

**MINUTES**  
**REGULAR MEETING OF THE**  
**SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY PARK BOARD**  
**Friday, March 13, 2020**  
**Park Board Administrative Offices**  
**1923 N. Weller, Springfield, Missouri**

**I. ROLL CALL**

Ms. Carolyn Gerdes, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m.

**Members Present:** Scott Bailes, Randy Blackwood, Mike Chiles, Carolyn Gerdes, Tammy Mast, Sidney Needem, Michele Risdal-Barnes

**Members Absent:** Cynthia Lipscomb

**Park Board Staff Present:** Bob Belote, Tim Carpenter, Matt Coats, Mike Crocker, Jeff Cumley, Jenny Filmer Edwards, Jim Fisher, Trysta Herzog, Ben Kellner, Anne-Mary McGrath, Karen Mellinger, Jerry Mitchell, Miles Park, Kim Reser, Diana Tyndall, Lana Woolsey

**Guests:** Lexi Staner, Assistant Director, and Jan Horton, Vice President, Friends of the Garden

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Randy Blackwood made a motion to approve the January 10, 2020, Park Board Minutes; seconded by Mr. Mike Chiles. Motion was approved unanimously. Ms. Michele Risdal-Barnes made a motion to approve the February 14, 2020, Budget Workshop Minutes; seconded by Mr. Mike Chiles. Motion was approved unanimously.

**III. GARDENS AGLOW EVENT RECAP AND CHECK PRESENTATION**

Ms. Trysta Herzog, Executive Director, Friends of the Garden, stated she appreciated Parks staff who helped to make this second-year event such a great success. This year's display featured 75,000 lights strung throughout the Japanese Mizumoto Stroll Garden. Staff and volunteers welcomed 12,000 visitors to the Garden during the 12 nights it was available. Ms. Herzog stated that they mostly used social media to advertise about the Gardens Aglow event, and many patrons mentioned that a visit to this park will now become their family's holiday tradition. She thanked 417 Drones, who provided a video for today's meeting. Carolyn Gerdes, Park Board Chair, accepted a check in the amount of \$21,221.14 from Friends of the Gardens representing 50 percent of the proceeds from the event. Mr. Jon Carney, Superintendent of General Operations, stated that he appreciated the staff's vision in creating the display, and thanked everyone who worked to help make the event a success.

**IV. PRINCIPLES OF CIVILITY/ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

Mr. Belote stated that Ms. Kim Reser, Assistant Director, has been working with the Mayor's Commission on Human Rights and Communications since last summer. Ms. Reser explained the

packet of information that was distributed to the Board, which included a 2011 Springfield-Greene County Civility Project Resolution, the Springfield-Greene County Civility Project information, and the Municipality Equality Index and Standards for Credit. Ms. Reser stated that she and Ms. Lana Woolsey, Parks Assistant City Attorney, reviewed the Springfield-Greene County Civility Project Resolution and the City Code Section 82-1 of Park Rules, which included provisions to prevent adverse treatment of others, but they did not find any specific reference to anti-bullying. A draft of the Springfield-Greene County Park Board's Principles of Civility Policy and a draft for the Springfield-Greene County Park Board's Resolution for the Principles of Civility were reviewed with the Board. Ms. Woolsey stated that there are already Springfield City Codes in place regulating the treatment of others, so the policy and resolution affirm what we currently practice. Our Principles of Civility Policy are modeled after the Columbia, Missouri City Council's policy, and the Anti-Bullying/Anti-Harassment Policy is similar to the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department's policy. Ms. Woolsey stated that we would recommend providing copies to our partner groups and suggest that the groups adopt a similar policy. Ms. Woolsey stated we already have a non-discrimination clause that includes similar language in our contracts. Ms. Reser stated that we will enhance our employee training protocols to include more emphasis on inclusion and awareness. Mr. Mike Chiles made a motion to approve the Springfield-Greene County Park Board's Principles of Civility Policy and accompanying resolution; seconded by Ms. Tammy Mast. Motion was approved unanimously. Mr. Belote mentioned that we would invite the Mayor's Commission to present an update on this project at a future Park Board Meeting.

**V. DAN KINNEY FAMILY CENTER DEBT REFINANCING**

Mr. Jerry Mitchell, Superintendent of Business Operations, stated that Greene County staff approached Parks Administration about the possibility of refinancing the debt service on the Dan Kinney Park Series Bonds issued in 2011 which funded the construction of the Dan Kinney Family Center. Mr. Mitchell explained that lower interest rates and Greene County's improved bond rating should allow for monetary savings for the Park Board, subject to market conditions at the time of closing. Mr. Mitchell provided a summary of the prospective debt refinancing, which includes a potential savings in debt service payments annually over the next six fiscal years, potential overall savings realized over the life of the new debt service issuance, the maturity date will remain unchanged, which is June 30, 2027, no out-of-pocket cost to Parks for the refinancing process, and because of the short timeframe for repayment, there is not option for early pay-off. Ms. Tammy Mast made a motion to approve the Parks Administration's request to pursue the refinancing of the debt service on the Dan Kinney Park Series Bonds issued in 2011; seconded by Ms. Michele Risdal-Barnes. Motion was passed. Ms. Carolyn Gerdes, Chair, abstained from the vote.

**VI. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION OF FY 2020-21 PARKS BUDGET**

Mr. Belote thanked the Board for their productive discussion of the challenges associated with our proposed FY 2020-21 Parks Budget at our recent Park Board Budget Workshop on February 14, 2020. An updated budget document reflecting the suggested edits by the Board during that discussion was distributed to the Board.

Mr. Belote reviewed the Budget Snapshot document, which depicts a proposed balanced budget of \$31,819,087. Our proposed priorities are similar from previous years, with the number one

priority being to secure a long-term funding source to continue operating our parks and facilities, supporting greenway trails, and expanding sports tourism opportunities. We will continue to comply with the new minimum wage standards, which will impact our budget by \$534,976 in FY 2020-21, with an additional impact of over \$42,000 due to additional wage compression staff costs. We will begin to work towards the five-year renewal of our departmental accreditation status. As a requirement for the CAPRA accreditation renewal process, we will work with the City's Forward SGF Comprehensive Plan to develop a new Parks and Greenspace Master plan. Restoring older and more under-utilized neighborhood parks within our park system will continue to be a priority, along with park safety and seeking new collaborative opportunities wherever possible.

Mr. Belote stated that we have discussed the need for a long-term funding source since our 2006 county-wide parks sales tax initiative sunset in 2012. Since then, we have operated and maintained our facilities at a consistently high level, but with rising costs including the new minimum wage standards, it has become increasingly difficult to operate and manage at this same level. Mr. Belote mentioned that the Park Board Future Funding Committee was created approximately three years ago to review other funding options, but we have exhausted additional revenue producing opportunities. In reviewing our proposed expenditures, we will fund the prospective cost of living and merit increases for eligible employees, along with additional Zoo operating costs for animal food and medical supplies. We worked to restore our revenue projections to actual revenue collection. In reviewing our new expenditures and revenue adjustments, we have \$1,940,473 in proposed liabilities for FY 2020-21. We have proposed our revenue to be \$1,438,481 by proposing savings in our existing operations through reductions in all divisions and closing facilities or limiting services, along with some growth in sales tax, and new fees and charges revenue. We still have \$501,992 to cut from our proposed FY 2020-21 budget. Mr. Belote stated that we did a similar exercise nearly four years ago, so it is a net impact of a 10 percent reduction of our operational budget, along with an increase in some of our fees and charges, but yet, we still have not been able to increase services and programs.

Mr. Belote reviewed the Summary of Possible Scenarios of Proposed Budget Cuts document with the Board. Mr. Belote stated that we have reviewed every division, and the cuts presented are extremely difficult to make, but we do have to bring these cuts forward to balance the budget. The proposed budget cuts include the following: deferring annual lease program for capital equipment purchases, reducing seasonal employee availability, discontinuing special events such as Snowfest, the closing of two outdoor pools for the season, reducing the hours of operation at our three Family Centers, Cooper Tennis Complex, and the Skate Park, discontinuing several SPARC programs, reducing the number of Harvest Fest weekends offered and hours of operation at Rutledge-Wilson Farm Park, reducing the kayak/canoe rental season at Lake Springfield Boathouse, and reducing the department-wide advertising and marketing budget.

Mr. Belote stated that these cuts are needed to balance out the FY 2020-21 budget, but this issue is not new information to our Park Board members or City and County officials. The recent news of the coronavirus may make our budget challenges even more difficult, but today we recommend the proposed budget including the cuts discussed. The City Manager is aware of our situation, as well, and we will share a Parks Update presentation with City Council on March 24. Mr. Belote stated that we have made a formal appeal to forgo our \$610,000 payment for

City services, which would help our shortfall for the current budget cycle, but we also need to develop a plan for future budget deficits. Throughout the Forward SGF discussions, we continue to hear that our community wants more park and trail opportunities, but we are currently struggling to keep doing what we do now. Ms. Gerdes, Park Board Chair, stated that she does not believe our community knows how we are funded. She continued by saying that we are a self-sustainable city/county department that does not receive any city or county funding, which is why we are having to make such deep cuts to balance next year's budget. Mr. Belote stated that we have shared with the Greene County Commission about how we are funded, which includes revenue from the 2001 and 2006 parks sales taxes, fees and charges, a 1913 mil tax, and grants/donations. Mr. Scott Bailes, Chair of Future Funding Committee, stated that he appreciates the City Manager's office taking interest in our budget situation, but he finds it concerning that we have not received any support from our elected Greene County officials. Mr. Bailes stated that our patrons can be angry with the Park Board for making budget cuts, but the lack of support in not allowing us to submit a ballot initiative to ask our citizens for help is the real problem of concern. Mr. Mike Chiles, Board Member, stated that we have waited nearly 10 years to have a funding source to address aging 100-year-old infrastructure and facilities, over \$60 million of unfunded priorities, and an opportunity to bring new amenities to our parks system. Mr. Belote stated that he appreciated the Board's support and passion to provide the very best for our citizens and visitors, but at this time, we need to present a balanced budget to the City for further approval. Mr. Randy Blackwood made a motion to approve the proposed Parks FY 2020-21 budget and recommended it be forwarded to the City Manager's Office and City Council for further approval; seconded by Mr. Scott Bailes. Motion passed unanimously. Mr. Belote thanked the Park Board members for their time and the in-depth discussion of the budget.

#### **VII. COMMITTEE REPORT**

There were no Committee Reports to discuss.

#### **VIII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Mr. Belote stated that we would forgo the usual staff reports, but their division written reports were included in the Board members' packets for review. Mr. Belote stated that there are still a lot of good things happening in our parks system, and we will continue to do what we can for our community.

Mr. Belote provided an update of how the City is managing the recent coronavirus situation. We are following the guidelines issued by the Center for Disease Control and Springfield-Greene County Health Department. We are trying to manage the situation for the next two weeks initially, and then, the next three months. We would like for our parks and trails to remain open to offer some hope and a place to visit for mental and physical health, but we also want to be good stewards in protecting our patrons, as well. Mr. Belote stated that should our facilities close, we will still have hard costs to cover without revenue. Mr. Belote stated that we do have \$600,000 in our Parks reserve account, which could easily be depleted given the landscape ahead, but we will continue to manage as best as we can and keep the Park Board members informed.

Mr. Jon Carney mentioned that Mr. Jeff Smith, Senior Park Planner, designed an updated Rose Garden within Nathanael Greene/Close Memorial Park and work will begin soon. The newly designed garden is a donor-funded project.

**IX. CHAIR'S REPORT**

The Chair did not have a report.

**X. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

There was no unfinished business to discuss.

**XI. NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business to discuss; however, Mr. Blackwood stated that patrons who may be unhappy with the reduction of Park services and closing of facilities may want to communicate their opinion to our elected officials. Mr. Belote stated that we will continue to share information with the Board, our patrons, partner groups, and the eight other municipalities who also rely on the county-wide parks sales tax to operate and maintain their park systems.

**XII. CALENDAR**

- a. "Parks Update" Presentation to Mayor and City Council: Tuesday, March 24, 2020, at 12:00 pm, Busch Building, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Councilman Denny Wayne Conference Room  
(Note: Mr. Belote mentioned that with the recent coronavirus developments, this meeting date and time could be changed, but he would keep the Board members informed.)
- b. Park Board Meeting: Friday, April 10, 2020, at 8:30 am, Park Board Administrative Offices

**XIII. ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Sidney Needem made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Ms. Michele Risdal-Barnes. Motion was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:58 a.m.