



# **PARKS COMMISSION**

## **AGENDA**

**Tuesday, November 7, 2023**

**5:30 PM**

1. Approval of Minutes for September 5, 2023
2. Discussion: Pickleball Signs at Stephen Decatur Park
3. Horticultural Advisory Committee – Stephen Decatur Park Tree Planting
4. Comments from the Commission
5. Adjournment

Upcoming Meeting/Event Schedule:

Tuesday, January 2, 2024 – Meeting

Tuesday, March 5, 2024 – Meeting

**Berlin Town Hall, 10 William Street, Berlin, MD 21811**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room**  
**410-641-4314 for more information**

Parks Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, September 5, 2023

**5:30 PM          REGULAR SESSION – Berlin Town Hall Conference Room**

**Commission Members Present:** Chair Mike Wiley, Patricia Dufendach, and Laura Stearns

**Commission Members Absent:** Sarah Hooper

**Staff Present:** Public Works Superintendent Cody Chesser and Administrative Assistant Kate Daub

This meeting was also broadcast live via Facebook and called to order by Administrative Assistant Kate Daub at approximately 5:34 PM.

Ms. Laura Stearns moved to approve the meeting minutes of May 2, 2023. Ms. Patricia Dufendach seconded, and approval was unanimous.

Ms. Daub began the meeting by reviewing the upcoming event and activity dates for the Commission. She said the only event on the schedule is the Fall Glow Walk on Friday, November 3, 2023, at 5:30 p.m. She clarified the event is part of the Worcester County Just Walk initiative and said Atlantic General Health System has confirmed they will be participating by providing blood pressure and prediabetes screenings. Ms. Daub reported the walk registration starts at 5:00 p.m. and the walk is scheduled to start promptly at 5:30 p.m.

Ms. Daub referred to the Open Space Project priority list included in the meeting packet and said the list was presented to the Commission earlier this year. She confirmed that some revisions will need to be made to the list before it is resubmitted for the following fiscal year. She clarified that changes to line item three, the purchase of Automated External Defibrillator (AED) units for each park will be coming off the list entirely. Ms. Daub said the town was made aware that AED units are not eligible for grant funding because they do not have an expected lifespan of twenty years, adding the hope is to pursue other financial resources that may be available for funding. She continued by saying that Waterside Life-saving devices, which is line item five, must be incorporated into a larger project such as the observation platform over the lagoon at Heron Park. Ms. Dufendach said she is glad there are ways the Commission can still achieve its goals by pursuing other options. Ms. Stearns shared that she has experienced situations when an AED was needed and believes it is important to find a way to obtain the devices so that they are accessible in town.

Ms. Stearns continued by saying she read that changes may be made to the tennis courts at Stephen Decatur Park and asked if there was any information to share regarding the topic. Ms. Daub said there is growing interest in adding pickleball courts in town and the potential to convert some of the current tennis courts at Stephen Decatur Park into pickleball courts. She said Public Works Director Jimmy Charles investigated what the project would entail, adding that the quote he received at that time came in at just under \$92,000. She clarified that the quote reflected converting two of the tennis courts into six pickleball courts. Before moving forward with such a project, Ms. Daub said she spoke with Town Administrator Mary Bohlen who recommended that a public survey be conducted to determine if there is community interest in pickleball. Ms. Dufendach asked how the survey would be performed; Ms. Daub answered she would work with the Commission members to create a questionnaire of five to ten questions, which can be promoted on the town website and social media. Ms. Dufendach suggested limiting the survey to only five questions.

Ms. Daub continued with the review of the Open Space Project Priority List and said it is likely that the Inclusive Playground will be removed due to the lack of grant funding available; she said the project far exceeds what had been budgeted. She added that the Stephen Decatur Park restroom project also exceeded what had been budgeted, but said the hope is to revisit the project in the future. Ms. Daub clarified that the Town currently has a grant application pending and the hope is to secure the necessary funding to move forward with this project.

Mr. Wiley commented that he would like to make a motion that the commission start actively pursuing pickleball in order to start the groundwork for the project. He said numerous people have approached him about the idea in recent weeks, adding that We Heart Berlin has begun fundraising efforts to help offset or cover the cost of the project; he said the Church Mouse has already received a \$100 donation. Ms. Daub said the request does not need to be made in the form of a motion, adding she will begin developing the survey and will add a Discussion item concerning Pickleball to the next Parks Commission meeting agenda in November.

Ms. Daub made the commission aware that a Community Parks and Playground grant application had been submitted in hopes of seeking the necessary funding to update the large play unit at Henry Park. She reported that GameTime provided a quote to give a general idea as to what the update would cost and said the amount fell within the range of available grant funding, however, she said the specifications included in the proposed design may change should the project move forward. Public Works Supervisor Cody Chesser stated the plan involves removing the existing top swing and extending the two-base swing unit. He said this would provide more space to add other playground features.

Ms. Dufendach asked if the existing swing is ADA compliant; Mr. Chesser confirmed, adding the piece of equipment is new and will not be replaced. Ms. Stearns asked what the timeline of the project would look like if the town were awarded grant funding; Ms. Daub said the estimated date of completion would be within twelve months of the award. Mr. Chesser confirmed that many of the safety issues that were found on the existing structure have been addressed but said they are working to make the unit as safe as possible until they can get a new multi-age play structure.

Mr. Wiley returned to the topic of pickleball and said he has done a lot of research and said it would be relatively inexpensive to convert the tennis courts over. Ms. Stearns asked if people would still be able to play tennis; Mr. Wiley said the nets are different, adding there are many different options available.

Mr. Steven Wehlan, a sixth-grade teacher at Berlin Intermediate School, was present at the meeting to inquire about upcoming restoration or planting projects in town in hopes of getting his students involved. He said he is working on coordinating field trips that are low cost but can benefit the community and would help Berlin Intermediate work toward maintaining their Maryland Green School Program certification. He said projects that involve planting trees or mitigation of invasive species would be of interest because they are low maintenance and benefit the community.

A lengthy discussion followed regarding the possible options for projects in town. Ms. Dufendach suggested removing vines from trees and Ms. Stearns recommended planting a tree line along Route 113 at Stephen Decatur Park and Henry Park. Ms. Dufendach said she believes the town needs to develop a plan for its tree planting. Mr. Chesser responded by saying that they have a rough and short-term plan in place for Stephen Decatur Park which involves the planting of approximately ten trees. He

continued by saying the plan is to plant trees along the roadbed to create a buffer of cypress trees; he confirmed the Horticultural Advisory Committee has been involved in the plan development. Mr. Chesser reported that he has applied for the Urban Trees Grant, and has a meeting on Thursday, September 7, 2023, to review questions the grant committee has regarding his application.

Ms. Dufendach acknowledged it would be beneficial for the Parks Commission to discuss any future plans with the Horticultural Committee. Mr. Chesser shared that a plan has not been finalized but said he continues to work on the plan with the Horticultural Committee, specifically the type of species that would work best for the long and short term in the parks. Ms. Dufendach said she is hoping the State Highway Administration will provide a water retention plan to help with the flooding problem caused by all the water that comes off the highway; she asked if there was a timeline for the tree planting. Mr. Chesser answered they had discussed starting the project in the Fall.

Ms. Dufendach said she would love to partner with Mr. Wehlan on any project, adding she hopes to address the area of Route 113 and Old Ocean City Boulevard by removing the Callery Pear trees and replacing them with native species. Mr. Wehlan said his goal is to work with species that have been impacted in some way by a kind of plague or to take students to the arboretum at the Taylor House Museum to start teaching them how to identify plants. He said he would like to begin with plant taxonomy and get students to pay more attention to the environment. Mr. Chesser asked if Mr. Wehlan would be interested in helping the Public Works Department with the plans discussed for Stephen Decatur Park; Mr. Wehlan confirmed but added that he would have to coordinate it around the hours of the school day.

Resident Laura Mulvaney was present at the meeting to offer the town her expertise concerning stormwater management and geographic information systems; she said she would love to lend her experience to help the town coordinate improvement efforts in those areas.

Ms. Daub introduced Ms. Kristen Gerhart, the newest member of the Parks Commission. She said Ms. Gerhart will be sworn in at the Regular Session meeting of the Mayor and Council on Monday, September 25, 2023.

Following no further questions or comments, Ms. Dufendach moved to adjourn the meeting; Ms. Stearns seconded, and the meeting adjourned at approximately 6:21 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Kate Daub*

Kate Daub  
Administrative Assistant



COURTS FOR TENNIS ONLY

PULL



**PICTURE IS FOR  
SAMPLE PURPOSES ONLY**

# Court Rules

Tennis Play Only

Tennis Shoes Only No  
Other Shoes Allowed

No Skateboards Bikes or  
In-line Skates

No Food or Drinks on Court

Limit Play to One Hour  
if Others Are Waiting

Surface Slippery When  
Wet or Dirty





Tripoli St

Tripoli St

Tripoli St

Tripoli St

Tripoli St

Stephen  
Decatur Park

Burley St

Burley Building  
Company

Worcester Hwy

Decatur St

Worcester Hwy

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