

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE
SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY PARK BOARD
Friday, December 11, 2020
Jordan Valley Ice Park, 635 E. Trafficway, Springfield, Missouri, and virtually via Microsoft Teams
Teleconferencing

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, Tammy Mast, Sidney Needem, Heather Noggle

Members Absent: Curtis Jared

Guests: Leslie Carrier, Susan Turner

Park Board Staff Present: Bob Belote, Jon Carney, Tim Carpenter, Matt Coats, Mike Crocker, Jeff Cumley (via Teams), Jenny Filmer Edwards, Jim Fisher, Anne-Mary McGrath, Karen Mellinger, Jerry Mitchell, Miles Park, Kim Reser, Jeff Smith, Diana Tyndall, Lana Woolsey

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Randy Blackwood made a motion to approve the November 13, 2020, Park Board Meeting minutes; seconded by Mr. Sidney Needem. Motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Bob Belote, Director of Parks, stated that the Park Board Nominating Committee recently completed a very competitive interview process for two city representative seats. He introduced the two prospective Board members, Leslie Carrier and Susie Turner, who both have extensive experience in serving on community boards and committees.

Mr. Belote also acknowledged the family losses that our Park Board members have recently experienced including Mrs. Margaret Blackwood, mother of Mr. Randy Blackwood, Board Member, and Dr. John Gerdes, husband of Mrs. Carolyn Gerdes, Park Board Chair. Our staff appreciates the time your service to the Park Board takes away from your families, and we will continue to keep you in our prayers.

III. SPRINGFIELD BOTANICAL GARDENS MASTER PLAN OVERVIEW

Mr. Miles Park, Assistant Director of Parks, provided a brief history of Nathanael Greene/Close Memorial Park stating that in 1998, Major and Marthe Close purchased the 54 acres south of the Nathanael Greene Park, which was planned to be developed as a botanical center. With the help of the Close Family, other donors and organizations, including Friends of the Garden, which celebrated 20 years in 2020, we continue to complete elements of the master plan. The Botanical Center opened to the public in 2010 as part of the 2006 Parks Sales Tax initiative, with

the help of Greene County Extension Center, and the capital campaign efforts of Friends of the Garden.

Mr. Jeff Smith, Senior Park Planner, provided an overview of the Springfield Botanical Gardens Master Plan. With the Close Family purchase of the land south of Nathanael Greene Park, the size of the park doubled in size to nearly 113 acres in 1998. The park attracts approximately 800,000 visitors annually, and the guest book signed by visitors at the Botanical Center indicates that we have had visitors from France, England, and virtually every state across the country.

Some of the key park features include the Rosten Native Butterfly House, the Gray-Campbell Farmstead as a host site for school field trips, the Mizumoto Japanese Stroll Garden, the new Peace through People Pavilion, and the Master Gardeners' demonstration gardens. Mr. Smith stated that the park's numerous features would not be possible without the partnership of several agencies and volunteers. Mr. Smith reviewed the goals for the botanical gardens, which include providing ADA accessibility in all areas of the park and using standardized materials throughout the park, along with a new 9,000 square foot event space, which would allow for large special events and workshops, and a formal greenhouse and demonstration kitchen. Additionally, the plan recommends additional parking and more storage and warehouse space. Mr. Smith reviewed several of the specialty gardens and recent new amenities that have been added due to the generosity of several donors, along with future possibilities to continue developing regional showcase gardens. Mr. Smith estimates that approximately \$12,000,000 million dollars would be needed to complete all the elements of the Master Plan. Mr. Park thanked the Friends of the Garden Master Plan Committee and Jeff Smith for continuing the vision created more than 20 years ago and sharpening the focus to develop the plan.

IV. COOPER PARK/LAKE COUNTRY SOCCER FACILITIES UPDATE

Mr. Belote reviewed the presentation he provided to City Council at their November 30, 2020, meeting that detailed a prospective \$10 million upgrade for the soccer facilities within Cooper Park/Lake Country Soccer Complex, which would include provisions for installing artificial turf to the eight upper fields. These facility improvements, the most critical unfunded sports infrastructure needs for our park system, would include a FIFA-approved championship field, with spectator seating for 3,500 people, new locker rooms, restrooms, and tournament/team meeting rooms, along with a fan-friendly concourse, picnic and play areas, and new food and beverage options. The improvements would allow the City to competitively bid on MSHSAA state championships, Missouri Youth Soccer Association championships, along with regional and national tournaments. With upgraded fields and enhanced amenities, it would also allow for high-level collegiate play, and the possibility to entertain professional soccer opportunities for Springfield. The tournaments provide a significant economic impact for our community, while allowing our local youth to play on quality fields and participate in weekend competitions at home. Mr. Belote stated that it is anticipated that the interest in soccer will continue to grow since North America is scheduled to host the World Cup in 2026, so with the upgrades and additional amenities, we will be ready to address the increased demand for soccer services and activities.

Following Mr. Belote's presentation and several testimonials in support of the upgrades to Cooper Park/Lake Country, City Council unanimously adopted a Resolution of Intent to move

forward with soccer-oriented facility improvements for the park. The resolution detailed the City's commitment to extend \$5 million in City funding for the project, while challenging Lake Country Soccer and its donor base to raise the additional \$5 million needed. The City is also willing to finance the entire project on behalf of the Park Board, allowing us to potentially complete the entire project at one time instead of having to spread it out in phases over a multi-year period.

Mr. Randy Blackwood, Board member, stated his appreciation of the City's leadership in supporting this facility improvement, which is an investment that will benefit not just the Park Board, but the City, County, and out-of-town visitors. He stated he encourages the City's leadership to continue to be engaged with similar projects within the park system that will also benefit the City. Mr. Scott Bailes stated that 20 years ago, Springfield was a premier location within the soccer circuit. With multiple turf fields and upgraded facilities for teams and spectators, we will be a more competitive location for future soccer championships, as well.

V. DEPARTMENTAL CAPRA ACCREDITATION RENEWAL UPDATE

Mr. Jim Fisher, Assistant Director, mentioned that the Park Board formally adopted two new policies, "Safety Policy and Procedures Manual", and "Goals and Objectives" in December of 2015. The current documents with a few minor updates are included in the Board members' packets for review consideration, but no formal Board action is required. Mr. Fisher stated that we are working to complete the remaining standards soon. Our accreditation site visit will be virtual sometime in 2021.

We are hoping to have the final draft Master Plan document within the next two weeks. By partnering with the Forward Springfield initiative and the City's Planning Department, we were able to obtain considerable feedback from citizens and the Park Board members' input, about parks and trails before the pandemic.

VI. LIVING MEMORIAL PARK PROPERTY ISSUE

Mr. Miles Park, Assistant Director, stated that when the Park Board originally constructed the trail through Living Memorial Park, a small portion of the trail was mistakenly constructed on the adjoining landowner's property, which was owned by the Olde Ivy Development, LLC. The sole owner of Olde Ivy Development, LLC., Mr. Michael Pulscher, has generously agreed to donate this portion of his real estate to the Park Board. Mr. Pulscher will provide the Park Board with the appropriate legal documents to transfer this real estate to the Park Board as part of our linear trail system. Mr. Sidney Needem made a motion to accept the transfer of this property to the Park Board; seconded by Ms. Heather Noggle. Motion passed unanimously.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORT

- A. **Welcome Prospective New Park Board Members** Mr. Belote thanked the Park Board's Nominating Committee, Mr. Randy Blackwood, Ms. Tammy Mast, and Ms. Carolyn Gerdes for their work to review the applications and interview the candidates. Of those five candidates that were interviewed, the consensus of the Committee was to select Ms. Leslie Carrier and Ms. Susan (Susie) Turner as our two new prospective Park Board members. The

City Manager's Office has approved our recommendations, and they are on the City Council's agenda for formal reading at their December 14 and January 11 meetings.

- B. Mr. Belote stated that the Park Board has a seat on the Center City Development Committee, which was organized in the 1990's to issue bonds for Jordan Valley Park. The Nominating Committee recommended Mr. Randy Blackwood, due to his familiarity with the downtown area and surrounding properties, to replace Mr. Scott Bailes, whose Park Board term has been fulfilled. Mr. Blackwood accepted the nomination. Ms. Carolyn Gerdes made a motion to appoint Mr. Randy Blackwood to the Central City Development Committee; seconded by Mr. Scott Bailes. Motion passed unanimously.

IX. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Jon Carney, Superintendent of General Services Mr. Carney stated that the Gardens Aglow walk-thru display of lights in the Mizumoto Stroll Garden has been a successful event so far. Staff is encouraging visitors to wear their face coverings while in the park, even though it is outside. At Ms. Carolyn Gerdes' urging, we will continue to work on dispersing groups of people along the walkways, at the entrance gate, and throughout the park itself.

Ms. Anne-Mary McGrath, Superintendent of Recreation Ms. McGrath mentioned that our Accessible Recreation staff hosted a unique holiday party for their invited guests with a private event at Candy Cane Lane in Rutledge-Wilson Farm Park. Guests were treated with a special ticket to drive-thru the lighted display, which also included a wish-list gift for each participant, given to them by Santa Claus. Ms. McGrath stated that she would have a full report regarding the virtual Turkey Trot at the Park Board meeting in January. Mr. Sidney Needem, Board Member, mentioned that he and Ned Reynolds decided to meet at the traditional Turkey Trot starting line on Thanksgiving morning, just in case any runners showed up—and to their surprise, approximately 40 people did show up! Mr. Reynolds did his annual countdown, and Mr. Needem pulled the trigger on his imaginary race start gun, and the runners trotted off down St. Louis street into the fog. Mr. Belote stated that the Park Board, along with our partners, Developmental Center of the Ozarks and Ozarks Food Harvest, appreciated the show of support from our sponsors and donors, and the 2,100 participants who registered for the virtual event.

Ms. Jenny Edwards, Public Information Administrator Ms. Edwards mentioned that her team researched program publications from other park and recreation agencies to redesign the Park Bench and make it more user-friendly. The publication is at the printer now and should be ready for distribution in the next ten days. New apparel items featuring Springfield Botanical Gardens, Lake Springfield Boathouse, and Rutledge-Wilson Farm Park are now available in several of our park gift shops. Diana Tyndall, Marketing and Sponsorship Coordinator, is continuing to shoot Parks Pick Me Up videos, which continue to be popular on our website.

Mr. Jerry Mitchell, Superintendent of Business Operations Mr. Mitchell reported that current sales tax revenue is up compared to the same period from one year ago. Mr. Mitchell stated that the Parks Property Mil Tax is not recorded until the end of the year, but it is also up over the projected amount. With these two revenues up significantly from last year, it will help offset some of our unplanned costs and revenue deficiencies. Mr. Belote stated that the City Manager's office recently lifted the hiring freeze and restored the merit steps for employees, as

well. He appreciates the City Manager's support in keeping our full-time staff employed and continuing to allow employees remote work options during the pandemic.

Mr. Matt Coats, Superintendent of Special Facilities Mr. Coats mentioned that Candy Cane Lane had over 1,000 cars drive through the lighted display on the opening weekend. The drive-thru display is open Friday-Sunday, the first three weekends in December. Mr. Coats stated that James River Basin Partnership was awarded a federal grant to improve water quality by planting 450 native shrubs and trees along the Wilson Creek corridor. With the help of 30 volunteers from JRBP and the Watershed Committee, along with Park staff, the 450 holes have been dug and are ready for the plantings.

Mr. Jeff Cumley, Superintendent of Jordan Valley Park and CSDP Programs Mr. Cumley mentioned that CSDP players participated in a mental training workshop taught by Amanda Jones, owner of Elevate Mental Performance, in addition to their physical conditioning training last month. The athletes participated in a variety of workshop activities including individual meetings to build self-confidence and positivity.

Mr. Miles Park, Assistant Director Mr. Park mentioned that park operations staff conducted 41 playground safety inspections last month. Light pole timers were adjusted at park sites to reflect the end of Daylight Savings times. The crews will also make minor playground equipment repairs, level playground safety chips underneath play equipment, along with minor electrical repairs.

Mr. Jim Fisher, Assistant Director Mr. Fisher announced that recently Mikael Irvine was promoted to Golf Facilities Supervisor and will oversee all three golf courses maintenance operations. Mr. Belote mentioned that this is not a new position, but one that has been unfunded since 2013-14. We are looking forward to a bright future for the golf courses with the reinstatement of the position.

Ms. Kim Reser, Assistant Director Ms. Reser reported that 40 new leased computers will be distributed to Park employees by the City's Information Systems Department. Ms. Reser thanked the Recreation program staff and supervisors for their extensive work in providing facility services to the community during the past year.

Mr. Mike Crocker, Assistant Director Mr. Crocker stated that with the help of government loans and grants, along with a reduction in expenses, the Zoo has remained opened without furloughing any Friends of the Zoo staff. Many of the zoos around the country have not been as fortunate. The three new baby cheetahs are doing well and have been placed on exhibit several times for visitors to see them. Mr. Belote mentioned that Friends of the Zoo recently coordinated a contest/fund-raiser to name the three cheetahs, and the money raised was donated to the Zoo's on-site veterinarian hospital. The names of the cheetahs were Faith, after the current Zoo Administrative Secretary, Art, after long-time Springfield sports announcer, Art Haines, and Crocker, after our current Zoo Director and employee for over 40 years.

Mr. Bob Belote, Director of Parks Mr. Belote mentioned that the most recent NRPA parks survey of data on how park and recreation agencies across the country are confronting the COVID-19 pandemic was included in the board member's packets for their review. Mr. Belote

stated that formal discussions will begin in January or February regarding the property near Sequiota Park. For the City's 2020 United Way campaign, our generous Park employees pledged nearly \$12,000 this year. We appreciate everyone who made a pledge to help others in our community, along with Ms. Karen Mellinger's effort to again coordinate our department's campaign.

IX. CHAIR'S REPORT

Ms. Carolyn Gerdes, Chair, stated that she would like to recognize one of our long-term Board Members, Mr. Scott Bailes. Mr. Belote mentioned that Scott joined the Park Board after serving on City Council for several years. He is a recognized athlete, who has a passion for parks, youth participation, and economic impact endeavors for our community. Scott has been a huge advocate for our park system. We admire his ability to ask questions, and we will continue to gain his input in the future, as well. Mr. Bailes thanked the Park Board staff for what they do on a daily basis, and the management's ability to retain very dedicated staff. Mr. Bailes stated that he hopes that Greene County will follow the City's lead and demonstrate their support of our park system moving forward. Ms. Gerdes presented a plaque to Mr. Bailes in recognition of his service on the Park Board.

Mr. Belote thanked Tim McCrea, Business Systems Analyst, along with the City's Public Information crew, for their flexibility in setting up for virtual board meetings at a variety of locations.

X. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business to discuss.

XI. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business to discuss.

XII. CALENDAR

It was suggested that the January Board meeting be scheduled for Friday, January 15, 2021, instead of January 8, 2021, as City Council will meet to approve the new prospective Board members on January 11. Following City Council approval, the new members would be able to officially participate in our January Park Board meeting.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Sidney Needem made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Mr. Scott Bailes. Motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 10:02 a.m.

Ms. Gerdes and Mr. Needem wished everyone Happy Holidays!