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Monthly Insight into the Elizabeth Park & Rec District

***EPR* connections**

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Park Maintenance Spring Project Updates

The Maintenance Team continues to remain busy this winter with frequent snow removal between these increasingly warming days. They have also had to recently remove about 16 dead trees from the parks that were killed by pine beetles over the last couple years. The problem has unfortunately now become widespread throughout the Black Forest, and the District is assessing how best to manage the issue going forward and ensure the parks greatest assets continue to survive. We are also relocating younger pine trees from dense stands to more open areas in the park where they can grow and mature and replace trees that have died. The crew has also been servicing equipment and getting ready to begin managing turf as the spring sports seasons approach. Increased participation in youth sports is requiring staff to be as efficient as possible in the layout of fields to maximize the number available. The crew will also be shutting down Prickly Pines Disc-Golf Course near mid-March for its annual spring closure which allows for some spring vegetation to grow, helping with the mitigation of erosion. The closure also allows some peace for birds nesting throughout the area in the spring. The course is scheduled to re-open near Memorial Day.

Project Construction to Begin at Casey Jones Park

After a year of planning, developing the design, and selecting a contractor, the District will begin constructing the new pickleball complex and artificial turf ballfield in coming days. The District has selected FNF as the general contractor for the \$1.8M build within Casey Jones Park. A new entry to the park from County Road 17 will be developed, and an improved roadway will take vehicles to a new parking lot to be located between the pickleball courts and artificial turf ballfield. The 4-pickleball courts will feature a post-tensioned concrete pad with specialized court surfacing and permanent net systems. The courts will be fully fenced, and screening will be utilized to minimize the impact of wind. A plaza area near the courts will feature seating, porta potties, and a bulletin board to post announcements and program / facility updates. The artificial turf ballfield will be a 200-foot ball diamond featuring high quality turf, organic infill material, and an underlying pad system to improve player safety and extend the life of the field. The field will be fully fenced and also include dugouts and bleachers. The District plans to host girls softball on the field this fall, and will host t-ball and machine pitch youth baseball programs on the new field beginning in 2025. The field may also be utilized at times for soccer, flag football, and other programming as may be needed. The project will also include the construction of a detention pond to manage existing and future water storage and drainage in this area of the park. The District is currently planning to hold a ground-breaking ceremony to kick-off construction activity, tentatively planned for Friday, March 8th at 11am. Please watch our website for confirmation of the ground-breaking ceremony date and time as well as other project updates throughout the completion of construction activity. We really look forward to completing these new community amenities and getting you or your children out there to play on them. Thanks for your continued support.

Program Registrations – NOW OPEN

Exploration Kids Dance Classes

Registration is now open for our new youth dance classes. Youth between the ages of 3-5 can sign up for *Creative Dance – Hip/Hop* and youth 6-10 can sign up for an intro *Ballet / Jazz* program. Classes begin March 28th. See our website for more detailed class descriptions and to register your child.

Adult Fitness and Nutrition Class

Keep up that New Year's resolution to get or stay fit and register for the *8-Week Classroom / Challenges* program. Classes are held on Saturday mornings from 10am-noon at the Elizabeth Library meeting room beginning March 16th. Participants will learn about proper nutrition as well as various approaches to maintaining fitness and take on physical fitness challenges to promote improved wellness. Sessions led by Nathan Trujillo with GURU. See more info and register online at www.elizabethpr.com

YES YOU CAN – Strength Program

This new fitness offering is a collaboration with local fitness instructor Kelly Breckenridge. Join Kelly for this unique 6-week program that will focus on stability, endurance, and strength as well as the mind to muscle connection that leads to better posture, balance, and coordination. This class is also an opportunity to connect with others in the community that will help foster and support each other's fitness journeys. Classes held on Friday evenings from 6:30-7:30pm. See more info and register online at www.elizabethpr.com

Youth Baseball

T-Ball / Rookies (Co-Ed)

Ages: 4-6 / 7-9 Fee: \$55 / \$65 Start Dates: 5/4
All games played in Elizabeth on Saturdays – **REG ENDS 4/1**

Minors / Majors (Co-Ed)

Ages: 9-12 Fee: \$120 Dates: Mid-April thru June
Player Assessments to Determine Division: 4/5 - 4/7
Games played in and outside of Elizabeth – **REG ENDS 3/18**

Adult Co-ed Softball

As warmer weather approaches, it is time to break out the old mitt and get ready for softball season. Games will be played on Friday evenings beginning 6/14 and the season will wrap up with a tournament on 7/27. Space is limited, so sign up early at www.elizabethpr.com Cost \$660/team.

Missoula Children's Theatre Camp

The traveling youth theatre group will be back in Elizabeth this summer with a production of *Peter and Wendy*. Local youth between the ages of 6-18 are invited to sign up for this unique experience and become a part of this local production. Participants will learn and rehearse the play throughout the week and then conduct two local live performances for the community on Saturday, July 20th. All activities held at Elizabeth Middle School.

Message from the Director

What Comes Next?

As the District looks forward to completing another significant project this year and making further improvements to Casey Jones Park, the Board is beginning to ask the question, "what can we do for the community next?". To answer that question, the District has allocated funds this year for a master planning process to gather input from residents and plot out a path for developing the system of parks and recreation the community desires. In collaboration with the Town of Elizabeth and the Elizabeth School District, the master plan effort will include taking an inventory of all community resources available to support parks and recreation, trails, and open space, identifying and prioritizing resident needs and desires, and creating a roadmap that will comprehensively address how best to achieve our shared vision. On behalf of the collaboration, Town Planner Alexandra Cramer has prepared and has submitted a grant application seeking support for the project from GOCO and we will learn if the application was approved in June. If the collaborative grant application is not approved, the District intends to proceed with a District based master planning process. The Board believes a master planning process is needed for a variety of reasons. As the community grows and existing park infrastructure continues to be strained, we need additional athletic fields, playgrounds, skateparks, and other public spaces to gather with family and / or friends and recreate. The Board also recognizes the need to increase equitable access to District parks and amenities throughout the District boundaries and wants to work with developers to ensure the right park and recreation amenities are developed in the right locations and that corridors exist for connecting trail systems. Lastly, the Board wants to know if the community wants the District to pursue developing the recreation center or if the majority still feel it is not needed. The eventual District master plan that is created over the next year, whether with the Town and School District or on our own, will be a very important document that serves as a roadmap for building and maintaining a comprehensive park and recreation system that enhances your life as a District resident. I ask that you please participate in the upcoming planning effort and help us understand how we can best be of service to the Elizabeth Community.