



RECREATION, PARKS & CULTURAL
SERVICES COMMISSION
MEETING OF JANUARY 12, 2021

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I. CALL TO ORDER

- Commission Chair Dennis Mitchell called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm

II. ROLL CALL

- Commission members present: Sandy Barth, Dana Davis, Scott Doll, Kevin Johnson, Dennis Mitchell, John Norton, Cheryl Rand, Jit Saha
- Commission members absent: Shuntel Beach
- City staff present: Department Director, Morgan Rodgers; Project Manager, Kurt Kirby; Park Services, Eric Milley; Community Services Manager, Amanda Musilli; Cultural Services Manager, Kim Zane; Administrative Office Coordinator, Valerie Jackson
- City Council:

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF November 10, 2020

- Motion by Scott Doll to approve minutes as written.
Second by Jit Saha
- No discussion
- **All in favor. Motion carried**

V. OLD BUSINESS - none

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- Commission Chair Mitchell introduced newest commission member, John Norton, who was appointed by Dan Merkel

VII. PARTNER ASSOCIATION REPORTS

- Lisa Gelber came forward to discuss origins of Little Free Library in City of Alpharetta parks. The Little Free Libraries have always been of special interest to her but because she lives in an HOA community, she could not have one in her yard. Was looking for ways to volunteer after her children got older and reached out to Morgan Rodgers. At around same time, she found out that Rotary Club of North Fulton was interested in building the libraries and placing them in Alpharetta parks. Rotary wanted to build the libraries and then be done while she was interested in being the one to maintain them. She wanted to make sure the libraries were kept in good working order, that the books weren't getting stale, that inappropriate flyers and pamphlets were not being left in them and so on. Morgan introduced her to Doug Higgins, who built the first three libraries that were sponsored by Rotary Club of North Fulton. Those three libraries were installed at North Park, Cogburn Road Park and Wills Park near the Community Center. The original three libraries were built using an online plan. Her husband built the next one for Webb Bridge Park in March of 2019, and has built all of them since, based on some design improvements that she observed while maintaining them. Sponsorships are available and she has a 501c3 set up, a non-profit, to take in the donations so that it's a tax deduction. That money is used for the lumber, which has gotten so expensive, and plexiglass. There's usually a little left over that goes into a fund that is used to buy books. Takes in a lot of donations but always has a need for children's books. The library at Rock Mill Park was the first effort at a sponsorship. The next library is located at the pocket park at intersection of Canton and Old Canton. The colors were coordinated to match sculpture there. Also, first effort made at involving someone else in community – in this case, a student at Alpharetta High School who did artwork on the box. This box was sponsored by a resident of Alpharetta Lofts, Sandy Hoffman, who is an avid supporter of literacy and box is in memory of her parents. The most recent library is located at Windward Park, which is one of her personal favorites because it's so easy to get to. This library was color coded to match the playground and it gets a ton of use. No matter what time of day she goes, there are people there enjoying the park, so it has been a great addition to the community. In response to inquiry from Commission Chair Mitchell regarding cost to build one, it is \$500 to sponsor. Commissioner Rand asked if this includes a plaque and it does. In response to inquiry from Commissioner Rand regarding how often they must be checked, in the beginning it's an unknown and people are afraid to touch the books, so she goes more often in the beginning. Once they're part of the community, she usually goes every three weeks or so. Likes to make sure that the books are changing hands and they're not just books that no one wants in that location. Sometimes she moves books from one library to another because different library locations have different tastes. Commissioner Johnson stated that he is a huge fan and has used the library at Wills Park and was curious what plan is now...are there plans to have multiple libraries in one specific park? There are two libraries at Wills Park. There's one by Wacky World that is not one that she is a steward of but

there are two because it's such a large park. Does not think there are any other parks right now that would warrant having more than one library but as parks are added, there are plans for more libraries. There may be an opportunity to partner with Alpharetta Elementary on the new playground and is investigating that possibility as well. In response to Commissioner Doll's inquiry regarding how many libraries there are currently, there are eight and she is steward of seven

VIII. REPORTS

A. Divisions:

1. Cultural Services – Kim Zane

- Upcoming Cultural Happenings
 - *Norman Wagner Solo Exhibit* – one of three solo shows so far. Solo shows are unique because you can go into the gallery and really get a feel for the artist. He is a local artist and still lives in Alpharetta. He's been an artist for 41 years and started the print making department for Atlanta College of Art when it was here before it merged into SCAD
 - *Tuskegee Airmen: The Segregated Skies of WWII* – our first on loan exhibit. We have it on-loan from Kennesaw State. Will be in Community Gallery starting in mid-February for a month
 - Gees Bend Play by ACT1 was just transitioned into a virtual release. We don't know date yet. We'll have it on the calendar and I can let you know. If you don't know story, it's about a group of African American women in rural Alabama in the early nineteenth century that created quilts. Had planned to have play in Black Box in conjunction with *Not Your Granny's Quilt Exhibit*. This will be a very modern quilt show so there will be some contrast there. We've had to adjust a lot of things because of COVID so bear with us and we'll keep you up to date
- Art Center
 - Spring Guide, including summer camps, is out
 - Have gone to a lot of short classes since people aren't quite as comfortable right now doing 4 to 8 weeks. Have switched over to Make & Take type classes and has had really good response
 - Open studios in ceramics and figure drawing – added for people who like longer classes. They can come in and do more art on their own and dig a little deeper.
 - Art Parties at Art Center - added for both adults and children
 - Art Studio on the GoGo – continuing outside, weather permitting
- Public Art
 - Alpha Loop Connection Mural - on hold right now due to weather. Artwork has been approved and predicts will start painting end of January or beginning of February
 - Crosswalk Mural at Windward Community Park – has been completed by high school apprentice group and looks great

- Historic Preservation
 - FFA Log Cabin – launching a living history camp. Partnering with Alpharetta Old Milton Historical Society. Has an instructor to do three weeks of camp this summer

2. **Community Services – Amanda Musilli**

- Alpharetta Events Update
 - Did not have Season of Celebration tree lighting this year but did have three snow days on Fridays and they were a great success. First one was very cold and raining sideways but families still came out. The weather on second Friday was beautiful and more people came out to join in. Third Friday also had lots of families, so it was wonderful
 - Holiday Food Drive was a great success. NFCC was excited with turnout. We had to empty wooden trees around downtown every day and deliver to NFCC, as well as seven indoor locations that were set up this year. In addition, Publix had a large end cap display, which is prime real estate in retail market. Very grateful for that
 - Holiday décor has mostly all come down, but you will see that trees lining the streets are still wrapped going up the trunk of the tree. Will leave that way until Farmer's Market starts in order to bring a sense of festivity and life downtown
 - Still no decision regarding Taste of Alpharetta
- Marketing
 - Community Food Drive was advertised on social media
 - Emily Shively put out a great 2020 highlights of Rec and Parks on Facebook and Instagram pages. If you haven't scrolled thru, please go back and look at all the great things that we were able to do, even in 2020
 - Spring and Summer Activity Guides are underway
- Agriculture
 - An Eagle Scout project was completed. There are now 3 barn owl houses at Farm. One is within Farm footprint and others are in undeveloped areas. We're hopeful that we'll get some owls. Has reached out to nature preservation organizations that may find a hurt owl that needs a new home
 - Really excited about entrance sign which has now been installed on Rucker Road. It's a beautiful blue park sign like those used at other parks
 - Winter silage tarps are out. We are solarizing some portions of the production fields, as well as lower part of NFCC field. The NFCC field is now half dug, so we are 50% of the way done and the other half is lined out to be dug by volunteers. We will plant NFCC field starting March 1st
 - On Farm social media page, or for those of you who get our monthly newsletter, you saw our numbers for 2020 on the ag program. We were

also fortunate to have a lot of success in 2020 despite everything that was going on

- Inquiries
 - In response to inquiry from Commissioner Davis regarding last date that decision can be made on Taste of Alpharetta, does not have a hard date but we are getting close to it. In response to Commissioner Saha's inquiry regarding possibility of moving event to August or September timeframe rather than not having it at all in 2021, the challenge would be what would we do in 2022. Would we do another Taste 6 months later? That would also be two Tastes of Alpharetta in the same fiscal year. In addition, due to calendar complexities and the number of people required for the event, it would be difficult to resource in a small timeframe. We have discussed this possibility but doesn't think that will happen. In response to Commissioner Johnson's inquiry regarding what the financial impact would be if the event did not take place, it would not be a net loss revenue-wise. The Taste of Alpharetta does not generate more revenue than the cost of the event

3. **Recreation Services – Christine Young (Presented by Amanda Musilli)**

- Adult Activity Center
 - The Recreation Team put on an awesome holiday drive thru event. They had snow machines and Kevin dressed as Santa Claus in an inflatable suit. 55 participants drove thru and I'm sure that brought a lot of joy to our seniors
- Alpharetta Community Center
 - Gym floor is complete
 - Alpharetta Gymnastics Academy is starting their competitive season
- Wills Park Rec Center
 - Santa Drive Thru Event – team worked with Fire Department and had Santa Claus come out. About 300 families drove thru, dropped a card for Santa and were able to wave and talk to Santa thru the window. This event also partnered with Community Services division on collecting non-perishable food for the NFCC food drive. It really was a great partnership across divisions
- Health & Wellness
 - Looking to Spring for outdoor classes to continue
- Upcoming Events
 - Father Daughter Dance postponed until the Spring
 - Rotary Club Polar Plunge – February 6
- Feedback
 - Commissioner Davis provided feedback on dance at Rec Center. Advised there are a lot of traffic problems and wondered if it might be possible to get signage for new families so that they know flow and pattern and

expectation. Second problem is that she's never dropped off child in carpool and picked them up that she didn't receive a number or a tag or a color – something associated with them. When she picks up, she's asked who her child is, and she gives them name and they bring child to car. It works out and assumes that most of the time a child would say "that's not my ride" but doesn't like to assume things when it comes to kids. Her feedback from a safety standpoint would be to have a number, like the way they do at elementary school. Number is then matched up with a name. Third suggestion is regarding fact that they're all out there underneath the overhang in leotards and they're freezing to death. If there's a way to keep them in the inside and parents were given numbers, then staff could request that number be sent out and the children aren't all shivering outside. This information will be passed along to Christine Young, Recreation Services Manager

4. Park Services – Eric Milley

- General Projects
 - Maddox Park - has been working on restoring and updating the fountain at the Alpharetta CVB. It was in rough shape. Concrete was falling apart, and we had to re-do it. We took sign off and powder-coated it, then put sign back on. There are a couple of loose letters that got damaged with the pebble coating but we're fixing those. There were four lights in it before and now we have eight; however, we don't have a switch for the lights yet. The switch will allow us to change pattern of the lights with a mobile device, like fountain out in front of City Hall. We'll have 16 different color patterns to choose from. The new tile band and pebble coating will prevent water from freezing, which is why concrete was cracked
 - Milton Center – irrigation on stadium field is a hydraulic system and we feel it can be repaired by somebody familiar with those older systems. Currently have someone working on it. It will save thousands of dollars if we don't have to replace irrigation on that field
 - Coghurn Park – had a couple of drainage issues. One in parking lot and one by concrete walking trail. Built a drainage pit and a retaining wall. Also removed chain link fence around right side of playground and reinstalled it on left side to funnel people onto the walkway and hopefully keep people from walking thru. Plan to put in some landscaping to address water issues also
 - Donated fitness equipment has been installed at Webb Bridge Park by the soccer field restroom. It's in a great area, at the head of the trail right by a restroom and the Little Free Library

5. Wills Park – Matt Casey (Presented by Kurt Kirby)

- Wills Park

- Horseshows started back up beginning this month. COVID protocols are still being followed. There will be a large, nationally rated show at the end of this month
- Staff busy getting fields up to standards and ready for play
- We are working with AYBA to address some issues around baseball complex. Adding some safety netting on Field 4. Also working with AYBA to upgrade Hall of Fame wall and enhance that area. Also working on bleachers at upper fields, trying to get that area looking good and possibly getting more shade structures out there. That's pretty much the plan over the first six months at Wills Park, working with AYBA. Hopefully, a lot of this will be done before opening day but the challenge is the weather

6. **Project Management – Kurt Kirby**

- Park Development
 - Mid-Broadwell Park – we broke ground but still have some challenges related to water and sewer and we're trying to work thru those issues to get the restroom installed. Hoping to have installed by March
 - Innovation Academy – goal posts and scoreboard are gone from football field, which will be our soccer field. Our on-call contractor will be working to remove light poles that are unsafe. We're hoping weather will cooperate and we can work this in during February. Also have approved Purchase Order for restoration of the home stand, which will include demo of old concession stand underneath stadium, sandblasting and painting the metal structure and making sure it's structurally safe, and pressure washing the front and back of the home stands. All of that was bundled into one project and we're hoping to begin either the end of this month or the first of February. Everything is on schedule to have this area ready to play, hopefully by June. We're working with soccer association to get the main field playable for the summer months. In response to inquiry from Commissioner Doll regarding possibility of football being played on field or only soccer or lacrosse, it will be a multi-purpose field. It will not be designated a football field. If there's anything going on with football, it will be flag football. North Park will still be main hub for football league and there's no indication that they have interest in moving over that way. Soccer and lacrosse are the two sports that we feel we need to continue to support, especially on this side of town. We don't have a lot of soccer facilities on this side of town and we're excited that Ambush wants to utilize this facility. In response to Commissioner Doll's inquiry regarding year the home stands were built and if structurally sound, not sure when built but structural engineer is 95% sure that it's good. Unable to give clean bill of health until we have it sandblasted and structural engineer can complete the final inspection after paint comes off hardware. Commissioner Saha commented that at one time he had heard of several sports designated for Innovation Academy - cricket, lacrosse and soccer and wondered if that had changed.

- Morgan Rodgers confirmed that soccer will be played on the big field, lacrosse on what we call the practice field, and cricket on the baseball field. The softball field in the lower area is in a much smaller area and is not big enough for any activity. We're clearing everything out but eventually we want to take the practice field and have a field there. If we can level it off, then we can build another rectangle field. This will give us three rectangle fields and that's what we really need. We don't need any more diamond shaped fields. Not enough money to build now but that's our eventual goal
- Restoration of metal structure behind football field is in process. Will not only be storage for facility but also for downtown area, with all the activity going on. When complete, will move on to restore some of the other buildings
- Wills Park Maintenance Facility is another challenging facility that we're working thru – stormwater, design, trying to find best location. It's a small area but a challenging area. Plan has been given back to Pond from Community Development but is now under review from Public Works. Public Works will be taking on construction administration of this project so they're trying to get up to speed. Project will be handed off to them after bid has been awarded to a vendor. In response to Commissioner Rand's inquiry wondering if this was a normal process – normally Public Works does help us out a lot. There was a time when we did some of this on our own, Windward Park for example, and we worked with Pond and they helped us with construction administration. Public Works feels this is an area that they can really support us in. They did the pool and will also help us out with construction of the Equestrian Center. The Equestrian Arena is also being reviewed by Community Development. Timeline wise, these two projects will probably be going on at same time
- Old Rucker Park – Community Development has approved design to repair collapsing garage and retaining wall and it's out to bid
- Alpharetta Community Center – Gym 1 floor has been redone and really turned out good
- Wills Park Pedestrian Bridges – both are open
- Wills Park Tennis Court Resurfacing – there were a few capital projects that we put on hold during COVID until the first of the year, trying to be good stewards of the money of Alpharetta, but we've been give blessing to move forward. Will be working on getting it out to bid so courts can be resurfaced this spring

B. Director Update – Morgan Rodgers

- Wants to talk about the year 2020. 2020 was a pretty good year for us, even with COVID and everything that's happening in the world right now. Would like to take 15 or 20 minutes to discuss highlights. I think when you see list, you'll be just as impressed with staff as I am. List is in no particular order.
 - Developed and opened Windward Community Park. This was a huge win for us because this was an area that was locked up for years and

now you have the Little Free Library lady saying that she can't keep enough books there. Hat is off to Kurt as the general contractor. As an aside, what determines having Public Works come in and help with construction is whether it's a large project or a complicated project. Nothing against Kurt but Windward Community Park was not a complicated park to build. It was already flat. Public Works did the pool, they did the Art Center, and they will help with the arena and the maintenance shop because we're building close to a stream and a floodplain. These are complicated projects and beyond our expertise

- We developed two MOU's with Fulton County Board of Education. At Alpharetta Elementary School, we basically talked them into letting us take their land and build a park on it. And then we talked them into giving us an athletic complex in downtown Alpharetta and letting us run it for next ten years. Those are monumental marks on our record and the Innovation Academy is going to change downtown Alpharetta in a couple of years, simply because of the extra activity down there and energy because people will be using track day in and day out
- Developed Alpharetta Elementary School Community Park. That one tugs on my heartstrings because it was right project at right time for the right group of people. Very proud of that
- Opened Pop-Up Skatepark in Union Hill. We took that project from a council meeting to opening it up, complete with an art mural, in about four weeks and that is lightning fast for a government
- Upgraded entrance to Wills Park Recreation Center. Before, we had crape myrtles that were falling over everywhere, there was an ugly metal railing that protected an area that was of no use to anybody, so we opened it up. Next time you ride by there, look at the front of the building. It's open and inviting and even has a couple of Adirondack chairs
- Installed donated exercise equipment at Webb Bridge Park. The City didn't spend a single dime on it. The equipment was donated, and we used Northside Hospital money to install it. It's probably worth \$50,000 or \$60,000 in the open market
- Took control of Encore Park, across street from VIP entrance to Ameris Bank Amphitheater. A nice 7 acre park. Took control of Alpha Loop from downtown Alpharetta to Avalon. Also took control of Thompson Street Park. Those are now City parks and open for business
- Made upgrades to Silos Park. Put a sign out there, painted the silos, did some landscaping, and removed fence that was termite infested. It looks good now
- Made facility upgrades at North Point Greenway Access Park. That's the Ethan Allen entrance. The number of people who access the greenway from that point is just incredible and now that restroom is up to par

- Completed repairs on Greenway pedestrian bridge that is just past Kimball Bridge. We found out bridge was being undermined by creek and we put in a gabion wall that secured bridge for many years to come. That was a huge project that no one will notice now because it looks like it's supposed to
- Continue to develop Wills Park Master Plan
 - Whole Foods pavilion got moved to the event lawn and is now the Grand Pavilion
 - New Wayfinding signs throughout the park. We're working on some additions and within the next week and a half, all the blank spots will be filled in
 - Replaced a lot of the concrete along the spine of the park, which goes back to Master Plan. As Kurt mentioned, will be making some upgrades at baseball field. That's part of spine project because we're starting at Community Center and we're going to go all the way to Wills Park and improve the spine of the park. You will see major changes at baseball fields coming up and those will be joint projects with Alpharetta Youth Baseball Association. AYBA will be putting their money into the project
- Safely accommodated and hosted events at the Equestrian Center. The horse community accepted the charge to make sure that their COVID protocols were in place to have those shows. We've had absolutely great events, starting back in June and that was a major accomplishment
- Wills Park Equestrian Foundation was formed this year and they raised \$250,000. We had money set aside in our budget for a matching contribution, so we had \$500,000 to build arena at Wills Park. We're also building maintenance shop
- Two bridges at Wills Park Recreation Center playground were replaced. Really didn't know this time last year just how bad they were. A 100-year flood lifted bridge up and threw it against Wills Road. After that, we looked at other one and realized that it had a hole in it and needed to be replaced as well. Both were built with helical piers, which has a very small impact on the ground - one little metal rod goes all the way down to the bedrock
- Repaired damaged roof on large pavilion between fields #6 and 7. The next time you're in the park, be sure to go to pavilion and look up to see gorgeous tongue and groove that's been put under there
- Operated, with COVID protocols, summer camps this past summer. Had an average of 106 kids in camp each week with no incidents
- Health & Wellness folks ramped up free fitness activities because of COVID and the need to do things outside. We had over 100 free outdoor classes every month during the summer
- Staff also designed middle-school and after-school programming when Fulton County decided to go virtual. Some folks had to go to

- work and needed a place for their children. Partnered with the Y to offer programs at Community Center
 - Music Match program in downtown area restaurants was one of more successful programs during COVID
 - Take Out Art Projects in association with Arts Alpharetta and Art on the GoGo allowed us to keep art out in front of kids in particular. Arts Alpharetta made boxes and people drove thru and we gave them a project that they could take home and complete
 - The Farm donated 7,500 pounds of produce to North Fulton Community Charities this past year. Amanda had conversation with some of the volunteers and this is why we are expanding the produce area. Produce area is normally handled by Cambridge High School agricultural students. When Fulton County wasn't in school, the kids couldn't come to the farm, so the volunteers stepped up and did that, along with Amanda's and Emily's leadership. We realized that there is a real need for fresh produce to be given away by North Fulton Community Charities. Amanda had money donated and volunteers so now we're expanding that area. The school will have a production area and the volunteers will have a production area for food that we will donate to North Fulton Community Charities
 - Largest display of scarecrows ever with 122. One of the highlights this year was how good those scarecrows looked
 - We dedicated the Preston Ridge Community Center. We're excited about that because now we will have program space on the east side of town as soon as conditions allow
- These wins were gathered from lists submitted by managers so there are actually 6 pages of wins that these were chosen from. Couldn't be prouder of our group this year because 2020 was a tough year for everybody. Our folks rallied and pivoted on a daily basis and made me very proud of the things they did for the City and the citizens. We are looking forward to 2021 and with that, I'll be glad to answer any questions.
 - Commissioner Doll stated that in all the years he's been here that he has always been impressed with the quality of staff and the dedication that they have on a mission basis to do the right thing. Under Morgan's leadership, this has just been magnified tremendously. Doesn't feel that we could ask for better park staff or a more dedicated group of people that will do whatever it takes, rain or shine or flood or famine, to get it done and feels department should be recognized for that
 - Commission Chair Mitchell added that he's noticed the way that Morgan and staff have adapted to problems at hand. When COVID came around, everything had to shift. Things had to change on a dime and the department was able to do it. It is noticeable and from the outside, seemed to happen almost seamlessly. Thank you to everybody for doing that. Was interesting to watch from the outside

- Commissioner Norton remarked on positive changes he's observed at Wills Park since returning to Alpharetta after being here in the mid-eighties and early nineties. At that time, there were five dirt fields and a concession stand and any work done over there, was done by the coaches. You never saw anybody from Fulton County up there doing anything to the field. We actually sodded two of those fields one time. What has transpired at Wills Park and the changes that have been made over there, the City of Alpharetta has just done a marvelous job. From somebody just moving back, thank you

C. City Council – none

D. Recreation Commission

- Commission Chair Mitchell announced that Dana Davis would be leaving at the end of the month. She is going to move over to the Planning Commission and we will miss her

IX. CITIZEN'S COMMENTS

- None

X. ADJOURNMENT

- Motion to adjourn by Scott Doll. Second by Kevin Johnson.
- **All in favor. Motion carried**
- Meeting adjourned at 7:54 pm
- Next Commission meeting: February 9 at 6:30 pm