

TOWN OF MOUNT PLEASANT, SOUTH CAROLINA
RECREATION COMMITTEE
Monday, December 3, 2018
Municipal Complex, Committee Meeting Room, 3rd Floor
100 Ann Edwards Lane, Mount Pleasant, SC 29464

Minutes

Members Present: Gary Santos, Chair; Tom O'Rourke, G. M. Whitley

Staff Present: Eric DeMoura, Steve Gergick

Mr. Santos called the meeting to order at 9:37 a.m.

1. Approval of Minutes from the November 5, 2018 meeting

Ms. Whitley made a motion to approve the November 5, 2018 minutes. Mr. O'Rourke seconded the motion. All were in favor.

2. Public Comments

Mr. Scott Manna, 353 Bridgetown Pass, Mount Pleasant said he was the new District Ambassador for the South Carolina region of The USA Pickleball Association (USAPA) and had taken over Mr. Mike Michener's position. He said he wanted to introduce himself and had met with Mr. Jimmy Millar and Mr. Matt Hansen from the Recreation Department. He said he had worked with Mr. Al Bradshaw-Whittemore for a while and he had done a good job in growing the sport. He said that most people have heard about pickleball as it was exploding around the country. He said they are grasping for places to play. He said there was a bit of a contentious relationship between tennis and pickleball and they appreciate everything that the Town of Mount Pleasant had done so far with painting lines and creating shared space for the players. He said they have no space to play for the working-class residents without going into homeowner associations or the shared space opportunities at night that are never guaranteed and cannot plan anything. He said he would recommend and like to make a proposal that rather than to construct, as that could take years, time, and money, doing a study to understand what the least utilized tennis courts are and converting them to dedicated

pickleball courts. He said he had been told that Park West was possibly the place. He said he knew money had been spent there with the lines and the paint. He said he had been told there may be a couple of courts at Whipple.

Mr. Santos said he knew they have some areas that they play pickleball in such as in the Old Village on the basketball courts. He said he thought they were moving in the right direction. He said when they finish Carolina Park, they are going to be adding some more courts at Mugsy Kerr Tennis Center. He said hopefully they will be able to put some pickleball courts there or be able to share some with tennis.

Mr. Gergick said they have shared lines and there are no designated courts for pickleball only. He said the concern was the desire to have designated courts for pickleball. He said they currently share them the basketball courts at Park West, Jones Center, Miriam Brown, and tennis courts at Park West. He said they have several areas where pickleball is accommodated for the community. He said at the present they do not have a location for designated courts. He said there are some designated courts identified for Rifle Range Road Park in the future.

Mr. Santos said they are proposing a new tennis facility at Park West. He said it was a slow process, but the Department is doing everything they can to provide pickleball. He said it was a sport for younger people as well and not just for the older population.

Mr. Manna said it does have an identity problem that when people hear about it, they think it is just for seniors. He said if it would help, he would be willing to raise the funds for any project such as what he discussed in a proposal for a conversion. He said he did not think it would cost more than ten thousand dollars. He said if there were any courts the Town would deem a possibility to convert which would alleviate a lot of the issues, he would more than happy to raise those funds.

Mr. Santos said they would talk to him some more about it and thanked him for introducing himself.

Mr. John Wright, 145 Rosemead Road, Mount Pleasant said he had been made aware of some movement around the Sweetgrass Cultural Festival. He wanted to add that with the sweetgrass the Town was the capital of the entire civilized world. He said it was a Mount Pleasant exclusive. He said he wanted to make sure that anything that he could do to make the Sweetgrass Basket Festival a success going forward and continue to have it here he would lend his support to that. He said the Town has a unique thing that no one in the world has and that was sweetgrass baskets. He said he was in support of what could happen or may happen with the Sweetgrass Cultural Arts Festival and wants to lend his support to make sure they transition smoothly.

Mr. Santos said he remembered when they did the Sweetgrass Basket Pavilion out at the park. He said he was happy they were able to do that and said it was definitely a part of the culture here and hopefully they can continue this as he feels very strongly about it.

3. Discussion of Sweetgrass Cultural Arts Festival

Mr. DeMoura said they received a letter from Ms. Thomasena Stokes-Marshall and Ms. Virginia Watson about the dissolution of the Sweetgrass Cultural Arts Festival Association. He said that both the individuals sent a letter to discuss the importance of Gullah Geechee culture and the people's history of basketmaking and the importance to the community. He said that while the Association was going to be breaking up, there is a request that the Town go ahead and maintain what has been an annual festival. He said that was the request before the Committee. He said that while they are considering that, know the Town is capable to be able to take on the event and would be happy to do so. He said Mr. Gergick, the Recreation Department, and staff had been working on an idea and concept of how it could happen as soon as February which aligns nicely with Black History Month here in Mount Pleasant. He said whatever their direction, staff was happy to accommodate.

Mr. Santos said that being born and raised in Mount Pleasant he grew up around the Gullah culture. He said he thought it was very important and

loved what they did with the Sweetgrass Basket Overlay District and would be a great thing for the Town to take over and continue it.

Mr. O'Rourke said the most important thing for the Town as they grow, and they grow with people who are not from here was to understand the history. He said he made a speech at Town Council meeting last Tuesday when they talked about Shem Creek. He said the sweetgrass basket industry and Mr. Wright did a good job in that it is the Town's. He said it was not Goose Creek or Orangeburg, it was Mount Pleasant. He said they harvest this at Palmetto Islands County Park. He said they work with people who are harvesting the sweetgrass to actually do this. He said it was one of the few, if any, Mount Pleasant things. He said they cannot not do this in his opinion. He thanked Ms. Stokes-Marshall and the group for getting it going. He said it was time now to put it up for adoption and he said the Committee appreciated them coming to them for that need. He said the Town is good and can pull this off. He said he hopes they keep the guiding principles when they do it. He said it was about history and a part that they can never forget. He said he thought it would be one of the greatest things ever. He said he was on the Accommodation Tax Advisory Committee. He said when they had the meeting one of the requirements for funding is that one had to be there. He said Ms. Stokes-Marshall had already written the letter but the Committee as a group said stop. He said this was not going to just go away but was sure the Town was going to help out. He said from the Town's standpoint there was some accommodation tax funding that could help with the first year too. He said he could not think of anything more important as it is history.

Ms. Whitley agreed. She said she remembered being in Washington, DC with her children and going through one of the museums and there was a sweetgrass basket and they credited Mount Pleasant, South Carolina. She said she was so use to telling people she was from Charleston area and then clarify she was from Mount Pleasant. She said the sweetgrass basket has put the Town on the map nationally as well and thought it was very important that they continue the festival.

Mr. O'Rourke made a motion to direct staff to put on the Sweetgrass Basket Festival. Ms. Whitley seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Ms. Thomasina Stokes-Marshall, 481 Lillie and Rebecca Lane, Mount Pleasant thanked Mr. Santos, Mr. O'Rourke, and Ms. Whitley for their support for the request of the Sweetgrass Cultural Arts Festival Association and continuing the annual event. She said when she was on Council in 1999 or 2000, she served on the Tax Accommodations Committee. She said that the Chair, at that point in time, approached her about doing a sweetgrass festival. She said she knew nothing about sweetgrass baskets as she grew up in New York City. She said she realized it was important enough for her to get more information and educate herself. She said that the more she learned about the more she realized that it was something they had to do. She said for many new residents they may not know that the sweetgrass basket is the State of South Carolina Official Artform. She said that Highway 17 is named Sweetgrass Basket Maker Highway. She said that the history that comes along with it is woven into the fabric of the community on all levels – educational, social, domestic, and economics. She said it was extremely important that they hold on to this. She said the basket makers go to the Charleston Market because that is where the greatest amount of tourist come to. She said Mount Pleasant needs to claim the basket because it was Mount Pleasant. She said that of probably 90 percent of the basket makers their family ancestors three, four, five, six generations of basket makers still reside here. She said she could not thank them enough. She said that the workload had become too much because of the success. She said they just finished their thirteenth year going into the fourteenth year. She said whatever they could do to work along with Town to try to make the transition as easy as easy possible, they welcome the opportunity to do that.

4. Review of Culture, Arts & Pride Commission *Paint the Town* Initiative

Mr. Gergick said this was a *Paint the Town* Initiative through the Culture, Arts & Pride Commission. He said it was a way to get some artwork and murals in the Town.

Ms. Nicole Harvey, Recreation Department-Special Events and staff liaison for the Culture, Arts & Pride Commission said that in September they did a program update for all the things they had been working on. She said that one of the programs was *Paint the Town*. She said she hesitates to say it was a mural project because the plan was for it to be interactive art. She shared some picture of interactive art and public art installations that have been done in other cities. She said the Commission has Accommodations Tax funding in place for this project. She said they tried to identify a couple of public buildings that have high traffic areas with a lot of car and pedestrian traffic. She said they wanted to get the Committee's permission and bring them up to speed on the plan. She said they wanted to paint a four-foot wall in front of the pool at the Jones Center and also the side of Fire Station 7. She said they would treat this very much like the Traffic Box Art, the Town Hall Art and all of the other art programs. She said there would be submission process. She said they would they would vet the artist because there are particular things that one needs to be familiar with in terms of the challenges of weather and outdoor art. She said they have promised the fire department they could be involved in selecting the art for their building as well as Mr. Gergick and Mr. DeMoura having approval on all of the paintings as well. She said it was not always full wall, giant installations as it was sometimes a fun way that people come across something that makes them smile.

Mr. Santos asked if they had to get a permit for that.

Ms. Harvey answered in the negative and said they would not be painting any logos.

Mr. Gergick said they are seeking permission to do this on the Jones Center wall and would be brought up during Fire Committee to make sure they are on board with it for Fire Station 7.

Ms. Whitley moved to approve the painting of the wall at the R. L. Jones Center and as far as the Committee is concerned also the fire house as well. Mr. O'Rourke seconded the motion. All were in favor.

5. Presentation of Summer Camp Report

Mr. Gergick said the summer camps were an area of pride for the Department and shared some information. He said they had talked before about how well the summer camps went but he wanted to share some statistics. He said camps ran from June 4 to August 13 for ten weeks. He said there were 211 camps held with over 5,000 participants. He shared the locations where they were held. He said they were primarily at the Department's facilities, but some are held at Wando High School, Patriot's Point, Beads and Brush Strokes, and Charleston National Golf Course. He said with Revenue and Expenses it had far exceeded what they had done in the past. He said this year they had over \$650,000 in revenue and \$472,000 in expenses for a total net of \$180,000 for the summer. He said in 2017 they had \$532,000 in revenue so that is a \$120,000 increase in one year. He said the net revenue in 2017 was \$142,000 and a strong increase of \$38,000 net on the camps. He said for the years from 2010 to 2018 the increase in participants, the total number of camps, the revenue has more than doubled and the net has tripled. He said it was not just a lot of camps and not just a lot of variety and a lot of people being served and being financially stable, but the people are thrilled with them. Mr. Gergick said shared a tiny sampling of some comments they receive from the residents. He said they do surveys at the end of all of the camps. He said the comments are repeated over and over. He said the most common comment was for the Department to do more of the camps and they wished they lasted longer. He said the summer camps are not done by just one group of people. He said they have contractors throughout the area, staff throughout the Recreation Department are involved from back of the house staff getting ready for registration and the front desk staff. He recognized Ms. Tina Carter, Mr. Mark Friedrich, Ms. Anne Selner, and Ms. Florine Russell as having special roles in putting the camps on. He said they live the summer camps from April through August and after that in finishing everything up. He said they do a wonderful job. He said Ms. Allison Lane had made such an impact on marketing the programs. He said that the quality of the programs sell themselves but also the way it is presented to the public and she had done a great job with that.

Mr. Santos asked Ms. Tina Carter if the Department did a sailing summer camp.

Ms. Carter said they have a regatta in August.

Mr. Santos said he knew that but wondered because it is a summer time thing and children are out and a lot of sailing going on. He said he wondered if Hobcaw would not entertain an opportunity to partner with camp for sailing.

Ms. Carter answered in the negative as they do their own summer camps with morning sessions and afternoons all summer.

Mr. Santos said they do camps already.

Ms. Carter said the Department does refer people that call us to them, but she did not think they had the time to do anything else.

Mr. O'Rourke asked Ms. Carter if the waiting list were long for the camps.

Ms. Carter answered in the affirmative.

Mr. O'Rourke said they are so good, and the parents fly to the brochure to get it. He said part of it makes him feel really bad for those that do not get a chance to do that. He asked what limits them for more and asked if it was facilities.

Ms. Carter answered in the affirmative. She said they have all of their rooms at all of the facilities full all the time. She said they do not have more space.

Mr. O'Rourke said when one turns over \$180,000 of profit that is real money that can be used to have more facilities to do more. He said the role is to serve the public. He said if there is a public out there waiting to do more and they are paying for it he wished they could find a way. He said it was so much more work, but it is so good and such a great product that everybody wants. He said congratulations to everyone as it was an amazing thing. He said he just wonders what they need to do more. He said it was a great service and thanked staff.

6. Program/projects update

Mr. Gergick said they have the report on participation levels. He said on upcoming events, Thursday, December 6 they have the Volunteer Appreciation Dinner at Alhambra Hall. He said it was a wonderful event and it was the Department's opportunity to say thank you to more than 1,500 volunteers. He said he uses that number, but it was actually larger than that. He said they have a very nice dinner and recognize volunteers of the year for the athletic area, program area, and special events area. He said the Committee is welcome to be there and hope they can attend. He said it was one of his favorite events of the year to say thank you to people that allow the Department to do what they do and allow it to happen. He said the upcoming weekend they have the Holiday Market and Craft Show at the Farmers Market Pavilion on Saturday and the big Christmas Parade on Sunday. He said it was a wonderful event and thousands of people would be involved in the events this weekend and they are excited about them and hope for some good weather.

7. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting at 10:05 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Bedenbaugh, 12/3/18