

MURFREESBORO PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2, 2022

12:00 NOON

MPRC Members Present: Mr. Eddie Miller, Chair  
Dr. Gloria Bonner, Mr. Leroy Cunningham,  
Mr. Rick LaLance, Mr. Tim Roediger (Vice-Chair), and  
Mr. Ricky Turner

MPRC Members Absent: Mr. Trey Duke, Mr. Ronnie Martin, and Mr. Don Turner  
(ex officio)

MPRD Staff Present: Mr. Nate Williams, Director  
Mr. Thomas Laird and Ms. Rachel Singer, Asst. Directors  
Ms. Lisa Browning, Ms. Susan Hicks, Ms. Mitzi Hughes,  
Dr. Gernell Jenkins, and Mr. Mark Owens

Others Present: Ms. Katie Driver, Staff Attorney  
Mr. Cameron Mitchell, 2022 Poet Laureate

After the meeting was called to order, Dr. Gloria Bonner asked that everyone keep our leaders in mind regarding the Ukrainian crisis. She then led everyone in a prayer and in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Nate Williams pointed out that Murfreesboro Parks and Recreation Department (MPRD) has performed well financially over the last seven months. Mr. Roediger asked if the dramatic gains in revenues were due to the rebound year from Covid. Mr. Williams said that was probably so and also added that he thinks more of the community has noticed the department's level of worth during the many Covid months - people who might not have known of MPRD's offerings before the pandemic. Mr. Williams additionally believes staff has done a great job of enhancing current programming and adding new. He expects the next budget to reflect increases in revenues as well.

The minutes of the January 5, 2022, Murfreesboro Parks and Recreation Commission (MPRC) meeting were next presented for approval. Mr. LaLance made a motion to approve the minutes as read. Dr. Bonner seconded, and motion passed by unanimous vote.

Ms. Lisa Browning with Cultural Arts announced the 2022 laureates, Ms. Meg Brooker (dance laureate-not present today) and Mr. Cameron Mitchell (poet laureate). Ms. Browning said that the theme for the 2022 Laureates was, "Awakening Resilience." She also mentioned that the commission might recognize the current laureates, due to both being 2021 laureates; however, Mr. Mitchell had been the actor laureate that year. Ms. Browning presented Mr. Mitchell with his laureate award, and he shared a spoken word

with the commission. He said that he was interested in helping to promote positivity back into the community. Mr. Rick LaLance thanked Mr. Mitchell for his work and invited him to share his story and spoken word at a City Council meeting. Mr. Mitchell agreed. Dr. Bonner added that Mr. Mitchell was an MTSU graduate of the Aerospace program.

Ms. Susan Hicks, Cultural Arts Supervisor, presented for approval new Gateway Island Pricing and Packaging. The changes to the current rental procedures include canceling half day rentals and requiring weddings and other large events to be 4-day rentals (\$2,000/event) due to past problems with having to close the Island for rental companies to set up and take down tents, tables, and chairs. Simple weddings without tent rentals will be \$500. Monday through Thursday rental prices will stay at \$350/day, with Friday-Sunday prices staying at \$500/day. All rentals will include the reception center. Special use fees for races will remain at \$350 per event. Additionally, an overage fee of \$100 per hour will be charged for patrons staying longer than their scheduled event. A discount of 10% will be applied for City residents, and MPRD will only provide 5 tables and 20 chairs for rentals, as needed. Mr. LaLance made a motion to approve the Gateway Island Pricing and Packaging as presented. Mr. Roediger seconded. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

Ms. Hicks next reviewed the proposed changes to the Washington Theatre prices and packaging, explaining that the 550 Package will be deleted and the 800 Package for a 5-hour rental will remain. The per hour fee will be raised by \$50, and the weekly rental fee will be lowered from \$6,500 to \$4,500. Also, the nonrefundable deposit will be increased to \$250, with an over hour charge of \$250 per hour. Ms. Hicks stated that many of the theatre rentals are by groups outside the City and County limits. She added that spring and summer rentals are mostly dance recitals. Ms. Hicks said that other frequent rentals are for comedy shows and bands. Mr. LaLance recommended looking into charging more for out-of-city residents in order to allow city residents more opportunities to rent the facility. Dr. Bonner agreed that City residents should have priority.

Mr. Leroy Cunningham asked how far in advance the theatre could be rented and what facilities the theatre competes with. Ms. Hicks said the rentals are allowed one year out for everyone and that theatres the Washington Theatre competes with locally are the Center for the Arts (prices are double) and Tucker Theatre (\$3,000-\$4,000 per day). Mr. Cunningham also inquired about the number of rentals for upcoming weekends. Ms. Hicks said that there were bookings up to August with recitals and preschool graduations. She added that Patterson allows Holloway and Bradley to use the theatre for their graduations through in-kind services. Mr. Ricky Turner recommended charging more for out-of-state groups/people. Mr. Williams mentioned that most of the theatre rentals were from Middle Tennessee individuals/groups. He further explained that the department is already implementing a successful model for many 20-plus department fees that give a good discount to City residents. Mr. LaLance suggested that City residents receive at least a 10% discount. Mr. Williams replied that department staff is constantly evaluating prices and will continue to discount and streamline prices as able. Mr. Williams also

recommended that the commission visit the Washington Theatre, which has been updated recently. Ms. Hicks invited everyone to go see the production of *Junie B. Jones* at the Washington Theatre this weekend with showings at 7:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and 2:00 p.m. on Sunday. Mr. LaLance made a motion to approve the pricing for Washington Theatre as presented. Mr. Cunningham seconded. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

Ms. Hicks additionally requested the following in regard to the Greenway Art Festival: increase booth fee from \$25.00 to \$50.00 to keep up with neighboring art festival booth fees (with the most similar type of festival charging \$100/day); no refunds if festival gets canceled, even for inclement weather, since the artists will still have the opportunity to sell their art by way of the Virtual Greenway Art Festival. Mr. Roediger made a motion to approve the changes to the Greenway Art Festival prices as presented. Mr. LaLance seconded, and motion passed by unanimous vote.

The Miracle All-Stars Games' update was given by Mr. Thomas Laird, MPRD Assistant Director, who said the event would be this September 16-18 (Friday-Sunday), with 100 athletes plus their families getting to stay at the Embassy Suites Hotel during the weekend. Mr. Laird further mentioned that charter buses would transport the All-Star athletes to the Opening Ceremonies on Friday night where the athletes will be entertained with activities, Boro Beach, fun, food, music, and a home-run derby. Then on Saturday, City buses and vans will transport the athletes to their games at the Miracle Field where high school athletes and first responders will serve as their buddies, like they do for the regular Miracle League players. Mr. Laird further shared that the athletes and their families will be treated to a banquet at Embassy Suites on Saturday night, followed by a player party and dance. Mr. Laird added that when he and other City representatives went to Houston's hosting of last year's All-Star games, it was easy to see that the dance was the highlight of the whole event to the athletes. He said that they had a big time.

Mr. Laird provided the commission members with pamphlets from Project One Four, which is the foundation that funds all the local Miracle League's expenses. He said the foundation's representatives asked that the department be sure to let the public know of the opportunities to contribute to the league, either monetarily or with in-kind services, such as for meals or transportation.

The next item presented by Mr. Laird was the announcement of the Special Olympics Weightlifting Training Room (an Olympic-style weight-lifting venue), which has opened up at Patterson through a partnership with the City, Nashville Predators, and Special Olympics. Mr. Laird explained that some parents of Special Olympics athletes had bought equipment for their kids to use, and a business had been donating space for them to work out. Unfortunately, the business closed, and the parents asked Mr. Laird to help locate another place for the kids to work out again. Mr. Laird found a place at Patterson Community Center, and the parents have donated the equipment to the City for their kids and others to use.

Another announcement by Mr. Laird was that the City will be hosting the Area 16 Special Olympics May 9-10, 2022, at MTSU's Dean Hayes Stadium. High school and adult athletes will compete on May 9th, with elementary and middle school kids competing on May 10<sup>th</sup>. Weekly training for the Special Olympics athletes will start at Patterson in April. Besides for the new weight-lifting program for individuals with physical and intellectual challenges, MPRD offers Advantage Flag Football, Advantage Basketball, bocce ball, golf and tennis lessons, and fitness classes. Mr. Laird invited commission members and the public to attend the Special Olympics to support the athletes.

Ms. Rachel Singer, MPRD Assistant Director, informed the commission that the City received \$20,000 in grant monies from the National Environmental Education Foundation to purchase a nature buggy for allowing individuals with mobility limitations more accessibility to public lands. Staff hopes to allow the opportunity for all individuals to enjoy park property and outdoor programming.

MPRD upcoming events and programs were also announced by Ms. Singer, who mentioned that signups for summer camps started on March 1<sup>st</sup>, with numerous offerings. Registration is available online through [murfreesboroparks.com](http://murfreesboroparks.com) and in person at Sports Com, Patterson, and the main MPRD office. Ms. Singer shared that a Saturday Class Sampler (of fitness classes) would be held at Patterson on March 5<sup>th</sup> 9:00-10:40 a.m. for patrons to try various types of classes. The annual Underwater Egg Hunt and Spring Festival will be at Patterson Pool on April 9<sup>th</sup>, with registration beginning on March 14<sup>th</sup>, and Conservation Days are set at the Wilderness Station April 22-23. There will be knowledgeable speakers, local wildlife information, free hikes, activities, and backyard habitat project information. Raptor Day, a good family event, will be held at the Wilderness Station on March 19<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. And the annual Pioneer Days at Cannonsburgh will be April 23<sup>rd</sup> from 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Athletic registrations for youth track and field and youth volleyball started yesterday, March 1<sup>st</sup>. Further, the St. Clair Senior Center has lots going on as well, with special events, various daily activities, health and social services, free and fee-based fitness classes, creative arts, seminars, games and recreational programs, and travel opportunities (local and abroad). Ms. Singer mentioned that the Senior Center's brochure, the *Senior Connection*, has a lot of information for those interested in their activities and programs. Also, she said that information on the Senior Center and other Parks and Recreation activities, programs, facilities, and parks can be found at [www.murfreesboroparks.com](http://www.murfreesboroparks.com) and on numerous MPRD Facebook pages.

Mr. Miller said that the agenda had been completed and asked if anyone had something to add today. Dr. Bonner complimented the Daddy-Daughter dance held at Patterson. She said she was able to observe the stellar event, which had a very diverse crowd, with many dads dressed in tuxes and girls in gowns. Dr. Bonner added that there was surely "no room left in the hair salons that day." She also mentioned that there is powerful research indicating how important that kind of event can be for helping fathers and

daughters to bond. Dr. Bonner recommended that this event be continued through Parks and Recreation.

Mr. Cunningham stated that the inaugural *Created Equal* film series presentation at Patterson went well. He said there was a full house and that the event meant a lot to the community. Mr. Cunningham also appreciated the warm welcome into the Washington Theatre by Dr. Gernell Jenkins and her staff.

Additionally, Mr. Cunningham said that he appreciated the MPRC members being provided MPRD's financial information regularly so that he and the other commission members can review it and offer consultation to staff as needed. Another matter he mentioned was the issue of some people using the greenway for purposes unintended by the City. Mr. Williams explained that there is a concern with some of the homeless population trying to live in various areas along the greenway system and that there is a homeless task force through the Murfreesboro Police Department that is working on the situation and making tremendous headway. Mr. LaLance referred back to Mr. Cunningham's comments regarding MPRD's financial information and asked that staff please also indicate how the City is impacted by MPRD budget changes, such as what is expected to occur when "changing this or that" in the budget. Mr. Williams acknowledged that staff could do that.

With no other business, Mr. Miller said that the meeting was adjourned.

Meeting adjourned: 12:58 p.m.

Meeting approved:

---

Eddie Miller, MPRC Chair

---

Nate Williams, MPRD Director