

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
Minutes April 19, 2022, 6:30 pm in person at CH Community Center

Attending:

Director Joe McRae
Davida Russell, City Councilperson
Gail Larson, City Councilperson
Katina Davis, Heights Libraries

Board

Deby Auerbach-Brown
Lenore Cruz-Price
Alex Pesta
Mike Payne, Heights Tigers Youth Sports Organization
Peggy Spaeth
Peter Titas, Chair

Guests

Brian West, East Side Tigers & CH Youth Hockey Assoc.
Kelly Taylor, CH rink manager

March minutes were approved.

The committee unanimously approved that the following be presented to the May 2nd Community Relations and Recreation Committee:

- Offer 100% scholarships and obtain sponsorships to sustain the Youth Scholarship 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.

We respectfully request that the CRRC bring these matters to the City Council of the whole.

Update on safety in the parks

Director McRae reported on the shots exchanged at Cain Park where a young man had an injury from which he is recovering; the fatal shooting at Denison Park; and an intoxicated driver running onto the baseball fields when children were playing.

Safety measures being taken:

Two police details are designated only for parks patrols.

The city is looking for funding for cameras at the parks and a youth services division to engage high risk children in activities with mentorships, jobs.

Basketball courts are staffed.

Wraparound services are needed with a partnership with the libraries, schools, and city work together. The Boys and Girls Club left a void. It was a perfect location next to the high school—the community center is less accessible. Some reported that it also felt unwelcoming.

At the suggestion to have Parks & Recs programs at satellite locations such as libraries, Dir. McRae said he would love to have that but staffing is extremely short right now. He's looking forward to working with the libraries now that this board has a permanent library representative. There will be a school district representative at the next meeting.

Other

There is trouble hiring lifeguards. So far 16/40. Council raised the pay scale but other cities are paying lots more (\$18-\$19/hr.)

Ice programs

Brian West, East Side Tigers & CH Youth Hockey Assoc. (parent org. of East Side Tigers)

Listened to 1/18 meeting discussion about addressing South Rink issues and wants to tell Board about their programs.

Finds values of hard work, persistence, empathy, compassion in Heights Youth Hockey program

2016 Heights Youth Hockey merged with Cleveland Skating Club to maximize coaches and increase players.

85 kids ages 5-14 – 50% CH residents

4 age groups/1-5 teams each age group

Competitive but not travel teams. Suburban league.

Interested in growing the game, introducing people to the sport. Supports many Parks & Rec programs with coaches and outreach. "Try hockey for free" programs at CH rink. Equipment, lessons, coaching. Two last month—25 kids/15 kids. Most kids just learning to stand up on the ice for the first time.

Community outreach: Would like to create weekly house league using Sean Sullivan's model for soccer—100 kids at Denison playing soccer.

Mid-Oct to Feb ice access opens up opportunities for outreach. Absence of South Rink ice will impact outreach. One of many community groups using the rink.

Need to feed high school program and working with their athletic director Joe D'Amato.

Kelly Taylor, Rink Manager

Started lifeguarding 1988

30 years 9/1/22

Rinks have a time limit and South Rink is verrry old. Big demand for ice. Some groups would like to privatize it. City just provides the ice to groups such as Orthodox men's hockey group 9-10:30 Tuesdays; 30 Orthodox boys play.

Plans have been chaotic: 2-rink season planned—mid-Sept went to 1 rink. Usually plan for October start.

City charges \$180/hour since 2001 but could be sold for \$250-\$300. An increase has been discussed but not implemented.

City has a highly valued asset that many would like to use.
No decision has been made by the city regarding closing a rink.
\$585,00 (30%) of the Parks & Rec budget has been cut.
In general, public rinks don't make money because they keep rates affordable to the public. A private company wouldn't have public skates, for example. Different business models.
Council has not raised rates since 2001.

Communications and marketing can use improvement.

Upcoming meetings: June 21, 2022

Unfinished business

from March 15, 2022 meeting:

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 (CRRC) meetings. Councilperson Russell advised that this should be in the future as they are pretty busy with the transition.***