

PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE

of the

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

Minutes

A regular meeting of the Parks & Recreation Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York, on Wednesday, April 22, 2015 at 12:30 p.m.

Members Present:

Legislator Jay Schneiderman - Chairman
Legislator Kara Hahn - Vice-Chair
Legislator Tom Cilmi
Legislator Bill Lindsay III
Legislator Kevin McCaffrey

Also in Attendance:

George Nolan - Counsel to the Legislature
Tim Laube - Chief Deputy Clerk/Suffolk County Legislature
Christina DeLisi - Aide to Deputy Presiding Officer Schneiderman
Michael Pitcher - Aide to Presiding Officer Gregory
Mike Cavanagh - Aide to Legislator Lindsay
Alyssa Turano - Aide to Legislator Hahn
Benny Pernice - Budget Review Office
Greg Dawson - Commissioner/Suffolk County Department of Parks
Tom Vaughn - County Executive Assistant
All Other Interested Parties

Minutes Taken & Transcribed By:

Gabrielle Severs - Court Stenographer

(*The meeting was called to order at 12:56 p.m.*)

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Good afternoon. I'd like to call this meeting of the Parks and Recreation Committee to order this 22 day of April 2015. Will you all rise and join us for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Lindsay.

(*Salutation*)

Please be seated. We're going to start today with public portion. I do not have any yellow cards; do you, Mr. Clerk?

MR. LAUBE:

I don't have any.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

If somebody wishes to be heard by the committee, they need to fill out a yellow card. Is there anybody that wishes to be heard and they have not filled out a yellow card? Please identify yourself now; otherwise, we're going to move directly to the agenda. Last call for anyone wishing to be heard.

We'll then go to *tabled resolutions*.

IR 1043, Authorizing use of Smith Point County Park property in 2015 by the Mastics-Moriches-Shirley Community Library's Family Literacy Project (Browning). Is there a motion; Commissioner?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Yeah, I think that was still tabled. We would --

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

It is currently tabled. Do you need it still be tabled?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Yeah, I think we requested it to be tabled so we can make the adjustments to the fee structure.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

And that won't hold up the event?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

No, the event is at the end of the summer.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

All right. I'll make a motion to table. Second by Legislator Hahn. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **1043 is tabled. (VOTE: 5-0-0-0)**

1125, Establishing a Parks Passport Program for Children in Suffolk County (Hahn).

What's your pleasure, Legislator Hahn?

LEG. HAHN:

Motion to approve.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

All right. There's a motion to approve. Is there a second?

LEG. LINDSAY:

I'll second.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Legislator Lindsay seconds, at least for the purpose of discussing. So, Legislator Hahn, I think to you, have you amended this in some way?

LEG. HAHN:

We met with the department, and I think it was a very productive meeting, and I think we're in a place where they understand the intent and, you know, what we hope to accomplish through this program and so I'm -- if you would like to --

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Yeah, we had a discussion. I have a better understanding of what the legislature is looking to accomplish with this bill, so we have no objection to it. It's not going to put an undue strain on my department.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

What under this bill -- I got the idea that kids, then, could collect all the stamps, show that they visited all the county parks like they do in state parks. I don't know if it's like a little sticker or something they get at each park or who designs that.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Sure.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I don't know.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

We're in the process. We're going to be working with the communications division to develop some kind of small booklet and either a pass or a sticker for each of the parks that we could stamp.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I mean, to keep it simple, you could just, like, have a card with the various parks on it and just a standard star that you stamp in that square for that park.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

That's correct. We're developing it, and that's -- I think that's --

LEG. HAHN:

There are all kinds of ideas, and there's even ways using QR codes -- CQR codes that if someone attends a park and can scan the code and can get themselves a sticker that they can cut out and paste into their book at home. There are all kinds of ideas. I'm not micromanaging or directing exactly how to do this to the Parks Department or the executive branch. I'm sort of leaving it wide open. The idea here is to find a way to get our youngsters into the parks, get them to see what we have, and, you know, young people really like to do this kind of collecting and, you know, whether it's a sticker, whether it's something that they cut out and then paste into their book and whether we partner with local schools or local boy scouts, local scouting groups to create individualized stickers or stamps or whatever it is for each park, there's all kind of potential opportunities through this.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

You'll develop these --

LEG. HAHN:

I'll work with -- yeah.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

What about the unsupervised parks? I mean the county has a --

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

We had a number of ideas --

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

-- an enormous amount of parks. I mean, how many individual parks do we have? It depends on what we call "parks," right? We have a lot of open space parcels that are technically parkland.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Tens of thousands of acres --

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

How many?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

We've got 50,000 acres --

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

50,000 acres, and how many various parcels?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Thousands. I don't think that's the intent. The intent is to do the major -- our major parks, the one that we --

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

The main parks, right?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Even if it's just going up to the park sign and they can scan a CRQ code on their iPhone or -- you know, and then get it to us where we can send them or maybe stop by the legislative offices to pick up the stamps. So like you said, it wasn't going to be --

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

They don't have to hike a trail to qualify? They just have to show up at the park?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Not at this stage. You just have to visit the park. Once they get there, they'll take --

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

You're going to develop what it looks like and you have the -- I know you don't have the time, but you're going to make the time, somebody's going to make the time to put this program together, right?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Yes, somebody either on my staff or working with the communications division and working with the Legislature.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Yeah, maybe, Legislator Hahn, can have a staff member help put it together. You have a sample of a passport program I see you brought with you.

LEG. HAHN:

I brought just samples of things I've come across recently. This is not a parks passport program, but this is a potential of the kind of thing it could be. I'll pass this around. You know, there are different kinds of things that we could try to emulate. I think the paper in the middle is the simpler. But the idea here is no, there does not have to be a staff member at the park to hand out stickers. In the end, if we have the QR codes and folks can scan that and earn themselves, just by visiting, and earn themselves the logo that they could print out at home, cut out, paste into -- you know, children paste --

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

We want to get young people excited about our parks.

LEG. HAHN:

All the time. We want to get young people -- eventually, if we could have an exercise component one day, maybe, that would be wonderful.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

That's like a separate bill.

LEG. HAHN:

That's later.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Is this zero cost or close to zero?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

That's my understanding. DPW can print up the booklets --

LEG. HAHN:

But we can even make them downloadable --

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

-- and any stickers that we have.

LEG. HAHN:

-- so folks can print them at home if they, you know, wanted to. I'm sure we can print a small quantity to have at some of the larger parks. Maybe some legislative offices or this main legislative building, county centers, but I imagine they could even -- these kinds of things could be a PDF document that gets printed at home and put together at home if need be.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

All right. Any other questions, comments, concerns? Legislator McCaffrey.

LEG. MCCAFFREY:

Yeah, I just have a concern. I support the use of the parks and what we can do to promote it. I was just speaking to my colleague, Legislator Cilmi, and he reminded me about what we now feel was something we regretted voting for, which was the wireless router bill; and I didn't really feel it was so bad until I saw the sign on my door and I said, This is scaring people, and not that this would but I would just think that this is something that could be -- instead of being mandated could be done administratively through the Parks Department at a time and it just -- how much more can keep doing, saying there's no impact when we do this and there's no impact, and eventually there's got to be an impact, and I would just think that it's something we can do administratively. We don't have to mandate the resolution for it.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

We're going to do it one way or the -- whether we are mandated to do it or not.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Well, you wouldn't be doing it if Legislator Hahn hadn't been suggesting it and if this legislative body tells you to do it. You might do it. You might do it on your own, but if this goes through, you're going to have to do it.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Anyone else? Okay. So we have -- it's the end of discussion. We have a motion to approve and a second. Any other motions? Okay. We'll vote on the motion to approve. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions?

LEG. CILMI:

Opposed.

LEG. MCCAFFREY:

Opposed.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay, three to two, two opposed: Legislator Cilmi and Legislator McCaffrey. Passes. **Approved (VOTE: 3-2-0-0, Opposed: Cilmi, McCaffrey).**

This is now moving on to Introductory Resolutions.

IR 1190, Authorizing use of Smith Point County Park property by Mastic Beach Fire Department, Inc. For Public Safety Services fund drive (Browning). Are we okay on this, Commissioner?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

We are. This is an event that they do every year. The fee structure's correct, so we're fine.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Do I have a motion to approve? I'll make a motion. Second by Legislator Hahn. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **Approved. (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).**

1191, Authorizing use of Smith Point County Park property by Mastic Beach Ambulance Company for "Help Us Save You Program" (Browning). Is this ready to go, Commissioner?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Yes, it is. This is another fundraiser (indiscernible).

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

All right. Same motion, same second, same vote. **Approved. (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).**

1199, Appointing Carmella Masem as a member of the Suffolk County North Fork Preserve County Park Advisory Committee (Krupski). Is Carmella present?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Yes, Carmella is in the back.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

If you'll step forward, maybe take a seat at the table beside our commissioner. We'll try to make this as painless as possible. Thank you for coming out. We have a policy where we just invite anybody who's being a new appointee to the board to come to the committee so that committee

members can ask questions and that person can introduce themselves and tell us why they might be interested in serving on this particular board. This is a new board for a new park on the North Fork. It's a 300-bus acre park. We have a lot of excitement about -- there's a lot of excitement about the future uses of this park, and this board is designed to help advise the county and the commissioner on the uses. So if you'll just tell us why you're interested, what your background is, any particular skills that you bring to the discussion.

MS. MASEM:

My name is Carmella Masem, been in camping going back to the late '60s, early '60s, have always used the county parks. I happened to have a husband who lived to be outside so it kind of rubbed off on me. We tried very hard to promote family camping in Suffolk County. We did our best to work with the county to improve our parks, and we do need another park for our campers. We have at least 1200 families who camp in Suffolk County, of which maybe half of them belong to our organization, The Suffolk Committee for Camping. We do try to encourage them to use our parks. I don't know what else I can tell you.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

That's fair enough, and I believe this seat is for a camping representative, and it sounds like you are well-suited for that. So does anybody have any questions? Okay. I think that will do. Commissioner, is there something you wanted to say?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Actually, I didn't want to put Carmella on the spot, but when we knew we knew we needed somebody from the camping community sitting on this board, Carmella was the first one we thought of, so we made the suggestion to the sponsor. Carmella is the president or vice president has been (indiscernible) for Suffolk Committee for Camping for, as she said, over 30 years. Wealth of knowledge so --

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Carmella, where is home for you, what town?

MS. MASEM:

Medford.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

You're in Medford?

LEG. HAHN:

Yes, I'm in Medford.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

So you're not from the area where this park is, but the park, obviously, is going to serve people throughout Suffolk County.

MS. MASEM:

Definitely.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

But it's not that far of a drive because I imagine this committee will probably meet in Riverhead or --

MS. MASEM:

Yes.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

I think they've been meeting in Riverhead, and actually, I think their last committee meeting was

actually at the park itself.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay. So that's -- you'll be able to go out to where the park is?

MS. MASEM:

Definitely, yes.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay. Thank you. Thank you for your interest in serving. I'll call the vote. It's clear that it's going to pass. You won't need to come to the full legislature. All right, so I'll make a motion to approve. Second by Legislator Lindsay. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Congratulations.

MS. MASEM:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Thank you for your service, upcoming service.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Thank you, Carmella.

MS. MASEM:

You're welcome.

IR 1215, Authorizing use of Blydenburgh County Park and showmobile by the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation for its Great Strides Walkathon (County Exec.). Commissioner, is this ready to go?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Everything is in order, yes.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

All right. Do I have a motion? Motion by Legislator Cilmi. Second by Legislator Lindsay. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Approved. **(VOTE: 5-0-0-0)**

IR 1264, Authorizing use of Cupsogue Beach County Park by the Moriches Paquatuck Squaws, Inc. for its Inlet Ride fundraiser (County Exec.). This also ready?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Everything is in order.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I'll make the motion. Second by Legislator Lindsay. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Approved. **(VOTE: 5-0-0-0)**

1272, Creating an Educational Agriculture Support Initiative (EASI) Pilot Program in cooperation with Mount Sinai Heritage Trust (Anker). I understand the sponsor has asked for this to be tabled, so I'll make a motion to table. Second by Legislator Hahn. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Tabled. **IR 1272 is tabled (VOTE: 5-0-0-0)**

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Commissioner, I've received a number of complaints about the reservation system for the parks, long delays, and then apparently it went down last night.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Yeah, we actually voluntarily took it down last night. We were experiencing significant delays. They were getting worse and worse as, kind of, the week went on.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

How much did we spend on this? This is like a new system, isn't it?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

It's a brand new system. I don't know what it costs off the top of my head, but I'll get that for the next day.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

It's more a frustration. It's a new system and it it's supposed to make things better not worse.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

And it will in the end but it does have its bumps and bruises.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

This is like the Affordable Care act rollout. All right. So what happened?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

So actually IT is working with Vermont Systems right now. They are having a conference call meeting to figure out why the system has slowed to what I call a crawl yesterday. We didn't think it was fair to the public to have them go on and try to spend three hours to make a reservation. We thought they'd be quite less frustrated if they went on, and we just said, Look, we're shutting the site down for today. We're pretty optimistic we'll have it back up and running by the end of the day. I'd be happy to give you a call this afternoon. Like I said, IT is on the phone right now with Vermont Systems. They think they know what the issue is. They're trying to clear up some databases and delete some files, so hopefully it will be back up and running.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I mean, I'm not an IT guy per se, so I just don't understand why -- it shouldn't be that complicated. Reservations is something I'm familiar with. I spent a good portion of my life in hotels.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

You have to understand, our reservations aren't like any other reservations or a hotel reservation. We've got rules, and many of them where we only allow people in for seven nights, they have to be out for seven nights. There's a whole fee structure that comes into place; you know, you got veterans fees, handicapped fees, everything else, so all that has to go to get coded into the system, and there's some glitches, and Vermont Systems right now is trying to figure out where those problems are. Again, I'm not an IT guy --

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Now is this on -- are their calling in by phone? Is it a menu system or computer?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

No, no. It's a straight computer system.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

So they can't call in like they used to. Now it's all computer?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

No, but we really didn't get many. We did an analysis of that right before we went out for the RFP. We looked at how many people were making reservations online for camping and gold -- I'm sorry, online for both the IVR and the phone system, and it was miniscule. It was like under four percent.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Mostly it was online.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Mostly it was on the computer system. The golf is up and running. The people are calling the golf courses, and they're able to get on a tee sheet that way. Again, we're hoping to have this resolved.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

We had a mess last year where we had people who thought they had reservations, and they ended up not having reservations. They got through. They called too early --

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

What happened last year --

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Remember this? I'm sure you can't forget this, so I'm just -- I want to make sure, though, that with all these technical glitches we're having with this reservation system we don't end up with double bookings, we don't end up with a situation like we had last year where we're breaking people's heart telling them they can't come this year --

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

No, that's not the case. What happened last year was -- you know, you mentioned a little earlier the phone system -- people were able to -- the prior vendor did not set the right parameters within that phone system, and people were able to make their reservations more than 120 days in advance and some people weren't able to do that. We didn't think that was fair, so we cancelled it. I will say with this new vendor they are much more responsive than the prior vendor was, and I don't know if that's because their contract was ending, but, you know, I was actually on the phone with the CEO of the company yesterday afternoon, and we had a conference call at 10:00 this morning to resolve this issue, so they are being very responsive, and we're optimistic that it'll be -- and people are making reservations. You know, all of Fourth of July is booked. The campsites are filling up. It's not like people can't make the reservations.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

What happens if you go on right now to make a reservation? There's a screen that says "The system is --"

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Right now -- what was happening was it would allow you to get to the website, and it would just spin and spin and spin. It would take people hours to put stuff into their cart. We got a lot of phone calls on it. I'm sure you got some phone calls, a lot of legislators did.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Numerous, yeah.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

And like you said yesterday, it came to such a crawl. Something happened in the database with the coding and we were having difficulties even in our own parks to try to sell out of beach permits and whatnot. We decided, look, this is not -- it's not fair to the public. Let's just direct -- when they go to go on the reservation system, it directs them to a site that says "This site is temporarily down. We will let you know when it comes back up." We use Facebook and Twitter and whatnot, and again we're optimistic that we should get this thing up and running today. You know, I would like -- all the IT people are kind of actually working on it right now. They're not here to not speak on it. I hope that answers your questions.

PK 4/22/15

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Anyone else on this or any other issues for the commissioner?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

I'd be happy to give you an update either close of business today or first thing tomorrow morning. I'll let you know where we're at.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

That's it. No other business. Okay. We are adjourned.

(*The meeting was adjourned at 1:17 p.m.*)