

Virtual Recreation Committee Meeting

March 7, 2022
Minutes

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

All media were advised of this meeting.

Councilmembers Present: Councilmember Shealy (Chair), Councilmember Gregorie (Vice-Chair), Councilmember Parker, Councilmember Bowden, and Mayor Tecklenburg.

Staff Present: Jason Kronsberg, Director, Parks; Laurie Yarbrough, Director, Recreation; Wanda Stepp, Clerk of Council's Office (recording).

Also Present: Councilmember Shahid, Troy Miller, Marshall Ormond, and Fern White.

Chairman Shealy called for a moment of silence.

On a motion by Councilmember Gregorie, seconded by Councilmember Bowden, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the July 13, 2021 Recreation Committee meeting and the July 19, 2021 Joint Public Safety Committee and Recreation Committee meeting.

Municipal Golf Course – Friends of The Muni (Presentation):

Chairman Shealy said that Troy Miller had played a major role in the Muni, and even after it had been renovated, it was still the most affordable way for constituents to get out and enjoy the game of golf. It was a bargain with the City discount. Within six months of the course being renovated, it showed up in the national rankings of top municipal golf courses in the United States. It was #19 according to www.Golf.com. Since drawing that national attention, the course had done incredibly well from a financial standpoint. The Friends of the Muni wanted to make sure the golf course continued to do well and they had some ideas on how they may be able to improve on it.

Troy Miller said the first time the project was presented in a number of iterations was back in 2016 when the projected costs were about \$3 million. When it was originally presented to the City, the idea was that it would provide about a 10% return on investment. The original projections and plan were not only a design of the golf course, but also conceptual budgeting that would help tell how that would be achieved. A lot of it was predicated on creating a product that was good enough to come play, not just good enough to play while they were there, start to drive a little bit more play out of tourism, and subsidize the ability for the golf course to continue to be maintained at an improved and elevated level by providing some out-of-town play at a higher rate while maintaining that exceptionally low rate for residents which they had been able to continue to do through the process. The next step was to figure out how to source the funding for it. Some of that came through the Recreation Bond passed in 2018. Accommodations Tax dollars played a role in the funding as well as private donations raised through the Friends of the Muni over the course of the last several years. In October 2019, they had the RFP for the

construction of the golf course renovation and started construction in January of 2020. The golf course opened in December of 2020. The costs came in at about \$2.5 million through COVID and some other value engineering items. They decided to cut some items in order to keep the budget, in the uncertainty of times with COVID, but what the result had been was pleasing and astonishing. They went from 55,000 rounds in 2019 to 67,000 rounds in 2021. They went from about 350 Junior players being serviced in camps and lessons to around 1,000 players total in their programs for Junior golfers. As a result of the project, Charleston County was able to greenlight the Woodland Shores drainage improvements that the County worked on which included putting sidewalks in on Woodland Shores Road primarily because of the improved drainage that took place in concert with the re-design and development of the golf course that allowed for some more stormwater improvements for not just the golf course, but for the surrounding areas, as well. Late last year, they were also recognized by the FairWays Foundation with a grant for environmental sustainability in golf and environmental design in golf that would allow them to continue that movement and plant some more wetland plants and the aquatic shelves of some of the large ponds built during the course of the construction.

From a dollars perspective, the project results had been incredibly positive. They went from a situation where, typically, over the course of the last 10 to 12 years, Charleston Municipal had lost somewhere in the neighborhood of \$50,000 to \$100,000 annually on a net operating income basis. In 2021, the golf course did \$1.2 million more in revenue than it had ever done before and ended up with a profit of \$550,000 which was a \$650,000 improvement over the 2019 numbers. It was incredibly well done by Mr. Ormond and his staff to be able to operate and create the generation of revenue that had never existed before. It showed what an incredible project it had been for the City. Going back and thinking about that 10% return they talked about in 2016 paled in comparison to the kind of returns they saw within 12 to 14 months of the opening.

Some of the key factors associated with that were fewer weather days due to the improved drainage. The golf course, typically, had to close for several days after heavy rains or significantly elevated tides in the past because of the drainage issues. All of those had been alleviated and there had been some increased interest in golf through COVID, so that played a part in it, as well. The quality of the course and the conditions had driven a different client. More interest and excitement about playing the golf course as well as the national and international acclaim had come to fruition it had been a lot. At the end of 2020, they were named one of the Top 10 courses in the world to be seen in 2021 by Golf Magazine. Shortly thereafter in April, they were named the 19th municipal golf course in the Country and that made them the top rated municipal golf course in the southeastern United States. They also were awarded several large prestigious events that would bring heads to beds in Charleston including the South Carolina State High School Championships in May and the South Carolina Public Links Championship later in the fall which was a Statewide event to celebrate public golf and public golfers around the State and give them their own championship for those that weren't members of private clubs. He encouraged the Committee to do a google search which would uncover a lot more of the coverage they saw. One that he thought was probably his favorite was written by a Golf Magazine writer that talked about the community aspect of Muni and what he stumbled across by coming and hanging out for half-a-day trying to get on the golf course, waiting for a tee time to open up, and some of the people he encountered and the sense of community that Charleston Municipal provided. That was where their project had gone from a Junior Program's' perspective. Part of the exponential growth in players was because part of the project included the creation of a short game area which gave them more physical space to be able to host the kids. Through the U.S. Kids Junior Programs, like Boykin Powers and his crew ran through Charleston Municipal, and through partnerships with the First Tee, PGA Hope, and Fore the Ladies, and soon to be Western Golf Association, their span of touching Junior players in

Charleston had accelerated tremendously. They still needed expanded space in different ways as well as the need for more instructors. Their limiting factor was no longer space as much as it was instructors to be able to handle the number of kids that wanted to be involved in the programs. Another thing they were honored to be involved with was the Western Golf Association's Evans Scholar Caddie Program. In the spring, 8 to 12 rising 9th graders would begin caddying at the Muni and it would be a job for them where they would be able to earn some bucks on the side as well as an opportunity for them to earn a full scholarship including housing to several schools throughout the United States. The program was over almost 100 years old, the same age as Charleston Municipal was, and it had a huge footprint in the northern states, the northeast, the upper Midwest for almost a century, and they were pioneering the southeast. It was an opportunity for kids in their market to have an opportunity to gain a full scholarship to college in a life-changing way, so they were excited about that. One of the things the Western Golf Association, from a core mission values perspective, was they shared that same mission of diversity, equity, and inclusion that they had within the Friends of the Muni. It was a good fit of a partnership to bring to Charleston Municipal.

Mr. Miller talked about the future and how they tried to improve in some of the things the Friends of the Muni wanted to see done. From a tee sheet management perspective, they needed management software built for golf so they could increase non-resident accessibility to the golf course and ease of use for everyone including the residents. They wanted to continue to do on-course enhancements to elevate that experience, to continue to drive the interest they had seen over the last year on the golf course whether that be cart path repairs, bathrooms on the golf course, landscaping, drainage, and all of those things that could be productive not only for the golf course, but the community at large. Those were the kind of things they wanted to see continue as well as the big projects such as the new and expanded facilities. What they wanted to do was see the Muni become the community center they had always felt it should be. One of those things was a pavilion at the short game area that could provide a home for the Junior programs. It would provide a restroom on the golf course as well as a snack bar that would create/generate additional revenue, and it would also be utilized as an event space that could be utilized pre- and post-golf so they could generate more revenue than they had seen to date. On the revenue side, their original projections showed those changes might create \$250,000 to \$300,000 annual operating income for the Muni. They were at \$550,000 in 2021. He thought some of the shortcomings they talked about were opportunities to not only see the same kind of return annually, but also increase that return to \$750,000, \$800,000, up to \$1 million just by doing a better job of managing the tee sheet. Having the tools at hand to do that would generate the proper amount of out-of-town play given the demand they had at the proper rate and be able to maintain those lower rates for the residents. By providing things like an event space for businesses and community groups to have events at the golf course, they would have the ability to also generate event space revenue, and more food and beverage revenue as the snack bar created a huge benefit for the golf as to help with pace of play. It would generate more revenue, but also keep people from having to go back to the clubhouse during their round. The clubhouse was the largest project that the Friends of the Muni looked to undertake where they would create that community center and gathering place. It could be utilized by residents for special events, community events, community meetings, and they could accommodate growing programs with the juniors that could include some after-school tutoring. It could also include space to be able to accommodate the growing Evans Scholar Caddie Program opportunity they had at Muni, so all of those things played a part in creating the environment they looked to create and the sense of community they looked to create. The two types of capital they were trying to create were one, the social capital. 'Fore Y'all' had been their rallying cry since 2017 when they got started and it meant 'for everyone.' It was about expanding the reach of municipal golf in Charleston. A big part of it was trying to positively affect more lives, juniors and

otherwise, in the community. Providing spaces to do that was a big part of it, creating community involvement, and the new addition of giving kids an opportunity to earn full scholarships. It was the kind of social capital they wanted to create as Friends of the Muni. From the City's perspective, the financial capital and the ability to create a return on the investment was also significant with each of the things being suggested. Obviously, there was a return on investment in bringing an on-course snack bar in and increasing that revenue. The event spaces would provide additional revenue both from food and beverage as well as event fees, and non-golf revenues generated, as well. There was financial capital to be had in everything they talked about. One of the big takeaways was they wanted to see the continual improvement of the golf course and the facilities continue to drive the high interest amongst visitors while still creating that affordable, accessible product for the residents. His felt it was the British model of having a great local golf course that was accessible and affordable for the residents and they could control the rate based upon the demand by the non-residents and continue to see that rate grow and limit those rounds to a level that allowed for the amount of accessibility appropriate for the residents. There was a lot of open sky in front of them to do a lot of great things.

Their next steps at Friends of the Muni would be to generate a plan and formulate how to implement those future improvements in the same way it was presented in 2016. Provide not only a plan for what they wanted to see done, but also the return on the investment financially, and why it was a good idea and undertaking for the City to look at it. As part of that plan, they needed to get an updated MOU with the City to talk about what the goals of the Friends of the Muni were and make sure they met that mission on a regular basis. Part of the plan would be the same program they had five years ago when they first started of trying to identify the appropriate means of funding of the large projects as well as the smaller ones. Those were the things they looked to do and planned to come back to Council over the course of the next several months to talk about what their plan was and what that return on investment looked like, and understand the value of what they had been able to create as a Council by improving the project which was what he believed to be a tremendous asset for the City. He hoped to have the support of Council for a lot of those conversations going forward and he thought that started with the Committee understanding they wanted it to be a crown jewel of the City's Parks and Recreation Department. Mayor Tecklenburg said what a remarkable improvement it had all led to at the Charleston Municipal Course. Charleston being the oldest place in America where golf was played and he also noted it was the first desegregated course in South Carolina in the late '50s early '60s, a course with notable history. Taking care of that gem was the right thing to do and he knew there were a lot of hands involved in the renovation, City staff, Mr. Ormond, Ms. Yarbrough, and Mr. Jerue, but the community really pitched in. The Friends of the Muni and he could go on naming people, but it was under Mr. Miller's leadership and his generosity of his time and effort. The fact that he was remaining so involved was a Godsend and he looked forward to what they came back with as the numbers were beyond what they thought the improvements would be. He bet more out-of-towners were playing which helped justify some of those hospitality dollars going into future improvements. He thanked Mr. Miller and the Friends of the Muni for everything they had done as it had been a great community service. Councilmember Shahid said he wasn't on the Committee, but he was on the Municipal Golf Course Commission which he missed last time. He echoed some of the comments already made. He said it was a beautiful course and the photographs didn't do it justice as to how pretty the course was. He said Mr. Miller and Mr. Ormond did a great job and he supported all of the things Mr. Miller mentioned about the pavilion and the clubhouse. He thought that was the next direction that the golf course needed to go in and whatever they could do on Council to help make that a reality, they had his support for that. He asked Mr. Miller to share the presentation

by e-mail as he wanted to share it with some of his constituents so they could see what the dream was for the golf course.

Chairman Shealy asked the Mayor what the next steps were and if they should bring something to Ad Hoc Budget Committee or where should they go from there in talking about an MOU and those types of things. Mayor Tecklenburg said they would work with the Legal Department to revise the MOU and then bring it back to the Committee. Mr. Jerue said they sent them a template and they would work together to try to develop something in the next couple of months. Mayor Tecklenburg said the specific capital improvements were recommended at first he knew Mr. Miller would work with Mr. Kronsberg and Ms. Yarbrough and they would feed that up to the Capital Projects Committee before it would come back to Ways and Means, but it would come back to Council on both counts, the MOU on one side and any capital improvements they had on the other. Chairman Shealy thanked Mr. Miller and Mr. Ormond and said it was a great presentation with a lot of good information.

Charleston Tennis Center and Maybank Tennis Center (Presentation):

Chairman Shealy said Lance Tyner was a City resident and he lived in District #2. He was an avid tennis player and he reached out about some things he wanted to talk about with the Maybank Tennis Center on James Island. Ms. Yarbrough met with Mr. Tyner and some of his fellow players, and he thought it would be good to communicate to the Committee.

Lance Tyner and Daniel Strickland were not able to present due to technical difficulties, but will do so at the next meeting.

Ms. Yarbrough said she received from Daniel Strickland in the Maybank Tennis Group with Mr. Tyner tried to get in the Zoom call, but couldn't get through. She said he would like to share information next meeting, so she would reach out and let him know that. She said she did work with that group and she knew they contacted several Councilmembers and there was a previously scheduled Council meeting that night, but they met with them as a staff. She said a lot of the things they were having challenges with was getting courts reserved for practices and things like that, they were able to work with them on. She said a lot of the needs were able to be addressed head on, but they had some other needs. She said he wanted everyone to know he apologized for not being able to get through. She said there was a lot of great activity going on now in the City. She and Mr. Kronsberg saw children and people all over the parks, on the fields, and on the courts. She said the weather was already starting to be wonderful again, so that people wanted their parks and recreation. They loved their parks and recreation, and they told them that loudly and clearly when they did the Master Plan. She knew that everyone on the Committee had an ear to that anyway or they wouldn't be serving in their capacity. She thanked the Committee for their continued interest in Parks and Recreation as when the big three were asking for their attention, it was hard for them to get it too, so they were appreciative of everybody's efforts in trying to make sure that the City was a wonderful place to live, work, and play. Chairman Shealy thanked Ms. Yarbrough and Mr. Kronsberg for all of the work they did and for working with the tennis group to come up with resolutions. Chairman Shealy said he would definitely put them on the next agenda. Mr. Kronsberg said he looked forward to bringing it back to the Committee with the consultants a fresh look at how they enter into some sort of an implementation phase of the Master Plan.

Pickleball Courts:

Chairman Shealy said he was invited to watch pickleball at Bees Landing and he saw how they functioned and what they did. He said they played every Sunday and during the week, and that particular day, there were about 38 pickleball players playing on four pickleball courts or two converted tennis courts. He thought it was a good idea to bring Fern White on and allow her to tell them about what was going on with pickleball.

Ms. White thanked Chairman Shealy for inviting her to speak on behalf of the pickleball residents in the City. She said they appreciated the efforts of their elected officials for working with them to help answer their immediate and future needs. She said the pickleball sport was exploding across the country. In 2020, they had identified 4.8 million players and it grew by almost 40% over the last two years. It was a highly competitive and yet very social sport. It was usually open play so they welcomed the local residents as well as people visiting Charleston. It presented a lovely interface and a good position for their exposure to people and their impression of Charleston. She said the sport was played by all ages and they welcomed all ages. She knew Ms. Yarbrough was working with one of the youth instructor's downtown, ages 8 to 88. It could be played on tennis courts that had lines similar, but not quite the same dimensions. At Bees Landing, they were given permission to chalk-in lines which was a bit of work, but their games were played there. A lot of times they saw upwards of 30 people on just two tennis courts, so they had two nets set up on each tennis court.

She did a comparison of the City population versus the dedicated facilities in various cities. Charleston had the highest population density with the lowest dedicated pickleball courts and the highest amount of tennis courts. She said that was nice because that didn't detract a whole lot when they wanted to address their immediate needs. She asked if the City could share a few of those dedicated tennis courts so the pickleball players might enjoy the same space. She showed an example of two tennis courts within the same time of about 14 hours a day for matches. The first one showed an example of two tennis courts and the one was pickleball which she conservatively listed as six courts putting three on each tennis court, but they could do as much as four which was what had been configured on Thomas Johnson Park on James Island. For tennis, they saw eight players and for pickleball, they saw 24 players. The approximate time for tennis matches was about 90 minutes and for pickleball about 50 minutes. In the same timeframe, tennis would have 18 matches and pickleball would have 102 matches. The total players during the same period of time on the same two courts, tennis had a through code of 72 versus 408 players which was five-and-a-half times as many players that could use that same space. She said that was an impressive strong statement in that they would have a lot more people enjoying the public facilities if they had that capability. When players looked for places to play when they traveled, that represented a fair amount of potential revenue dollars for localities that offered dedicated courts. In another example, she said they might be talking dedicated, but they also might be talking dual use. One of the concerns she heard was that some tennis pros worried about losing clients for tennis lessons, but they could easily learn to teach pickleball to increase their client base which was what had happened over at Collins Park in North Charleston successfully. The criteria for pickleball venues was the same as tennis locations centrally located to the population, not restricted by traffic, accessible from all points, from Ravenel to Johns Island, to West Ashley, to James Island, or even off of I-526. Everyone looked for convenience and access to courts. The amenities also were meaningful as it was with tennis. Lighting for those people who played the game who were not retired. They had a very young base, as well, and they usually played in the evening which required lighting, restrooms were appreciated, and perhaps benches in a waiting area shaded from the sun. They had some additional criteria for the venue and recommendations for dual use and for dedicated. At Collins

Park in North Charleston, there were ten dedicated courts and they still had a massive amount of wait. They held tournaments at that location which brought them significant revenue, so the one tennis court to be converted they saw blocked out where they would add additional courts to try to alleviate some of the problem. They also had a huge, lovely indoor facility that shared basketball and pickleball courts.

Ms. White said as with tennis the design, construction, fencing, and all of those things still held true for pickleball as they were close in their requirements and the environment to be safe, to have good air quality, and low noise traffic since it's so social. People generally, when waiting for a game, go into conversations and maybe some practice drills on the side. To give an indication of how the industry pivoted, the U.S. Tennis Association was now involved in promoting pickleball through tournaments, leagues, instructions, building facilities where they taught it, and doing certifications. There was a new complex going up in Opeika which they foresaw \$2 million in tax revenue alone boosting their hotels and restaurants in other areas and businesses. She showed a picture of the Billie Jean King Tennis Center where they would have the Associated Professional Pickleball Tournament this year.

Ms. White said in looking at dual-use courts some cities worked to try to accommodate both. In the pictures she showed, they could see in one of them a light green blended line on the darker green which looked like the junior tennis lines and the other one was the same concept of a lighter blue on a darker blue. She said Bees Landing had a fantastic area which would accommodate ten pickleball courts on a level property, the lighting and the facilities already existed so they would have a reduced construction cost compared to other potential venues. The thing that the community suggested was an immediate compromise solution for the residents with a look forward to the future. The needs were such that they asked that three of the six tennis courts were lined and mostly they used the remote courts. It would result in a more equitable distribution of resources. When they had eight pickleball players versus two tennis players, they could have shared resources instead of the pickleball sport being pushed to the side and not being able to have access to a public park. As a lot of the infrastructure was already in place and the pickleball community felt strongly about it that they were willing to chip in and help fund some of the lines for that particular site. It would help alleviate a potential cost to the City recognizing that it was a minimal solution for an immediate timeframe to be supplemented with an outlook to future needs to help accommodate both the youth communities and to help the City for accumulated revenue and growth. With all of the tournaments across the country, players come from all different states to a dedicated court venue for tournaments and Charleston was lagging and behind in what they were able to provide both residents and for revenue attainment. She thanked the Committee and everyone on the call for allowing her to present and if they needed more questions answered, she had some more presentations that provided more detail. Chairman Shealy thanked Ms. White and said it was a good presentation.

Councilmember Bowden said after flooding and traffic that pickleball might be the next thing he had heard most about. He didn't realize the groundswell out there, but he thought Ms. White had accurately identified there was one. It was a great thing moving forward as they tried to accommodate both groups. Councilmember Gregorie asked whether or not it fit into the overall Master Plan the City developed. Mr. Kronsberg said they heard a lot of feedback about pickleball in public engagement portions of the Master Plan and the Master Plan did identify needs Citywide. They met last week with their consultants to start the implementation phase of the Master Plan and would be working with them over the coming months to bring back a reasonable list of projects to be funded by some source in the future for projects to come, so it was addressed in the plan. Chairman Shealy said it would be a temporary situation, but he knew they had the Senior Center which was a membership situation. When he went out to

watch Pickleball, he ran by the Waring Senior Center and there were no cars there as it was closed on the weekends and in the evenings. It was \$70 a year for Charleston County residents over 50 years old to be a member at the Senior Center. He asked if there was a possibility of extending those pickleball court hours. One of the problems they had was the Senior Center closed at 7:00 p.m. and everything got locked up at 7:00 p.m. A lot of the people that played pickleball worked during the day. They had the weekends and evenings free, but they weren't able to play at the Senior Center because they worked while the Senior Center was open. He asked if there would be any opportunity to extend those hours of membership even if it was just the outdoors and not the indoors. Ms. Yarbrough said they talked to Roper St. Francis about operating costs as the Senior Center had been hard hit from COVID and their revenues were down. She had asked that question if there was something they could do that would allow use of those courts by members or having some kind of separate membership for evenings or something. There weren't any lights so those courts, to be maximized, would have to be lighted, but that was an example of the kind of thing that Ms. White alluded to as to where they could do things better than they already had or where could they maximize some of those experiences. At Mary Utsey on Orange Grove Road, which was centrally located in West Ashley, those two tennis courts had pickleball lines permanently on them and lights, and could be used anytime. She looked at Bees Landing Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. They had pickleball in their gym, as well, so they had an indoor pickleball situation going on. They tried to look at creative ways. They offered pickleball in the mornings at all of their gyms, Daniel Island, Bees Landing, James Island, and downtown at the City gym. The Mayor worked hard to get money for 11 courts to get permanent pickleball lines put on them last year. Mr. Kronsberg's crew was able to handle that through Capital Projects, so they did expand some, but they had a long way to go. They tried to do that and tried to grow it. The City worked with Des Brown. He did pickleball lessons on the Eastside and the kids from St. Julian Devine and Martin Park were able to come in and learn that sport at no cost to them. They tried to do some different things, but she thought talking to Roper St. Francis about the Waring Senior Center was an option and one that she had already opened the conversation to. Chairman Shealy said he went over toward Northbridge/Park Shore Park and there were those courts that were old racquetball courts with the walls up, so if they could look there. He knew they still had an unused park on Woodland Road in West Ashley, as well. He didn't know if they had extra space for something like that at West Ashley Park or Bees Landing, but he hoped they would consider all of those areas.

Councilmember Shahid gave a shout-out to Mr. Kronsberg and Ms. Yarbrough for the work they did over at Park Shore as it had been a wonderful transformation. Mr. Kronsberg and he had that conversation about converting that old walled area for racquetball into pickleball courts to see the feasibility of knocking those walls down and trying to figure out if they could add some pickleball courts there as it would be a great opportunity. That park had generated a lot more interest recently and he appreciated the work that the City had done on it. He supported putting a pickleball court in that old area and thought those walls had been used for something more nefarious than athletic activity. Chairman Shealy said it would certainly be good for that area if they could generate good, clean, fun, family activity. He said those courts backed up to the Elks Lodge and a lot of the pickleball players were Elks members and things like that.

Ms. White said they had a two-thrust concern. One was for immediate need and the other venues referred to were probably for future use. She showed a picture of the Mary Utsey courts. When they lined the courts, they had to pick the roller up to get the lines in. She said they were not ideal and didn't support the high social nature of the community, so it wasn't useful that much. She said it would have been helpful if the community was consulted. She showed a picture of the Park Shore courts. The property on Bees Landing had a higher potential, less cost

factor, and a faster turnaround than looking at tearing that down. She understood wanting to optimize and leverage the properties around and she encouraged the Committee to help them and the resources used if they were able to be used as consultants to help the City's return on investment because worse case was doing something and it not getting used. Councilmember Gregorie asked what the costs would be to develop a court from scratch or to convert something existing. Mr. Kronsberg said the last two pickleball courts built at Moultrie Playground were about \$100,000 which started from scratch. He said that project was completed prior to COVID. All of the numbers would be different at present and he didn't have a current new cost for that off the top of his head, but he could get that information. He said converting courts was not a huge expense, but they had to identify location. Ms. Yarbrough said the courts at Moultrie didn't have lights so the \$100,000 spent was without lights. She said if they built pickleball courts, they definitely needed to put lights on them just like they did basketball courts, tennis courts, and other areas. She said then it was a matter of looking at where they had amenities, where they had space, and then the other programs that were ongoing and how that would impact. She said if they were able to talk to Mr. Tyner, he would share some concerns the Maybank Tennis Center members had raised. They were a membership that paid fees, dues, and everything else, so she thought they had another side of the equation that had to be looked at, but they needed to have more. She said COVID did nothing if not bring out more pickleball, more tennis, more runners, and more golfers as they saw that in everything they talked about. She said they were back to higher numbers in the youth sports than they were before COVID, so they were back on Mr. Kronsberg's fields with almost 6,000 kids in the spring. She said it was growing all over and stretching them very thin. Councilmember Gregorie said he just wanted everyone to get a sense of what they were talking about in terms of costs. Mayor Tecklenburg said they were lucky there as that was the cost without the lights, but it just so happened, either they were smart or lucky, that they built those two pickleball courts right underneath the old baseball field lights, so they were able to provide lights, but not as part of the \$100,000. He said with all due respect to the presentation he acknowledged they needed more courts and he thought it was easy for the immediate need to do the conversions or additions. He said that was why they added lines to seven courts last year was to try to help fulfill that immediate need. He said it shouldn't be a tennis versus pickleball battle. It ought to be the City trying to provide more facilities that citizens wanted to use. He admitted that put them in a time crunch given costs and development of a project. He thought they had to look at every hard surface out there that wasn't being utilized and existing places where they could have lights. He thought it was a great idea about the Waring Tennis Center. He said they had a couple of hard surfaces down at Martin Park they recently converted to pickleball and they were well utilized. He saw people out there all of the time. He didn't think the Park Shore project would take a long time and he thought Mr. Kronsberg was already working on what it might take to knock those walls down. He inquired with Ben Navarro, who would be operating the Charleston Tennis Center on Daniel Island, to see if they could do some multi-use over there, but one other idea he had recently was there were some old basketball courts underneath I-26. It was hard surface already and there was concrete there. It didn't drain great, so maybe after a big rain they would need a couple of days to let it dry before they could play again, but with some portable nets he thought they could put four to six courts down there easily if Ms. White's supporters would be willing to help put some nets in place and temporary lines down. He welcomed them to take a look at that space to see what they thought. If anybody had any ideas on some unused hard surface out there, the City should take a look at it and try to add as many courts as they could. Chairman Shealy said they would continue to work toward coming up with some solutions.

Mayor Tecklenburg said he had heard back from Mr. Navarro. They had four permanent pickleball courts at the Daniel Island Tennis Center and could transition two more tennis courts so they could come up with a total of eight courts and that was more than what the City had

now. Ms. White said that was wonderful. She didn't know if residents from Johns Island, Ravenel, and West Ashley would find that amount of travel acceptable, but certainly people out in that area would be thrilled. She appreciated it. Mayor Tecklenburg said they would ask Mr. Navarro to go ahead and do that.

Parks and Recreation Master Plan/Enterprise Manager:

Mr. Kronsberg said he and Ms. Yarbrough had met with the consultant team to begin the implementation phase of their contract and they would be scheduling meetings over the upcoming months with BFRC and the Finance staff, Ms. Wharton and Mr. Frohlich, to talk about the future and how they could start implementation of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. It all took funding, so they would have more reported out and they would come back with the consultants for a presentation to the Committee after they had time to get into the nuts and bolts of the implementation, and then come back with some proposals for the Committee. Ms. Yarbrough said they would be meeting on March 23rd with BFRC and the consultants, and the consultants would like to come back to the Committee in April with an update with, hopefully, some more information. She said they were accepting applications for the Enterprise Manager Account position. She would start interviews the following week with Tom O'Rourke's assistance. He had several other items he wanted them to start work on internally with staff as they bit off some of the big project. She said it was good to see it moving forward and she was excited that she and Mr. Kronsberg got to work on it with the Committee.

Councilmember Parker asked if there were any updates or proposals from the Master Plan that indicated how they could after or utilize private sector funds to help improve or build new recreation centers. She asked if there would be any advice given in that regard. Mr. Kronsberg said partnerships were always a plus. He didn't have anything off the top of his head, but they could talk about that with the consultants when they kicked off the implementation phase of the Master Plan. Councilmember Parker said that was her question and maybe ask those consultants, since the consultants would already be onboard, that maybe they could talk about how they could utilize the private sector as they needed recreation centers everywhere, so it might be an avenue they could approach. She said maybe they could get some data from them and that way giving her and the community some advice on how to approach some of those things.

Updates:

Stoney Field:

Mr. Kronsberg said the project renovation was in cooperation with the Charleston County School District and they conducted the portion of converting the field into a synthetic turf field and getting the practice track completed. He said that work was completed and they were working to finalize the few remaining punch list items and close-out documents on their portion of the work. They were also taking on a waterline fix to the building as there was no water to the Home stands where all of the facilities were. The CCSD took that on and they should have their contractor in soon to run a new waterline. The City's portion of the work currently was the parking lot work, new entry plaza, and new fencing that went around the field and along Fishburne Street. As the contractor got into the work, the Army Corps of Engineers saw some work happening and were concerned about an issue with the old landfill cap from the early '70s. Everyone knew there was formerly a landfill there, so they were working through some

contingency items and stormwater issues with regard to that cap. They anticipated that could cause some delay so they had to get some new design to accommodate the Corps' requirements with how the water comes from the renovated parking area and filtered through in order to protect that cap on the landfill. He said they had also conducted some work in the Home stands itself. When they first started the work, they fixed all of the small repairs. They re-sealed all of the areas where the rebar was corroding and cracking through the existing concrete, so all of that had been sealed, painted and re-invigorated to give it a little more lifespan. All of the stands were re-sealed, new seating installed, and lights upgraded to LED fixtures. They were excited about getting that project open. They still had meetings with the Corps of Engineers, so they hadn't figured out a final solution on it, but the contractor had not stopped work and they continued to progress.

Carr Richardson Park:

Mr. Kronsberg said the park was in the Ashleyville/Maryville neighborhoods and that the site and building construction was ongoing with an anticipated completion of early May. They were still working through getting the building finalized and with the site work more of the landscaping should be conducted soon. Chairman Shealy said he went over to the park and it was coming along and looking very nice. He said it was a gorgeous piece of property and it would be awesome when they finished it.

Fort Pemberton:

Mr. Kronsberg said Fort Pemberton was in Riverland Terrace and, historically, it was an old Civil War fortification. It took them about two years through multiple scenarios. With the Greenbelt Program and the Conservation Fund, they were able to purchase that land. It had about 270 linear feet along the Stono River, two existing docks, and it was set up to be an incredible sunset view. He said they were working with the neighborhood association to schedule community engagement hopefully in the next month to get more feedback and they had already met with a subcommittee on two different occasions to walk the site and talk about ideas. He said they tried to bring it back to the full neighborhood association to get new ideas. He said they submitted for a Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant that came through Council at one of the last meetings matching that grant request was \$261,000 matching it with the current Greenbelt funds awarded for the project. He said they should know in September if they were awarded those dollars and those combined funds would provide for the substantial first phase path of getting that property opened up to the public. He said it took two years to purchase that land, COVID struck, and so it had been a little bit of a challenge to get back out into the public, but they were raring to go to get those meetings scheduled, get that engagement, and get some good ideas going.

Councilmember Parker asked about Fort Pemberton being opened to the public in September. Mr. Kronsberg said that was when they would hear back about the grant the City applied for and they needed to get the community engagement completed. He said they didn't have any funding to do full-blown Capital Project style planning, so what they would try to do, and hopefully they would get the grant, was to work with their in-house staff and the neighborhood to come up with a conceptual Phase 1 opening plan, and then figure out how to fund that work to get it open. Currently there were no improvements on the site. It was old residences, so it was not safe to open to the public yet. Councilmember Parker agreed and said no walkable paths. She asked if Mr. Kronsberg had said there were docks in place. Mr. Kronsberg said that was correct and there were two existing docks that needed work. He said they did a little bit of work

on one of them last year, but they were not ready for public access yet. He said they were residential in character when they were constructed, so they needed work.

WPAL Park:

He said they didn't have any current activity from a project-related point of view.

Other Park updates:

Councilmember Parker asked if there was an update on the Harborview Road at Fort Johnson Park. She knew the Mayor mentioned that there were funds given to that park. Mr. Kronsberg said they had a PAR grant for that location to come in and refurbish the playground equipment. Since 2012, they had worked hard on upgrading some of the old and outdated playground equipment for over 50 locations around the City. They had six of them left to refresh and Harborview/Fort Johnson was the next one. He said they were working quotes through the vendors and should have something soon. He didn't have a hard date on it yet, but he could get back on that. Councilmember Parker asked if the quotes automatically came through the Committee first or did Mr. Kronsberg move forward with them. Mr. Kronsberg said typically they worked with the neighborhood association to say this was what it looked like, here were the colors, was everybody good with it, and then it would come through Bids and Purchases.

Councilmember Gregorie asked Mr. Kronsberg to talk about the public/private partnership between Bishop Gadsden and the City, and the public/public partnership between the Town of James Island and the City to create a park on James Island most recently. Mr. Kronsberg said they had been working with Bishop Gadsden, which was derailed by COVID a little bit, but it was back. He said Bishop Gadsden had purchased the property that was between the Bishop Gadsden Land Proper and Ferguson Village Park on Ferguson Road. A lot of it was wet between the City's park and their property, but adjacent to the City's little parking area, there was a small portion of highland. He said they were working through a license or a lease agreement, but he wasn't sure of the details on that. The Legal Department was working on that to have access to it and expand the Ferguson Park a little bit. He said that would take some work, but that was a great example of public and private partnership. He said Bishop Gadsden was giving the City use of that land at no cost to the City, so they looked forward to some park improvements there, as well. The City worked with the Town of James Island on a joint Greenbelt application for the new Brantley Park purchase. He said they bought the Brantley Park 50/50 with Town Greenbelt funds and the City Greenbelt funds, and the Town would be constructing a small park at that location. He knew they were working through their plans and, hopefully, there would be something soon.

Councilmember Gregorie asked for an update on the public/private partnership with regard to Longborough they had been working on since 2014, 2015. He knew they had run into some brick walls, but to give the new members some since of the kinds of public/private partnerships and public/public partnerships the City had been engaged in which piggy-backed on Councilmember Parker's question because he thought it was a good one. Mr. Kronsberg said the Longborough scenario was ongoing and they tried to work with OCRM to determine how to permit a public dock there. He said they were working with the neighborhood association along with OCRM to determine what those uses were, how they got permitted, and a joint effort to get that opened to the public. He said the person they were working with at OCRM left and went into the private sector. Councilmember Gregorie said as a point of reference the Longborough Park they were talking about was on the Peninsula and they called it a 'spit' right off of that area, and it was right on the Ashley River. Mr. Kronsberg said it was a small piece of land off of the

old Longborough redevelopment site and it would provide wonderful access to the Ashley River once they got those agreements completed. In January they received comments back from OCRM and they were working on those comments through their consultants. He said they required a Dock Master Plan to be created which had been lengthy and they had learned a lot. Councilmember Gregorie said there was another public/public partnership with the County with respect to the Susie Jackson Freedom Memorial Park downtown, as well. He said there were some existing partnerships he thought they could build on as well as create new ones to try to expand the park and recreation opportunities.

Councilmember Parker thanked Ms. Yarbrough and Mr. Kronsberg for everything they did for Parks and Recreation as it was near and dear to her heart. She knew they were spread thin so she didn't want to leave the meeting without talking about staffing and any other issues in that regard. She saw it and felt it personally with her kids' sports on James Island and whether they put it on the agenda next time or if it was something to discuss currently or later with HR. She knew they depended on volunteers as far as coaches, but those departments were spread thin. She asked if there was anything the Committee could do in that regard or was that something they could add as an agenda item. Ms. Yarbrough said in Recreation they had a number of part-time openings currently. She couldn't speak to that being a dollar amount problem because Council voted and gave them an increase this year, so they had a fair starting wage for part-time positions, but it was difficult in the job climate to find people looking for part-time jobs. She was already working with HR trying to take some part-time positions and cobble them together to create a couple of more full-time positions hoping that they would have more candidates interested in that, but they had had several new seasonal positions on their job board for the last couple of weeks like lifeguards. They had 63 people read the job description and they had zero applications. She didn't think it was that people didn't understand, 'Oh, it's a lifeguard, I don't know what that is,' or 'I don't want to do that.' She thought everyone knew what a lifeguard position was, but it was difficult to find people looking for seasonal employment, part-time employment, and that was what a lot of her department depended on. She said they couldn't do a thing without their volunteers and they used them and needed them, but they would continue to try to do more to reach out to colleges and high schools. She was considering 16 year olds as lifeguards this year which she didn't like that idea, but she wanted to open the pools, so they would have to make sure they got them in and got them trained. She thought anything they could all do collectively at the City to help get people in the community interested in going to the job boards, looking at them, and making an application. She said they were competing with everybody else currently and it was not an easy place to find those people. Councilmember Parker asked about sharing the job board. Ms. Yarbrough said absolutely and to share it with the neighborhood associations and with anybody on James Island, constituents. She said it was a lot different than it was when she was in high school and her dad said, 'Go find your summer job.' He told her that in January and she did. She said they didn't see that anymore and it was tough, so that would be the biggest thing they could do was to help get the word out that the City was hiring and it could be teenagers, as well, so there were a lot of summer opportunities happening.

Mr. Kronsberg said on the Parks side, as far as the maintenance went, it was the same scenario. He said they had lots of jobs open and lots of views. A lead groundskeeper on one of their ball field crews that opened 9/30/21 had 2,039 hits on the advertisement with only eight applicants. It was a tough time to hire people currently, like Ms. Yarbrough said. Councilmember Parker asked if anyone was accepted out of those eight applicants. Mr. Kronsberg said, for that specific one, there were two positions open and they had hired for one of them.

Councilmember Gregorie said the bottom line was competition in terms of what was out there these days. The City was finally at a \$14 minimum wage, but people looked at a \$14 minimum wage as nothing in comparison to what they could get today, so it was a highly competitive job market, as well, because there were tons and tons of jobs out there. He thought they were getting closer to becoming competitive, but the City wasn't quite there yet especially in the leadership positions. He thought the leadership positions, in particular, could use another boost across the board before the City lost them. Councilmember Parker agreed and they all knew that the pay was the biggest issue. She said as far as volunteers went they utilized volunteers for coaching, but she asked about concessions. She understood that might not be a huge money maker, but was it something Recreation had looked at and was it something they could look at as a community utilizing volunteers or anything like that for those types of roles and raising funds. Ms. Yarbrough said absolutely and she knew they had worked before with groups from the schools with fundraisers and they wanted to come in and do some Booster Club sales or things like that. At this point, they could consider anything. She had to have someone in to watch, because they had City money in the concession and she wanted to make sure, even though they didn't do a whole lot of cooking, as most everything was pre-prepared except for popcorn. They just wanted to make sure everybody was safe, but they had done everything from using volunteers to keep score at games. She had to have paid referees and umpires or they wouldn't have people show, but they would be willing to do anything. It helped in an area like Councilmember Parker's where the families were there. She said they didn't always do concessions for money making, they did it as a service because they knew they had a hard time grabbing something to eat, getting from point A to point B, and the parents and kids did too. In some of the other parts of the community where they didn't have a lot of parental involvement, it would not work. Certainly, on James Island, she had given Allison and Robin the hats off to try whatever would work. Robin even found a new gymnastics instructor on her Facebook, so they weren't ashamed to try anything to get the word out and let people know what they had going and what they looked for. Anything that could be shared or done, they were willing to consider. Councilmember Parker asked if they should take that directly to Allison. Ms. Yarbrough said Councilmember Parker could take it directly to Allison as she was quite competent.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 3:29 p.m.

Submitted by Wanda Stepp
Clerk of Council's Office