

Administrative Divisions



OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Charlie Loehr, Director

Donald K. Cochran, Deputy Director

Terry H. Brooks, Special Programs

Under the direction of the Director and Deputy Director, the Department oversees and manages the preparation of land use policies to help public officials prepare for the future and develops and manages a nationally recognized award winning park system for the citizens of Montgomery County.

GRANTS MANAGEMENT

To date, grant applications have been submitted primarily to public agencies and a very small number of private sources that deem local government agencies eligible for their funding. The grants program has also been expanded to include Bond Bill projects and fundraising in the community. Awards received in this program include:

- Maryland Department of Transportation, National Recreation Trails – Sligo Creek Hiker-Biker Trail signage and kiosks - \$30,000
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Community Parks and Playgrounds Program (CP&PP) – Olney Square Neighborhood Park playground renovation - \$64,000
- Maryland DNR, CP&PP – Stewartown Local Park playground renovation - \$64,000
- Rudy Bruner Foundation Urban Excellence Award – Silver Spring Downtown and Discovery Headquarters - \$10,000 Silver Medal (\$50,000 Gold Medal pending)
- United States Tennis Association (USTA) Maryland – Olney Manor \$5,000 matching grant commitment
- Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) and Trimble, Mobile Government program – ArcPad Application Builder - (in-kind) \$1,500
- Montgomery County Volunteer Center (via the Points of Lights Foundation) – Martin Luther King Park replacement picnic tables - \$2,000
- National Center for Boundless Playgrounds – Martin Luther King Park playground accessibility - \$4,545.46
- State Highway Administration – Rock Creek Hiker-Biker Trail Bridge construction - \$2,368,000 (Bond Bill)
- State of Maryland, Capital Grants Project – Olney Skate Park construction - \$350,00 (Bond Bill/Grant)
- Individual donations – Capital Crescent Trail - \$29,250

Pending applications include the following:

- Maryland DNR, CP&PP – Olney Manor Tennis Lights - \$148,000
- Maryland DNR, CP&PP – Quebec Terrace playground renovation - \$40,000
- Maryland DNR, CP&PP – Flower Avenue playground renovation - \$40,000
- Maryland DNR, CP&PP – Ellsworth Avenue playground renovation - \$67,000
- Maryland DNR, CP&PP – Randolph Hills playground renovation - \$64,000

- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (a partnership of several federal agencies), Pulling Together Initiative – Sligo Creek Stream Valley Park and Rachel Carson Regional Park, Non-Native Invasive plant control model project - \$38,000
- Montgomery County Tennis Association – Olney Manor lights renovation matching funds - \$5,000
- USTA, Tennis in the Parks program – Olney Manor lights - \$50,000
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Five-Star Restoration Challenge Grants program – Rock Creek Stream Valley Park, Unit 1, Erosion and Non-Native Invasive plant control \$13,190

COORDINATION WITH RECREATION DEPARTMENT MANAGEMENT

In an effort to continue to improve park and recreation program services to the public, the Department and the Montgomery County Recreation Department entered into a comprehensive memorandum of understanding (MOU). The purpose of the MOU is to create an administrative process that will serve to create cooperatively designed, developed and managed parks and recreation programs for the public. The MOU covers such subjects as park and recreation facility planning and development, facility security and safety, and fiscal management. The Department believes this new cooperative agreement will help to deliver quality recreation facilities and services to the citizens of Montgomery County.

ENTERPRISE DIVISION

Bill Mooney, Chief

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

- The Enterprise Division was established July 1, 2004. During the first year of operation, the division has established a strategic plan to build the Enterprise Team and to work toward fiscal stability. The plan defines the mission of the division as *Providing Great, Affordable, Active Recreation For All*.
- The Enterprise Division budget for FY06 advances the mission through a combination of strategic fee changes, marketing, and a basic shift in the non-golf operations from profit driven to achieving the mission of affordable active recreation. It is basic to this shift that success in marketing and increased attendance will result in financial success—it is the emphasis that will be the most significant change. In addition, the budget submitted for Enterprise raises the major policy issue of the ability to sustain debt service for facilities while achieving the mission and reinvesting in the facilities.
- As a major focus of the Strategic Planning Initiative, the Enterprise Division and the Montgomery County Revenue Authority conducted an in-depth analysis of the two public golf systems in the County. The primary conclusion of the report established for the Commission that the Park golf system faces major financial challenges primarily due to several factors that are affecting all golf courses (flat demand and over building of golf courses) and several that are more unique to our system, including that we are a government structured business competing with private enterprises. Work is now being completed to make several major recommendations regarding the business structure, marketing, and incentives to drive business to the courses, as well as other opportunities regarding potential partnerships.

STATUS OF ONGOING ACTIVITIES

Public/Private Partnerships

- **Guidelines for Public/Private Partnerships** – The implementation of existing partnerships and the solicitation of new ones continued to be a major function of the Enterprise Division. All proposed partnerships are reviewed under the guidelines adopted by the Planning Board in 2003 and are intended to:
 - Allow park services to be continued or enhanced, while maintaining or reducing public tax support, or
 - Advance or enhance recreation/park facility development through the investment of private resources.
- **Montgomery Regional Office (MRO) Redevelopment** – The most significant partnership, redevelopment of the MRO site, is progressing with the selection of ZHA, Inc., led by Don Zuchelli as the development advisor for the project. The MRO team is working on a timeline to select a development partner and negotiate a memorandum of understanding by summer 2005. Currently, the initial Request for Qualifications (RFQ) is in draft, as is the Request for Proposals (RFP), which will be issued shortly after the RFQ process is completed.

- **New Partnership Opportunities** – A key component of the public/private partnerships concept is outreach within the Commission and to the public by the Partnerships Team to identify potential new partnership opportunities. During the past six months, through internal and external discussions and site visits, partnership opportunities have been identified and have entered the comments phase of the approval process. The Commission will review the comments, the opportunities, and the potential for incorporating the partnerships into the work program in the next several months.

Current partnership proposals on which the Commission sought comment include:

- **Cabin John Train** – This is a small-scale train operating in Cabin John Regional Park. As a result of the input on this project, the Park Foundation has expressed an interest in undertaking this project. At this time, the Foundation is evaluating the issues related to the train, its operation, and the building at the train site.
- **Muncaster Recreational Park** – This is an undeveloped park east of Gaithersburg, northeast of Route 124 and Muncaster Mill Road, with 105 acres of existing parkland including gently rolling, wooded, and open areas, and small tributary streams. The vision for this park includes both active and passive areas and trails. The park, located adjacent to Route 124, may be suitable for high intensity recreation (e.g., indoor tennis, roller hockey, etc.). Very little input was received on this site.
- **Ridge Road Recreational Park** – When the park was developed, a site for future development was prepared. At the time, it was anticipated that the site would be used for a three-sheet indoor ice skating facility. The facility has not been built and is not anticipated to be built in the near future, if at all. The pad is finished with structural fill and has utilities to the pad. In addition, infrastructure in terms of stormwater management and parking has been provided in the park. Very little input was received on this site during the review period. However, the site is currently being evaluated as a temporary site for cricket. The site is actually too small, but the cricket association is willing to try and make it work until a better site can be identified.
- **Chevy Chase Community Center** – In a new development—Wisconsin Place in Chevy Chase—the developer, New England Development, is providing a community center as a public amenity. Based on the input received from many sources during the review, the Commission and the Department of Recreation are working on a cooperative basis to identify what will be required for the Department of Recreation to operate the facility.
- **Tennis** – There are possible partnership opportunities to develop new indoor tennis facilities in Cabin John Regional Park and Olney Manor Park. In addition, there is potential for reuse of the Wheaton Tennis facility should the indoor tennis move to Olney. Based on a significant amount of interest in tennis expansion, the Enterprise Division is undertaking an update of the tennis demand analysis that was completed four years ago. This will be the first step in determining the potential to expand Cabin John; the best use for the Wheaton site—which includes continuation as a tennis facility; and the potential to introduce indoor tennis at the Olney site.

MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Marie-Edith Michel, Chief

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

- Coordinated and submitted the Departmental FY06 Proposed Annual Budget
- Successful Team Building Day brought together 600 employees who participated in hands-on learning activities, healthful exercise and spirited competition in this all-Department, once-a-year event
- Departmental training coordination added an additional responsibility whereby we track our employees who register for specific training within the newly offered Professional Development Training Program. The first classes are now underway.

STATUS OF ONGOING PROJECTS

- **Quarterly Management Meetings** – The Fall 2004 and Winter 2005 Quarterly Management Meetings (QMMs) provided supervisors and managers with important information on departmental priorities, such as traffic congestion; applying for grants; the Shady Grove Sector Plan; the newly formed Enterprise Division; recent changes in recruitment, and the Employer-Assisted Housing program.
- **Strategic Alignment** – Actively engaging other divisions and functional areas, the Division has assisted the Enterprise Division in completing their strategic plan; helped the four nature centers operate collaboratively on critical issues, such as programming, scheduling, improving partnerships with schools, pricing, and online registration; and initiated alignment efforts in the Community Based Planning and Development Review divisions.
- **Recruitment** – Pace accelerated with more than 30 hiring/selection actions processed to date. Employee Services staff works closely with divisions to prepare advertising and interview questions, participates on panels, drafts selection materials, and interacts with the recruiter to finalize hiring decisions.

NEW INITIATIVES

- **Diversity Action Plan development and implementation** – The report provides background information and outlines objectives and strategies in six action areas: Work Environment; Employee Development and Training; Management Practices; Recruitment and Selection, Community Outreach; and Vendor Diversity Practices. It includes a schedule for implementation as well as directives on Key Tasks and Responsible Parties to ensure accountability. The Division is also playing a key role in implementing ongoing departmental communication regarding the Diversity Action Plan.
- **Diversity Action Plan Report and Implementation Guide** – Prepared this guide, based upon the work of the Diversity Leadership Team. This report will be the seminal document that defines the scope of the Department's diversity efforts over the next three to five years.
- **Customer Service Training** – The Division is providing Employee Success/Customer Service Training for park staff, initially focusing on the Southern Region, with the

expectation of delivering the training to all Park staff. Division staff are also gearing up to train seasonal employees in customer service prior to the summer, when the number of seasonal staff is at its highest. Training will also focus on development of techniques such as a pocket aid with pointers and list of referral names and phone numbers.

- **Departmental Orientation for New Employees** – We integrated an interactive group dynamic exercise whereby the new employees worked together on a task that highlighted the importance of everyone’s contribution to the team effort. Given that the participants enjoyed this exercise and learned from it, we will make it a standard part of the program.
- **Time and Labor Management** - A new Commission-wide initiative of using Kronos for time card and labor distribution management is underway. Employee Services is responsible for collecting data used to determine licensing and training requirements. As the shift to Kronos occurs, we will take on related responsibilities to assure operational success.
- **Forever Green Initiative and Energy Conservation** – Management Services staff continues to promote environmentally friendly purchasing throughout the department for a variety of purchases including vehicles. In addition, staff is working with the departmental Energy Manager to decrease consumption throughout the department and monitor energy usage by facility.
- **Management and Fiscal Analysis** – The Budget Unit continues to provide technical assistance to the department particularly on special revenue fund information. The unit is also working with the Grants Manager and staff to develop guidelines for managing new grants. The unit continues to encourage the use of department-wide contracts for various services to provide economies-of-scale and more efficient contract management. In addition, we continue to coordinate training efforts for staff on using our automated financial systems for improved information gathering and decision making on short and long term financial issues.