trying to do from the Master Plan, one was to go ahead and establish the Enterprise Manager position. She said HR worked with her and they were able to set up a job description, a pay classification, and they went through that process over the last couple of months. She had narrowed it down to three candidates all of which had very different experiences than the folks they usually hired in Parks and Recreation. They had offered the position and she was awaiting an answer. If the person that was her first candidate, and Mr. O'Rourke sat in on those interviews with her, but if that person accepted the position, they were not local, so she thought there would be a little bit of a lag time in getting them on sometime in the summer, but they had moved in that direction. She had hoped she would have an update more than that, but she was still awaiting that decision. Chairman Shealy said it was good news they had moved that far.

Update on Carr-Richardson Park, Fort Pemberton, and Stoney Field:

Carr-Richardson Park:

Mr. Kronsberg said the work was progressing on Carr-Richardson Park on Bender Street. There were some challenges with every other construction project in the region recently. The work looked great. The exterior building work progressed, the ducting was about 85% complete, the wood ceilings were complete, plumbing was nearing completion, and they were getting ready for pre-install for the drywall. They should be covering up the interior walls pretty quickly. Site work was well underway, some landscape metals had been received, parking lot work was about 90% complete, curb and sidewalks and other hardscaped areas were about 95% complete, and the playground had been installed. The contractor was given 42 rain days which hadn't happened in the past couple of months, so there was a new substantial completion. They didn't think they were going to make it. They were being a little more optimistic than the design team

was, so they were looking probably at July or beginning of August to get the park opened. Chairman Shealy said he expected it to be further along than it was and was disappointed with what he saw. Councilmember Gregorie said he thought it was an unbelievable park in terms of design, the views, and the vistas. He thought it was probably one of the City's best parks once it was completed. He said Mr. Kronsberg and Capital Projects were to be applauded. He thought it was a phenomenal park and everybody, at some point, needed to go over there and take a look. They were doing a great job. Chairman Shealy said he thought it was in Councilmember Sakran's District. Councilmember Sakran agreed. He thanked Mr. Kronsberg for the work on the project and he thought he shared it with Councilmember Waring, as well. He said they went over there early and he asked Mr. Kronsberg for an update about the fraternity name and plaque. Mr. Kronsberg said there was a group of the Alpha Phi Omega Fraternity that would like to put up a statue of Dr. Just. Dr. Just grew up in the neighborhood and he had a fantastic story. He was an incredible guy. Mr. Kronsberg encouraged the Committee to look up Dr. Just if they hadn't. They were also working with the neighborhood association on some historic interpretation of important people from the neighborhood. The number of folks that came from the area and accomplishments they made historically was amazing. They put together lots of historical information and brought it to the History Commission. It was not part of the original project budget, so once they got to the end of the project, they would work with them and figure out how they could get some of the interpretation of the neighborhood completed and printed to display in the park or the building.

Chairman Shealy agreed with Councilmember Gregorie in that the park was going to be gorgeous, looking out seeing The Citadel and downtown across the river, and then looking in the other direction and seeing Charles Towne Landing. It couldn't be a better spot. Chairman Shealy asked when the building was completed would it be rented out to groups or was it just there as part of the recreation facility. Ms. Yarbrough said at this point, they envisioned it being an event space where someone would reserve it for some kind of event whether it be a birthday party, anniversary, or something like that. It would be a nice venue to have meetings. There was no staffing that had been budgeted with that facility, so if they tried to do anything to the building to make it more useful, they would have to add staff. She didn't have existing staff that could do that. They hadn't added staff dollars to the cleanup or anything like that, so they would have to look at it that way, but she thought the envision was that it was somewhere that the community could rent and use for special event space to work with the parking and all of those kinds of things.

Fort Pemberton:

Mr. Kronsberg said Fort Pemberton was a Greenbelt purchase in Riverland Terrace. They held a community meeting drop-in style on March 21. They advertised it via U.S. mail, social media, and the neighborhood association. They had over 100 people attend which was nice. They set up four stations throughout the six-and-a-half acres with a staff person at each station. They had a welcome station, a Fort history station, a station set up in the lawn area, and one at the water's edge on one of the existing docks. The feedback received was commensurate with the Conceptual Plan they had prepared and submitted with the Greenbelt application. It was a passive park with a few small parking areas, historic interpretation, picnic shelters, an open field, and most importantly the waterfront access. All of that engagement was positive about the project and it all supported the LWCF Grant that Council approved a couple of months ago. They hoped to hear back from LWCF in July or August to hear how they ranked with the application. Hopefully, they would get the grant which was a \$260,000 grant, 50% match by the Greenbelt funding available already for minor improvements allowed by the Greenbelt.

Hopefully, in July or August they would hear back positively from LWCF and would bring back a grant acceptance award.

Stoney Field:

Mr. Kronsberg said the work was ongoing. Ticket booth windows, bathroom, and flooring resurfacing had been procured and that work was ongoing over the next couple of weeks, so there would be additional contractors on site. The new plumbing service had been completed which was conducted by the Charleston County School District. It wasn't part of the current MOU, but they knew the City had an issue and they had an easy or affordable way to fix it, so they jumped in and had their contractors fix the new water service. The parking lot and entry plaza were scheduled for completion at the end of that quarter, so they looked forward to getting it all buttoned up. They were still working on a small hiccup with the Army Corps of Engineers and the landfill cap from the former landfill which used to be marsh. There was a 1971 agreement that said the City had to maintain the landfill cap. The City didn't know about the 1971 agreement until the Army Corps looked out their window and wondered what work the City was doing there after the City had already completed a bunch of work out there with all of the field work. The Army Corps had committed to helping the City amend that permit and, hopefully, it didn't hold them up anymore. The Army Corps had been a good partner so far.

Additional Business:

Councilmember Parker said with regard to shade structures there were a lot of engaged community members that wanted to try to help see that through so if Mr. Kronsberg could give her the direction to try and take that. Mr. Kronsberg said they sent the sketch that Councilmember Parker had sent to two of their playground equipment vendors who did shade structures. They hoped to get some cost estimates back quickly and he would share them back with Councilmember Parker. She said she would be sending another one on Stephen Washington Park because that was one that a lot of constituents had been reaching out on and they would love to see improvements over there. She knew the budget was tight, but she thought they had some engaged community members. They could get some things done, but she needed a little help and direction.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Submitted by Wanda Stepp
Clerk of Council's Office