

Recreation Committee Meeting

February 21, 2023

A meeting of the Recreation Committee was held on this date beginning at 2:03 p.m. at City Hall and over video conference call.

Councilmembers Present: Councilmember Kevin Shealy (Recreation, Chair), Councilmember William Dudley Gregorie (Vice-Chair) (*Absent*), Councilmember Stephen Bowden (*Virtual*), Councilmember Sakran (*Virtual*), Councilmember Caroline Parker (*arrived 2:11 p.m.*), and Mayor John Tecklenburg.

Staff Present: Jason Kronsberg, Director, Parks; Laurie Yarbrough, Director, Recreation; Robin Cooper, Superintendent-Athletics; Julia Copeland, Deputy Corporation Counsel; Melissa Cruthirds, Assistant Corporation Counsel; Mallery Scheer, Assistant Corporation Counsel; Rick Jerue, Senior Advisor to the Mayor; and Wanda Stepp, Clerk of Council's Office (recording).

Also Present: Dave Echols, Don White.

Chairman Shealy called the meeting to order.

The meeting was opened with a moment of silence led by Chairman Shealy.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Councilmember Sakran, seconded by Mayor Tecklenburg, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the December 19, 2022 Joint Recreation Committee and Special Facilities Committee meeting.

Enterprise Manager Report:

Chairman Shealy said Justen Braddock, the Enterprise Manager, couldn't be there, but he had done a great job and had been working hard. Ms. Yarbrough said Mr. Braddock and their Marketing Coordinator Bethany Doman had worked hard for the last several months looking at their sponsorship package and how they could better present themselves to businesses and the area agencies that might want to align with their mission and what was going on in their Recreation Department. She said last week they managed to ink a deal with the Charleston RiverDogs that would result in \$15,000 in cash. Mr. Dave Echols was in attendance, and they had a great longstanding relationship with their partners over at the RiverDogs. Mr. Dave Echols was in attendance. It was the first time they had been able to do that, and she hoped it was the start of some new activity to help bring in additional revenues into Parks and Recreation that they could turn back into their program. She was very proud of Mr. Braddock and Ms. Doman, and she was very appreciative. Mr. Braddock was working with some other businesses and if the Committee knew of anyone in the community that might be interested in talking to Mr. Braddock, to get in touch with her and she would connect them with Mr. Braddock. She said Chairman Shealy had made a connection over the weekend for them and they were appreciative of that. Anything they could do to bring in some additional revenue would assist them. Mayor Tecklenburg wanted to put Mr. Braddock on the agenda for next meeting so they could all get to know him personally. He thought it would be helpful if he would let them know what he was looking for and working for because sometimes the Mayor or a Councilmember

might have some connection with a company just to connect a dot for Mr. Braddock and help the sales call. He thought they should all be on deck to be able to help make those requests when they knew somebody that would be appropriate. Ms. Yarbrough agreed and said Mr. Braddock was in a great position for the City as he was starting a job that no one had before him. If they had ever done that in their life, they didn't get, 'Here's the files, pick them up and run.' They had to figure out what they were doing. She said he had spent a lot of time with their consultant, Tom O'Rourke, working through those because it was such a different position than anything else in their Recreation Department. She would have him make a presentation at the next meeting.

Update on lights for tennis courts:

Mr. Kronsberg said they had two ongoing lighting projects which were Maybank Tennis Center and Charleston Tennis Center. There had been a little bit of start and stop based on supply of materials. The contractor was at Charleston Tennis Center and that work should be completed by the end of the week. That was just swapping out fixture for fixture on existing poles. They were LED lights, and they were smart, so they could tell them when to turn on and when to turn off. After they finished at Charleston Tennis Center, they would move over to Maybank Tennis Center and continue on that work where they had to install a couple extra poles, but they were also replacing the existing lights from the old GE sports lighters to the new LED lights. He said they were on a good track. Chairman Shealy said he knew that people would be excited with the new lighting and all of the advancements of the tennis centers. Mayor Tecklenburg asked if they had an estimate on how long Maybank would take. Mr. Kronsberg said they didn't have that yet.

Update on Disc Golf:

Chairman Shealy said Ms. Yarbrough and Mr. Kronsberg had done a great job working with Bart Altman who headed up the disc golf community and gave some great information at the last meeting. Mr. Kronsberg said they walked the course and removed the dangerous steps, and had barricaded a couple of the little areas that weren't fixed yet. They were going to install some earthen steps where the old steps were. The steps were built to traverse and remnant phosphate mine pile was what that whole area was originally, so they were going to install timber-type steps in the side of the earthen work so they would be more user friendly. Work orders had been created for all of the other decks and boardwalks that needed to be repaired. They just hadn't gotten to them yet. Ms. Yarbrough said while they had been working hard on the facilities end, she had met with Mr. Altman twice now and had walked the course with him. She said he had done a remarkable job of taking a couple of tools and just working hard out there, and he was proud of what he had done. She said he had put in a permit to use Hampton Park in December of 2023 to have a disc golf tournament which was one of the things he and his group really wanted to do was go back to Hampton Park and have a tournament. They would provide all of the equipment and baskets, so they were working with him on that. She said Mr. Altman would also like to have a couple of things at West Ashley Park and she was working with him on that. She said he was going to meet with Mr. Braddock about potentially figuring out some ways that they might be able to sponsor some of the baskets by wrapping them in a sponsor material and maybe doing a couple of tournaments with them to find some sponsors.

She said Mr. Altman was really excited about the interest that the City had taken back in disc golf.

Mayor Tecklenburg said when they talked with Mr. Altman before, there was a thought of improving the one that badly needed improvements, but also thinking about other locations where even if they couldn't do 18, they might consider doing 9. Mr. Kronsberg said he hadn't worked on that yet. He said they had Johns Island Park, which was an existing course, but they would put their thinking caps on. Mayor Tecklenburg said Hampton Park was not really being utilized for anything right now and it wasn't far from the West Ashley Park, but he thought the comment there was it wasn't big enough to do 18 holes. Mr. Kronsberg said they needed a good footprint because discs were like golf balls so there needed to be a lot of open space as the frisbies were quick and they were thin and dense. He said there was a putter, a driver, all different weights, and they flew differently. They went left and right. Some were more stable like a set of clubs, but it had a lot of velocity and they had to have a lot of open space. Chairman Shealy said he was excited that Mr. Altman was going to talk to Mr. Braddock as he thought there were some big opportunities. He said that adult sports would be a fit for that particular business he had came across that was mentioned earlier.

Pickleball Storage Request:

Mr. Kronsberg said they had gotten a lot of requests for one-off storage and they had to figure out how to manage, if that's how the City wanted to do it. There were people that wanted to have a work box there and have equipment in it, but it was a little bit of uncharted territory for them as to how they implemented something for all. If it wasn't for all, then everybody wanted a one-off box. Ms. Yarbrough said they had used them with their own staff sometimes with sports where they didn't have to locate storage at a location such as to put a ball machine in. She said Don White, who was a pickleball enthusiast, was the one that had asked if they could do this so that some nets could be stored onsite, and so that groups when they got there could use them. She knew that Councilmember Parker was trying to get that moving. She said they had talked to Legal, there was a way to do it, and they were working through how that would work, but they had to figure out how they were going to put signage and information on it so that everybody that showed up would understand why it was locked, when it was open, when the group got the stuff out, and how they might contact them so they could get the equipment out and use it. They were trying to work through some of those, but Julia Copeland had given the okay to do it. Mr. Kronsberg had asked that Recreation be the coordinator of that, so Recreation would be the coordinator. She thought it was something they could get across the goal line.

Chairman Shealy said most of them knew that the pickleball community had asked for lines to be put on some courts several months ago and now they were in a situation where they had separate nets to play their pickleball games, so they were trying to find an easier solution than someone having to pack it up, put it in their trunk, and physically bring it so that it would already be there.

Councilmember Parker said she had spoken with Mr. White and Ms. Yarbrough at a Recreation Commission meeting and reiterated that this was a key component of their community contributing to a City facility in order for them to have easier access to their equipment. She thought it was a low-risk situation. She said she wasn't an attorney, she wasn't in the Parks

Department, she wasn't Recreation, but she thought this was a feasible solution. She thanked Mr. White for his community and their contributions for the box. She said the signage was sort of where they fell, but she didn't think there was a whole lot of responsibility. If people wanted to know about it, they would have a number to call, someone in Recreation would answer the phone, and they would put them in the department. She asked if the Committee could give Ms. Copeland the go ahead to do the MOU. Ms. Yarbrough said that was her understanding that they would move forward if that was something the Committee wanted. She and Mr. White e-mailed often whenever he needed something. When they had someone active like that in the community, it made something like this a lot easier. She said sometimes folks had really great ideas or a lot of energy and then they ran out of it, and in three years Mr. Kronsberg and she had a rusted contractor box sitting in the back of a car getting beat up, tagged, and with graffiti. She thought it would work well with this group of volunteers because they were so active and out there using it so much. Councilmember Parker said that was great and she assumed with an MOU like this, if that was the case that the community abandoned the box, the City had every right to remove it. Ms. Yarbrough agreed. Councilmember Parker said she really appreciated Parks and Recreation doing this for them and she thought it was win-win for all. Mayor Tecklenburg asked where they would be using it. Ms. Yarbrough confirmed with Mr. White that they were going to start with Bees Landing, but it probably wouldn't be long for Alan Fleming. Councilmember Parker said Councilmember Brady was aware and was supportive, as well. Mr. Kronsberg said the reason they would talk about it like this was because when he came to the City and he moved into his current position from his prior one, there were a lot of things that came out of the woodwork that didn't have an agreement and that nobody knew about. He said it was years of things like that being asked about and there would be no record of it, so if they got it memorialized then when they were all gone, there would be something there and it was a good way to track it. Councilmember Parker said it was just a great contribution.

Councilmember Sakran told Ms. Yarbrough and Mr. Kronsberg they did an awesome job on Frank Jones and Hester Park. He was there with his kids and the courts were being utilized fully and it was a site to see on a day when a lot of folks had off, the basketball courts were being utilized, the field was being utilized, and the tennis courts. He thanked Ms. Yarbrough and Mr. Kronsberg for all of their hard work. Mr. White said he appreciated Councilmember Parker's, Ms. Yarbrough's, and Mr. Kronsberg's efforts on their behalf to get their community more involved. It was communicated to him by Councilmember Parker that nothing spoke action like actually doing things, and they were able to do that by getting the community involved. He said they really looked forward to this, they appreciated their efforts, and they understood the difficulties long term of things disappearing through the cracks. They would do whatever it took to make sure that the efforts on their behalf were well appreciated.

Mayor Tecklenburg said he saw the request from some citizens willing to pay for the insulation of another court at Moultrie Playground and he wondered if that had any legs particularly since the citizens were willing to raise money to pay for the improvements. Ms. Yarbrough said she and Mr. Kronsberg had a meeting last week with one of the individuals who had moved to the community and was an avid player. She said he had asked about the possibility of more courts being added there since it was such a nice location. She and Mr. Kronsberg were concerned about losing some of the grass area from that park as it had shrunk when they looked at the beautiful renovations that had occurred. They had determined that there could be two courts placed adjacent to the two that were there and still would leave the long rectangle so that athletics could use that for doing things. She said Moultrie was a neighborhood park with no real

parking there, and the restrooms were over by the tennis courts. She thought that was a good compromise and they left that meeting with that individual going forward with that information about the City's willingness to work with him. Councilmember Parker said she thought those were fabulous opportunities of the community coming together and she would fully support that. She understood there were a lot of other things, but those were fabulous opportunities that the community was willing to step up and say, 'We know there are needs. We want to do it.' She said in a short amount of time, they had raised the money for the box, and she thought that was great.

Discussion on current City youth sports, participation, number of fields and groups receiving permits (Requested by Councilmember Jason Sakran):

Ms. Yarbrough said Councilmember Sakran had been following an e-mail exchange for some folks that were looking for fields, outside groups that came to the City routinely especially this time of year, looking for field use for private teams and uses. He had asked for a report to better understand what the City currently had, what the City offered, what the City used, and then the relationships the City was in with different agencies.

The first portion was on Youth Sports participation. They took it back to 2013 which was about the time they started using RecTrac and being able to capture how many registrations the City had for each area. They were broken into the four boroughs. Johns Island was not up there because they didn't actually have staff that were on Johns Island working daily with those folks, so most of their Johns Island people either went to James Island or West Ashley. The graphs showed winter, spring, and fall sports, and that was the total just for the Peninsula over the last nine years. She said they could see where they went into 2020 during COVID and in March of that season when COVID started and then they stopped everything. They did go back and have a smaller fall, so they could see that trend in all of the areas that way, but the bottom line numbers had now rallied back and they were beyond where they were at. She said they had higher participation than they had prior to that. The only area they saw a little bit of a problem with was in the Peninsula as there were less kids living downtown and participating in sports. They saw it in the housing communities. There were just less children out there, so part of that was some of that loss. Tackle football had been a loss that they had each fall, but they had rebounded in the last year by adding flag football and their soccer numbers were up. In all of the sports and recreation departments across the nation, they saw a drop in tackle football with the younger ages. She understood as, obviously, there were a lot of moms and dads that were concerned about safety. There was plenty of time for tackle down the road and tackle football was more expensive. It was about \$300-\$350 to outfit a kid in tackle football equipment. They had a lot of flag football that was played, and that sport required a lot less money and things to put in.

She said those were just the numbers of families/kids that registered just with the City of Charleston each season to play sports. Currently, the City's Athletic Department which was run by Robin Cooper and all of her staff. Once they finished basketball and all stars, then they would go into spring, so James Island would have that many kids at least playing in the spring between baseball, basketball, and soccer. On Daniel Island, the numbers were there and in West Ashley, there would be almost 1,400 kids. That was a lot of kids on the fields. It would start up in the next couple of weeks. While they had all of those kids going, they also had cross

country going across the City. They had a track program which had picked up some numbers and they were excited about that as they were going to be at Stoney Field for the first time. They were running middle school sports, City-wide wrestling, a volleyball program for fall City-wide, gymnastics was City-wide year-round, adults sports, and their swim team would max out at 300 kids. They couldn't take any more kids on their swim team. They were getting ready to start the elementary/middle school tennis program with another 1,100 kids in the spring. She said City-wide there was a lot of action, a lot of things going on in their parks and fields just by what families that signed up with the City did. Chairman Shealy said he saw that James Island was a little bit ahead of West Ashley which surprised him a little bit because West Ashley was such a large community, but maybe James Island was pulling from Johns Island. He knew they had gymnastics and swimming. Ms. Yarbrough said there was really no one else offering anything on James Island. They had the James Island Soccer Club which was a private soccer club and they did pull from there, but they were more expensive than the City and had a volunteer requirement. So, if someone lived on Johns Island, Folly Beach, or James Island, and they had a situation where the City was working with the Town of James Island where if someone was a Town reimbursement, they would reimburse the City for that difference between residency and non-residency. She said West Ashley was very large and a lot of those kids were probably playing private sports and they also had St. Andrews Parks and Playgrounds. She said that was a great note as the first couple of years in West Ashley, the City was still combined with St. Andrews Parks and Playgrounds. The City had a ways agreement then, but since starting there though, all of the numbers added all had been back in the City's own programs. She said Daniel Island was another one that had a large number of young families now. When they first got some facilities on Daniel Island, they were seeing kids in the 5 to 6 and 7 to 8, and now those kids had grown and stayed with the City. She said they actually pulled some kids from Mt. Pleasant if they lived close to Daniel Island, if they lived on the outside area where the Port was, Belle Hall, and all of that community. It was a shorter distance to jump on I-526 and drive to the City than it was to drive all of the way out in Park West for Carolina Park. She was pleased with where they were. She thought they did was great, and they did all of that with 11 coordinators and about 3,000 volunteer coaches. Those were people that were not being paid. They were moms, dads, and sometimes grandpas who came back because they had so much fun coaching the first time. She said those were all of the things happening in the City currently in all of those areas on the fields.

Ms. Yarbrough went through and showed which fields the City had access to. Starting with Daniel Island there was Governor's Park off of I-526 and they had six lighted fields consisting of four soccer fields and two baseball fields. They also had Etiwan Park which had one field with no lights. They had Freedom Park behind the school which had two fields or one vacant and one larger field with no lights. She said when they were programming for Daniel Island, those were the only fields they could use to have lights on for practices or games. Trying to have everything happen here and here required that everything had to happen between 5:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. until it really got further in the day which put a strain on Daniel Island. When they had a group that wanted to have a lacrosse team from Daniel Island, they were asking for a field in one of those field areas and currently going into the spring, they could see what numbers they had between baseball, softball, soccer, and lacrosse that they were trying to fit into those same parameters.

Ms. Yarbrough said on James Island there was the James Island Recreation Center which was kind of the hub where they did things and it had four lighted fields. Down the road was the

Bayview Soccer Complex which had four lighted fields, and then on the other side of James Island there was Plymouth Park. They had access to Medway but the City didn't actually own that building as it was owned by the school and that field had no lights. Again, if a private baseball team wanted to have a travel baseball team and they weren't going to play with the City, then they were asking for a field that fell in some of those that weren't a neighborhood park currently. Honey Hill was there, but it had no restrooms, no lights, very limited parking, and there was a neighborhood that had a very strong connection to it. Councilmember Parker said same with Westchester. Ms. Yarbrough said same with Thomas Johnson. She said there were fields that existed, but it was difficult for her to put a group out there as they had their own uses in their own area and they had a strong bond with that. She said they did permit an all African American, historically, in the community, called Coastal Softball League. It was an adult softball league that asked to use it, the City permitted it, and they had played there for years, so that kind of worked there. She said they did have a couple of other fields, but they didn't have lights on them. Mr. Kronsberg's crew didn't have irrigation to that and they didn't do any kind of chemicals. There was no pre-emergent put down and no pest control, it was just a field, so that was the differentiation between the two. Plymouth field didn't have any lights or irrigation, but it worked.

Ms. Yarbrough showed the lighted fields the City had on Johns Island and also a soccer field at Johns Island Park which served that whole area. She said they were working closely with St. Johns High School who wanted to add to their government use agreement with the School District to allow them to make some improvements out there that would allow their softball and baseball teams to use that for their home site.

Ms. Yarbrough said with regard to the downtown area she showed Stanley Chisolm which was up in the neck. Those three fields were multi-purpose fields used for lacrosse or rugby. They did not have lights. She said they had Gadsdenboro which was across from the Aquarium. They had one large field that they actually used as a couple of smaller fields, but there weren't any lights there. There was one field at Moultrie and they would still have a rectangle if they added a couple more courts. Harmon Park had three lighted fields, Stoney field had one lighted field, and McMahon had one lighted field. Stoney Field was getting a lot of use currently with Burke High School which they were happy about. The City built the track field there and it was currently being used by 40 or 50 kids every day running track which was exactly what was wanted, but Burke was using Stoney Field for that program, for football, Step, and band practices. They didn't have a soccer team this year. They would have baseball and softball. Those were the ways they were working with those folks.

Ms. Yarbrough said in West Ashley starting with outer West Ashley they had Bees Landing with three lighted fields. They had West Ashley Park with four soccer and four baseball fields which were lighted fields. There was Mary Utsey Playground which was the best playing field she had ever seen. They also had Forest Park Playground which was behind W.L. Stephens swimming pool and it had a lighted field, as well.

Ms. Yarbrough said that's what the City had in order to program those numbers. So, when they started getting phone calls from friends asking for a practice field, she showed a list of permitted athletic organizations that even though the City had their own needs, they already worked with those groups to permit them. Ebony Soccer Club, Cainhoy Soccer Club, James Island Youth Soccer Club, and Charleston Rugby Club. Cusabo Lacrosse had an MOA with the City that expired during COVID. She and Mr. Kronsberg met with those folks and they were trying to

figure out what they were going to do with themselves. Coastal Lacrosse, Palmetto Lacrosse, Hurricanes Lacrosse, Mingo Lacrosse, Low Lax Lacrosse, Lil' Bulldogs AAU Football, West Ashley Wildcats AAU Football, and Barrier Island Little League was actually Johns Island. She said they had outgrown their little complex by the water company on Maybank. Sea Island Softball League, St. Johns High School Baseball and Softball, Burke Football, Band, Baseball, Softball, Soccer, Step Team, and Track. Those were the groups that the City worked with in addition to the programs the City ran now. She knew that folks rode by a field and said, 'Wow, I rode by the field and there was nobody on it at 2:00 p.m.,' and at 2:00 p.m., there wasn't going to be anybody on it except maybe Mr. Kronsberg's guys getting it ready, but the kids would be out there in those afternoon hours from 4:00 p.m. until and they didn't do their adult sports until after 7:30 p.m. because she was trying to get the kids in early time slots. She said they just kind of balanced everybody's needs with what they had. If there was an empty time that a field was not being used and the field was in good shape, they had no problem renting it out to somebody, but then Mr. Kronsberg and herself had this dance that they did where he built wonderful fields and they take care of them and then we go out and use them and then get torn up. Then, she goes to Mr. Kronsberg to take care of the field and he tells her not to use them so much, so it was that back and forth that they were doing all of the time, but this was what they currently had.

Ms. Yarbrough said she knew Councilmember Sakran had some interest in how they let people know about the City's programs. She said their marketing efforts, although they were inexpensive and broad, they had the reader boards across the City, they use constant contact, the City's website, social media, flyers, and they sent e-mails to folks already playing in the City's program that it was time to register for the next program. That was how they got the word out. They did brochures. She said they tried to tap into every household realizing that one way doesn't work for everyone. Their registration used to be all in-person, but now they had an online component to that, as well. The City invested some money in RecTrac, and two out of three transactions currently were done online. Those were people that didn't have to get in their car and they could sign up for summer camp in their pajamas and never leave their house. She thought that was the kind of customer service they were all trying to give.

Ms. Yarborough said the Charleston County School District and the City had had a Joint Use Agreement going back to the '70s. She and Mr. Kronsberg updated it four or five years ago, but they were actually working on it again now because they had Stoney Field. The maintenance of that needed to go in and they were also contemplating what would happen at Johns Island County Park with St. Johns, but the reality of that agreement was the School District said to the City anytime they were not using their gym, the City could use it which was a great offer. The problem was they used their gyms every day and every night, so the City didn't get access to those gyms. She said they did get some time at Camp Road School, not in their gym, but on their athletic field as well as Ravenel Stadium in West Ashley, they ended up using that field a good bit which worked well. The City provided the field for Burke and then for St. Johns, but that was kind of the way that relationship went. When the schools were using the gyms in the winter months, that's when the City needed them and so they weren't available to the City. Ms. Yarborough said they were getting ready to start their busiest season and they had had a lot of rain in the last few weeks. The fields at Governor's Park currently were very wet. She knew that some of West Ashley Park was wet. All of those places were just wet. She said they were trying to minimize the use. There wasn't a whole lot permitted going on, but in the next couple of weeks, they would start seeing a lot of folks out there.

Councilmember Sakran said he appreciated Ms. Yarbrough's presentation as it was tremendously helpful to see the bigger picture. He wasn't sure if they had this since he started, but it was helpful particularly the point around the lack of field space. He asked with the Joint Use Agreement with CCSD, if there was opportunity for the City to use some of the fields that might be in play in some of the locations because he had had calls, not from the City Council side, but from his other role from community members basically displeased with the lack of access to some of the School District facilities at night. Many municipalities, many cities across the Country, those facilities were often a little bit more open for community members to use. So, he wondered if with the Joint Use Agreement, if any of the fields in play were in that agreement. Ms. Yarbrough said that happens in a lot of places across the United States and it even happens over in Mt. Pleasant with a couple of fields where they had managed to work some things out, but for the most part the City's elementary and middle schools didn't have outside areas even for themselves much less for the City. When the high schools were going in their season between JV, Varsity, girls and boys, there wasn't anything else left field-wise to use, so that hampered what they could do. She said they did use Ravenel and they worked closely with Steve Fogleman, and they used Camp Road Middle. Since both of those campuses used to have high schools on them and had fields that were stadium fields that drained and had lights, and they didn't have high schools on them now, so they were able to access those in the evenings and on Saturdays. She said one other challenge was on Saturdays when the Citadel had a home football game in the fall which would be when the City played football, they couldn't use Stoney Field because they couldn't get parking in and out of there. When they played a day game, that quadrant was consumed by Citadel folks, so they couldn't get their own teams, kids, umpires, and referees in and out of there. So, on those Saturdays thank goodness they had Ravenel because they did use that. They were even a little hampered by what went on around them in some areas, not just what went on on the fields.

Councilmember Sakran asked Ms. Yarbrough what some of her biggest challenges were overall. He said the change in hourly rates had probably helped, but he wanted to hear from Ms. Yarbrough if it had helped with the hiring as they headed into the summer with some of the challenges the City faced last year with swim lessons and manning the pools. Ms. Yarbrough said she hoped that would become a little clearer in time. She said for full-time employees there had been a huge morale boost and interest in jobs and people were excited because they were making more money. They had some people applying for some full-time jobs. The world of part-time was still difficult even at that hourly rate of finding really good folks to apply, but they would continue to use their efforts working with HR to get that word out. Their staffing was always an issue. If they didn't have great coordinators, there was no way this program would run because they had 3,000 volunteers to supervise, they had 1,000 kids to supervise plus their parents and grandparents and the dogs they bring to the field when they're not supposed to have dogs on the field, and everybody else that was out watching it. It was those staff that were doing that. We just don't have any part-time staff currently.

Ms. Yarbrough said she knew after last summer they couldn't sit around and wait, so she talked to the Mayor several months ago about the idea of finding a company to privatize the seasonal lifeguards paying about the same thing. They would be out recruiting for those folks and trying to market and onboard to take some of the stress off of their staff and let them actually do programming. She said they had a contract coming to City Council at the next meeting that would be for securing seasonal lifeguard services for Herbert Hasell, James Island Recreation Center, and W.L. Stephens pools. The staff at MLK was a year-round pool, so they would keep

all of that staff there. This was the way they were going to try to get ahead of the summer because they really had not had more people come knocking on their doors trying to get certified. They had six lifeguard certification programs set up between now and May that they could certify guards because they had so many open positions currently.

Councilmember Sakran said that they found in Kaleidoscope they got about 80% of their folks hired through their lawn signs which were posted around the schools, so he encouraged them to use them more particularly when there were sign-ups and new enrollments, or if they were looking to hire. The lawn signs worked well and they were cheap. Also, on the donation side when they looked for sponsorships, he thought the sponsorship numbers could be a little bit higher and that might be something to pass back into the Enterprise Manager's portfolio of work in looking at other places. For example, to sponsor a team, that number could be a bit higher and some of that money could actually go to the volunteer coaches to pay them a small stipend. He thought they could get that number a bit higher and get more from some of the business partners. Ms. Yarbrough said Mr. O'Rourke had put a nice goal minded setting for her to try to find those dollars. They were looking hard for them in the City, but that was absolutely what they needed to do was to continue to market and find those resources and revenues. Councilmember Parker thanked Ms. Yarbrough and said that they did incredible work. She said she knew the City fields especially when it came to City recreation, the teams, families, and participants that signed up at a great rate all ran by volunteers and the City's wonderful staff. She said that was the City's priority for the coming season and, of course, they wanted to have those partnerships with those outside companies and welcomed it, but she thought with the baseball leagues that wanted permits and things could be done outside of the times that the City was scheduling City recreation folks. Ms. Yarbrough agreed and if they couldn't schedule it outside, then they had to say no. She said there was a process for that and for the groups that wanted to take an off field or an alternative or were willing to go on a Sunday afternoon, because the City didn't do youth sports on Sundays, so it does work if the folks were willing to work with them a little bit.

Councilmember Sakran said with regard to the donations and sponsorships, he wasn't referring to some of those outside companies. What he was referring to was, for example, he sponsored his child's City league and the sponsorship was like \$300 or something like that to his business. He would happily pay \$1,000 for that sponsorship if that would help recruit and attract coaches to stay with the City, that was what he was referring to in terms of the sponsorship money. Mayor Tecklenburg thought it was clear to all of them that they were trying to max out the resources, the facilities, that they did have. This would morph into their discussion at the next meeting, but it seemed to him, to add some more turf at some of the fields and to add some more lights to expand the hours that they could operate at would be a very positive thing to continue to increase the capacity. He knew this would probably bring the same kind of response from CCSD with the City's partnership with them. He asked Ms. Yarbrough if she worked with Berkeley County already. Ms. Yarbrough said they didn't have a Joint Use Agreement with Berkeley County, but when the Freedom Park School was built that land property adjacent to the school was a shared relationship. She said they had 500 hours a year of access to their gym during non-school times and Berkeley County used the City's fields for PE and recess, and then the City had those fields in the afternoon after they were done. She said that had been a nice relationship. Mayor Tecklenburg said the City needed them more than they needed the City, but with the schools on the Cainhoy Peninsula, until the City got some facilities up there, the City needed to probably take an extra step in trying to further their relationship with Berkeley County

schools. He knew Ms. Yarbrough had spoken a few years ago with Ashley Hall, but there were some other private schools they could partner with. He knew First Baptist had a nice facility on James Island. He said they could ask some other schools and even the colleges to see if there were any opportunities out there to share and sometimes that could mean the City investing in their facility or the City's. He knew the City had an agreement coming forward, if it wasn't already in place, with the Charleston County School District to do some improvements at the City's Johns Island baseball fields. He said maybe there was a school asset somewhere that needed lights and the City could invest in a school property. They needed to look at all of those possibilities, not just Charleston County School District, but the other schools and institutions in the City.

Approval of seasonal lifeguard contract:

Ms. Yarbrough said they did an RFP and there was one company that they were familiar with that did work in the Carolinas and Georgia finding seasonal aquatics staff. The company reached out and did apply to the RFP and their proposal was accepted, so they had been working through the contract. Mallery Scheer said they were the one proposal submitted, but they did appear to be a very good fit with the City. She said they met with the vendor, and they were hashing out just a couple of final details. The contract that was in the Committee's packet was probably 98% what they were going to do. She had gotten verbal confirmation that she thought they were all in agreement, but the goal was that the final version would be on the next City Council agenda. She asked that the Committee approve it with the permission for her to finalize any negotiation. Ms. Yarbrough said they would be using their seasonal money that came from the budget under Aquatics for the contract. She said Ms. Wharton had told her that she thought if she froze one other position, she could almost make the swap even that way, so the company would be paying what the City would pay. She thought the savings to the City was that instead of the City's HR which was trying to find firefighters, police officers, scorekeepers, and clerks, this company specialized in aquatics staff and they were out in the street running on that. Then, the City's aquatics staff could focus on programming and managing pools instead of hiring 16-year old summer lifeguards and training them. Chairman Shealy assumed they would be employees of USA Management, but the lifeguard would report to the City's Pool Manager who was a City employee. Ms. Yarbrough said that was correct and that State DHEC required they have a Certified Pool Operator (CPO) for each of the pools, so that would be a City staff person. USA Management already had the City's schedule. They would schedule the lifeguards and they would know when the City had open recreation swim, when they had swim team, when they had laps swim, or whatever. They would have those folks staffed for that appropriately, and the City would just be managing the pool, taking up money, making sure the locker rooms were ready to go and cleaned, the pool deck chairs were out, and those kind of things. Chairman Shealy said the Pool Manager would have the ability to say, 'Hey, this person's doing a great job or this person's not cutting it, we need somebody else.' Ms. Yarbrough said absolutely, and that all of the lifeguards had to be certified. They would either be certified upon the time that USA Management hired them or when the season started, and USA Management had that. All of that certification would go through them. They would be certified in the same groups that the City was certified in the year-round pools. She said it should be very transparent and the general public shouldn't see a difference.

Chairman Shealy asked if any bonus opportunities were still being offered. Ms. Yarbrough said the City had a bonus opportunity for those positions, but the seasonal positions through USA Management was up to them if they decided to do something like that. Chairman Shealy said at no time USA Management wouldn't be paying more to their seasonal as the City was to City employees. Ms. Yarbrough said the only way there could be a difference would be if they hired somebody with a lot more experience such as a schoolteacher that was 45 years old that came and worked in the summer versus one of the younger college age, and none of the things that came out of City workers' paychecks would come out of the paychecks for USA Management. Councilmember Parker said she was fully supportive and behind it if it meant the pools were open and kids were swimming. Ms. Yarbrough said that was what they were all trying for. She had not seen the climate change in the hiring process, or the number of people interested in jobs, so to sit and wait on something coming up in May she wouldn't be doing a service to the citizens of Charleston if they didn't try to do something differently.

On a motion by Councilmember Bowden, seconded by Councilmember Parker, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the seasonal lifeguard contract.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Submitted by Wanda Stepp
Clerk of Council's Office