

**Germantown Athletic Club Advisory Commission  
Minutes  
Tuesday – September 8, 2009**

**Members Present:** Alderman Ernest Chism, Chairman Stephen Wilensky, Mr. Rob Ayerst, Ms. Dee Dee Duneheew, Mr. Clint Hardin, Ms. Laura Jaggar, Mr. Paul Mosteller, Ms. Teresa Rando, Mr. Garth Thompson, Mr. Walker Uhlhorn and Mr. Larry Williams

**Members Absent:** None

**City Staff Present:** Mr. Derek Chaput, Mr. Michael Ballard, Ms. Scarlet Jones, Ms. Debbie Powers, and Ms. Amy LaRusso

**Call to Order**

Chairman Stephen Wilensky called the September 8, 2009 meeting to order. The meeting was held in the community space at the Athletic Club.

**Approval of the Minutes**

Chairman Stephen Wilensky asked for a motion to approve the minutes, motioned by Mr. Garth Thompson and seconded by Mr. Paul Mosteller and all in favor.

Derek opened the meeting introducing the members to Mr. Michael Ballard, the new Aquatics Coordinator.

Chairman Wilensky asked Michael as a returning employee if he had any thoughts he would like to share.

Michael expressed he was glad to be back and part of our organization.

### **KIDS KLUB SPACE**

Derek opened up the discussion on space for the Kids Klub area by stating the members would be taking a tour of the facility looking at space and options for the Kids Klub area and classes.

Derek began the tour of the facility starting with the Pilates studio. One option staff is considering is, opening up the wall between Pilates and the Kids Klub area and making this one open area for the Kids Klub with a partial wall between the rooms. Next we moved to the Kids Klub area and looked at the walls and bathroom area for the Kids Klub room. Derek explained if we open these rooms up, we are looking at separating the ages of the Kids Klub and adding staff.

Next Derek moved to the Pool area to discuss the progress of repairs being made on the Pool. Plans are to have everything finished by Friday, September 11, and opening by Monday, September 14.

Next we looked at the offices and activity rooms downstairs, and the option of possibly bringing Cindy Qualls Pilates studio downstairs either in the office space we now have or in an Activity Room. One option is possibly moving Scott Robinson the Swim Coach upstairs, to the community area in cubicles with Debbie. When Diana makes the transition to the Great Hall area, Joey and Sam will move their offices to her old office.

Next we moved to room number 2, which is a very small room and Derek explained we are looking at extending this room out into the changing room areas we have now. Next the old cycling room, one of the options is to put Cindy Qualls in this space or another option is to knock this wall out and extend room 2 for programs. This last option would put Cindy in the old office areas and open up the wall between the two offices.

Next we looked at the locker rooms. The men's side of the locker rooms would be opened up for our party room, and small meeting space for the Athletic Club.

Derek explained the weakest area for space is in the Kids Klub, Amy is working on our Winter Kid's Program now. He asked the members to consider the space we are looking at, the options he has discussed and a plan for peak times for the Kids Klub. Derek added that peak times are 8:30 am – 11:30 am, holidays and summer months, and staff welcomes any feedback in this area.

Chairman Wilensky asked Derek if the Commission members could have copies of the floor plans and the options he has already discussed. Then with this knowledge and creativity and suggestions from other members, this is really the essence in what this commission can do. One function that can serve real well, is to be that resource for collecting, that information from other members. He said the other thing that concerns him is that the colors, columns, accent walls or carpet, there is nothing vibrant that just jumps out at you. Everything is clean, but nothing that seems to say WOW! Small things need to be done, despite all the efforts of the staff to make it better every day, they are hampered by the facility itself.

Mr. Mosteller agreed with Chairman Wilensky that the staff is working hard, but painting or adding color needs to be the next big project. Mr. Mosteller offered Derek a public grace for his hard work and added that Derek's been playing catch with catch hands since he has been here. This is the third time we have had repairs on the pool since he has come here along with renovations. He and Chairman Wilensky agreed it takes money for improvements.

Chairman Wilensky commented on all the staff has done. The Commission admires them for the team they have assembled and the memberships they have managed to hold on to through the renovations and the bad times.

Mr. Mosteller requested that Derek and staff just give them copies of the recommendations of what renovations they would like to do. He realizes staff deals with this everyday and is more aware of our needs.

Derek responded that he would definitely get their ideas on paper. As far as accent colors go, they would be seeing small changes. He and Scarlet have discussed an accent wall for the pro shop area, which they plan on expanding to include small items that members may need, because they forgotten on that day, such as small towels, locks, possibly socks or toiletry kits.

Scarlet discussed a wall of accomplishments for the swim team, club members and staff to be located on the wall where the old snack machines were.

Derek said they will be looking at areas they can brighten up; his pet peeve is the lighting in the gym area. Staff will continue with improvements as funds permit.

Ms. Duneheew asked about the nursery and will we make any changes in the minimum age? She believes we are missing the market for new mothers wanting to lose weight, but can't take advantage of the nursery for the first year.

Derek said he and Amy and Danelle have been looking into it. We are considered casual care, and we are looking at the guidelines for that. We will continue to look, but it would involve changes for changing areas and hiring more experienced employees for the infant care.

Mr. Mosteller asked if there was a set date for making a decision on the Great Hall, as a probability of whether they will sink or swim.

Alderman Chism responded he has no doubts at all that it can pay for itself, just like this place, it needs to be marketed. He believes with proper management and staffing that given time it can pay for itself.

Mr. Mosteller responded the point he was trying to make is, obviously we need more space, and we had talked about giving that space to the Club eventually. But we all want to give it a fair shot. He wasn't sure if there was anything etched in stone as a good time line to see when the Great Hall was going to be profitable.

Alderman Chism responded that he didn't believe there was a date for Derek to show the Athletic Club would be profitable. As he recalls there was no deadline set.

Derek added he believed the F.A.C. would be looking at the Great Hall each year and review it with their business plans and projections they make with the help of their task force, and at that point the F.A.C will make a decision in the future with updates on the Great Hall. This is how the F.A.C. made a decision for the Board of Mayor and Alderman for the Athletic Club's future.

Alderman Chism stated the Great Hall has a task force and these people with their business and marketing background will work with the Great Hall. Before, if we are very honest, the Great Hall was a stepchild.

Mr. Hardin agreed with Derek that the F.A.C. would be reviewing the Great Hall and its business plan before they can determine what to do with the Great Hall. He addressed Alderman Chism and said it is still going to be a tough nut because the rates are going to have to be doubled at almost a 100% to break even. The City is going to have to determine what kind of loss they want to support, because he doesn't believe it will ever be profitable.

Ms. Rando added that at the last meeting it was proposed that the City determine and put it to rest to whether or not the City wants it to be a public space. They requested they make a formal announcement and determine the Great Hall will be treated like the parks as public space for community meetings and emergency management meetings and they will not be expected or required huge amounts of income.

Mr. Hardin said he didn't think it will ever bring in huge amounts of income. His personal belief is that we are going to have to build a quality facility on the other side of GPAC, and take this into the Athletic Club. This will still leave problems for the Club, because it is so cut up and fractured to try to operate. But Paul is right the Athletic Club is going to need more space. He and Alderman Chism have discussed this before and agreed that we need to build a quality facility for the Great Hall on the other side of GPAC.

Alderman Chism responded he was glad he agreed with him, but he was just thinking out loud to Clint and others to see if it was feasible. He would hate for someone to go to another Alderman and say Earnest Chism said we have discussed this. He thinks people would be willing to pay for covered walkway, parking, concessions and space. He believes the City wants a building like the Great Hall. There is so much that needs to be done. He also said he has a hard time treating the Great Hall and Athletic club like an Enterprise Fund when we don't treat the tennis courts and other things like an Enterprise Fund.

Mr. Mosteller apologized and said he didn't mean to open up a can of worms. He realizes we have more business to take care of.

Derek said to put closure on it, as the City moves forward, like Ms. Rando said the City will have to make a decision. Because Smart Growth is going to happen and we can't serve the citizens when that happens. We don't have the space for growth.

Derek added like Alderman Chism said we are going to have to have a long range plan and that is what we are working on now. We are in a kind of flux situation now, but once we get the facility where it needs to be, we are going to have a growth issue. The only way to curb growth is to raise the rates, and at some point, to do that we will have to compete with Life Time.

### **Club Reports**

Scarlet discussed the marketing report and handouts, upcoming events, and marketing club services. Scarlet said that Jewel Simpson, one of our instructors will be on the Live at 9 Show with Mary Beth Conley on September 22 speaking on club memberships and the Silver Sneakers program.

Chairman Wilensky suggested that would be a good time to make sure all of the hanging T.V.'s are turned to that channel so the members are aware of that. Staff agreed.

Scarlet explained now we are using a program called EMMA that is an email system that allows us to send emails to our members.

Scarlet mentioned Stephanie Ward, our nutrition specialist, will be offering tours of grocery stores and cooking advice to parents and members of the club on September 23

and October 3. Scarlet also discussed our Gobble Wobble 5k to be held on November 15 that will benefit Baptist Rehab-Germantown. This will be our 3<sup>rd</sup> run and we have several sponsors lined up. Back Yard Burger is making Chili, and Bounce and Fun will be one of our sponsors for the Children. These are just a few of the programs Scarlet touched on. She added the Club is also renewing our agreement with Screen Vision at the Malco Theaters and we are adding the Cordova Theater into the contract.

Scarlet discussed her handout on memberships, the July retentions being down and the decision to send out a direct mail piece to the members who have not visited the facility in the month of August or renewed their memberships. One of the handouts is a copy of the mail-out (Is your Club Membership Getting a Full Workout?). On the backside of the mail-out we will notify them of the latest additions to the Club and what they are missing out on and an urgency box offering them a discount on apparel at the pro shop.

Derek added this is for the group of members who just signed up for the pool season, and this makes it difficult for Scarlet to run accurate reports on memberships. Quite a few of the drops were families, where moms use the facility year round, but the family is here on for the summer months. Then we have people who figured out the system as far as the monthly option, and turned in their 60 day notice the day they signed up. We had to allow that because we really didn't have a policy to prevent that. Next year we are looking at staggering our application fees to prevent some of the losses we had this year. We are trying to get duration of memberships on our reports. As Scarlet said the shift now, is on retention and getting members to use the Club. The other revenue sources are going to be reported to us as far as being profitable. The concession areas and personal training has continued growth.

Mr. Ayerst asked who we will be sending out mail-outs to, the primary family member or the individual member who is not using the facility on a regular basis.

Scarlet responded that we will be looking at the family household and if two people in that family are not using the facility we will send it to one of those two people to let them know what they are missing out on.

Scarlet talked about the Fall Membership Drive, we are going to do something different by having a competition among our members. The theme of the fall promotion will be tied into the football season and will run from October 17 through October 31. This will get our members involved in boosting our membership by offering sports prizes for referrals.

Mr. Hardin asked if we could change our reports to reflect dollar amounts on the Club Revenue Reports. Once we have something in place we can compare the dollar amounts each month in all Club Revenues on our reports. If we have a consistent report, he can get some keys to compare to each month. The Club dollar amounts are good.

Derek replied he can run a report each month for a total dollars collected, but it would not be an actual report of what we are credited for each month from Finance. Finance breaks

down our reports to 1/6, 1/12, or monthly credits, depending on how the member is paying and what is truly earned.

Mr. Hardin agreed that a report of total dollars collected would work; if it is consistent he could get some keys to compare with. He added that we should make it as simple as we can and we can complicate it later on.

Chairman Wilensky asked if there was anything else for Club Reports.

Scarlet mentioned we received the Memphis Most Award, for best gym exercise facility in Germantown, we were chosen by the readers of the Commercial Appeal.

Mr. Ayerst shared a paper he had, showing we were runners up in other contest with the YMCA and French Rivera Spa for best health club.

Derek spoke on the Locker rooms stating that the contractors are back on schedule and the walls are going up and things should be taking shape soon. The pool water should be going into the pool by Friday evening. We are very pleased on how things are turning out.

Derek touched on the fall calendar and the schedule for the Club that would be communicated to the members. We now have a good holiday schedule that we have been consistent with the last two years, and members kind of know what to expect. He has gotten several positive comments from members and commission members on how professional the email system looks. Derek and Scarlet are going for training on the new City Website and they will be able to update things on the Website for the members.

Chairman Wilensky asked the members for ideas and concerns that they may have or have been expressed by other members of the Club.

Ms. Dunehew asked if we could open earlier the day after the holidays that members are ready to come and work out after the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

Derek said he would go back and look at the check-ins for those days.

Mr. Thompson asked if it was really productive to remain open until 5:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve and New Years Eve.

Derek said he can look at that as well, the biggest reason is to allow staff time to travel. Most people live within the region and if they are within a four hour drive that would allow them time to get back to work by 10:00 a.m.

Chairman Wilensky asked if the day after Thanksgiving is different. For example if it was him and he was here, he would come at his regular time.

Alderman Chism added that Thanksgiving always falls on Thursday and that helps, but Christmas, Christmas Eve and New Years could fall on any day of the week, that would certainly cause a conflict on trying to schedule in advance, and we may want to leave Thanksgiving as it is and think about the others.

Derek added that Thanksgiving is Thursday and Friday and Christmas Eve is Thursday and Christmas is Friday and the day after New Years is regular time.

Chairman Wilensky added they know the days of the holiday, but if Derek could bring the information on check-ins for the holidays to the October meeting, then they could make some input on the schedule.

Derek agreed he would bring the numbers to look at.

Ms. Rando asked how soon we have to post the closings for the holidays for the members.

Derek responded we normally give a three week notice.

Mr. Mosteller asked if we normally get a lot of requests for openings after the holidays.

Derek said he gets a lot of request for 24 hour openings.

Alderman Chism asked who made the decision on hiring staff for the nursery. He added that Germantown High School teaches CPR and training for babysitting.

Derek responded that Danelle and Joey Maurizi make that decision, but Coach Terrell brings in a lot of referrals from Germantown High.

### **Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned.