



PARKS COMMISSION

AGENDA

Tuesday, July 1, 2025

4:30 PM

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Minutes for May 6, 2025
3. Presentation: Eagle Scout Project, Stephen Decatur Park Bridge Rehabilitation
4. National Night Out: Tuesday, August 5, 2025, 4 PM at Henry Park – Craft selection
5. Comments from Staff
6. Comments from the Commission
7. Adjournment

Upcoming Meeting/Event Schedule:

*Tuesday, August 5, 2025, 4 PM to 7 PM (National Night Out)

Tuesday, September 2, 2025, at 4:30 PM

Tuesday, November 4, 2025, at 4:30 PM

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

Parks Commission
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, May 6, 2025

4:30 PM REGULAR SESSION – Berlin Town Hall Council Chambers

Commission Members Present: Chair Laura Stearns, Corey Davis, Patricia Dufendach, Kristen Gerhart, and Melissa Gillespie

Staff Present: Special Projects Administrator Kate Daub

This meeting was also broadcast live via Facebook. Special Projects Administrator Kate Daub called the meeting to order at approximately 4:30 PM.

Ms. Daub presented the meeting minutes from March 4, 2025, for approval. Ms. Stearns made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Ms. Dufendach, and passed without any objections.

The meeting moved to agenda item two, which included a presentation by Vincent Schicchi, who introduced himself as a Life Scout from Troop 225, sponsored by the Berlin Lions Club. He explained that he is currently working toward earning his Eagle Scout rank while studying engineering as a sophomore at Worcester Technical High School.

Mr. Schicchi presented his proposed Eagle Scout project, which involved creating and installing a Little Free Library at Stephen Decatur Park. He described the library as a small wooden structure meant to allow visitors to exchange books easily. Inspired by a similar setup he remembered from his childhood in New York, he noted that the park's frequent visitors, especially parents with children, might appreciate a quiet reading spot while kids played nearby.

He proposed two possible locations for the library within the park, one near the parking lot at the entrance to the fitness trail and the other close to the playground area. Vincent planned to complete the installation between June and August 2025. He also shared design sketches and specifications, emphasizing aesthetics that would complement Berlin's masonry style. He mentioned including a plaque to identify the library as part of his Eagle Scout project and discussed possible materials, such as brick and wood, as well as color schemes ranging from traditional tones to vibrant, child-friendly neon colors.

Ms. Dufendach asked whether Vincent would be available for future maintenance of the Little Free Library. Vincent clarified that, under Eagle Scout project guidelines, Scouts are not permitted to commit to ongoing maintenance. However, he shared his plan to set aside funds in a managed account that his mother could access to help maintain the library after he leaves for college. He also noted that the initial book supply would come from donations from family, friends, and classmates.

Mr. Davis offered to contribute old leather-bound classics, an idea Vincent enthusiastically welcomed. He added that he also planned to reach out to local libraries for discarded books and emphasized his commitment to keeping the library stocked over time.

Ms. Dufendach suggested creating a volunteer system involving other Scouts or local families to help check on and maintain the library after the project is completed. She said it would help to ensure its sustainability and encourage community participation. Vincent responded positively and said he would explore whether such an arrangement could be coordinated within Scouting guidelines.

Vincent suggested planting flowers around the Free Library to enhance its appearance. In response, Ms. Stearns expressed concern that such plantings near edges or pathways might interfere with maintenance equipment, such as lawn mowers, and could create obstacles. Additionally, Vincent explained that he had ordered a pre-made library kit and would organize volunteers to help with the assembly. Ms. Stearns recommended using more natural colors, such as dark wood or brick tones, to help the structure blend into the park's surroundings and avoid visual distraction.

The group then discussed the best location for the library, ultimately favoring the site near the playgrounds. Vincent agreed, adding that the area would provide greater visibility to park visitors walking along the path.

The conversation concluded with appreciation for Vincent's thoughtful planning and initiative. Ms. Dufendach recommended reaching out to the town's Horticulture Advisory Committee and Public Works Department for guidance on landscaping. Ms. Daub noted that Cody Chesser, superintendent of Public Works and liaison to both the Parks Commission and the Horticultural Advisory Committee, would be a key contact moving forward. Vincent requested Cody's contact information, and it was confirmed that those details would be provided.

The commission briefly returned to the topic of color choices and reiterated a preference for natural tones, such as darker wood or brick-style finishes, over lighter or neon shades. The consensus was that the colors would better complement the park's aesthetic while still allowing room for creative expression. Finally, Ms. Daub asked Vincent to submit a visual rendering of the project before it is presented to the Mayor and Council for final approval. Vincent agreed to provide an image or design rendering ahead of the meeting. Ms. Jennifer Hope-Willis, Vincent's mother, who attended the meeting, clarified that under Eagle Scout guidelines, Vincent could not begin any work on the project, including fundraising, until he received official approval from the council.

Ms. Dufendach made a motion to approve the project, which was seconded by Ms. Gerhart and passed unanimously.

Ms. Daub then updated the group on a separate town initiative by announcing that the town was preparing a grant application for the demolition of the deteriorating multipurpose building on Flower Street, which is currently contaminated with asbestos. She said the application, for a Community Development Block Grant, would mark the first step toward building a new community center at the site. She expressed appreciation for the commission's quick approval of a support letter to be included in the grant package.

Ms. Daub also gave a brief recap of the Spring Celebration event held on Saturday, April 19, 2025. She noted that all crafts were distributed within 90 minutes due to high turnout and pleasant weather. Looking ahead, she mentioned that planning for the National Night Out event in August was underway, with new craft ideas to be discussed at the July meeting.

Ms. Stearns raised a practical concern from her recent visit to Stephen Decatur Park. She observed that a section of sidewalk ends abruptly, making it difficult for parents with strollers to navigate. She requested that the sidewalk be extended to the Parks Commission's list of improvement goals. Ms. Daub responded with caution, explaining that there may be stormwater-related restrictions in the area, which could account for the absence of a permanent path. Nonetheless, she agreed to investigate the matter further.

Ms. Stearns clarified that she was not requesting a full path through the park, only a short extension connecting the existing sidewalk to the parking lot to improve accessibility. In response, Ms. Gerhart suggested using permeable grass-cover mats, which blend well with grassy areas and could offer a discreet solution.

Ms. Stearns also brought up a recurring issue with litter around the pavilion area and recommended adding more trash cans there, as well as near the dog waste station at the far end of the path. Members noted that trash cans had previously been placed in those locations, but some had gone missing. The group agreed that strategically repositioning trash cans could significantly help maintain cleanliness.

The discussion then turned to vegetation concerns, with Ms. Dufendach highlighting the resurgence of poison ivy and invasive vines along the tree line, particularly near the carved tree walk. Although some sections had been treated in the past, she observed new growth emerging through the straw and pine needles, and acknowledged that addressing it would require a coordinated and sustained effort.

Ms. Stearns added that many trees have been lost in the park over the past several months and years. She expressed a strong interest in replanting, specifically with larger shade trees such as London plane, oak, ash, cedar, and fast-growing maples.

In support of reforestation, Ms. Gillespie proposed that when private developers, such as those working on the new Wawa, are required to remove trees, they could either donate the trees or fund replacements in public spaces like Stephen Decatur Park. She emphasized that town parks provide a more suitable environment for healthy tree growth than roadside areas, where trees are more vulnerable to damage. The commission expressed support for involving the Parks Commission more directly in future tree replanting initiatives.

The conversation then shifted to Henry Park, where members agreed that additional shade is needed, particularly for children playing basketball during the hot summer months.

With no further questions or comments, Ms. Daub requested a motion to adjourn. On a motion made by Mr. Davis and seconded by Ms. Dufendach, the meeting adjourned at approximately 5:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kate Daub

Kate Daub
Special Projects Administrator



OTC

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