

MEETING NOTES
CITIZENS COMMITTEE FOR PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICES
AUGUST 10, 2011

Kent County Commission Board Room (Room 310)
County Administration Building
300 Monroe N.W., Grand Rapids

Committee Members Present: Sandi Frost Parrish, Ron Koehler, Steve Peterson, Mike DeVries, Jerry Hale, Sue Thomas, Doug Wustman, Rebecca Rynbrandt, Ken Krombeen, Brian Donovan, John Schneider, Milt Rohwer, Chuck Porter, Chris Muller, Andy Johnston, Rosalynn Bliss, Dave Shaffer, Greg Northrup, Darel Ross, Mick McGraw, Andy Guy, Stacie Behler, Carlos Sanchez, Rich Houtteman, Eddie Tadlock,

Staff Present: Assistant County Administrator Mary Swanson; Kent County Parks Director Roger Sabine, Grand Rapids Parks Director Jay Steffen, Byron Township Parks and Recreation Director, Carrie Klingelsmith, KC Management Analyst Jennifer DeHaan

Meeting Notes:

Welcome & Introductions - Kent County Board Chair Parrish welcomed everyone to the committee and stated that this committee is a demonstration of the value that our community places in parks, trails and recreational services. Parrish stated that this committee resulted from the work of a subcommittee of the County's Legislative and Human Resources Committee which recommended that the County partner with our local communities to jointly implement a study of our parks and recreational systems. Parrish stated that the vision for this study is to review how we can continue to maintain and sustain our parks and recreational systems in a collaborative and/or coordinated manner and that the study will identify, evaluate, and recommend an appropriate organizational, operational, and funding model for parks and recreational services. Parrish stated that the charge of this committee is: *To oversee a multi-jurisdictional study of parks and recreational systems in Kent County, with the end goal of determining if there are additional or better ways to work together to provide and sustain these services to support a high quality of life for the citizens of Kent County.* Parrish noted that while there are other initiatives ongoing in the community, the work of this committee is not related to the One Kent initiative and is simply an attempt to study and identify if there is a better way or a more efficient way to deliver and sustain these services.

Review Project Timeline and Proposed Project Steps – Assistant County Administrator Mary Swanson stated that the proposed study has been developed to be in two stages. The first stage being an inventory and service analysis of what is currently provided in the County, identifying best practices that are utilized elsewhere, identifying a ten-year projection for services, and making appropriate recommendations to maintain/sustain services for the ten-years. Swanson noted that a piece of this process will involve citizen engagement to help better understand the community perceptions of parks and recreation services. If, based upon the recommendations of Phase I, there will be a Phase II to this study, it will further define the next steps to implement

the recommendations of Phase I. Swanson stated that committee members had received a copy of the RFP and that a staff group comprised of representatives from several parks and recreational systems had met, reviewed, and discussed the RFP and made various changes to the document. The copy received by the committee was an outgrowth of that work. Swanson asked if there were any comments or concerns regarding the RFP and asked that feedback be provided no later than Monday, August 15, 2011. A sign-up sheet was distributed for those members that are interested in receiving information regarding the proposals as well as those attending the interviews with potential consultants.

Greg Northrup stated that “Vital Signs Report” completed by WMSA may provide some information to identify comparable communities for the benchmarking portion of the study. Rich Houttemen asked if the study would review alternative models for service delivery? Chair Parrish stated that as the consultant reviews the information and makes recommendations everything is on the table. Milt Rohwer stated that he sees a couple of related issues which include: 1) the State is currently conducting a thorough analysis of State Parks as a result of the bankrupting of the Natural Resource Trust Fund and that there may be a way to plug into that planning process; and, 2) We may look to our neighboring communities such as Ottawa County which has done a good job engaging citizens in these processes. Rebecca Rynbrandt stated that one aspect of this study is to look at how our parks and recreation systems interact with other entities such as public school systems and to recognize and identify that there are many interrelated partnerships between the parks and recreation systems and the schools. Chair Parrish also stated that there is a wide partnership between non-profits that also play into the parks and recreation process. Brian Donovan stated that the study should definitely identify the relationship between the public schools and the cities and townships and that many partnerships do exist. Ron Koehler stated that he has been invited to attend to represent the partnerships that exist and to have a dialogue with local schools and to bring them to the table as appropriate.

Chair Parrish thanked everyone for attending today and that the next steps will be to release the RFP and to have staff short-list the responses, conduct interviews with the short-list, and then to have the full committee review the recommendation from the staff committee and members available to attend the interviews.