

# Parks and Recreation System Organization

## Department Overview

The primary provider of recreation services in Blount County is the Maryville-Alcoa-Blount County Parks and Recreation Commission. Ancillary providers of targeted programs and activities are located in Maryville and Alcoa. The Parks and Recreation Commission is responsible for operating many programs independently from other providers using staff to organize programs and volunteers to assist in team sports and Special Olympics. Programs operated by the Commission are open to all citizens and no fee differential is assessed to non-county residents. With the exception of the Everett Senior Center, there are no membership fees charged to participate in programs, and fee waivers are possible when hardship occurs. A \$15 yearly membership fee is charged to users of the senior center.

The Commission is a joint venture between Maryville, Alcoa and Blount County governments as permitted in the Inter-Local Cooperation Act, TCA 12-9-101 and 11-24-101, the provision for providing recreation services. The Commission was established in 1970 and is the only joint venture of this type in the State of Tennessee. The Commission is made up of seven members, two representing each of the jurisdictions and one at-large member. These seven members serve as an administrative board and are responsible for hiring a full-time Executive Director. The Commission operates under its own by-laws, and the employees are governed and protected under a personnel policy manual and job-classification system.

## Ownership and Development of Facilities

Relative to facilities, the Commission does not own any facilities except for the administrative office. Each jurisdiction owns the facility located within its jurisdictional boundaries and has traditionally paid for all construction and infrastructure costs, as well as long-term maintenance and renovation, within its boundary. Each jurisdiction contributes a percentage of its tax collections toward the operation of the Parks and Recreation Commission. The Commission operates and provides daily maintenance of all facilities and carries the liability insurance on them.

## Greenbelt and Greenway Maintenance

The Maryville Greenbelt and Greenway and the Alcoa Greenway are controlled by the cities of Maryville and Alcoa Public Works Departments. The city of Townsend also operates and maintains its greenway. Due to this management and control structure, the Commission does not program the trails. Programming only occurs where the Parks and Recreation Commission has liability insurance on its facilities. The Commission only maintains sections of the greenway located in Blount County.

## **Organizational Structure**

The MAB Parks and Recreation Commission has a total of 21 full-time employees and 6 full-time/part-time employees who work to provide programs and facilities throughout the county and its cities. During each year, the agency hires seasonal, part-time and contract staff to assist in providing activities. This level of staffing has remained fairly consistent for eight years. During the peak seasons of June and July, the commission employs 190 staff members. The staff is composed of administrative staff, recreation staff, seasonal aquatics staff, and nine full-time maintenance staff in the Parks Division. An existing organizational chart is provided in **Figure 4.1**.

The existing organizational chart illustrates the current staff assignments for supervisory staff throughout the agency. Later in the master plan, detailed organizational charts and discussions of issues and recommendations for each division within the MAB Parks and Recreation Commission are provided. This current organizational chart documents the four distinct divisions within the agency.

They are:

- Administration
- Recreation/Programming
- Athletics
- Parks

The senior staff responsible for leading these divisions includes the Director, Assistant Director, Superintendent of Athletics and Maintenance Superintendent over parks. These staff members make up the Administration of the department along with support staff responsible for financial, personnel and clerical activities. The superintendents also lead their representative divisions.

## **Overall Organization Structure Assessment**

Administrative support staffing levels need to be large enough to allow cross-training of staff. Staff levels for peak registration periods are also needed. Currently the agency appears to need support staff in administration and in recreation centers. Staff indicated and researchers noted the need for increased assistance in the main office. The current workload in the administrative area is stressed due to lack of trained personnel to perform various functions. Currently there is limited cross-training occurring in the agency. If one person is out on vacation or ill, tasks associated with that person might not occur. This impacts the work processes in the agency and impacts outcomes. Communication with the public on programs and activities is critical to the department. Currently much of their work falls to the assistant director, limiting time spent training and observing staff and helping to formulate new programs. Relative to the management of the agency, an additional position is recommended to enhance communication, marketing, personnel assistance, and long-range planning. The director needs to have the ability to market the agency to community stakeholders and business leaders. The director needs to rely on someone who can manage the day-to-day operations allowing the director to focus on the visioning and the overall mission of the department.

The agency needs slight adjustments in resources due to limited budgets and space. Recreation centers are not adequately staffed and need additional staff to ensure safety and quality service. Researchers recommend that each center have an assistant to help program, monitor, and manage facilities. This person should have hours that overlap with the center director. The current situation limits the ability to program and plan and allows inadequate management of facilities at times. Qualified staffing levels are lacking at some facilities due to limited operating funds. Desires of the community to add facilities will further stress staffing levels.

Staff interviews and observations of the planning team reveal there are space limitations in the administrative offices and other off-site facilities. This issue could become a more severe problem if program offerings are enhanced and additional programs are offered. More space will be needed to support such activities.

In the following division-by-division discussion, staff needs and organization structure within each division are discussed in greater detail.

### **Administrative Division Analysis**

The Administrative Division is comprised of five full time staff members including the Director and Assistant Director and one full-time/part-time staff member. It is the smallest of the three divisions. It serves all other divisions in the administration of the agency and provides support functions that include:

- Personnel
- Finance and Budgeting
- Marketing
- Planning
- Computer Support
- Registration
- Purchasing
- Policy Administration
- Superintendents of Athletics and Parks Division

The Administrative Division is charged with many important functions within the agency. The primary function is being the direct link and communicator for the department with the Parks and Recreation Commission and the governments of Maryville, Alcoa and Blount County. The director leads the division, building partnerships and educating external groups and individuals about the agency.

The administrative office handles all registrations within the department. During peak times, staff is stretched and important tasks are delayed due to staffing and resource limitations. Technology enhancements that would reduce staffing levels for program registration are needed to allow staffers to focus on critical day-to-day functions and expand on services that would create more programming opportunities.

The director leads the department and serves as the chief spokesperson. The director needs to enhance partnerships and alliances with external agencies and the corporate

community. The director also needs to educate the community leaders on the benefits the agency brings to the community—the benefits of providing recreation programs to children and to enhancing the economy of Blount County through tournaments and other programs.

The current director has the skills and abilities to lead the marketing efforts of the agency but has limited time to commit to these efforts due to managing other tasks within the department. Lack of support staff with marketing skills prevents the director from delegating some duties to another management staff within the agency.

The working relationships with affiliated governments are good, but as more facilities and programs are needed, the director will need to communicate the benefits to the public and have an internal manager handle a larger number of administrative tasks.

Significant capital for new parks projects has been limited. The director will need to work with government leaders to build a coalition of support for the Master Plan Facility Recommendations. This project will require additional support from the existing staff, further stressing the limited staff in the Administrative Division.

The Administrative Division is also responsible for planning and development of all new park facilities and park renovations. As is common with many small departments these planning and development activities are led by the director. Balancing the director's time between community/marketing functions, staff oversight, financial and facility planning is critical for the Administration Division and the overall department to function at a higher level. This balance cannot be achieved without adequate quality staff, a good technology system, and an adequate operating budget.

### **Administrative Division Recommendations**

To ensure the ability of the Parks and Recreation Commission to meet the recreation needs of the community and continue to offer high quality programs and services, staff additions within the administrative division are recommended.

It is recommended that the division hire an Office Manager directly responsible for day-to-day operations and improving the internal communications within the agency. Further, the new position will manage office operations and provide support in areas that include personnel, budgeting, and contract management. This person would also ensure that staff is cross-trained to optimize efficiencies in the division. There are many benefits to hiring the Office Manager, they include:

- Staff member to lead or direct administration training efforts
- Management member that focuses on increasing revenues and reduces dependence on tax-based budgets
- Freedom for the director to spend more time with decision-makers and create and/or enhance partnerships
- Establishing a single point person to ensure that all contracts are consistent with commission policies and properly executed and filed.

The division experiences times when staff is stretched. The office handles all registrations and, when this occurs, normal day-to-day tasks are shelved until time can be given to these tasks. These actions limit the effectiveness of the agency as a whole, causing other operations to be impacted.

The planning team recommends that the division hire a part-time assistant position that would provide support to the entire staff. This position would report to the new Office Manager and assist staff at times of peak use and provide normal daily administrative duties.

#### *Marketing Internally or Outsource Marketing*

Staff, stakeholders and the public all mentioned that the marketing of the agency needs to be improved. Currently, the agency has the ability to market programs through a newspaper insert, flyers, and web-based information. The planning team feels that the agency is not reaching a large segment of the population in Blount County, and more marketing needs to occur to gain users and inform the public about the benefits and programs of the agency.

Marketing and public relations needs to be improved within the MAB Commission. The current arrangement has limits due to the availability of staff and resources. Marketing the agency's existing and proposed revenue centers will require a greater investment of marketing time to educate the community about new programs and facilities provided by the MAB Commission.

A marketing section within the agency is recommended to deal with the need for promoting programs and facilities. The section would solicit sponsorships and ensure consistency in marketing and public relation pieces produced by the MAB Commission. This section would produce promotional materials, improve the web-based marketing abilities of the agency, and increase the visibility of special events and athletic tournaments in the county.

As an option, the director may desire to solicit these services to an outside business that specializes in marketing and promotion. Costs for these services may be borne from a percentage of revenues from special events, dedicated funds from within the operations of the agency, or a percentage of sponsor dollars generated from the marketing of programs and activities.

A suggested organizational chart with the revisions discussed above is shown in **Figure 4.2**. As you will note, the Administrative Secretary position and Receptionist have relocated under this new division from recreation and the full-time/part-time human resource manager has been upgraded to a full-time position.

### **Recreation Division Analysis**

One of the most active divisions within the agency is the Recreation Division. The recreation division is responsible for promoting and offering many activities. This division operates many recreation facilities and in many instances serves as the front line of communications with the public. The division coordinates programs with volunteers and

secures partners to expand programming space. The core programs offered by the division include:

- Youth Sports Programs
- Adult Sports Programs
- Youth Classes
- Adult Classes
- Special Olympics
- Aquatics
- Special Events
- Contracted Programs

The majority of instructional programs and youth sports are provided through contract instructors and volunteer personnel. For example, programs and activities such as aerobics, golf instruction, karate, and tennis are taught by instructors who are not full-time employees of the department. Instructors have the option of working by contract and securing a percentage of revenue, or becoming a part-time employee of the Parks and Recreation Commission to provide the instruction. The Commission's policy requires contract instructors to have liability insurance that protects the instructor and the agency from claims. When instructors choose to be an employee, the person secures liability insurance through the agency that indemnifies MAB from liability.

It is important that in both methods of employment the Commission is protected from liability exposure. The use of instructors is an excellent way to expound quality programs offered by the Commission. It is also a way to increase revenue by maximizing the use of current community center facilities.

The Recreation division also organizes and manages sports programs through its athletics section. The athletic section provides oversight for youth sports and plans and organizes adult leagues and tournaments.

The largest event planned by this section is the Smoky Mountain Softball Classic. The Smoky Mountain Classic is such a large undertaking that staff from all divisions are involved prior to and during the tournament. Staff prepares "goodie bags" with local goods and coupons from participating sponsors. Staff have to schedule food service and speakers, order all supplies, and work to secure sponsors. It is a good revenue generator for both the Parks and Recreation Commission and the entire County. This event draws approximately 36 of the top adult softball teams in the country to the region and generates over \$50,000 in revenue for the Commission yearly. Using these figures and economic impact formulas from the United States Specialty Sports Association (USSSA), it is estimated that this tournament brings in over \$750,000 in direct and indirect economic impact to the area. This type of special event provides local residents a unique opportunity to see top athletes perform in a relaxed setting and at a low cost.

There are 9 full-time staff members in the recreation section, 5 full-time/part-time and seasonal staff which are utilized during peak seasons. In addition to paid staff, volunteer coaches, parents, and citizens who volunteer for special events and programs

make activities possible. The division manages many activity centers in the system, they include:

- Everett Athletic Complex
- Everett Park/Senior Center
- Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center
- South Hall Pool and Park Area
- Springbrook Park, Pool, and Duck Pond
- Sandy Springs Park
- John Sevier Park, Pool and Tennis Courts

The operations of the division are managed by the Assistant Director, Superintendent of Athletics and Executive Director. The separation of duties is listed below:

- Assistant Director – recreation facilities (except Everett Park and Athletic Complex personnel), recreation programming, Special Events, Special Olympics
- Superintendent of Athletics – Soccer programs, adult sports programs, Everett Park and Athletic Complex personnel, concessions
- Executive Director – aquatic programs

Researchers found that the Assistant Director dedicates a large portion of her energies planning and programming the Blount County Special Olympics. The full-time/part-time assistant spends approximately 75% of her time coordinating this program. In addition, the Executive Director with the support of the full-time/part-time Human Resource Manager oversees the summer aquatic programs due to limited staff resources. The level of senior staff actively managing major recreation programs and facilities is unusual in a system of this size. This results in less time for the senior staff to focus on the overall planning, staff training, and consensus building among the three governing partners. In the future, mid-level staff should be responsible for more of the day-to-day planning and operations of programs and facilities with guidance from senior staff.

For many years, the focus of programming has been on athletics—both youth and adult. In recent years, the department has attempted to diversify programming opportunities to include aquatics, arts and cultural affairs, and senior programming, to name a few.

The Assistant Director position should continue to focus on the area of recreation programs. This includes aiding staff in developing new programs, monitoring the success of existing programs, and determining which programs should grow and which programs should be discontinued. To provide this level of support the Assistant Director should pass much of the daily task of organizing the Special Olympics program to support staff. It is understood that the Special Olympics program is important to the agency and the region, but downline staff and programs need more direct attention if the diverse recreation needs are to be met.

#### *Aquatic Services*

The aquatic programs and services for the MAB Commission are managed under the Recreation Division. Currently, the director at Everett Recreation Center and the Human

Resource Manager are in charge of staffing seasonal pools and managing concessions in the parks. All aquatic activities done by the agency are done at outdoor pools located at John Sevier Park, South Hall Pool and Springbrook Park.

Programs offered by the pools include:

- Open Swim
- Swim Lessons
- Aqua Aerobics
- Scuba
- Flying Dolphins Swim Team

Management of this division is done by the Executive Director with support from the Assistant Director.

On average, staff hires approximately 50 to 60 support staff and lifeguards for its aquatic centers. The lifeguards rotate between facilities during the season, which generally runs from Memorial Day to September. As stated earlier, all pools are outdoor, which lends itself to having a limited season and/or being susceptible to inclement weather. Fees are collected at each of the pools and deposited with the main office daily during the season.

The agency has had good success with its pool system, and two aquatic centers have recently been renovated. Records reveal that revenues cover direct costs at Springbrook, but the other two pools are falling short on expense recovery.

An asset of the pool system is that two pools, the South Hall and Springbrook, are connected via the greenway. This allows multiple communities to access either pool by walking or bicycling to the pools. It also allows children and teens above the age of 12 to go to the pools without parent supervision or parents driving children to the pools.

The desire to have an indoor aquatics facility is a high priority among citizens. The development of an indoor aquatic center would greatly enhance the programming opportunities within the aquatics section. Year-round swimming for both recreation and competitive swimmers would expand revenue opportunities for the division and help offset losses at the outdoor facilities. An operations and revenue plan for an indoor aquatics complex should be developed as part of the facility development plan.

#### *Recreation Centers*

Recreation centers are a vital part of the Parks and Recreation Commission program delivery system. Everett, Springbrook, Martin Luther King Jr. and the Everett Senior Centers provide indoor programming space for athletic programs and meeting space to civic groups. Each center has a full-time director and part-time assistant staff. The senior center focuses on senior programs. It has a full-time director and secretary and also uses part-time staff. Overview of the recreation centers are divided between the Superintendent of Athletics and the Assistant Director. Oversight of the Everett Recreation Center is the responsibility of the Superintendent of Athletics while the Springbrook, MLK Jr. and Everett Senior Centers are supervised by the Assistant Director.

The current organization of the recreation division places a mix of responsibilities on staff and limits the ability of the Commission to place great emphasis on growth and planning for the future. To meet the challenge of providing additional programs and to continue to offer a quality Special Olympics program, staff additions are needed. The agency should separate functions of recreation and athletics under two superintendents. A Superintendent of Recreation should be added to the organization to oversee functions of non-athletic programming, recreation center management and special events. Functions of the Superintendent of Athletics should be modified to oversee tournaments, aquatics and tennis. Athletic program oversight should continue to fall under the direct supervision of the Superintendent of Athletics.

Staff needs will also be impacted by the development of new facilities. It appears there is a need for more athletic facilities and indoor recreation facilities. Staff and public meeting responses reveal that there is a desire for:

- A tournament level multi-sports field complex
- A recreation center complex with indoor competition and family aquatics
- Outdoor/indoor tennis facility

With these facilities identified and the wish for such complexes, the Commission will need to develop a staffing plan that will satisfy programming needs and ongoing maintenance demands based on the individual facility that is constructed. The following provides greater discussion for recommended staff additions under the Superintendent of Athletics and Superintendent of Recreation.

### **Recreation Division Recommendations**

As previously discussed, the current management of recreation programs is the responsibility of the Assistant Director. The creation of a Superintendent of Recreation position would relieve the Assistant Director from the day-to-day oversight of programs and lend more time to planning and growth for the future. The Superintendent of Recreation will provide direct oversight of a newly appointed program supervisor, Special Events Supervisor and all recreation centers.

The program supervisor will continue with the day-to-day planning and operation of programs with support provided by a program coordinator and part-time/contract staff. A new Recreation Supervisor will oversee the management of all recreation centers under the commission. This position will be particularly important as new recreation centers are opened. The recreation center supervisor will work with all the center directors on policy, budget, staffing, and programs at each center. It will be the supervisor's job to see that all support items are provided so that center directors can focus on client services and facility oversight.

To improve and expand recreation programs at these centers, full-time assistant directors are needed at Everett Recreation Center, Springbrook Recreation Center and Everett Senior Center. The Martin Luther King Jr. Center should continue to operate with a Director and full-time/part-time assistant. The limited programming space in this center prohibits the ability to offer the number of programs that are possible at the other centers. Existing full-time/part-time positions should be upgraded to full-time positions.

These upgrades will allow centers to be programmed a minimum of 12 hours a day weekdays and 16 to 20 hours a day on weekends. To meet their level of programming an Assistant Director with a strong recreational background is needed. They should be able to assist contract employees offering programs in the center with setups and other program issues and make sure all officials and other support personnel are maintaining control of programs. The center directors and assistant directors should be talking to the participants using their facility to gain insight into how the programs are meeting their expectations and if any changes are needed.

At the Everett Senior Center, an assistant director position should be added consistent with other recreation centers in the system. The secretary position should remain in addition to utilizing volunteers to serve as greeters or receptionist.

A new Special Events Supervisor is recommended to oversee Special Olympics and all other existing and new special events hosted by the Parks and Recreation Commission. In addition, this position will provide support to the planning and management of tournaments hosted by the athletic division. Part-time and contract staff will provide further support to the recreation division. The proposed reorganization and staff additions are shown in **Figure 4.3**. Included in the reorganization are a Director and Assistant Director over the proposed East Side Community Center. These positions should be added as the center is nearing completion.

### **Athletic Division Recommendations**

The Superintendent of Athletics should continue to be a function of the Parks and Recreation Commission organization; however, responsibilities should be changed. Under the reorganization, the Superintendent of Athletics should continue to oversee athletic programs and tournaments. New responsibilities should include the management of aquatics and tennis. The proposed organization is shown in **Figure 4.4**

#### *Management of Aquatics Section*

The role of Executive Director currently provides direct oversight of aquatic programs. With the development of an indoor aquatics complex even more time will be needed to manage aquatic programs and facilities. While extremely capable of fulfilling this role, the Executive Director needs more time doing outreach, establishing partners, and educating the public and elected officials to the benefits of parks, recreation, open space and trails.

The direct oversight of this section should be shifted entirely from the Executive Director to the Superintendent of Athletics and an Aquatics Supervisor. The Aquatics Supervisor, with the aide of an aquatic center coordinator will manage the new indoor aquatics center and all aquatics programs and facilities. Seasonal pool managers with the direct oversight of the Aquatic Center Supervisor and Coordinator should continue to be utilized at outdoor facilities. If recommended recreation staff additions are approved, this move should allow more attention to pool operations and aquatic programs. Further, if a new indoor facility is considered, the supervisor and coordinator could provide more guidance towards the formulation of programming, scheduling, and revenue recovery.

### *Tennis*

The Maryville-Alcoa-Blount County Parks and Recreation Commission through contract labor runs a successful tennis program. Public input revealed the desire to see this program expanded. The result was the recommendation to develop tournament-level tennis facilities at a new community park. Future consideration is recommended for the development of an indoor tennis facility. The expansion of the tennis program with an eventual indoor tennis facility will require staff to oversee the program. It is the recommendation of the planning team that a Tennis Center Manager with an assistant manager and part-time support staff be added to the parks and recreation commission organization. Tennis staff should report directly to the Superintendent of Athletics.

### *Tournaments/Concessions*

Another critical element of the Parks and Recreation organization is the planning and management of tournaments. If recommended facility additions become reality this responsibility will be increased as new tournament level facilities come on line. The organization of sponsorships and management of concession sales are just one piece of the overall execution of a successful tournament. These responsibilities are not only tied to tournaments but to special events and regular program activities. Under the supervision of the Superintendent of Athletics, a Tournament/Concession Supervisor should be added to the organization to handle functions of tournaments and supervision of the concessions portion of the parks and recreation operation.

## **Parks Division Analysis**

The Parks and Recreation Commission's Parks Division is charged with maintaining all parks and select greenway sections throughout the County. The division is made up of nine personnel including the superintendent. Park assessments revealed what appeared to be a high level of general maintenance in the parks given the number of full-time staff assigned to the division.

The existing parks division organization has nine full-time staff who are responsible for duties associated with mowing, trimming, athletic field chemical application, irrigation repair, and general fields and facility maintenance. General facility maintenance includes upkeep of swimming pools, basketball and tennis courts, playgrounds, electrical, plumbing and HVAC repair, and cleaning of all parks and recreation buildings, pavilions and restrooms. In addition to these responsibilities, maintenance staff assists with the operation of special events and tournaments.

The Parks Division staff are responsible for maintaining the following properties:

- Amerine Park (7 acres)
- Bassell Courts (1 acre)
- Eagleton Park (22 acres)
- Everett Athletic Complex (12 acres)
- Everett Park/Senior Center (20 acres)
- Howe Street Park (2 acres)
- John Sevier Park/Pool and Tennis Courts (8 acres)
- Louisville Point Park (16 acres)

- Richard Williams Park (.5 acres)
- Pearson Springs Park (8 acres)
- Pole Climbers Athletic Fields (3 acres)
- Rock Garden Park (4 acres)
- Sandy Springs Park (20 acres)
- South Hall/MLK Jr. Community Center (10 acres)
- Springbrook Park (62 acres)
- Oldfield Mini Park (.5 acre)
- Frank Bogle Greenway

All but Louisville Point Park are located within the urban Maryville and Alcoa centers. Approximately 200 acres are maintained by park crews.

*Division Maintenance*

Currently, the division operates out of a central maintenance facility. Interviews with parks staff revealed the maintenance facility is ideally located but does not meet their storage and maintenance needs. The agency incorporates roving crews as part of its maintenance routine. Further, youth teams that utilize parks such as Eagleton Park assist the division with the maintenance of fields during regular season play.

A review of the parks maintenance budget revealed the actual maintenance expenses have increased less than 1% since 2002. Supplies and maintenance costs have averaged \$158, 398 for the 3-year period reviewed. Personnel-related costs make up approximately 72% of the budget, slightly higher than the norm (60-65%).

**Parks Maintenance Budget**

	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
<b>Personnel Costs</b>	\$392,950.00	\$408,755.00	\$403,525.00
<b>Supplies and Maintenance</b>	\$159,700.00	\$155,120.00	\$160,375.00
<b>Total Budget</b>	\$552,650.00	\$563,647.00	\$563,875.00

Source: MAB Parks and Recreation Commission

*Parks Maintenance Formulas*

In 1995, the Commission requested assistance from the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation Parks and Recreation (PARTAS) study team. This team conducted a system-wide study of the maintenance budget to provide guidance relative to making the maintenance of parks a more manageable process

The study focused on four key items:

- Assess the current maintenance operations, staff, and budget
- Assess the classification/mode of existing parks and facilities
- Create a formula for determining costs for new parks maintenance
- Provide general recommendations for future maintenance planning and budgeting

One of the major findings in the study was that each of the jurisdictions was developing capital improvements independent of oversight or direction from the Parks and Recreation Commission. This move made the overall maintenance of parks facilities more of a challenge, since the representative entity (the one who planned and developed the facility) did not increase its maintenance dollars when the new venture opened. Based upon findings by the research team, the funding of the parks maintenance still is a challenge and, to date, a defined maintenance plan has yet to be implemented and adopted by the Commission.

#### *Outsourcing Some Parks*

As a way to offset some future internal costs, the Commission may seek to explore outsourcing some parks maintenance to a private company. Outsourcing provides a way for the agency to escape some personnel and equipment costs while providing a sustained level of maintenance by an outside group.

While the Commission may wish to keep control of overall parks maintenance, a method for determining which parks become privately maintained could occur. For example, the agency may wish to continue maintenance of trails and parks with a maintained acreage level of over 3 acres. This would open up the opportunity to have smaller parks within the agency to be maintained by an outside company with oversight by the Commission.

If the Commission chooses this option, it will need to have a documented maintenance schedule for the parks to be outsourced with expected maintenance outcomes (expectations). Assistance from an outside consultant may be sought to assist in composing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to provide maintenance services.

Some benefits of outsourcing include:

- Alleviation of existing and/or future personnel costs
- Limiting the need for new capital equipment investment
- Creating new jobs with the private sector and building goodwill
- Possible upgrade of maintenance to existing and/or new facilities that are retained under agency maintenance

While the benefits sound inviting, there are some possible side effects to outsourcing. One is the loss of overall control of maintained sites. The MAB Commission maintenance supervisors could not spend all their time with private crews. This lack of direct oversight may cause lack of confidence that work is being done correctly or to specification. Further, it may create a competitive atmosphere within the department that some parks are more well maintained than others due to a variety of factors.

Another mechanism employed by some park systems to provide a higher level of maintenance is through the utilization of an Adopt-a-Park Program. This park adoption method allows for local civic groups, clubs, and individuals to sponsor a park and perform light maintenance at specified times during the year. The benefit can be the provision of a higher level of maintenance than would otherwise be possible with existing staff.

*Park Maintenance Staffing*

While the Commission does have the Tennessee PARTAS study, there may be other ways to determine the desirable or obtainable level of maintenance throughout the system, while maintaining efficiencies. Very limited information exists regarding labor ratios for

park maintenance activities. In his book, ***Municipal Benchmarks*** *Assessing Local Performance and Establishing Community Standards*, David N. Ammons reports that “although every municipality may wish to design its own standards to reflect local preferences and conditions, it need not start from scratch.” He further suggests that the following labor ratio guidelines devised by the NRPA may be useful to a community deciding on its own standards, procedures and resource requirements. The table below shows formulas for developing labor ratios for specific maintenance actions.

**Labor Ratios for Selected Parks and Recreation Maintenance Activities**

Task	Labor Hours
<b>Mowing One Acre, Flat Medium Terrain at Medium Speed</b>	
20" walking	2.8 per acre
24" walking	2.2 per acre
30" riding	2.0 per acre
72" riding	0.35 per acre
Bush hog	0.25 per acre
<b>Trim</b>	
Gas powered (weed eater)	1.0 per 1,000 linear ft.
<b>Planting Grass</b>	
Cut and plant sod by hand (1.5' strips)	1.0 per 1,000 square ft.
Cut and plant sprigs by hand (not watered)	10.9 per 1,000 linear ft.
Seed, by hand	0.5 per 1,000 square ft.
Overseeding, reconditioning	0.8 per acre
<b>Fertilize Turf</b>	
24" sifter spreader	0.16 per 1,000 square ft.
Hand push spreader 36"	2.96 per acre
Tractor towed spreader 12'	0.43 per acre
<b>Weed Control</b>	
Spraying herbicide w/ fence line truck, tank sprayer 2 ft. wide (1 ft. either side of fence)	0.45 per 1,000 square ft.
<b>Leaf Removal</b>	
Hand rake leaves	0.42 per 1,000 square ft.
Vacuum 30"	0.08 per 1,000 square ft.
<b>Planting Trees</b>	
Plant Tree 5-6 ft. height	0.44 per tree
Plant Tree 2-3.5" diameter	1.0 per tree
<b>Tree Removal</b>	
Street tree removal	13.0 per tree
Street tree stump removal	3.5 per tree
Park tree removal	5.0 per tree
Park tree stump removal	2.0 per tree

Ammons also indicated that a report “prepared by a management analysis team in Pasadena, California, concluded that a ratio of one park maintenance employee for every 7-10 acres should produce ‘A-Level’ service—in other words, ‘a high-frequency maintenance service’ (City of Pasadena [CA] Management Audit Team, 1986, p. 9.4). However, he was quick to point out that “standards of the maintenance-employee-per-

park-acreage variety and corresponding statistics reported by individual cities, are complicated by the question of developed versus undeveloped park acreage ... and therefore should be interpreted cautiously." Among ten cities he examined, ratios of 10.6 to 84.7 acres maintained per maintenance employee were reported.

The Parks and Recreation Commission currently has a ratio of approximately 25 acres of maintained park land per maintenance employee for 2003. Based on the 2004 budget and a current maintained inventory of approximately 200 park acres, the Commission spends nearly \$2,818 per acre of maintained park land. Based upon other plans the research team has performed, this figure appears to be at the low end of the funding spectrum. As facilities and trails are developed, and parks and open space areas are added, an increased burden of care will be placed upon the parks division. In order to provide for safe and high quality turf and other park facilities, the Commission should consider adequate funding to reach a ratio of 20 acres of maintained park land per maintenance employee. This figure, of course, is dependent upon whether the agency considers outsourcing some parks maintenance.

### **Parks Division Recommendations**

The Parks Division should be reorganized to include a Parks Maintenance Supervisor. This position would function similar to the vacant Assistant Superintendent position that is in the current organization. The need for additional utility workers saw funding redirected in recent years from the assistant superintendent position. Funding should be appropriated to maintain the additional utility workers as well as to hire a Parks Maintenance Supervisor. The change in nomenclature from superintendent to supervisor is intended to keep a consistency with other divisions in the organization. The parks maintenance supervisor will handle the direct supervision of a new custodial crew, skilled trades crew, mechanic and three general maintenance crews as shown in **Figure 4.5**.

The custodial crew is recommended to be a roving crew that handles cleaning and general maintenance of existing indoor facilities. If a large multi-use recreation center is constructed, a site-based crew is recommended to handle daily cleaning and maintenance of the facility. The number of users that would be expected at the facility would command a site-based crew to keep the facility looking its best at all times.

The skilled trades crew is intended to perform the general maintenance and repair that is associated with the operation of park buildings and structures. This crew should be responsible for upkeep associated with plumbing, electrical and HVAC repair. Light renovation projects should also be a function of the skilled trades crew.

A mechanic is needed within the organization to perform routine maintenance and repairs on all trucks, mowers, and small equipment. An employee dedicated to these tasks will eliminate the need for existing staff to take time out of regular duties to tend to repairs when equipment is not working. In addition, the performance of routine maintenance will increase the life cycle of equipment purchased by the commission.

Three work groups are recommended for general park maintenance. A crew leader, utility worker I and utility worker II should be assigned to each group. The current park system should be divided equally among two work crews. With the addition of new parks,

a third work group should be added to allow for desired levels of maintenance. Duties associated with each work group should include general and athletic turf maintenance, trash removal, light landscaping and irrigation repair. As new parks are developed existing work groups will be required. The large community park recommended in section six will require a site-based crew for efficiency and consistency in maintenance.

### **Agency Organization Recommendations Overview**

The MAB Parks and Recreation Commission has a dynamic operation that offers a variety of recreation, aquatic, and park programs for the public to enjoy. As its population increases and the commercial corridors in the community swell, the ability to provide for recreation and acquire land for parks will provide challenges for the agency.

The agency provides an array of programs and opportunities for the public. Further, many staff members bridge divisional lines to provide recreation and park activities. It is recommended that the Commission expand cross-training capabilities for personnel in order to continue good service to both internal and external customers.

The Executive Director of the agency is charged with many tasks, including outreach, educating the public and elected officials of recreation benefits, fund raising, and other external responsibilities. Coupled with this is the internal management of specific operations, including administration and pools. While admirable, this is limiting the potential outreach that could be occurring within the Commission. A complete reorganization with new staff additions (shown in **Figure 4.6**) is recommended to create the impetus for expanded and improved recreation opportunities.

To alleviate some of the tasks and to enhance the way the department handles personnel, budgeting, long-range planning, and marketing, researchers recommend the hiring of an office manager to oversee these support duties and expand operational opportunities. This position would allow the Executive Director to focus on needed external outreach and expand the public knowledge of parks, recreation and trails in the Maryville, Alcoa and Blount County community.

To coordinate efforts regarding publicizing and building advocacy, the agency should create a partnership policy that outlines roles of partnering, monies involved, and how the policy helps both groups in promoting the positive aspects of living and visiting Blount County.

Coupled with this hire, the administrative division could use the assistance of a part-time position to assist staff at times of peak use and typical administrative duties. If the division determines it should retain marketing under its auspices, a full-time marketing person should be added to support promotion efforts.

The planning team feels that the agency is not reaching a significant segment of the community through its marketing. Beyond the municipal limits of Maryville and Alcoa, outreach is limited and County residents do not get the information desired regarding programs, events and parks. Further, web-based marketing is limited and more needs to be done to ensure this marketing medium is used. The Team feels that the agency

can either provide these expanded services internally, through the creation of a marketing section, or solicit externally to outside businesses specializing in marketing and promotion. Agreements could be centered on performance-based measures tied to the amount of dollars brought from sponsorships.

The recreation division within the agency handles extensive programming opportunities to the community. From aquatics to special events, the agency provides a wide array of activities for many populations within the County.

The focus of the division has been on athletics, and there has been success in this venture. While this has been a positive activity, the division needs to diversify its program opportunities through planning and producing new activities for more of the county population.

The recreation centers within the system appear to be short-staffed with part-time personnel charged with many tasks. As a support to center directors, it is recommended that the agency explore hiring full-time assistant center directors to assist with management and oversight of facilities and programs.

The assistant director has provided extensive oversight into the Special Olympics program, a worthwhile project helping many Blount County residents. The need for more direct management downline is necessary for agency success and for the director to focus on outward needs and promoting the Parks and Recreation Commission. For this to occur, the assistant director will need to divest some time from the management of the Special Olympics and provide more direction over other program areas. A new special events supervisor will provide the needed support to oversee Special Olympics and other events.

With new facility opportunities come additional staffing needs. To address this obvious demand, the agency will need to develop a staffing plan to facilitate the operations of new parks and recreation centers. The need for an operations consultant to provide this staffing plan should be considered.

The Commission needs to develop a fee policy to address how facilities are used and how activities and rentals are paid. Fees need to address daily rates, rental fees as well as discounted rates for not-for-profits. The agency should utilize the Pricing Pyramid model, a form of Activity-Based Costing (ABC) described in Section 5 to value programs according to their benefit area.

The Commission needs to develop a fee policy that will take revenue recovery to nearly 50% by 2007. To reach this goal, it is assumed that a new revenue-based recreation center is developed and that fees are instituted that would accommodate reaching 70-75% (average) of center operation expenses. Without adequate revenue producing facilities, this number may need to be adjusted realizing the limitations of recreation centers in the system.

To create a more user-friendly payment system, the Commission needs to address the use of registration of programs via web and the use of credit cards. Using this medium may produce more users and not make patrons have to register at a Commission office.

Aquatic services in the agency are managed under the recreation division and have current direction from the Executive Director. The three outdoor pools have approximately 50-60 part-time personnel in a rotation schedule that provides all guards to work at all pools in the system.

Fees throughout aquatics appear low and should be addressed through a new pricing policy (as stated earlier in the recreation overview). Revenue recovery needs to be a focus of the division when it relates to covering costs of operations at all pools.

The management of the division by the Executive Director needs to be changed. While completely competent to serve this role, the focus of this position needs to be more outward and looking toward building advocacy, support through the corporate and government community, and looking toward visioning and planning for future facilities in the system. Management of the division should move from the Executive Director to the Superintendent of Athletics.

The parks division maintains a variety of facilities throughout the system. Facilities range from small neighborhood parks to trail systems and total approximately 200 acres. All but one park is located inside of the Maryville-Alcoa vicinity.

The division uses a maintenance formula that was created through work with the State of Tennessee. The study team from the Department of Environment and Conservation identified that there were disconnects between when projects were planned and developed. The projects were done exclusive of oversight of the Parks and Recreation Commission. This created deficiencies in maintenance of new and existing facilities and challenged the division's way to develop maintenance schedules due to lack of resources.

The Commission may want to explore outsourcing some parks maintenance to the outside entities. Methods to determining whether to outsource some may depend upon the size of the park, drive time to the park, and type of park facility. While the agency may lose some direct control over the maintenance performed, the benefits include possible cost reductions, limiting future capital equipment outlay, and possible upgrade of maintenance based upon standards initiated by the Commission.

Staffing within the agency will continue to be a challenge in light of the existing budget climate. While outsourcing some parks may "lighten the load" on personnel and resources, the maintenance of existing and new facilities will continue to be a focus of the parks maintenance division. As a way to address the planned growth, the agency should implant maintenance standards and staffing ratios in order to adequately maintain parks and facilities. Researchers believe a ratio of 20 acres of maintained park land per employee should be a standard the Commission should implement. This total would be adjusted based upon the number of acres outsourced (if considered).

Some departments have found benefit in instituting an Adopt-A-Park program. This program allows private groups within the community to adopt a park and perform scheduled light maintenance at different times per year. Some programs include minor beautification and capital repair.

**Summary of Division Tasks, Measures, and Outcomes**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Measure/Outcome</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>
Commission to develop goals, objectives and specific outcomes for each division.	Create goals, objectives, and performance measures prior to developing FY 2005 budget	Executive Director, Parks Maintenance Supervisor
Agency to initiate cross-training program for administrative front line personnel.	Create cross-training plan and begin training FY 2005-2006	Executive Director
Expand email networking throughout the Commission facilities.	Budget for email networking to all facilities in FY 2005-2006	Executive Director
Create Communications Plan within Commission.	Begin in early 2005 with completion by August 2005	Executive Director and Deputy Director of Administration and Support Services
Executive Director to focus on outward advocacy and building partnerships.	Create partnership policy in FY 2005	Executive Director
Budget for hiring of a part-time "floater" position or upgrade to full-time if agency retains marketing responsibilities.	Budget for mid-year hire in 2005.	Executive Director
Determine the feasibility of creating a marketing division or outsourcing marketing responsibilities.	Study to begin January 2005 with recommendations January 2005	Executive Director and Deputy Director of Administration and Support Services
Create two new programs in the areas of youth, teens, seniors, and outdoor education.	Determine what programs to market and begin programming January 2005	Executive Director and Deputy Director of Administration and Support Services
Assistant Director to divest Special Olympics programming load to downline staff and create performance measures for entire division.	Diversion to begin after Special Olympics 2004 and Performance Measures study to begin July 2004	Executive Director and Assistant Director
Institute a staffing plan based upon plan recommendations and action plan; determine need for Center Assistants in plan.	Initiate study of staffing plan in FY 2005 budget. Hire consultant early 2005.	Executive Director
Institute a Fee Policy for existing and new facilities.	Begin fee study in FY 2005 for implementation in 2006 (may wish to consider hiring firm experienced in pricing policies)	Executive Director, Assistant Director, Recreation Division, Aquatic Services
Revenue recovery should reach 50% by FY 2007*	Recovery should reach 50% for 2007-2008 for Commission	Executive Director, Assistant Director, Recreation Division
Institute the use of credit card and web-based registration.	RFP to go out in mid-year 2005 with implementation before end of FY 2005	Executive Director

<b>Task</b>	<b>Measure/Outcome</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>
Shift management of aquatic services from Executive Director to Assistant Director.	Institute FY 2005-2006	Executive Director
Division to establish a written maintenance plan.	Division to write and adopt a written maintenance plan by November 2004.	Executive Director and Parks Division
Explore the feasibility of outsourcing some parks maintenance to the private sector.	Using maintenance standards, determine costs of maintaining parks (per acre). If feasible, write RFP for distribution by March 2005. If cost savings are discovered, hire firm(s) for FY 2006-2007	Executive Director and Parks Maintenance Superintendent
Determine a maintenance standard for hiring personnel as facilities, parks, and greenways are added.	Create standard for FY 2006	Executive Director and Parks Maintenance Superintendent
Establish an "Adopt a Park" program for supplemental maintenance of parks and greenways in the system.	Begin FY 2005-2006	Executive Director and Parks Maintenance Superintendent

\*Contingent upon development of revenue producing recreation center.