

Ocean Pines Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee
2024 Annual Report

SECTION I: COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND STATUS OF TERMS

| Name | Date Appointed | On Term | Comments |
|---------------------|----------------|---------|-------------|
| Bill Barnard | December 2021 | 1 | Chairperson |
| Becky Lenhardt | January 2022 | 1 | |
| Pam McGregor | December 2022 | 1 | |
| Thomas Ottenwaelder | May 2022 | 1 | Secretary |
| Laura Scharle | Feb 2020 | 2 | |
| Pattie Stevens | June 2021 | 1 | |
| Kathy Witmer Toth | October 2023 | 1 | |

SECTION II: SUMMARY OF MAJOR ACTIVITIES DURING REPORTING PERIOD

1. Committee conducted complete assessments of OPA’s parks, playground and recreational trails and provided the Board of Directors with reports detailing current conditions, areas in need of improvements and maintenance as well as recommendation to improve these facilities. Reports submitted include: Park Signage, Safety, Bocce Court, OPA Park and Trail, and Outdoor Fitness. Condition reports for the following parks and trails: White Horse, South Pond I (including War Memorial), South Pond II, Swim and Racquet Club, and White Horse Kayak launch.
2. Committee initiated monthly walks to monitor conditions in OPA parks, playgrounds, and recreational trails. These walks identify safety concerns, maintenance requirements as well as picking up litter and performing other associated activities to ensure a high level of “usability” of our trail, parks, and playgrounds.
3. Ocean Pines Bike Day – In recognition of National Bike Month, the Advisory Committee organized and sponsored the Third Annual OPA Bike Day promoting bicycling in our community. There were 37 participants for the event.
4. Advocated and provided information, including estimated costs for establishing an accessible kayak launch at Pintail Park. The launch is currently being installed.
5. Advocated and provided recommendations for improvements to the Swim and Racquet club trail. Improvements to the trail have been completed.
6. Prepared and submitted to the Board of Directors a report recommending establishing an outdoor fitness capability in Ocean Pines.
7. Assessed current state of OPA Adopt a Park program and recommended revisions. OPA updated program guidelines and posted on OPA website.

SECTION III: PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AND ASSISTANCE REQUIRED

Pedestrian and Bicycle safety

Based on input provided by OPA members in the 2023 survey conducted by the OPA walking and bicycling are the two most popular recreation activities in Ocean Pines with over 80% citing walking and almost 50% of respondents indicating bicycling. Safety on the parkway is

paramount to our members enjoying these activities. Common approaches to improving safety and user's comfort level include providing clear demarcation through road markings, including crosswalks, signage – such as “Share the Road”, and clearly marked crosswalks with advisory signage. Based on outreach by the Advisory Committee to the Maryland State Highway Administration, Ocean Pines Association is responsible for maintaining the roads in the community. We recognize important improvement have been made, especially at Manklin Creek Rd at Racetrack Road (MD 589). The committee is advocating that we continue to enhance road safety in the community through several actions.

- Add zebra striped crosswalks with advisory signage, to MUTCD standards, on Ocean Parkway at the following intersections: White Horse Park, Pintail Park, Yacht Club, Sports Core/Library (Cathell Road), Racquet Sports Complex, and Swim and Racquet Club. Additional, as previously recommended, it is also requested that crosswalk markings and advisory signage be added at each street crossing of the Robin Hood trail.
- Continue public safety communications to promote safe use of these facilities with a focus on driver awareness.
- Develop a Bicycle/Pedestrian master plan for Ocean Pines, including an emphasis on connecting the community to transit, local resources (such as library, post office, grocery stores and pharmacies), as well as regional bicycle and pedestrian networks. Opportunities may exist to leverage other activities in this area such as Worcester County's Greenways and Trail plan, as well as the MD Rt 90 project, for instance.

Outdoor Fitness

Based on the results from the fall 2022 OPA community survey, the committee recommends the Board consider establishing an outdoor fitness park and/or trail. In the survey, there were many comments about having a gym in our community. As many of our residents already walk, jog, run, or bike to stay active, residents, of all ages, would benefit from fitness parks or trail. Our recommendations were recently provided to the Board for consideration. Several options were detailed (excerpted below):

- **Centralized outdoor gyms:** A centralized outdoor gym is set up like a park, with multiple pieces of equipment in one location. It typically has comfortable surfacing to walk on and may be located near a parking lot or other amenities. These gyms offer a great way to improve access to equipment for people who might live far from an indoor gym. They're also affordable, a great place to socialize and can motivate passersby to get involved.
- **Trail fitness stations:** Another option is to place a few pieces of equipment along a trail or pathway. The trail offers an opportunity for running or biking, while the exercise stations can introduce some strength training for a well-rounded workout.
- **Obstacle course:** Obstacle courses provide strength, agility, coordination, and cardio training to users. There are even kid-friendly options you can add to your outdoor gym. It connects people of all ages and backgrounds to socialize with their loved ones while exercising. It's designed to engage children and families, and you can either choose a pre-designed course or create one of your own.

The committee advocates that the Board consider developing a community fitness plan that would include phasing in each of these, over the next three budget cycles, as time and resources allow. These enhancements to our amenities would showcase our community, increasing its attractiveness across all demographics as a desirable place to live.

Abandoned Tennis Court at the Swim and Racquet Club

The committee has had discussions regarding the abandoned tennis court at the Swim and Racquet club. This facility is currently in disrepair and is unused. It is our conclusion that repurposing this space would benefit the membership. Potentially, depending on how this space is redeveloped, future revenue generating activities could be realized. We urge the Board to consider issuing a charging document to establish a task force of community stakeholders, including youth, to develop a strategic plan for this space.

Bainbridge Park Playground

In previous Annual Reports that committee has recommended funding improvements to the Bainbridge Park playground. This playground is overdue for refurbishment. Improvements that we suggest are:

- Make the playground more accessible and inclusive with new equipment.
- Expand mountain bike trail
- Add more benches, planting shade trees adjacent to the playground.
- Add a safety fence around the playground.

It is our view that implementing any (or all) of these changes would add value to this facility and increase usage.

Parks and Trails Safety

Due to the nature of parks and trails, continual maintenance, general upkeep, and preventative maintenance is required. Our committee has detailed the current state of our parks and trail safety in several recent reports. We also advocate the OPA Public Works tracking system be enhanced to better record, track, and report work orders. With this enhancement, communication, and coordination between OPA departments and the Advisory Committees would be more transparent, responsive and lead to efficiencies of effort.

Community Center Gymnasium floor

The OPA Community Center gymnasium serves as the hub for a myriad of recreational activities. Membership of all ages utilizes this facility daily. The gymnasium floor is currently in poor condition. The committee recommends that this floor be refurbished or replaced with a state-of-the-art surface, as soon as possible. Additionally, as a community “asset” we recommend implementing a preventive maintenance schedule to extend the useful life of the surface, and the gymnasium facility.

SECTION IV: REQUEST FOR ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR INCLUSION IN THE NEXT OPA BUDGET. CHAIRPERSONS SHOULD CONSIDER IMPACTS ON THEIR COMMITTEES RELATING TO THE OPA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

| Budget Item | Comment | Request Amount |
|--|--|---|
| Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Plan | Long range plan, by obtaining consultant service, with the goal to build and sustain a transportation network for all users. | \$ 35,000 |
| Crosswalk installations (signage and pavement markings) | Improve safety of pedestrians and bicyclist throughout the community | \$10,000 |
| Outdoor fitness | Improve community members health and wellness as well as increasing the attractiveness of community as a place to life. | \$5,000 - \$100,000 |
| Swim & Racquet Club abandoned tennis court redevelopment | Potential revenue could be realized with redevelopment of this site. | \$25,000 |
| Bainbridge Park | New accessible playground equipment, and perimeter fence | \$5,000 - \$30,000 |
| Park and Trail safety improvements | To address documented issues (see committee's park and trail safety report) | \$30,000 |
| Refurbishment of Community Center gymnasium floor | Current condition requires that needed maintenance, or replacement, be completed as soon as possible. | \$25,000 (refurbishment) \$100,000 state of the art replacement) |

SECTION V: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BOARD ACTIONS

1. That OPA fund the development of a Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan for Ocean Pines.
2. That OPA add zebra striped crosswalks, with advisory signage, to MUTCD standard, on Ocean Parkway at the following intersections: White Horse Park, Pintail Park, Yacht Club, Sports Core-Library, Racquet Sports Complex, and Swim and Racquet Club.
3. That OPA fund the development a Community Fitness Plan that would include phasing in a centralized outdoor gym, a fitness trail, and an obstacle course, over the next three budget cycles.
4. That OPA Board issues a charging document to establish a task force of community stakeholders, including youth, to develop a strategic plan for redevelopment of the abandoned tennis court at the Swim & Racquet club.
5. That OPA fund new accessible playground equipment, and safety fencing, along the perimeter, for Bainbridge Park.
6. The OPA fund needed park and trial safety maintenance items, as submitted in previous reports (and summarized in appendix I) and enhance Public Works work order system to include regular reporting to the Board and Advisory Committees.

7. That OPA implements a preventive maintenance schedule for the Community Center gymnasium floor and complete needed refurbishment, or replacement, as soon as possible.

attachments