

MEETING NOTES
CITIZENS COMMITTEE FOR PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICES
NOVEMBER 14, 2011 - 8:00AM

Kent County Commission Board Room (Room 310)
County Administration Building

Committee Members Present: Sandi Frost Parrish, Steve Peterson, Mike DeVries, Doug Wustman, Rebecca Rynbrandt, Ken Krombeen, John Schneider, Andy Johnston, Mike Wawee, Andy Guy, Rich Houtteman, Eddie Tadlock, Cathy VanderMeulen, Jason Zylstra; Brian Donovan; Chris Muller; Bryan Harrison;

Staff Present: Roger Sabine, Kent County Parks Director; Grand Rapids Parks Director Jay Steffen, Amanda Gearhardt, Cedar Springs Area Parks and Recreation Authority; Assistant County Administrator Mary Swanson, and; Kent County Management Analyst Jennifer DeHaan

Meeting Notes:

Welcome & Introductions - Kent County Board Chair Parrish welcomed everyone to the committee and noted that the consultants have started their work on the study and will be providing an update to the Committee today. Chair Parrish stated that the Committee now has a page on the AccessKent website which will contain postings of agendas, presentations, and meeting notes and that this site will be used to communicate with interested parties.

Approval of the Meeting Notes – A MOTION was made by Commissioner Wawee and supported by Andy Guy to approve the meeting notes for August 10, 2011 and October 10, 2011. The MOTION passed unanimously.

Overview of Study: Chair Parrish stated that at the last meeting, the Committee had selected the proposal submitted by Kerry Laycock to conduct the study. Parrish stated that Kerry Laycock is the lead consultant for the project and has more than 28 years of experience as an organizational and management consultant. He has worked on a wide range of organizational restructurings, performance improvement and public policy initiatives. Kerry works in all aspects of government and has recently worked on several parks related projects include an operational review for Camp Dearborn and a restructuring project at the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority as he is currently working with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. Laycock has assembled a team comprised of Barbara Heller and John Kazcor to conduct the study.

Parrish noted that Barbara Heller has over 30 years of experience in parks and recreation. Barbara has been involved in re-structuring and right sizing agencies throughout her entire career and most specifically at the Elk Grove and Naperville Park Districts in Illinois, where she served as Executive Director. She has been consulting for five years and is lending her expertise to parks and recreation organizations throughout the country. John Kaczor has specialized in local government financial, operational and human resources consulting for the past 17 years. He is highly regarded for his financial modeling tools, which have been used by all levels and types of municipal government across Michigan. His financial analysis and practical insights have helped many local units of government weather the recent financial challenges.

DRAFT Pending Approval by Citizens Committee

Laycock stated that they have a brief presentation today that reviews the purpose, task, timeline, work products, and the role of the Citizens Committee. A copy of the presentation is on file with the County Administrator's Office and posted online at:

http://www.accesskent.com/YourGovernment/BOC/citizen_comm_meeting.htm

Laycock stated that he and his team are working to gather information and data to support good recommendations. He stated that he is interested in talking with members of Committee and other stakeholders that have an interest in parks and recreation services. He invited members of the Committee to contact him if they have thoughts that they would like to share.

Laycock noted that already in Kent County there are a number of different types of parks and recreation services that are provided. For example, Kent County does little recreational programming and has more passive parkland, while the Cedar Springs Area Parks and Recreation Authority provides more recreation programming than facilities and that this is coordinated for the local school district as well as four surrounding townships. Laycock stated that some communities have a dedicated millage (e.g., City of Wyoming) and that they provide both recreational programming and facilities. In short, Laycock stated that there are a number of different models of service provision in Kent County. Over the next month, the consultants will be working to sort through the data and information to better understand the current services and service levels that are provided.

John Kazcor stated that they are working to gather the data and information necessary to complete the study. Responses have been received from 20 local units of government and the requests to the schools will be distributed shortly. Kazcor noted that there are two local units that have declined to participate in the study. One of the reasons for not participating in the study was the potential affiliation with the One Kent initiative. Chair Parrish stated that while the One Kent initiative took local municipalities by surprise, the discussion about the Parks study has been ongoing for several years and that this committee resulted from a recommendation made by a County Board Subcommittee which identified a need to conduct a study of our parks and recreation systems.

Barbara Heller stated that her role in this study is to better understand and analyze the recreational programs and services that are offered by various agencies. Heller stated that she will be meeting with a number of recreational programming staff after today's meeting to better understand the programs, as well as the opportunities and challenges that are present.

Laycock stated that there have been a number of ideas that have been identified already throughout this process and most involve the utilization of technology to help streamline services and promote good customer service; all of which provides a strong platform for collaboration. Laycock stated that there are several other things to consider and that may be that there may not be a one-size fits all approach.

Laycock introduced a continuum which reflected three different types of service provision (shared services, shared programs, shared governance) which ranged from low complexity to high complexity (with governance being considered high complexity). Members of the committee were invited to place a "dot" on the continuum which would reflect their level of comfort on the continuum and if they were comfortable at this time pursuing a solution which has

low or high complexity. In addition, committee members were invited to place on the continuum their ideas for delivery of parks and recreation services.

As a next step, Laycock noted that they will be conducting a meeting in January that will provide a report on the current services, services levels, etc., for parks and recreational services throughout Kent County. An additional meeting may be scheduled in February to review best practices and alternative models for providing parks and recreational services. Several committee members asked if there would be an opportunity for public input throughout this process. Laycock stated that due to the tight timeline for the completion of this study that there were not specific public outreach activities (such as focus groups) but that there would be several presentations throughout this process to the Citizens Committee and to the Board of Commissioners and another public forum for the final recommendations. Laycock stated that part of the role of the Citizens Committee is to reflect the perspectives of their communities and interested stakeholders. The February meeting may provide an opportunity to hold an evening meeting and to invite the public to attend a discussion of best-practices and service delivery models that could be considered for providing parks and recreational services. Additional information will be distributed to the committee regarding the February meeting date.

Chair Parrish thanked everyone for attending today's meeting.