

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE
SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY PARK BOARD
Friday, March 12, 2021
Lake Springfield Boathouse, 5324 S. Kissick, Springfield, Missouri

I. ROLL CALL

Ms. Carolyn Gerdes, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:38 a.m.

Members Present: Randy Blackwood, Leslie Carrier, Mike Chiles, Carolyn Gerdes, Tammy Mast, Sidney Needem, Heather Noggle, Susie Turner

Members Absent: Curtis Jared

Park Board Staff Present: Bob Belote, Mike Crocker, Jeff Cumley, Jenny Filmer Edwards, Jim Fisher, Anne-Mary McGrath, Karen Mellinger, Jerry Mitchell, Miles Park, Joey Powell, Kim Reser, Diana Tyndall, Lana Woolsey

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Randy Blackwood made a motion to approve the February 9, 2021, Budget Workshop Meeting minutes; seconded by Mr. Sidney Needem. Motion was approved unanimously. Mr. Sidney Needem made a motion to approve the February 12, 2021, Park Board minutes; seconded by Ms. Heather Noggle. Motion was approved unanimously.

III. LAKE SPRINGFIELD PARK STAFF INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

Ms. Jenny Perkins, Coordinator at Lake Springfield Park, welcomed everyone to the Lake Springfield Boathouse. Ms. Perkins mentioned that for the past three years, we have received a Community Conservation grant to remove more than 12 acres of invasive species brush within the park. We are grateful for the Master Naturalists that volunteer more than 600 hours of service annually to help with a variety of landscaping activities. Ms. Perkins shared information about upcoming programs including the Owl Prowl event, First Float and Guided Tours, and Introductory Lessons to Kayaking. These programs are hosted in partnership with the Dickerson Park Zoo and the Outdoor Initiatives Division. Ms. Perkins stated that we had over 4,000 people rent canoes/kayaks during the 2020 season. The watercraft rental season begins April 15 and continues through October 15 at the Boathouse.

IV. DICKERSON PARK ZOO UPDATE

Mr. Mike Crocker, Assistant Director, provided a brief history of the Dickerson Park Zoo stating that it was first opened in Phelps Grove Park in 1922. It was moved to the current site in 1923. Most cities that are the size of Springfield do not have a Zoo. The Zoo serves as a regional attraction, featuring over 500 types of species and animals from five different continents, and welcomes 180,000 to 200,000 visitors annually. The Zoo's mission is to connect people with animals and nature, participate in and provide conservation education, and protect wildlife.

With 1.2 miles of walkways and 20 outdoor sculptures to view, the Zoo is a great location to take a walk and enjoy the outdoors. In 2019, over 100,000 people participated in outreach and conservation education programs. As part of the Zoo's mission, the Zoo also supports 20 different species projects in effort to protect and save animals from extinction.

Mr. Crocker stated that while the Zoo was closed during the pandemic, the Zoo staff completed several renovation and maintenance projects that would have been difficult to do while the Zoo was open. Projects included replacing timbers and renovating the Zoo's front entrance, replacement of over 100 feet of sidewalk, constructing a new exhibit pool area, finishing the cheetah exhibit, landscaping projects, and constructing a new artificial bear cave log and den for kids to crawl through and play on. Throughout the pandemic, the Dickerson Park Zoo has received positive comments for serving as a great example of "quality of place" in Springfield and visitors truly appreciate what the Zoo has to offer.

Ms. Joey Powell, Friends of the Zoo Marketing Director, stated that during the pandemic, Zoo staff developed mini-classes and special activities including writing letters to animals campaign, which was a great success and earned national media coverage, with over 500 letters received. The mini-classes were a great way to keep Zoo education on-going and featured a 15-minute virtual class, with over 6,000 people who participated each month. With the support of the Titus Media Center, staff featured stories about recently hospitalized animals and shared the information with mini-class participants.

We continue to offer events with several partners such as KOLR-10, Kevin & Liz radio hosts, Rotary Clubs, and Leadership Springfield, which include after-hours events and special programs with the Zoo. The Hotel Vandivort offers a special hotel rate for Friends of the Zoo members. Friends of the Zoo membership grew approximately 12 percent, with over 500 members added last year. Upcoming new activities include adding interactive exhibits such as monkey bars and jump like a kangaroo stations, Build a Zoo activities, which participants can visit craft stations to make their own giraffe, elephant, tiger, snake and flamingo to coordinate with special featured "animal days" events at the Zoo. The popular adult-only events, Ball of the Wild and Brew at the Zoo, will be held July 9 and September 19, respectively, on Zoo property. Mr. Belote thanked the Friends of the Zoo organization, as we could not do what we do without their staff and direct financial support. He stated that it is amazing the number of people that continue to visit the Zoo to see what is new. We hope to have a future Board meeting at the Zoo.

V. PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN DRAFT DOCUMENT

Mr. Jim Fisher, Assistant Director, stated that the last working master plan document for the Park Board was the Vision 20/20 document, which was over 30 years ago. We did have strong tangible outcomes from that document which helped to outline the City/County park system we have today. We contracted with Houseal Lavigne, which is the vendor that facilitated the Forward SGF initiative. As part of the initiative, the contractor obtained significant input from citizen workshops, along with Parks Administrative Staff and Park Board members, which we were able to use for the development of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan document. Mr. Miles Park, Assistant Director, and Mr. Jeff Smith, Senior Park Planner, provided detailed park inventory information, and helped us to tell the story of our agency including our current situation and what we want to accomplish in the future. Mr. Fisher encouraged the Park Board

members to review the draft document and submit their suggestions or comments by March 26, 2021. Once the final edits are completed, we will request a presentation of the Master Plan from Houseal Lavigne, and then, present the final document to the Park Board for formal adoption. Mr. Randy Blackwood, Board Member, stated that it was a very impressive and comprehensive document. Mr. Belote stated that we would conduct a deeper review of our parks and facilities including clarifying property categories of parks and greenspace, along with the best options for the future and maintaining quality properties. Mr. Belote thanked Mr. Fisher and staff who have been greatly involved in developing the document, along with the public who provided comments that were collected prior to the pandemic. Ms. Leslie Carrier stated she appreciated the detailed information and seeing the list of items that need to be done, and she commented that the Master Plan will be considered an important historical plan like the Vision 20/20 document. Mr. Belote stated that we are hopeful that with the completion of this new Parks and Recreation Master Plan, we will once again receive increased city and county support.

VI. COMMITTEE REPORT

- a. **Nominating Committee Update** On behalf of the Nominating Committee, consisting of Mr. Randy Blackwood, Ms. Carolyn Gerdes, and Ms. Tammy Mast, Mr. Belote stated that we should have a slate of candidates for the 2021-22 Chair and Vice Chair positions at the April Board Meeting.

VII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. Anne-Mary McGrath, Superintendent of Recreation Ms. McGrath mentioned several activities that Recreation sections had offered recently including a four-week skateboarding camp at the Skate Park and a Zoo Zoom session with our Accessible Recreation participants. Ms. McGrath stated that the new Summer Camp brochure was available and included for the Board's review. Mr. Mike Chiles, Board Member, asked how we try to accommodate more campers when camp space is filled, and Ms. McGrath stated that if we have more campers than space is available, we do create a waiting list to possibly add additional camp locations. The new virtual race activity, the Shamrock, already has 72 participants registered for the March 14-28 event. We are now hiring temporary and seasonal employees for lifeguards, concessions, and outdoor maintenance staff positions. Interested applicants may visit parkboard.org/jobs for a link to apply online. Ms. McGrath thanked the Park Operations Division for their work on three big projects including making repairs to the mini-ramp at the Skate Park, repainting the Chesterfield Family Center gymnasium, and replacing the lights in the gym at Doling Family Center.

Ms. Jenny Edwards, Public Information Administrator Ms. Edwards thanked all the sections that contributed to the new Summer Camp brochure. Ms. Edwards mentioned that SPARC has a new logo that will be used in banners, digital campaigns, and at school-park locations.

Mr. Jeff Cumley, Superintendent of Jordan Valley Park and CSDP Mr. Cumley reported that our youth hockey team recently won their championship. Mr. Cumley mentioned that he appreciates the coaching efforts of Mr. Benjamin (BJ) Norman, CSDP Hockey Coach, who works to improve the players physical and mental performance development on and off the ice and helping the team become community-minded athletes. Last week, Jordan Valley Ice Park staff

hosted a large, regional gymnastics meet. Mr. Belote mentioned that we should invite the CSDP Coaches to a future Board meeting to hear more about their respective programs.

Mr. Jerry Mitchell, Superintendent of Business Operations Mr. Mitchell reported that total sales tax revenue is up \$375,184 from the same period one year ago. The Golf Fund revenue for the eight months ending February 28, 2021, is up \$390,873 over the same period in 2020. The total expenditures are down as we continue to accrue savings from vacant positions, as well as having fewer temporary/seasonal employees, and decreased costs due to fewer programs and events. Mr. Randy Blackwood, Board Member, asked if we prepare cost estimates for unplanned repairs or loss of revenues. Mr. Mitchell stated we do budget for unplanned weather incidents that may cause for unexpected repairs and potential revenue decreases based upon historical data from previous years. Mr. Belote commented that restoration and repairs made after severe weather incidents such as flooding may be eligible for reimbursement through agencies like FEMA.

Mr. Belote mentioned that with the sales tax revenues remaining strong, we have been able to restore some of the budget cuts that we made from two years ago, but we still do not have enough funds to reinvest in bigger projects. Our budget is primarily sales tax driven, so when the sales tax revenue is stable and strong, we remain fairly steady, as well. If we do have additional money available at the end of the fiscal year, we plan to increase our Parks reserve account. Mr. Belote stated that with continued communication with our Park Board sponsors and relaying the benefits of partnering with Parks, Ms. Diana Tyndall, Coordinator of Marketing/Sponsorships, has worked to retain many of our corporate sponsors in spite of pandemic uncertainties.

Ms. Kim Reser, Assistant Director Ms. Reser mentioned that staff continues to upgrade security cameras and software throughout the park system. Ms. Reser reported that Lake Country Soccer is aggressively seeking sponsors to help them match the City's \$5 million funding support for new turf soccer fields, restrooms, and other amenities. Mr. Belote thanked Ms. Reser for her continued work with the placement of university interns and practicum students within our park system.

Mr. Jim Fisher, Assistant Director Mr. Fisher stated that Ms. Christine Peoples has done a lot of new programming that includes historical and educational topics for classes and workshops. The Special Facilities Maintenance section helped to build a new office for the Golf Facilities Supervisor located within the Bill and Payne Stewart Golf Course pro shop. Mr. Fisher stated that we completed the hiring process for 12 full-time positions last month, but still have more than 14 full-time positions to fill that were frozen during the pandemic. Mr. Fisher reported that the Economic Impact Study has been completed except for a few revisions to the Executive Summary. We have completed nine of the 10 standards necessary for the CAPRA accreditation process. The actual submission process was much different from 2015, including that the June site visit with the accreditation team will be conducted virtually instead of in person.

Mr. Miles Park, Assistant Director On behalf of Jon Carney, Mr. Park reported that we had six water main breaks as the ice began to thaw after the recent frigid cold weather. Mr. Park stated that in coordination with the Recreation staff, a variety of transitional projects are in the

process of being completed at ball complexes and park locations. Mr. Park stated that Senior Park Planner, Jeff Smith, continues to remain actively involved with the Grant Avenue Parkway Project.

Mr. Bob Belote, Director of Parks Mr. Belote stated that Mr. Smith has also been instrumental in project planning of the Sequiota Park corridor, including the recent proposal which recommends that the City allow Parks to incorporate several city-owned properties adjacent to the park. This proposal will be presented to City Council on March 22, and if approved, Sequiota Park will nearly double in size, allowing for additional parking and upgraded amenities, while still maintaining the stormwater protections, natural habitats and the overall beauty of the park.

Mr. Belote stated that at our next Park Board meeting, we will have several important topics to discuss including our staff's assessment of a local sports facility and staff recommendations for Phase 2 of the Food and Beverage enhancements.

Mr. Belote mentioned that the WTT season will again be conducted remotely at a neutral site, with the possibility of the season being moved from July to the fall to better align with the player's schedules and continued COVID-19 recovery efforts.

VIII. CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair did not have a report.

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business to discuss.

X. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business to discuss. However, Ms. Tammy Mast did want to acknowledge the many volunteers who help Parks with landscaping duties and special events, and a special thank you to the volunteers who were picking up trash at Lake Springfield Park this morning.

XI. CALENDAR

The next Park Board meeting will be Friday, April 9, 2021. The location and time will be determined.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Sidney Needem made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Ms. Heather Noggle. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 10:01 a.m.