

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Department of Parks and Recreation



Department of Parks and Recreation
Fiscal Year 2015 Performance Oversight Hearing

Testimony of
Keith A. Anderson
Director

The Honorable Councilmember Mary M. Cheh
Committee on Transportation and the Environment
Council of the District of Columbia

Monday, March 7, 2016
11:00 a.m. Room 123
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

Introduction

Good morning Chairperson Cheh, members of the committee, and members of the public here today and watching at home. I am Keith Anderson, Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). I am pleased to testify before you and report on DPR's performance during Fiscal Year 2015.

I would like to thank Mayor Muriel Bowser, City Administrator Rashad Young, and Deputy Mayor Jennifer Niles for their continued support and leadership. I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to all of the DPR employees who serve the District's residents on a daily basis.

Inventory

It is exciting to lead an agency whose goals are to encourage residents to move, grow, and be green. We help residents have fun and we have fun doing it. DPR boasts an impressive inventory with something for everyone. We have more than 900 acres of green space, 31 urban gardens and 5 partner urban farms, 375 parks, 12 dog parks, 94 playgrounds, 119 athletic fields, 336 courts, 74 recreation facilities, and 50 aquatic facilities and features. Additionally we provide over 100 unique programs across the city in the following categories: sports, health and fitness; aquatics; early and middle childhood programs; teen programs; senior programs; therapeutic recreation; environmental education; and personal enrichment.

Vision

From the time I took office in January 2015, I have said my vision for DPR is to become a world-class leader in urban parks and recreation. As a nationally accredited agency by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), DPR strives to offer facility space and programming that is relevant and that enhances our residents' physical, social, and emotional

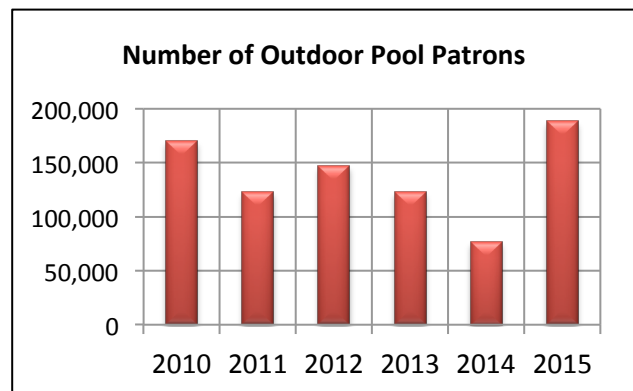
well-being. We are on our way to becoming an urban leader in parks and recreation by: (1) providing quality facility space and programming that supports both health and education; (2) being responsive to residents' concerns; (3) having clear and effective communication internally and with the public; (4) having clear and consistent employee and public policies and training; and (5) ensuring the sustainability of our vast and growing inventory.

I believe we are making great strides in each of these areas because of our dedicated site-staff and strong leadership team and as a result of making data driven decisions. As you have said, Councilmember Cheh, you can't manage what you don't track. To this end, DPR started conducting CapSTAT-style exercises we call RecSTATs that provide us with a framework to measure our operations and make better informed decisions for the future. We are able to take the lessons learned from these deep-dives into our performance, based on data, and make meaningful improvements.

Notable Accomplishments

Key Highlights

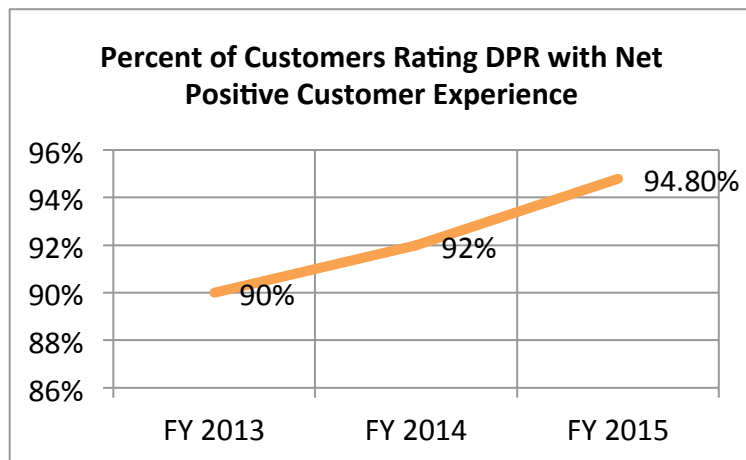
First, I would like to highlight a number of notable accomplishments in Fiscal Year 2015. There were more than 1.5 million visitors to DPR recreation facilities and more than 300,000 visitors to our aquatic facilities. In fact, we broke the record with the largest outdoor pool attendance in recent history with nearly 190,000 guests while achieving another year with zero drownings. We served 720,000 summer meals at 193 sites across the city and managed fifteen (15) After School Meals sites throughout the year. DPR has increased our community outreach. We hosted our first ever



Twitter town hall; our 1st "DPR Recreation Day" event attended by more than 600 residents; and the 1st Annual Chuck Brown Day. We also continue to support various city-wide events, such as Earth Day, Emancipation Day, and Fourth of July activities around the District.

Improved Customer Service & Creating Pathways to the Middle Class

We strive to be responsive to residents' concerns, and in fact, reached a 94% customer satisfaction ranking among survey participants in Fiscal Year 2015. With the Mayor's support, DPR was able to support Pathways to the Middle Class by hiring 38 Customer Service Representatives to greet guests at the door, ensure that visitors sign-in at the front desk, and encourage residents to sign-up



for available programs. They have also helped us enhance security at facilities by freeing up other team members who can now better monitor multiple indoor and outdoor recreation spaces, and allow our recreation specialists to focus on program implementation.

In further support of the Mayor's Pathways to the Middle Class, towards the close of the Fiscal Year, DPR converted twenty-three (23) temporary employees to full-time career service positions. We also offer lifeguard training programs on a monthly basis and even on a weekly basis in the spring at nominal costs to encourage careers and jobs in lifeguarding.

Publication of Proposed Fee-Based Use Permit Regulations

I am pleased to announce that on January 1, 2016, DPR published its new fee-based use regulations in the DC Register for public comment and we anticipate submitting these for

Council approval in the next few weeks. The proposed regulations will implement critical fee standards for parks and recreation activities that are in public demand. These standards will ensure fair and equitable use of our fields by setting up objective criteria for granting permits; providing low, hourly rates; and giving priority to residents over non-residents in registration and in cost by charging lower amounts to residents. The regulations will also provide fee waivers and discounts for groups such as seniors, small non-profits, and others that serve a great need such as providing fresh produce through farmers' markets that participate in SNAP and for teachers who tutor children after school at the recreation centers. They are the culmination of many hours of work by my staff, District residents, the permits' task force, and thanks, in large part, to the support of Mayor Bowser, the Office of the City Administrator, Deputy Mayor Niles, and several Councilmembers and their staff.

Expanded Community Garden Programming

In Fiscal Year 2015, DPR launched two new urban garden pilot programs: the Compost Cooperative Network and a Garden Toolshare. We also greatly expanded our Urban Garden Education Program which organized and carried out 108 free urban garden classes serving approximately 1,800 participants. The Compost Cooperative Network Pilot built 30 "critter proof" compost bins and organized and trained more than 20 compost cooperatives that are using them to create high-quality compost from food scraps and garden waste with the capacity to handle one ton of organic material a month and up to 100 participants with no operational cost and no carbon foot print. In May 2015, DPR launched a Garden Toolshare Pilot which has encouraged over 100 individuals and volunteer groups to borrow tools that helped create, maintain and/or expand home, school and community gardens.

Expanded Summer Programs

During the summer of 2015, DPR camps served over 5,000 youth and introduced nine new programs, including: Ballet Camp; Computer Coding Camp; Performing Arts Camp; Engineers Camp for youth ages 7-10; Little Engineers Camp for youth ages 4-6; Camp PlayDC; Adventure Explorers Camp; Olympic Tae Kwon Do Camp; and, Girls Basketball Camp. During the summer, DPR also employed nearly 2,000 youth ages 13-24 in the District's Marion S. Barry Summer Youth Employment Program. For six weeks, DPR taught these youth foundational skills for future employment including: attendance and punctuality; communication; team building; and, problem solving—to name just a few, and we hired professional performing artists to teach the performing arts industry standards to MBSYEP performing arts participants. Additionally, at the end of summer, DPR extended summer camp offerings to fill the gap between the end of camps and the beginning of the school year. We hosted 10 camps at five (5) sites which served over 200 children.

Expanded Partnerships & Simplified Giving

I am pleased to announce that DPR exceeded its projected number of sponsorships which totaled over \$2 million including the addition of a new baseball field and multipurpose field at Randall Recreation Center. We streamlined the process for making donations of less than \$500 by partnering with the Office of Partnerships and Grants to develop a “drop off” process, encouraging citizens and businesses to contribute to their local parks and recreation centers in small but impactful ways. In one recent example, a benefactor donated hundreds of tennis balls to our tennis program. These donations make a great impact on the ability to freely provide practice equipment and expand programs and we hope that others will follow with the newly simplified donation process.

Expanded Aquatic Programming and Operations Improvements

In addition to the impressive accomplishments of DPR's Aquatics Division mentioned earlier, our aquatics team greatly enhanced our standard of care by introducing emergency oxygen and "crash bags" and certifying over 400 lifeguards in the International Lifeguard Training Program (ILTP), including, as part of a pilot life-guard training program for high schoolers; we introduced new standard operating procedures that align with the Model Aquatic Health Code; certified more than 40 staff members as Aquatic Facility Operators who now demonstrate mastery-level knowledge in the field of pool operations; we made national news with our work being highlighted by NPR and several other news outlets including WTOP, News Channels 7 and 8; and, DPR grew its competitive swimming program by 25% with more than 200 swimmers on our DC Wave Team.

Continued Services & Support for Seniors

DPR continues to provide a wide range of services to seniors, an important cohort of our city. We provide leisure programming and activities that benefit the physical and mental well-being of seniors while helping them to maintain their social connections. Our program offerings range from chair aerobics and senior learn-to-swim to Bridge instruction. DPR organizes city-wide events open to seniors in all eight wards including the: Senior Games, Senior Fest, Senior Luncheon Cruise, and Senior Fun Camp. We also provide transportation for seniors to these special events. These services help seniors remain engaged in their community and help enhance their quality of life.

Support Services

In Fiscal Year 2015, DPR provided invaluable transportation and logistical support to more than 400 special events hosted by the agency and in partnership with our sister agencies;

nearly 250 Mayoral events; and more than 300 permitted activities. DPR’s Park Rangers also served and continue to serve as the eyes and ears of our parks at all hours. Without the dedicated work our staff, who work largely behind the scenes, this past fiscal year DPR would not have been able to transport more than 26,000 patrons to special events and camps, provide nearly 100 mobile stages and sound equipment setups, or distribute countless supplies to DPR’s 74 recreation centers.

Roving Leaders

DPR’s Roving Leaders Program has made great strides in helping to prevent and neutralize hostile behavior in youth through the development of positive relationships between youth and outreach workers. Year-round, Roving leaders provide on-site and immediate crisis intervention wherever altercations occur including in schools and they conduct community outreach in the District’s schools, recreation centers, and Focus Improvement Areas. In a one-week period this past summer, Roving Leaders interacted with over 1,600 youth during one-on-one talks; over 1,000 during group interactions; and nearly 3,500 during recreation activities.

Roving Leaders Activities & Events

Camps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camp Footloose • Talented Ladies of the Community Camp • Youth Motivation Camp
Mobile Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rock Climbing Wall • Skate Mobile • Fun Wagon • Movie Night Out
Other Programs/ Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reality Babies • Sophisticated Ladies and Distinguished Gentlemen’s Club • Anti-Bullying • Anti-Cyber Bullying • Anger Management/ Anti Violence
Special Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Madden Tournament • High school Football Games • Pop Warner • Various others

During the summer season, Roving leaders hosted three camps for approximately 100 MBSYEP youth on average: an outdoor anti-violence sports camp; and two gender-specific violence prevention camps for hard-to-reach youth. They also operated activities like a Rockwall, Skatemobile, Funwagon, obstacle course, and movable movie screen. Combined,

these interactions reached nearly 4,500 youth between June and August during 327 separate deployments.

Enhancements to Security

Recognizing the critical importance of improving security and public safety at DPR facilities, the Mayor has supported DPR with supplemental funding to conduct security assessments and make security upgrades at select DPR facilities. In partnership with the Department of General Services (DGS), DPR is conducting security assessments of multiple facilities to identify and prioritize security enhancements, such as the installation or repair of closed circuit television video cameras, improved outdoor lighting, additional signage, and other related improvements.

In partnership with DGS and the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), each DPR facility has been evaluated based on crime statistics, historical calls for service, and staff observations. In Fiscal Year 2016, DPR will complete security assessments and implement security enhancements at up to ten (10) facilities.

Additional Capital Projects Achievements

In terms of capital projects, DPR has enhanced facility space in the District by completing a \$28 million construction on a new gym, indoor pool, and computer lab at Barry Farm Recreation Center and an \$18 million modernization of South East Tennis and Learning Center. DPR also completed its multi-year playground improvement initiative. Moreover, we are working to ensure the sustainability of our properties and reducing their footprint by building all new construction to a minimum of LEED Silver and by building green infrastructure elements into our park improvement projects. We also planted nearly 1,800 trees in partnership with

Casey Trees and the non-profit organization Washington Parks and People, offsetting the equivalent of 1.6 million lbs. of CO2 or 197 cars per year. (Source: American Forests.org)

Conclusion

DPR is well on its way to becoming a world class leader in urban parks and recreation. We will continue the work that we have begun, and will continue to serve the residents of the District of Columbia. That concludes my testimony today. I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify and I look forward to answering any questions you or members of the committee might have.