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Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Joint Meeting w/ Park Authority, Tuesday, May 20, 2025

Date	Tuesday, May 20, 2025
Place	Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, Virginia
Length	53m (video)

- Official meeting video (Fairfax County): https://video.fairfaxcounty.gov/player/clip/3807
- Official Board of Supervisors page (Fairfax County): https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-29. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:03] you. We're going to go ahead and get started. Welcome, everyone. I know we have a short hour here, a little bit shorter than a normal committee meeting, but it's been a while since we've gotten our partners from the Fairfax County Park Authority board around the table with our board of supervisors, and so we're delighted to have this opportunity and to hear from Jay and the team some of the great things that are happening at the Park Authority and be able to have a conversation about that. But before I turn it over to Jay, I want to make sure Tim Hackman, who is here

[00:00:38] acting on behalf of Kyle Stone, who could not be with us today as the chair of the Park Authority Board, wanted to give him an opportunity as vice chairman to say a few words. Welcome. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Members of the Board of Supervisors, members of the Park Authority Board, my colleagues, and Park staff. I'm delighted to be here today to fill in for Kyle, who does extend his best wishes and deepest regrets that he couldn't join us today. But I'm happy to share these very brief opening marks on his behalf. First of all, I want to extend a very sincere

[00:01:16] thank you to the Board of Supervisors for your ongoing partnership and for those funds which restored for trail maintenance, open space mowing, and for the park foundation. This was a very difficult budget year, and we understand that not a lot of funds were available to restore to proposed cuts, and we greatly appreciate what you did do. In the face of all this pressure and uncertainty, your support of what it

takes to maintain a parks and rec system of our size, and landmass and service is, as I mentioned, greatly appreciated. So today we're excited to review the impact and achievement here at Fairfax County Parks over the last year,

[00:01:54] I want to offer a special thanks to the extended Park Authority staff who are here today and who continue to provide outstanding public service to our community. It is Kyle's mind and our entire Park Board sentiment that our staff is exceptional, and we're excited to see a highlight of those efforts today. So, Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. Thank you very much, Tim, and I should have said this at the beginning, but certainly our Park Authority Board members who are here, I know all of my colleagues really express our appreciation for what you do, because this is a tough job assignment, a volunteer assignment, but one that is so important to running the world-class park authority that we all benefit from.

[00:02:34] And so thank you for your service. And with that, I am going to turn this over to Jay Cole, our parks director. Welcome. Thank you very much. Oftentimes in committees we talk about heavy stuff, and a lot of times parks are very political, So today, though, I encourage you to sit back, and this is going to be a very feel-good story.

[00:02:55] We're going to talk about what we've done in the last fiscal year. So hopefully it's all really great news and brings a lot of smiles. I will remind you that we moved this back a few times. So this is FY24. So if you see – or calendar year 24, if you see things that we did this year, and why isn't that on there, that will be next time.

[00:03:16] So next slide. Oh, I am in charge. Okay, there we go. No, I'm not. see that's that's that's exactly indicative of my life so 2024 a year of excellence and impact at the park authority so first one of our focuses are set at setting the standard and building community by preserving legacy creating joy and inspiring wellness and in 2024 we did that by improving the lives of our residents through 16.6 million visitations to our parks rec centers and golf courses. That's an astounding number of people who regularly visit our parks on an annual

[00:03:55] basis. And I think that that's very light. Oftentimes we ask people, are you avid park users? And they're like, no, but when I walk my dog, I go left and I go through this trail because it's pretty. And this number does not capture those visitors. And we really do believe that parks are economic drivers. They're so important to building community. They create a sense of place, in addition to improving health outcomes in our residents and helping with environmental and sustainability and resilience against climate change.

[00:04:28] So transforming our spaces, how we've enhanced our county parks and facilities, this is a snapshot to what makes up the Fairfax County Park Authority. We are 422 parks. I'm so happy we finally got those two parks because we were at 420 for a very long time. And we're made up of eight golf courses, nine rec centers, 342 miles of trails.

[00:04:49] We have two campgrounds, 229 playgrounds, 11 dog parks, two skate parks, 263 fields, 242 athletic courts, and 36 historic features. Just in FY24, we invested about $40 million, we being the park authority, the park authority board, and the board of supervisors, in facility improvements and renovations.

[00:05:14] We added 31 ½ acres of land, and we had more than 100 improvement projects that were completed. And we really do believe that these investments in parks are transformative investments, even if it's to maintain the deferred maintenance or deal with deferred maintenance issues in parks.

[00:05:31] It's not just about maintenance, fixing a trail, potholes, adding railings. Those really do increase the availability of our facilities and our usability by our residents. So some new additions that we had in 2024.

[00:05:47] This is, again, just a snapshot. As you all know, we tried to have nine things on every single slide, but sometimes it's impossible. So here's just a snapshot of some of the new additions that we added to the park system in 2024. So the inline skate park at Lake Fairfax, the new restroom facility at Laurel Hill, the Moongate facility at Greenspring Gardens, another restroom facility at McNaughton Field Park, the Stratton Woods Futsal and Basketball Court, and the concession building that we added to Patriot Park North. All in all, we had 11 ribbon cuttings and ceremonies that were held in 2024. That's not

[00:06:26] including all of the other events that we had, speaking events, community events, and we'll talk about that in a second. So one of the focuses that we've got a lot of focuses, but one of the things that we've really been trying to focus on this year are playgrounds. You know, playgrounds are so important to the development of our youth, both mental and physical. They lower childhood obesity rates, et cetera. We are really focused as much as we can on providing for innovative play experiences and not leading as heavily on the post and platform playgrounds. These are some examples of work that were done at McLean Central Park before and after. And then on the bottom is

[00:07:05] Lake Akatink Park and Hoke Park. That picture on the top right, that's Muddy Hole. That's a really good example of an innovative play. A piece of equipment, think of that as post and platform. The design tells children how to play. So you go up these stairs and you go down the slide.

[00:07:22] It's not very creative. An innovative play, when they get there, does not tell them how to do it. It's balance. It's trying to figure out how to get up there. It's ropes. It's swings. It's those kind of things. And those really do help with cognitive development. As I say a lot, everybody meets at the playground. And when I park my car and my two kids would get out of the car and they'd run to the playground. By the time I got there, they've made their five new best friends, regardless of what language that they speak. So it's really important that those are gathering places for communities and that we make sure that everybody has an opportunity to play. Those are some other lists of other playground renovations we've had this year. But when we determine who or where

[00:08:02] things go, how do we do that? And really, because we're talking about things like playgrounds and parks and trails and things that everybody wants. We need a way that we're prioritizing projects. And the way that we do that is through data. So this is a really good example of a data exercise that we're ongoing for a playground study. And that looks, it's looking at playground deserts, access to playgrounds, which is about a five-minute drive shed to playgrounds. If you remember with our PROSA plan, our park recreation open space and access plan, we were talking about a 10-minute walk. This is a five-minute drive to a playground. Those are just some examples

[00:08:38] in the Sully district of areas that have no pink, which means they do not have a five-minute drive shed to a playground. And then we look at opportunity areas and we look at population density. We want to make sure that we're hitting as many people as possible and prioritizing places that don't have other options for play as like gyms and other things. We're also using data and technology to enhance our

experiences in the park authority. And one example is enhancing our golf experiences. And so we upgraded technologies, two of them on the screen. One is Notify, which is an

[00:09:17] app on the phone that helps us fill unused spaces, tee times on the golf courses, so that if somebody drops, somebody can pick one up. It's really decreased the amount of open spaces that we have, which has increased our golf revenue. And then SelectPi is another, sounds like a sorority, But SelectPi is another one where you can basically use a kiosk machine to get buckets of balls.

[00:09:44] So you can get a card and you buy buckets of balls and you can refill your card and you can get the buckets. And it's sort of taking out that third party. So across the country pre-COVID, every jurisdiction that was managing golf courses were thinking about what we were going to do with our golf courses.

[00:10:00] This was universal across the entire country. Golf was on the decline. It was a lot of space for a very small amount of users, and so it was a general conversation. You would go to park and rec conferences, and that would be a topic of conversation.

[00:10:16] Since COVID, our golf numbers are just through the roof, and this is across the country. We have eight golf courses across seven sites. We had 343 rounds of play in 2024. That's a 53% increase in rounds since FY19.

[00:10:34] We've increased our revenue 85 percent over FY19. In FY19, it was $9.6 million in revenue. Pre-COVID, we're now at $17.8 million in revenue. We've had 120 percent increase in driving range revenue. $1.3 million was our revenue in FY19, and we're at $2.8 in FY24. I think the last two years, we're still holding her breath. Sarah's behind me someplace and holding her breath. We were holding our breath for the last two, waiting for that bubble to pop. It doesn't look like it's popping. It looks like it's continuing on, which is a really great thing. I think people got hooked,

[00:11:10] started going outside, and now they're staying outside. And I think that that's a really great thing. While we're doing that, though, we're also having to balance taking care of what we have. As you know, we talk about it a lot. Our deferred maintenance, we just had our 75th birthday, or this is our 75th birthday year, and we have infrastructure that's that old.

[00:11:34] We work on it, but we're an older park system, just like an older county has older infrastructure. So we're working while we all love to cut ribbons and we all love to provide new amenities like playgrounds. I have to balance that. We're balancing that with the first promise that we make to our community, which is when we build it the first time and making sure it remains safe and open for our residents.

[00:11:58] Our biggest deferred maintenance issue that everybody is also aware of is our rec center issue. In that deferred maintenance group, the biggest number that we have goes to our rec centers. This is just an example of our three – I nicely refer to them as my ugly ducklings, but I love them all, and we're going to fix them all.

[00:12:23] But the Board of Supervisors made a historic investment 50 years ago and built five rec centers in five years. So Audrey Moore came first, then Mount Vernon, and then I think it's GW and Franconi the same year, and then Providence. I think that's the order that it went, which is a phenomenal investment for our residents, but that means that they're all up for renovation at the same time.

[00:12:47] And so a very large chunk of our CIP for the next cycle, a few cycles, is going to go to these. Then the next tranche, they built three rec centers in the same five years, And so we're just going to keep on doing this and this and that. One of them is Mount Vernon Rec Center.

[00:13:04] And you used to walk into Mount Vernon Rec Center, and there was exercise equipment in the lobby. And it looked like something out of 1974, just as other places. Well, it wasn't 1974. It's aged. It's aged.

[00:13:21] Not the people who were born in 1974 are aged, but I'll continue. I did. I did. I'm sorry. I apologize. So this is some after photos of Mount Vernon Rec Center. We're very excited to be opening that facility next month. In coming, I encourage all of you guys to attend, if only to take notes so that you can be pushing for what you would like in the rec centers that we're going to be renovating.

[00:13:45] Next, here are some photos of the work. Staff are working very hard with a building this big and this expensive. It looks like it's just done, but staff are there every single day, multiple hours just to get the boxes unpacked to get everything ready because people see it done and they want to get in there. It's got two sheets of ice, which is really phenomenal. It's got a track that's going to be going around the second sheet of ice. It's got a rock wall in the lobby. The fitness center is two floors. It's going to be a phenomenal facility. Some of the other categories of taking care of what we have, because even though the rec centers are the largest ones, you know, we really are

[00:14:19] focused on other things that might fall beneath the notice of some people but are very high up on other people's lists. So bathrooms, concession stands, courts, both tennis and pickleball and basketball, irrigation systems, lighting, the amount of fields that we have that we take care of. We take care of both our fields and we maintain the school fields, FCPS fields.

[00:14:44] For grass fields, we mow, we seed, we irrigate. For artificial turf fields, we have to groom them, We have to do the infill and do the GMAX testing. And then I just wanted to highlight something that might just seem like it's the most not interesting aspect, but really has gotten so many compliments, and I can't thank staff enough, is our bathrooms.

[00:15:09] So we have as many bathrooms as we have. When you're doing each bathroom by itself and you're designing them independently, you have to figure out a design, you have to buy the equipment, you have to buy the materials. It takes a long time to get them sort of up and going. So Alan Crawford, who has retired, but we encourage him to come back, came up with this standard design for our bathrooms.

[00:15:29] And they really have made a significant difference. There's a photo of it right in the middle. Really great materials. It looks very good. It's able to turn and burn them very quickly because it's the same design. It's one of those things that when I walk out, we were at Sully for Earth Day, and three people, have you seen the bathroom?

[00:15:51] So things like that that really do enhance the experiences of people in our parks. Trails is another one. I thank Kyle for sending the message through Tim about thanking you all for restoring some of the funding for the cuts.

[00:16:06] This was one of those trail maintenance. Trails are, without a doubt, the best bang for your buck that you can make out of every park system in the country that does the needs assessment that we're working on right now. I can't tell you this is going to be number one for everybody, but I guarantee you it will be in the top five every single place in the country.

[00:16:25] Trails are – and you can't even capture the true trail users because, like I said, my mother would tell you that she is not a trail user, and I say, hey, when you went on your walk, which way did you go? I went left because that's to the woods, and the right is, like, on a sidewalk. Yes, yes, thank you for walking directly into the point.

[00:16:42] So we have more trail users than I believe consider themselves trail users, So here are some before projects that we have worked on, Nottaway Park, Franconia, Cross County Trail, Wolf Trails, Lake Mercer, and here are some examples of after projects.

[00:16:59] Oftentimes, trails enhance the usability of them. If you're an avid cyclist and the trail's super bumpy, you're not probably going to use it. But sometimes trail, especially when it's maintenance, are really safety issues. If you're going along on your bike and you hit a pothole, you know, that's a safety issue for our users.

[00:17:15] so we take that very seriously. So thank you very much for restoring that funding to make sure that our trails are safe. Okay, something else that I wanted to bring up, because it's things that people don't think about when you manage about 34,000 acres of land. It's a lot of grass to mow.

[00:17:32] And so out of the 34,000 acres of land, we mow about 1,880 acres of FCPA property that we mow. Cumulatively, it's about 32,000 acres. About 300 acres we mow in-house by our Park Operations division. Under 1,000, we manage through a contract. That's the athletic fields and park grounds that are mowed by a contractor. And then we manage the contract for FCPS athletic fields that are mowed, about 400 of them. And then our golf courses equal about 600 acres of golf mowed.

[00:18:04] So if any of you guys are avid mowers and you've gotten to mow your lawn, like imagine having to do this many acres of them all of the time and making sure. And everybody likes the grass to be cut exactly the right way. If we miss one, you get a call. Well, you guys get a call, and then you call me, and you let us know. But it's a Herculean effort to maintain them. They're all mowed at different intervals, depending on what the use is, unprogrammed open space versus aesthetic mowing. And so the work that our staff do in just managing the contracts and doing the actual mowing is astounding. So equity, equity in action, building inclusive and accessible parks for

[00:18:42] everyone. One of our main tenets is accessibility. We want to make sure that everybody can access our parks, whether or not you come in two feet or two wheels. So we want to build parks for everyone. So ADA-compliant parks are very high on our list. And so some of the upgrades that we completed include a trail at Coven Run store, accessible trail at Coven Run Mill store, excuse me, a new pour-in-place playground. If you don't pour in places, it's the sponging material, like a track that you build which is a lot nicer. Sometimes they're brighter and they're more aesthetically pleasing,

[00:19:19] but they're also ADA accessible. So it allows an opportunity for the entire playground to be ADA accessible. I think in one of your districts is one of the largest ADA accessible playgrounds in the country. I'll look over there. I know. Thank you very much. This is a game show. I will be asking questions throughout. That's true. So we did new pour-in-place playgrounds in McLean Central Park and Muddy Hole Farm Park. We had a sensory-friendly and adapted amenities at rec centers. Our adaptive programs, a lot of people who don't necessarily need the service

[00:19:55] don't realize that we really try as hard as we possibly can to make sure that every child can do the same activities as every other child. And so if you want to sign your child up for a camp and they have

any type of accessibility requirements, you can call us up and we will make accommodations to ensure that your child can have the same camp as their friends at their school. And so that's something that we're very, very proud of. So all in all, we had 261 adapted programs, which is a 13% increase since 2023, with 1,564 individual enrollments. 540 camp ADA accommodations, those are the accommodations I was talking

[00:20:34] about, so of whatever the needs are to make sure that that child can participate in all of the activities. And we have three specifically adapted camps that were offered, which was a 33% increase since 2023. Equity programming and outreach, we want to ensure fair access for all communities to our parks and our amenities. Some of the things that we want to highlight here is we launched the Wonder Wagon, which I hope that all of you have had an opportunity to have in your district so far, it really is the kids gravitate to it.

[00:21:07] It's a wonderful way that the kids, especially ones who don't have ready access to nature, can come and learn about all the wonderful things around them. We reach more than that Wonder Wagon, reach more than 7,400 individuals with hundreds of free programs since April 2024.

[00:21:24] So it's really important to note that it's free, that it comes out whenever we have openings in especially in more urban areas or opportunity areas. We want to make sure that that Wonder Wagon is there. Some other new things, SNAP acceptance at some of our FCPA farmers markets is a really wonderful way to bring fresh foods to people who might not have, that might live in food deserts.

[00:21:44] We conducted an equity study with 23 tabling events so that we can make sure that we understand underserved groups. We had 64 outreach events that were hosted to engage residents. And we always continue enhancement and expansion of our programming and interpretation related to black history in Fairfax County, including interpretive program implemented at various sites and signed developments and interpretive panels.

[00:22:11] Building a strong workforce and investing in the future. I hope it's no secret that working for the Park Authority is, you know, awesome, mostly because we're in the business of fun. But one of the other reasons why it's a great place to work is that we really do invest in our future and in our staff. And some of the ways that we do that is through training and staff events and just the The amount of work that we put into making sure that everybody's having a good time and that state areas are staffed appropriately.

[00:22:40] So here are some numbers. We regularly sit at about 2,000 employees. That includes our merit and our non-merit all year round to be running our rec programs. In the summer, our surge, we call it the summer surge, is just under 3,000 people.

[00:22:56] That includes camp counselors. 34% of our merit and 36% of our non-merit employees identify as black, indigenous, or people of color. As you know, with the majority-minority county now, that's under the current demographics.

[00:23:13] We're just trying to work as much as possible to make sure that our staff and our employees reflect the community that they're serving. 461 youths hired, 14 through 17-year-olds. I heard somebody else, I think it was Minneapolis, who said that their park and rec is the number one employer of kids in the state, which is a demographic that I would love to just count and be able to see.

[00:23:38] I think McDonald's was number two. That's to say we have a lot, we do employ a lot of young people. I guarantee you we're the number one employer of 14 and 15-year-olds because it's very hard to, do

you want a job? 14 to 15, oh, 14 to 15-year-old kids.

[00:23:54] Oh, he was looking at it. I'm saying you want to focus on teenagers, not children, when it comes to employing people. Thank you. Spoken like somebody with an ACLU card. You're right. It is absolutely children, teenagers. I'd be happy to hear that. Law-abided to work teenagers, yes.

[00:24:11] But a lot of the 14-, 15-year-olds are lifeguards. They're allowed to start at 14. And then our internship program. We have invested a lot of work into our internship program. We really do believe that that's the future. We have 38 interns hired, and most importantly, we were recently recognized as a 2025 Top Employer for Interns by the Virginia Talent Opportunity Partnership.

[00:24:31] So it's a really huge badge of honor. We make sure that when kids come in, this is actually kids, come in and work with us that they leave learning something. The great part about parks is there's something for everybody to work. You can just tell me what you want to do, and you can find something in parks that you can learn a lot to do.

[00:24:50] Engaging our community, deepening connections across the county. So the breadth and depth of our connections with the people of Fairfax County create experiences that last a lifetime. Our community connections, and I have numbers because you know I like to win things. So hold on, hold on.

[00:25:08] Where is it? Okay, here it is. So our various lines of communication that we offer are Park Take subscribers, our 202,000 Park Take subscriber households, which is about half of the county households.

[00:25:25] for about 400 households subscribed to Park Takes. I heard another stat that we have to confirm that Park Takes might be now the number one subscribed to magazine in the state because so many people, households, and people aren't subscribing to magazines like hard magazines anymore.

[00:25:42] Our website accounts for about 23% of the page views for the overall county traffic for FY24. The Park Takes online webpage by itself ranks 10th. Our social media accounts consistently rank around the top social media accounts for the Fairfax County portfolio.

[00:25:58] So we're number one, Facebook, Fire and Rescue, and Police are next. And we're number three in Instagram, Fire and Rescue are number one. So if we ever want to break the internet, we just have Fire and Rescue. And I think that the animal shelter is up there, too, like a dog and then in a park.

[00:26:14] And then that's it. And then you've got to have any message you want underneath it, and people will get it. So creating experience, connect communities. So we had more than 298 community events that were hosted in 2024. That includes large events like Earth Day, the 4-H Fair and Carnival, including summer entertainment series, family skate nights, holiday events, and cultural celebrations.

[00:26:39] And all in all, about 140,000 members of the public attended those events. Again, since COVID, we found that people really yearn for and enjoy going out there and being with people in their community, preferably outside. So events and carnivals and fairs and Earth Days, they're still very, very popular things for people to do, especially now as things get a lot more serious, and especially when we're talking about being in the D.C. area and people losing their jobs, being able to have free opportunities to go out, you know, sit in nature, listen to some free music, or go to Earth Day, which I think we had 4,000 people at Earth Day,

[00:27:18] even with the rain, 3,000 people at Earth Day. Even with the rain is really, really an important service that we provide the community. impacts across generations um we've partnered with uh fc fairfax

county public schools and provided 820 field trips that were hosted for about 41 000 students and chaperones providing hands-on learning opportunities for the next generation i don't know about you guys with your with your children i think but my it's lovely having my daughter come home and say that she just went to a field trip at uh green spring gardens and then she did one at frying pan and then tell me all about the people there and everything and i'm like nodding my head and she just forgets um

[00:27:54] but it was the best one that we had. That's great, Hannah. So talking about all the wonderful things that we do, I think that if you ever go or become a chaperone, I'm not exaggerating when I say it is just the best experience. Watching our staff teach children in the next generation is really a wonderful thing to see. We had 2.3 million visits to rec centers in 2024.

[00:28:17] About 22% of our active rec center memberships are seniors. Seniors play a huge role in going to our rec centers are very active. I also want to point out that our rec centers act as social hubs as well. It's where they go. It's not just going to work out and leaving. You know, things like, I believe we might, and I might be ripping off a scab, but I believe we moved a bench in one of the rec, I don't remember which one it was. We moved a bench in one of the rec centers. I think it was Cub Run. I think it was Cub Run. We moved a bench in one of the rec centers out for a second and it was like a hole because that was the bench and everybody sat at the bench and everybody talked to the bench. And so it's like one of those things where you don't factor in how important

[00:28:56] different aspects are until you do them. We offered 14,780 classes, and our classes ranged from learn to swim to arthritis movement. We had 115,000 enrollments, 1,776 camps, and extended care sessions with 39,075 enrollments. Supervisor Stork isn't here. I had a whole joke about 1776 camps that now is going to go on deaf ears. Volunteer contributions. We had 429 volunteer opportunities. We have a, we could not do what we do without our volunteers. I have to

[00:29:31] pause when I say, and I say this whenever I thank volunteers, the people to my right are all volunteers. And so people think of volunteers as just people who go out for an hour and do something, but it's not that. It's people who really put their blood, sweat, and tears into working through something. My first rule of work in life is show up, and so I appreciate everybody who shows up for their community, as well as their family and their co-workers. We had 130,000 total volunteer hours, which is the equivalent of 62 full-time equivalents, 10,000 volunteers, and our volunteer value, when you take in the full-time equivalents, added about $4.3 million

[00:30:08] of value to the county in volunteer hours. So that's a really wonderful thing. I want to plug the Ellie Doyle's, which is going to be coming soon, which is where we do appreciate and thank all of the volunteers for all of their really hard work. Excellence recognized, celebrating achievement. We talk about awards here. This was the Elmore House in Frying Pan Farm Park.

[00:30:33] One, and I have to read this because I'm going to forget what it is. The Commercial Real Estate Developers Award for Historic Preservation for their work. That was a resident curatorship program. It's a really wonderful ribbon cutting that I believe Channel 16 also covered. Some other things that we've received is we've received top tier awards from the American Planning Association, Virginia Recreation Parks Society, and AGL's National Association for Government Communicators. I got an opportunity to go and deliver a briefing

[00:31:06] Congress on Capitol Hill about the importance of parks. The BOS, the Board of Supervisors, declared July Park and Rec Month. I look forward to that hopefully happening again. Kim Young from

Hidden Oaks received the OnThank Award. Chris King from Huntley Meadows received the Don Smith Award. I'll pause for a second, and if you talk to me or have a pool or splash pad in your district, hopefully you've heard me say the same thing. Our lifeguards, a lot of them are those 14 and 15 year old kids that we really put the lives of our residents in their hands are amazing

[00:31:41] and awesome and so professional what they do. Every time that I hear of them pulling somebody out and having an event, I just, it's just amazing. And it happens more often than you, than you think from serious issues that people get pulled out to, to just a kid just can't get out of the water mine and pulling out. But if you want to see true professionalism and just be in awe of the kids and the children of Fairfax County, please talk to me and go to the water mine and just watch them in action. It is amazing to see. We're also recognized, oh, I said that, interns. And then

[00:32:17] one of my favorite events is the rodeo, spelled road-e-o. It's a competition for maintenance staff, and we participate, and FMD and DPWES participate, and they actually compete in different categories like the skid steer and the zero turn mower and the and the um different stuff and then um you win and the top three go to the regionals and then there's a national and so we uh receive first second and third in the skid steer um and uh what else uh and we took first place in the mini excavator so that's our um mobile crew who did a really wonderful job again if you want to see

[00:32:56] something amazing let me know or chris harrington know please come out and watch it is amazing to do there. Also, and if you're really adventurous, you can jump in. There's a whole management competition. And so we did, I think that was the, which one did we do? We did the, what was the, the mini X. We did the mini X and I think, and I'm not exaggerating, I think it took me like four and a half minutes and it took the winner like 21 seconds. Like you got to pick up a ball and do this and put it here and pick up something else and do it here. It's very humbling.

[00:33:26] Leading in environmental stewardship sustainability at the core of what we do. Some of our conservation successes and sustainability efforts, we were able to leverage $4 million from OEEC and match $3.8 million, investing in ESCO energy project upgrades in calendar year 24.

[00:33:46] Those are some examples of solar panels that we put in at Oakmont, Audie Moore, and Spring Hill. We opened the Woodland Stewardship Education Center, which is designed to meet the rigorous living building challenge, sustainability standards.

[00:34:01] It's a zero-footprint building. It's off-grid. If you've never been there, it's a wonderful opportunity to go and see on a large scale how you could have a lighter footprint. And then wonderfully, as you're walking through there, there are panels that explain how you can translate the larger thing into a smaller thing that you can do in your own home.

[00:34:19] It's really a wonderful facility to go look at. It also has a wonderful playground. We treated about 1,100 acres for invasive species. And of the 773 deer that were harvested via the Sharpshooter Program, 660 of them were in FCA Park.

[00:34:35] So we work hand-in-hand with the Wildlife Ecology Unit on deer management things. There's some other stuff, bike racks that we put in, the Mobius Wildlife Tracking System at Huntley Meadow Park, also phenomenal.

[00:34:53] And we added in composting at our farmer's market. Here, because you have to see if you've never seen a prescribed burn, I'm going to talk. Oh, no, no, no, no. Can we hit return? Is there like a return

that you can hit?

[00:35:09] Or click the, click it. No. Go back. Go back. Is there? Oh, no. Can you click on the video or hit return? Oh, they converted to PDF.

[00:35:28] Okay. It doesn't work with PDF. That's, it told me that that's not. So I'll send the link in the video. It's a really wonderful thing. It's like two seconds, and it shows our prescribed burn. Our prescribed burns program is, again, a really great program.

[00:35:44] I like to point out things that are feathers in all of our caps as a county, of what we do the best of everybody. And I think the prescribed burn is one of those. We are regularly asked to train other jurisdictions, including state parks. I went to Lake Anna.

[00:36:01] I'm going back there actually this weekend. I went to Lake Anna. I drove by something that was obviously just burned. And I emailed. I was like, oh, there was a burn. Like, yeah, we had staff there, and we were showing the state parks how to do it. If you've never been to a prescribed burn, let us know. It's a really wonderful thing to do. It's really awesome to do that.

[00:36:19] There's rigorous training to be a, and this is the greatest name, burn boss, which is the person who's in charge of it, to make sure that there's no, you know, fires that go outside of the meadow. Okay, this is also a fun story. So I know that everybody knows that the county passed the bamboo ordinance, which is the heavier part of this, but the great part is we're turning trash into treasure, and so the pandas at the National Zoo eat the bamboo, and they're very picky about what kind of bamboo. You can't send them trash bamboo. It's got to be good bamboo, and so we actually send them taste tests. So everybody

[00:36:55] sends taste tests to bamboo to see will they eat it, and will they not eat it, and so we're, I think we're still in the taste testing, but I think that it's good. I think that they like it, and so we're looking at sending some of our bamboo from a site close to Huntley Meadows to the national parks for the pandas. Yes, you know, you know. Yeah, that's, man, I'm telling you.

[00:37:19] That's going to be the next joint meeting. Is that a goal? Could somebody make that happen, a baby pandas? Historic preservation, honoring the past, building for the future. And so FCPA serves as the primary steward of the county's rich archaeological heritage, The archaeology program for both the county and the parks department is within the parks department.

[00:37:38] We added 27 new archaeology sites that were identified. 94 archaeological collections were ascended, is the term. 131 cemeteries were surveyed and 1,000 graves markers recorded. We've really been focusing the last year or two on our cemeteries and making sure that we're stewarding those in a respectful manner and in cleaning them up and making sure that they really do really reflect what is the value of our county. We have 137 standing historic structures, and our resident curatorship program remains

[00:38:14] one of the most innovative ways of preserving our historic legacy. To date, since 2017, $2.1 million have been invested in resident curatorship properties by outside sources. And envisioning the future. We're almost done. Always striving to do more. So I believe I came two years ago and talked about our park recreation open space and access program it's a way that we're using data to ensure a that we are putting the right park in the right place and making sure that we are serving as many residents as possible the goal being to have as many parks within a ten minute

[00:38:51] walk as possible making sure that we serve our opportunity areas enhancing access to complete park experiences and that complete park experience is making sure that there's something at, something within, not at every park, but something within a 10-minute walk to all of our residents that offers both an active social gathering and contemplative experience. The goal being that we have that 10-minute walk experience as something for everybody from eight months old to 80 years old. We want to make sure that that's a complete park experience. Some other planning studies that we have coming down the pike, again, using the data

[00:39:27] driven philosophy. We talked about the playground study. We are right now doing an artificial turf study to look at where we have artificial turf fields around the county, how equitable that access is, both in geography and in the sport type. So, for instance, if an area has a lot of artificial turf fields, but they're all primarily soccer and there's no opportunities for other rectangular sports, then we would take that into account just so that we can be investing the dollars that we have for conversions in places that really don't have access. As all of you know, You know, as your kids get older and get into more sports, you know that there's a difference.

[00:40:07] My son has Monday practice on grass and Thursday practice on turf, and the Monday practice is canceled half the time. The Thursday practice is never canceled, so it really does make a big deal. And then we're doing a trial study to be able to identify gaps in our service and where we need to add more access and trail linkages.

[00:40:28] One of my favorite new tools that we're using for this 2026 CIP is our historic CIP investment mapping tool. So what we did was we took all of our CIP and our capital funds and we put them into a GIS program for the last 12, we could go back about 12 to 15 years, to look at how much and what we're investing where, so that we can make decisions on where areas that maybe have had a historical disinvestment in the last 12, 15 years or places that we've spent more money than most. Now, I say money, it's a loose interpretation. For instance, if it's just

[00:41:08] money, then Dan Stork would get nothing for the next 48 years because we're about to open a new renovation. And same thing with Walkinshaw. So it's depending on what it is. The other thing that factors in are there things that cost money that you can't see, like if we do a whole bunch of irrigation or pipe, put in a new pipe in an area, that might have cost me $2 million, but the public doesn't see that.

[00:41:30] So that's not an investment that they get to necessarily see. But this is a really good way of looking at the type of projects, the amount of projects, so that when we're putting our project list together for the 2026 bond, two things being equal on the order of which we can look and say, hey, this one's in a neighborhood that hasn't had anything in the last, you know, 10 years.

[00:41:49] We just opened a new park, a block from here for this park. So this is a really exciting thing. It's one of the tools in our toolbox, in addition to PROSA, in addition to our conditions assessments, in addition to a lot of other data-driven tools to make sure that we're making really smart decisions with our money.

[00:42:07] And then looking ahead, we are obviously working towards our 2026 bond and putting projects together. We're going to be working on our strategic plan coming up soon. I believe that most of you guys have been interviewed for the parks count, the needs assessment.

[00:42:24] If you haven't been interviewed, I would love to grab you and ask you to try to get interviewed so we can understand what your priorities might be for our needs assessment. I do want to thank you for the initial investment that we, in our equity endeavor, so we can work together to make sure that our revenue fund really is accessible and the programs that are in there are accessible to everyone.

[00:42:48] So I put that on there as well moving forward and all with that picture in the middle in mind of making sure that we are allowing all residents to access our wonderful programs and that with equity, that race and income of an area do not predetermine the quality and quantity of parks in that area and that our rec centers and our activities are available and affordable to everybody.

[00:43:12] And with that, we'll take any questions. Thank you very much, Jay. And we only have, I guess, a little under 10 minutes. But I do want to thank you for the presentation. And I do think before we open it up for questions, just so that folks watching at home can see, it would be helpful for us if we could just get each of the Park Authority board members just to introduce themselves.

[00:43:35] And I notice we have 100% attendance at large. But I want to make sure we recognize who is here. Bill Bowie, Hunter Mill District. Sorry.

[00:43:55] One more time. Go ahead. I need a lot of help. Ken Quincy, still Providence District. Jonah Toomey, at-large member. Linwood Gorm, Mount Vernon District.

[00:44:13] Rick Healy, Mason District. Abna E. De Hewton, at-large. Jose Peralta, Sully District. Faisal Khan, at-large. Excellent. And Tim Hackman, Drainville District. And I might point out, this is Jose's second meeting.

[00:44:30] All right. Excellent. Well, we're all glad that you're here, and I want to open it up to questions or comments. I'll just make one quick comment. We're hoping that the next time we meet, you will have a sustainability slide in there about how we've been able to expand recycling countywide.

[00:44:47] There is language in the county executive's guidance for carryover, and we're really hoping to ramp that up. Having visited at least four different parks over the weekend, it was quite noticeable, And so I'm hoping that's something, another box we can check really soon that's really important symbolically and to our sustainability efforts.

[00:45:08] We had a briefing earlier today about all of our environmental programming and how important that piece is going to be. So hopefully something we can add next year. And I'm just going to go straight down the line here to try to do this as quickly as possible and give everybody a chance to say something if they have something.

[00:45:25] If not, it's not required. Supervisor Smith. I'm happy you're looking at playground deserts. Supervisor Herdy. I'm going to try to be quick. I took too many notes and too many questions. Obviously, the biggest issues I hear besides we need more pickleball courts are the maintenance of our facilities.

[00:45:44] And the fact that we had cuts on there in maintenance really, really bothered me, and I'm glad those got restored. A couple of quick questions. One is, Patriot Park North concession stand open? When did it open?

[00:46:03] Last year. Okay. I was told just recently it's not open yet, so that may be – I'll come back to you on that. If I could get just the answer to a couple of questions, what's the fiscal impact to the park authority of the zero waste goals, and if you could include hard costs and soft costs on those?

[00:46:22] Repeat the question. What's the cost? What's the fiscal impact of the county zero waste goals on the park authority, the hard costs and the soft costs? We'll just include in that before Supervisor Walkinshaw reminds of us, which makes sure when we get the hard costs, we get all the benefits of that program as well.

[00:46:39] And the fiscal impact of the electric leaf blower requirement, not just the cost of the electric leaf blowers, but the time to complete the routine jobs, because my visit to the Park Authority maintenance guys say it's taken them about twice as long to do what they used to do with the old blowers.

[00:46:58] To go back to the maintenance issue and the importance of trails, I like to always brag Burke Lake Park is our number one most visited park. Anybody know why it's our number one most visited park? It's the five-mile trail around the lake.

[00:47:17] You went? Four and a half, you're right. It's not quite a five-mile. I used to run it, yes. You can make it five miles if you work at it. But I had to pull money out of my office budget to put into the trail and a couple of other improvements at Burke Lake. We just really need to work on maintenance to get back to where I started.

[00:47:36] And I think we have an opportunity to save a little money. The mowing, you mentioned mowing. You know, it's almost like the county trash pickup. We mow a lot of county office buildings. And if you've got mowers all over the county doing that much mowing to pick up the county office buildings, we might be able to get a better deal and save some money on mowing.

[00:47:57] And we've got to look for areas like that that, you know, we can do things for each other and save some money. So I think that's one that's worth looking at. And just to reiterate what was in the presentation, that you're doing all the field mowing at all the schools already.

[00:48:13] So a lot of that's already happening. Mr. Chairman, could I follow up on that exact thing? So for those 425 FCPS athletic fields mowed and maintained by the Park Authority, who's paying for that? Schools pays for that.

[00:48:30] The schools pays for that. Okay. It's a contract that I believe that we manage, but it's coming from there. Ken, right? My line? We'll get back to you.

[00:48:47] Schools pays for synthetic. I think it's county fund. I think we were given the money. We'll get back to you to confirm that. And I think this is maybe one area where the joint committee schools and FCPS talking about facilities might want to look into as well. So thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Yep, sure.

[00:49:02] Supervisor Walkinshaw? Supervisor Palchik? I just have to say, going back to the loop conversation, I know it's going to be in next year's report, but because we were here and we got to honor King Quincy for as many years on Saturday, I just have to say the direction that we're taking, it's less than a mile loop trail at Ruxell Park, but for a small seven and a half acre park, what the staff has been able to do in coordination with the community. It makes me so peaceful. It has a trail loop. It has

[00:49:40] playground area. It has a natural style playground. It has the adult spaces. It is absolutely accessible trail. You can take your little ones, your older parents, people with all different abilities. I just love, to me, that park as a vision of what our community parks can be and will be, I hope, as complete

parks that are both natural resources and a place for all ages to be able to enjoy. I was just, I can't get over the goosebumps I got when we opened that park. So I

[00:50:17] just want to thank Jay and the entire team and everyone who's worked on that and Ken, who's helped shepherd it along for all these years. It's pretty exciting, I think, for the next phase in the future of Parks and Fairfax County. So just thank you. Anyone else? Supervisor Lasky? I'll just quickly say thank you for everything that you're doing countywide, but then also in my own district. I really, really appreciate Muddy Hole, and I really, really appreciate Mount Vernon Woods.

[00:50:45] Thank you. You have two fields I played youth soccer on that look better today than they ever have looked before and that's something we forget sometimes you know i hear this routinely from people the facilities that we have at some of these parks are so much more advanced and better than i had when i was a kid growing up in the county and i know several others can can share that same experience but those two in particular just reactivated for the community's use responsive to what those communities around those facilities need um really really good

[00:51:19] appreciate you mentioning those. And can I, I'm sorry, point of personal privilege because I totally forgot as to say, say it louder for the people in the back. All of my division directors are here. I know that you all speak to them via email a lot of times. If you've never met them all, please come over and do that. They really are the best at what they do and taking care of all of this and taking really personal pride in what we're doing and making sure that each park represents that community and not that we're doing cookie cutters everywhere is really important. I'm so sorry. That's right. Supervisor Menez.

[00:51:57] Thank you, Mr. Chair. Really fast. One thank you to each and every one of our appointees, especially Rakeely from Mason District. It's great to see you. As always, number two, I want to put on my audit hat real quick. Can you remind me the amount of savings the county has because of the volunteers?

[00:52:16] Oh, yes. I thought you were going to ask me a hard question. $4.5 million? $4.5 million. $4.3. Thank you. Thank you. I just wanted to kind of reiterate that because I think that's extremely important.

[00:52:31] And lastly, just really proud of all my fellow board members on the fact that we were able to really stand up and fight for trail maintenance and put that into the budget again. So I know how important that is in every one of our districts. So thank you very much. Thank you.

[00:52:47] Supervisor Behrman. Many thanks. The new McLean Central Park is a complete game changer, so thank you for that. And going last, I'm going to be short. Thanks. Thank you, Supervisor Behrman, and that will bring us to the end. And I do want to say, and I know my colleagues already do this, but close coordination with your Park Authority board member is so helpful in understanding the district priorities, the challenges, the opportunities that are out there.

[00:53:15] And I know it takes a lot of time to do that, but it is particularly helpful. And so that continued collaboration is what we have built this park system on and what we will continue to grow it on in the future. And so with that, thank everybody for their time and for their participation and for their service on the park authority.

[00:53:33] And we look forward to more good news in the future. So thank you.

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