

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

Minutes March 15, 2022, 6:30 pm in person at CH Community Center

Attending:

Director Joe McRae
Davida Russell, City Councilperson
Gail Larson, City Councilperson
Mike Discenzo, Youth Sports Program Supervisor

Deby Auerbach-Brown
Lenore Cruz-Price
Mike Payne
Peggy Spaeth
Peter Titas, Chair

February minutes were approved.

Youth Scholarship Fund

- Approximately \$60,000+ currently in the fund.
- The fund is designated exclusively for CH residents 18 and under who cannot participate in recreation programs due to income.
- Funded primarily by the Happy 5K that has provided \$40,000 in six years, as well as by individuals and business sponsorships. Pre-pandemic the run has provided \$10,000/year.
- Approximately 100 participants.
- The fund provides 50% of the cost of a program—youth can apply as many times as they like over the year -- there's been an unofficial cap of \$100 but no one is turned away.
- Previously this committee was involved in fundraising—e.g., raising \$700 for a chili cook-off. Since Director McRae instituted the Happy 5K raising \$10,000/year, the committee can focus on programming.
- 100% of the funds raised go to the kids, not staff or any other administrative costs.

Because Cleveland Heights and University Heights share a school district, some UH residents have been upset to be left out of the scholarship fund opportunity. UH kids do participate in CH programs but there have been no scholarship funds provided from UH. There is no reciprocity on the pools. There was a discussion about all of the challenges for Cities to share programs—it's complicated.

***For the CH programs to be open to all CHUH students, the idea needs to be put before the quarterly Community Relations and Recreation Committee (CRR) meetings. Councilperson Russell advised that this should be in the future as they are pretty busy with the transition.**

Ms. Russell spoke about having reps from her sub-committees attend the quarterly CRR meetings: this committee, Committee on Aging, and the schools. She has a commitment from the Superintendent to have a representative attend.

Ms. Larson spoke to the need for transporting children to the programs.

A discussion ensued about how to get more public-school students involved in recreation programs. Several spoke about backpack fliers—there is uncertainty whether the schools are getting the fliers to the students. Another idea was fairs. The schools used to invite Parks and Recs to activity fairs to get kids interested in the programs. These methods have been successful in the past and there is a need to reinvigorate them.

Outside travel programs have changed recreation and all city rec programs have fewer participants because of them.

The maximum any one child might need annually is \$250 across several sports. Summer camp is about \$1800.

Dir. McRae wants to ensure a sustainable fund for scholarships, and set parameters for eligibility.

The committee is in favor of reinstating sponsorships. The Development person who obtained them left and the position has been unfilled.

Mike Discenzo:

22 years with the city. He oversees the Youth and Adult sports programs, outdoor fields, and indoor courts. He reported on participation in various sports. A big need is volunteer coaches for summer baseball.

Takeaways:

The advisory committee wants to have a representative from the school district again, to collaborate on many of the issues discussed. Establish relationships with appropriate people in the district to get the word out to the kids.

Ms. Russell invites the advisory committee to come to the May 2 CRRC meeting to request that Council consider that Parks & Rec:

- **Offer 100% scholarships and obtain sponsorships to sustain the fund.**
- **Better advertise the scholarships to the families.**
- **We also request reinstating the Development position to help fund the Parks&Rec. scholarship fund as well as all city departments.**

A draft request will be presented for approval at the April meeting.

Upcoming meetings:

April 19:

Draft proposal to CRRC discussion/approval
Rinks report

May: Friends of Heights Parks

(since this meeting, FHP has to be moved to the June agenda.)