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Glen Burnie Moose Lodge building will open as athletic club with turf fields, host youth rec sports

By **ADA ROMANO**

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Formerly Moose Lodge 1456, the Moose Athletic Club is getting ready to officially open their doors in July for kids, athletes and parents in the Glen Burnie area.

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Jim Lighthizer of the Chesapeake Real Estate Group and Josh Byrom, athletic director of Archbishop Spalding High School, teamed up to transform the fraternity club's building into an

athletic facility complete with turf fields and a physical therapy and rehabilitation center.

Lighthizer and Byrom shared the same vision of creating a youth sports recreational facility for the community, both agreeing that they heard conversations within the community about wanting a space for youth sports for a long time before deciding to bring the idea to fruition.

“It’s been a well known fact for a number of years that it’s hard to get indoor and outdoor field time in the county,” Lighthizer said. “Parks and recreation has a lot of schools and a lot of other facilities but they get gobbled up by the schools themselves and various associations.”

He added that organizations and the community want to host private training, leagues and tournaments and have a hard time finding space to do so. .

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County Councilwoman Allison Pickard, D-Glen Burnie, introduced legislation focused on revitalizing the county in 2020 and has pushed for turning older, underutilized and deteriorated properties into new businesses to promote sustainability.

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“Anne Arundel County really lacks indoor recreation sports facilities so there’s a lot of youth sports that need training space year round and so it’s a really good win-win because the property gets revitalized, it becomes an asset for the community and fills a need,” Pickard said.

According to Lighthizer and Byrom, the community support has been overwhelming. Byrom has been looking to open a facility like this one for years and said his other plans fell through. He said he received many calls while working at Spalding from people hoping to rent the fields but availability was scarce. Byrom will be the general manager of the Moose Athletic Club.

“It’s been a long four and a half years trying to get this to come to fruition but I’m not too proud to learn, I’m excited to come on as part of the team,” Byrom said. “I’m willing to collaborate, I’m willing to listen to great ideas, get on the whiteboard and map out a summer league how we all agreed should be run.”

The former Moose Lodge 1456 organization agreed to let Lighthizer and his team keep “moose” in the name because it’s a name people in the area already recognize. Foster “Buddy” Driver is the governor of the lodge and said the club has been looking to sell the property for some time due to a decline in memberships.

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COVID-19 also had a negative impact on the club. According to Driver, memberships went from about 600 to about 400 since he took over as governor three years ago.



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“It’s indicative of a lot of clubs now that you don’t get the volunteers like you used to and that’s understandable,” Driver said. “70 and 80-year-olds don’t want to drive at night.”

Driver has explored different avenues to attract new members to the club like hosting crab feasts, a murder mystery and bands like The Nighthawks, which is from Washington, D.C. and has been playing music since 1974.

Driver said the club has had a lot of changes over the years including letting women join and lead club activities and some members are not fond of change, he said.

“I never thought anybody was beneath me or

anything like that,” Driver said. “Women and men are equal, physically different, but still they could do the same job.”

It is unknown whether The Moose Lodge will rent a portion of the building or merge with the Annapolis chapter but Driver thinks the latter would be the best option.

Moose Athletic Club will officially open July 1 and the outdoor turf fields are set to open March 1, 2022.



Ada Romano

CONTACT



Ada Romano covers Anne Arundel county government for The Capital. Before joining Baltimore Sun Media, Ada covered the Virginia General Assembly for Capital News Service at Virginia Commonwealth University, where she earned the school’s Outstanding Digital Journalism Graduate honor. She also reported on local news for The Commonwealth Times.

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