

Centre Regional Recreation Authority
Millbrook Marsh Nature Center Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary (DRAFT)
Wed., 21 Sept 2011, 4:00 PM at the Spring Creek Education Bldg.

1. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL: (9 of 13 Appointed Members)

Dr. Rick Marboe, Chair	Mary Alice Graetzer	Holly Fritchman	Nancy Tamminga
Jennifer Shuey, Vice-chair	Kathy Matason	Alan Sam	Kevin Abbey
Jackie Melander			
Staff: Molly Hetrick, Rec. Supervisor			

2. APPROVAL OF THE MEETING SUMMARY

- 15 June 2011 Meeting Summary: Motion by J. Melander, Second by J. Shuey

3. STAFF REPORTS: *The following reports were sent via email prior to the meeting*

- CRPR Activity Reports – June & July
- Thompson Woods Subcommittee Report
- Program Subcommittee Report

4. BUSINESS ITEMS

- **2012 Proposed Budget Overview: Molly Hetrick**

Ms. Hetrick highlighted the positive aspects of the nature center budget and the challenging areas for 2012. Advisory Committee members discussed the need for some of the Recreation Supervisors time to be focused on fundraising to support the operations of the center as municipal contributions increases must remain low and the costs of the new building rise. (*Since this meeting, the COG Finance Committee capped the MMNC Operations Municipal Revenue at 4% increase for 2012 from 2011.*) They discussed the challenges to the Supervisor allotting her time this way and the important role the Program Coordinator will play in this. Donors to support individual programs are a preferred way of supporting programs and keeping costs to the customers low. Mr. Abbey asked that a footnote be added to the budget to show and calculate the value in dollars of volunteer time. He stressed that this value is actually that much less that needs to be raised or provided by municipalities and should be reflected in the budget in this way. Members discussed the Program Coordinator position, originally planned to go full time for 2012, but the salary based on the COG salary scale would have added too much increase to the expenses for 2012. However, members discussed that the current seasonal, part-time hourly salary paid to the Program Coordinator is too low and encouraged staff to find a way to develop this position, however challenging that may be, because it is an important asset to the program and the Supervisor's ability to move toward fundraising.

Mr. Marboe also provided a brief overview to Fund 39 and the Capital projects. He described the "Donor Tree" statue that has been selected to honor campaign donors. The goal is to recognize those who supported the project and provide a secondary fundraising option for the future. Fundraising for a Visitor Parking Area and Phase II of the Spring Creek Education building is needed.

5. DISCUSSION FOCUS QUESTION:

Fee Policy 2011 (Attachment #3)

2012 Fee Policy review and revenue generation discussion: *Using experiences in 2011, how should the Nature Center Fee Policy be revised for 2012? How should requests by community groups for rental fee waivers be handled, for both one-time events and monthly meetings? How should rental fees and program fees be adjusted to address the growing operational costs at the center?*

- Members discussed the idea of allowing renters to have alcohol at parties. This is prohibited in all CRPR parks, per township ordinances. Mr. Marboe reported that he spoke with Mr. Klees, who indicated willingness to work with us on changing this policy. He suggested that the CRRA be approached for their approval. This new alcohol policy would apply only the new Spring Creek Education Building and may require a staff person to check identification at the door for these events (at an additional charge to the customer.)
- Mr. Marboe also mentioned the need for wireless internet in the SCEB. Having this capability, plus a quality projector and screen will allow for business rentals of the site.
- The Connections project, which provides vital support to the nature center by covering program fees for local school students, could be more publicized for the community. This would allow for more fundraising to be devoted to MMNC programs, give more recognition to this exciting and generous program provided through ClearWater Conservancy, and highlight the partnerships that MMNC has that support programs. Nancy Tamminga suggested this information be shared in PTO newsletters and throughout the schools. Nancy feels that local teachers who use Connections via a school district coordinator are not really aware of the fees and how they are covered via Connections.
- Members discussed in detail waiving fees for non-profits. Conversation focused on how to determine who gets a waiver (non-profits only, groups who meet our mission statement, etc) and ways that groups may collaborate with the center in exchange for meeting space. Some members were strongly in favor of all groups paying the same fees, regardless of their association. It was discussed that there is a mis-conception in the community that since MMNC is operated by the Council of Governments that the center is fully funded by municipalities, when in fact MMNC relies heavily on program/rentals fees and donations for revenue. Other members expressed the partner groups who provide support to the center should have additional perks. The final decision is as follows:
 - A non-profit group (with 501c3 designation) who wishes to rent the facilities at MMNC during 2012 for a meeting must reserve the space for the two hour minimum time frame and will have the first hour for free and pay any or all additional hours at regular fees. For example, a 4 hour rental would be charged as a 3 hour rental, with the first hour waived. A 2 hour rental will be charged as one hour at \$37.50 with the first hour waived. No “one hour” rentals will be permitted.
 - Non-profits who wish to hold fundraising events will be charged regular fees.
 - This applies to the barn, Spring Creek Education Building, and pavilion (only if the CRPR pavilion fees go to an hourly structure).
 - Non-profits who wish to form a partnership or explore “trade-outs” with the nature center to provide a service or engagement in exchange for meeting space will be at the discretion of the staff. An example of this is trading Shavers Creek Environmental Center Bird of Prey shows at MMNC events in exchange for use of the meeting space for the same dollar amount. Offers where the partner group provides “marketing exposure” will not be considered.
- Other Fee Policy changes recommended for 2012:
 - Birthday party fees will increase to \$150 for base party, \$10 for additional children. (This is a \$10 increase from the 2011 base price of \$140.)
 - Program group fees will remain at \$6.50 per child for 2012.
 - Pavilion fees will match CRPR pavilion fees.
 - Fees for the Barn will remain the same.
 - Fees for the Spring Creek Education Building will increase to \$100 for 2 hours, \$25 each additional hour (an increase of \$25 from \$75 for 2 hours in 2011.)

6. ADJOURNMENT

Next Meeting: Wed., 16 Nov 2011 at 4 PM at the Spring Creek Education Bldg.