

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE
SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY PARK BOARD
Friday, September 10, 2021
Springfield-Greene County Botanical Center, 2400 S. Scenic, Springfield, Missouri
Meeting also conducted via Microsoft Teams platform

I. ROLL CALL

Mr. Sidney Needem called the meeting to order at 8:32 am.

Present: Randy Blackwood, Leslie Carrier, Ann Compton, Curtis Jared, Sidney Needem, Heather Noggle, Royce Reding, Susie Turner

Absent: Mark McNay

Park Board Staff Present: Lisa Bakerink, Bob Belote, Tim Carpenter, Mike Crocker, Jenny Edwards, Jim Fisher, Amber Gossen, Zach Henry, Katie Keith, Ben Kellner, Mike Lamkin, Tim McCrea, Karen Mellinger, Anne-Mary McGrath, Jerry Mitchell, Miles Park, Heather Parker, Kim Reser, Jennifer Shepherd, Jeff Smith, Diana Tyndall, Avery Webb, Lana Woolsey

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Royce Reding made a motion to approve the August 13, 2021, Park Board Meeting minutes, including Ms. Leslie Carrier's correction to the minutes; seconded by Ms. Heather Noggle. Motion was passed unanimously. Mr. Randy Blackwood made a motion to approve the Closed Meeting Minutes; seconded by Ms. Susie Turner. Motion was passed unanimously.

III. INVITATION TO 25TH ANNUAL JAPANESE FALL FESTIVAL

Ms. Lisa Bakerink, Education and Volunteer Coordinator for Sister Cities, welcomed everyone to the Springfield-Greene County Botanical Center and provided a brief background on how the Springfield Sister Cities organization started in 1985. It was created to engage people with cultural experiences and blend friendships to transform a distant location through person-to-person relationships. We have participated in city official exchanges with Isesaki, Japan since 1986, and with Tlaquepaque, Mexico for the last 18 years. Sister Cities provides opportunities to connect people by organizing citizen trips, which typically includes two trips each year to Mexico and one trip every other year to Japan. Ms. Bakerink stated that Sister Cities organizes three main fund-raising events each year including the Kite and Pinata Festival in April, the Japanese Fall Festival in September, and the Taste of Tlaquepaque, a ticketed event scheduled for October 8, 2021. The proceeds of the events are dedicated for upkeep and maintenance of the Mizumoto Stroll Garden. Ms. Bakerink mentioned that when we have delegates in town from Isesaki or Tlaquepaque, we engage in a variety of community activities including visiting school children and conducting community performances. This year, we exchanged a variety of artwork pieces completed by school children in lieu of in-person activities. Ms. Bakerink thanked the Park Board for their support of the Sister Cities' mission, staff, office space, and the opportunity to collaborate with many groups such as Friends of the Garden.

Ms. Bakerink shared information about the scheduled performers for the Japanese Fall Festival this weekend. She appreciated the support and work behind the scenes from Park Operations, including Ben Kellner and his staff who work in the gardens, and the nearly 100 volunteers that work with the event. Ms. Bakerink stated that staff will be posted at interaction points to remind visitors to wear masks, use hand sanitizer, and keep a safe distance as much as possible. In conjunction with CoxHealth, we will offer a vaccination event at the pavilion just outside the Stroll Garden. Mr. Bob Belote, Director of Parks, stated that we could not offer these great community events and enhance the gardens without groups like Sister Cities, the work of volunteers, and the support of sponsorships and donors.

IV. COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Belote stated that as the Park Board has suggested, we will soon define the Board sub-committees and assignments to conduct a more in-depth review and discussion about a few topics such as reviewing park properties and the impact of the increases in minimum wage. We will include the minimum wage impact discussion at our next Fees and Charges workshop as part of the Budget preparation process, as well.

V. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Belote mentioned that we have begun coordinating activities for the 2022 Missouri Park and Recreation Association Annual Conference, which will be hosted in Springfield on March 1-4, 2022. Park professionals from across the state will be invited to attend. We hosted the MPRA Annual Conference in 2015, so we look forward to showcasing our park system and community once again, while following suggested protocols from the Springfield-Greene County Health Department. We have invited neighboring park agencies that include Nixa, Ozark, Joplin, and Willard to be a part of the planning Conference Committee.

Mr. Matt Coats, Superintendent of Special Facilities Mr. Coats stated that the new disc golf course at Lake Springfield has been well-received, and we will host our first tournament on September 11. The Watershed Commission is assisting with a native prairie project on five acres, funded by the Conservation Federation of Missouri, at Lake Springfield Park, and we will notice significant landscaping changes in this area in about one year. Rutledge-Wilson Farm Park staff are making final preparations for Harvest Fest, which will be held on weekends in October, and will include a pumpkin patch, corn maze, and a new virtual game through the Agents of Discovery. The Valley Water Mill Equestrian Center staff has conducted on average 112 lessons/week this past month. Christine Peoples, Timmons Hall Coordinator, hosted another session of the Brown Bag Lunch series, about the life of Alberta Ellis. Timmons Hall is also being utilized as the headquarters for the new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs organized by the City's new DEI Director, Taj Suleyman.

Ms. Anne-Mary McGrath, Superintendent of Recreation Ms. McGrath mentioned that staff hosted the Kid' Athalon for kids between the ages of five to 12 years old at Chesterfield Family Center on August 7. We had 61 participants who enjoyed competing in the three events of swimming, running, and bicycling. Mr. Kennon Ellison, Community Recreation Coordinator, was the lead on the event, and several staff helped to make it a fun and safe event for everyone. Ms. McGrath reported that the recently awarded Shine Grant program already has 122 kids

registered to participate in the program. The Accessible Recreation Division's Annual Float for Independence event had 12 participants, which included three participants who attended all 27 previous annual floats. We appreciate the partnership of Ozark Mountain Paddlers and additional support from the Outdoor Initiatives staff, as well, to make this a fun and safe event. The Accessible Recreation Division also held a "Christmas in July" event, which included a ceramics project for guests to complete. One of the participants won a Grand Champion blue ribbon from the Ozarks Empire Fair with the Santa Claus ceramic statue he completed as his ceramics project at the holiday party. Ms. McGrath stated that Turkey Trot registration is open for the virtual event, and the early bird deadline is November 19. Registered participants can run anytime on Thursday, November 25 through Sunday, November 28, and upload their results. Ozarks Ridge Runners has mapped out several certified courses, but there will not be any division winners or prizes. Turkey Trot packet pick up will be offered similar to last year on Wednesday, November 24, at Killian Sports Complex parking lot. Kara Remington, Parks Web Designer, submitted the winning t-shirt design, which Ms. McGrath showcased at the meeting.

Mr. Jerry Mitchell, Superintendent of Business Operations

Mr. Mitchell stated that although he does not have the final revenues and expenditures numbers for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2021, he can provide the total sales tax revenue and parks property mil tax revenue for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2021. The actual sales tax revenue was \$1,921,052 more compared to budgeted sales tax revenue for FY 2021. The actual Parks Property Mil Tax revenue was \$133,967 more compared to the budgeted mil tax revenue for FY 2021. Golf revenue remains strong and is up more than \$24,000 from the same period last year. The Dickerson Park Zoo also has increased revenue and visitor attendance compared to 2020, with an increase of \$40,190 in revenue and 2,363 more guests.

Mr. Mitchell reported that the Family Center revenues are up compared to last year, returning closer to revenue levels before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. We continue to feel the impact of the increased minimum-wage, which will increase to \$11.15/hour on January 1, 2022, along with large local employers such as CoxHealth and Mercy, who are increasing their starting wage to between \$15 and \$18 per hour.

Mr. Belote mentioned that receiving the CARES Act funding through Greene County, which reimbursed the Park Board for expenditures related to COVID-19 pandemic, has allowed us to continue building to our goal of having a reserve of 8-10 percent of our operating budget. Additionally, it will support our rebuild of the maintenance facility to support the Special Facilities Division. With the additional revenue in the Golf Enterprise Fund, we will pay off the Rivercut Golf Course bridge loan with the City one year early and begin to review possible golf improvement projects.

Mr. Jon Carney, Superintendent of General Services

Mr. Carney mentioned that the Park Operations Division also has had difficulty hiring part-time and seasonal staff. Normally, we would hire 50 seasonal employees, but this year, we only hired 10 employees to assist with field preparations, mowing and landscaping projects, and routine maintenance tasks. He stated that staff has placed signs in local businesses, advertised through social media, and attended several community job fair events. Mr. Carney mentioned that the pool season was completed after the annual Dog Swim at Fassnight Pool. Mr. Carney stated that he appreciated the ingenuity of Park Operations staff for creating a retro-fit part to repair a broken drinking fountain, in which

the part is no longer manufactured, at the Dan Kinney Family Center. He also mentioned that he appreciated the key roles that Angela Keith and Shelly Key play in operating the Botanical Center, including the front desk, gift shop, special events, and even helping out in the park, as needed. Mr. Randy Blackwood asked the cost to replace the drinking fountain, and Mr. Carney stated that it was approximately \$1,000.00. Ms. Leslie Carrier stated that she appreciated our ability to fix items in house such as the fountain, which demonstrates how we do what we do with limited resources. We have had to modify some of our operations due to the inability to hire additional staff. Mr. Curtis Jared asked if we have spoken with the director who oversees the grounds and maintenance program at OTC. Mr. Carney stated that both he and our Human Resources representative, Amie Davis, have both reached out and offered to do presentations and meet with students, but we have not received a confirmation of a meeting date.

Ms. Jenny Edwards, Public Information Administrator

Ms. Edwards mentioned that the latest Park Bench publication, featuring programs, activities, and events for September to December, was delivered and a copy was provided to Board members today. Ms. Edwards mentioned that she and her team have also worked to provide information about seasonal and temporary job openings including various staff speaking with groups about our job openings. Ms. Edwards stated that her division is working on adding the new disc golf course information on our website, which will also include a map and demo video of each hole produced by Black Ink, our partner on the project. Ms. Edwards stated that Diana Tyndall, Marketing/Sponsorship Coordinator, is organizing a sports equipment drive with one of our youth sports sponsors, Land-o-Frost. We have collection bins at our Family Centers, Cooper Tennis Complex, and Jordan Valley Ice Park until October 3. Staff is also working on updating the Cooper Tennis Complex logo, Turkey Trot paper and online registration forms, and they recently completed logos for the 2022 MPRA Conference.

Ms. Kim Reser, Assistant Director

Ms. Reser mentioned we are finalizing the details for the US BMX Gold Series racing event scheduled for October 1-3, 2021, in Springfield. We anticipate up to 800 riders in 2 ½ days. Ms. Reser stated that we have positions available for up to \$15/hour for before and after school counselors in the SPARC Division. Mr. Belote thanked Tim McCrea for his technical support each month at the Park Board meetings.

Mr. Jim Fisher, Assistant Director

Mr. Fisher stated that the high school girls golf season began on August 9, and all three of our golf courses and Oscar Blom will host practices and matches throughout the season. Mr. Fisher mentioned that our Park Rangers completed 160 incidents/contacts during August. At the October Park Board meeting, we will have Houseal Lavigne conduct a virtual presentation about our recently completed Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Mr. Fisher reported that we had our virtual hearing with the CAPRA Accreditation Committee, and we received notification that we will be fully accredited for another five years. We were requested to complete a five-year work plan, which is a new requirement. Ms. Ann Compton asked about the nature of calls that our Park Rangers receive the most. Mr. Tim Carpenter, Park Ranger Administrator, stated that it was calls regarding homeless individuals in parks. Also, they receive calls about cars being vandalized, stolen catalytic converters, and domestic disputes occurring on parks property. Mr. Belote stated that we may ask for a more in-depth report from the Park Rangers on the issues they encounter in parks and how our Rangers address them. Mr. Belote noted that the homeless issue is a community issue, but our Rangers do a great job managing this situation throughout the parks.

Mr. Miles Park, Assistant Director Mr. Park mentioned that we have been working closely with the Springfield-Greene County Health Department to offer events as safely as possible, including the upcoming 25th Anniversary Japanese Fall Festival. Mr. Park stated that with the difficulty in hiring seasonal staff, our fulltime employees divide their time between urgent matters and keeping up with daily maintenance tasks. Mr. Park reported that staff hosted five weddings and nine baby showers at the Botanical Center last month. Mr. Park mentioned the proposed Drummond Peninsula enhancement project will feature a human sundial and will be funded by a private donor. We are currently working with several local artists and Jeff Smith, Parks Senior Park Planner, to finalize the drawings for the project. A copy of the project rendering was included with Mr. Park's monthly report, which is tentatively scheduled to begin this fall.

Ms. Heather Noggle, Board member, asked for an update on the Lake Country Soccer field upgrades, and Mr. Park stated that they were working to determine a consultant to prepare detailed plans for the project. The scope of the work will depend upon the amount of funds raised. Ms. Susie Turner, Board member, mentioned that she appreciated the Parks staff who worked to maintain the greenway trails, which includes cleaning out extensive brush, clothing, trash, and removing graffiti to help make our trails safer.

Mr. Mike Crocker, Assistant Director Mr. Crocker mentioned that Zoo staff recently released a red tail hawk at Lake Springfield Park. Mr. Crocker stated that while he was there, he noticed that there were a lot of people playing the new disc golf course. Mr. Crocker indicated that the Zoo staff has also had difficulty hiring season employees especially in the concessions area. He also commented that once they do hire the seasonal staff, it is incredibly hard to keep them partly due to increased competitive wages at several organizations. The Brew at the Zoo event is scheduled for September 18. Ms. Noggle inquired about the release of Mr. Crocker's book. Mr. Crocker stated that he has accumulated quite a few stories in his 45-year career at Dickerson Park Zoo, so he decided to write some of them down, though not intending to publish a book. With the help of Joey Powell, Dickerson Park Zoo Marketing Director, and Diana Tyndall, he was able to find a publisher that will help prepare his stories in book form and make it available through Amazon and other online retailers. The publisher will only print books as needed, making it a much more affordable process. The final book should have approximately 120 pages that will also include pictures of animals to accompany the stories. At this time, Mr. Crocker is not sure on when it will be available or the cost, but he will provide more information when it is available.

Mr. Bob Belote, Director of Parks Mr. Belote mentioned that Mr. Jeff Cumley was out on a health-related matter, so he was not in attendance for today's meeting, but his report was provided to the Board. Mr. Belote also mentioned that Mr. Jeff Smith, Senior Park Planner, will be in attendance for today's Closed Session. Jennifer Shepherd, Administrative Assistant in Recreation, is attending the meeting today, as she has been assisting Karen Mellinger with the preparation of Board packets. He also thanked the City's Public Information Office crew for providing the video broadcast of the Board meeting each month.

Mr. Belote mentioned that next week the Springfield Chamber of Commerce will be facilitating a Community Leadership visit event, in which the participants will be staying in Springfield. There

are several activities planned such as a visit to Fellows Lake, yoga at Sequiota Park, and canoe/kayaking at Lake Springfield Park. We are glad that we can share some of our outdoor activities with those participating community leaders.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no Unfinished Business to discuss.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

There was no New Business to discuss.

IX. CALENDAR

The next regularly scheduled Park Board meeting is Friday, October 8, 2021, at 8:30 am. The meeting location will be determined.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Randy Blackwood made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Ms. Leslie Carrier. Motion passed unanimously. Ms. Susie Turner made a motion to begin the Closed Session following a five-minute break; seconded by Mr. Curtis Jared. Motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:51 am.