MINUTES
SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY PARK BOARD
PARKS BUDGET WORKSHOP
Lake Springfield Boathouse, 2312 Lake Springfield Park Road, Springfield, Missouri, and Virtually via Microsoft Teams Platform
Friday, February 11, 2022

I. ROLL CALL

Mr. Sidney Needem called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

Park Board Members Present: Randy Blackwood, Leslie Carrier, Ann Compton, Curtis Jared, Mark McNay, Sidney Needem, Heather Noggle, Royce Reding, Susie Turner

Park Board Members Absent: none

Park Staff Present: Bob Belote, Tim Carpenter, Mike Crocker, Jeff Cumley, Jenny Edwards, Jim Fisher, Tim McCrea, Karen Mellinger, Anne-Mary McGrath, Jerry Mitchell, Miles Park, Stacia Portis, Kim Reser, Lana Woolsey

II. REVIEW OF FY 2022-23 PROPOSED BUDGET DOCUMENT

Mr. Bob Belote, Director of Parks, stated that Park Board staff has worked to prepare the budget documents for the last several months. Mr. Belote reviewed several documents that were distributed to the Park Board members.

Budget Snapshot Mr. Belote stated that the Parks proposed FY 2022-23 Budget is $35,316,612, which is up 6.3 percent from the current budget year.

Proposed Revenues Mr. Belote explained how our Parks system generates revenue: 2001 and 2006 parks sales taxes (operations), property Mil tax (since 1913), fees and charges, and grants and donations. We have proposed an increase in Parks Sales Tax and Parks Property Mill Tax revenue. We will incur savings from the expiration of lease-purchase program payments and a decrease in the amount contributed to LAGERS, and we will increase our position vacancy rate. We are estimating an increase in revenue of $648,852 from fees and revenues across several divisions. We also anticipate new revenue due to a growth in patron participation in two areas, Dickerson Park Zoo and the Gardens Aglow special event.

Proposed Liabilities Mr. Belote reviewed the proposed liabilities for next year, which include: The City of Springfield's pay improvement plan that addresses the lowest paid one-third of full-time employees equating to 35 City employees, with 19 of those employees within Parks, and raising the starting pay to at least $15.00/hour in most cases. We are also proposing to fund the cost of the City of Springfield's merit pay increase (for Parks employees), including the FY 2021-22 mid-year pay increase for FY 2022-23, and contribution to the City of Springfield's self-insurance and worker's compensation plans.

We proposed to increase minimum wage and approved wage ranges for temporary and seasonal employees in Recreation, Special Facilities, Park Operations, and JVP and Archery Divisions. We have experienced great difficulty in hiring part-time employees in many areas, most noticeably Aquatics, so we propose increased staffing costs in several Aquatics positions, along with other key part-time positions, to be competitive in the local job market. Due to rising costs, we propose increases in operating supplies and service expenditures throughout our parks system divisions. Mr. Belote also reviewed with the Board the costs for several recommended new full-time positions including a shared environmental-focused position with the Missouri Department of Conservation, a Park Ranger, two additional staff for the Fieldhouse Sportscenter, and allocating part-time wages for two full-time laborer positions.

The Board discussed the difficulty of hiring aquatics staff and the impact the lack of staffing has had on the opening of all the pools. We have already been actively recruiting for full-time and part-time aquatics positions for this year's pool season. We will continue to be efficient with our pool scheduling, so that at least one pool is open every day of the week. Additionally, we have budgeted for an increase in start-up costs that will be involved when we open pools that have been closed for two years. Mr. Belote reviewed the staffing costs for recommended position reclassifications and a revised overtime plan. The new overtime plan will allow for payment of hours above 40 hours of accrual of compensatory time, which is more in line with several other City departments and will allow for more efficiency of completing winter projects.

Proposed Capital Outlay/Development Mr. Belote mentioned that we have participated in a lease-purchase payment plan for the last several years to address our most critical capital equipment needs, and we have again allocated funds to cover the annual payment for five years of specific items. He also discussed the need to fund other projects including the Silver Springs Park Master Plan.

Proposed FY 2022-23 Fees and Charges Mr. Belote stated that our Parks staff reviewed the over 700 current fees and charges, and they have proposed an increase of the fee or an increase of a fee within an approved range, to 230 fees and charges. The line items with a proposed change are highlighted in yellow within the Fees and Charges portion of the budget document. The Park Board Fees and Charges Committee met on January 27, 2022, and staff reviewed each of the proposed fee changes and answered any follow up questions from the Committee members. They plan on meeting again later this year to discuss additional long-term revenue strategies.

Golf Fund Mr. Belote stated that with the strong increase of golf rounds during the pandemic, we were able to pay off the Rivercut Golf Course bridge loan one year early. We project we will continue to have a significant increase in golf rounds, so we plan to review potential golf projects at each of the courses. We have not proposed an increase in golf green fees, but there will be an increase in the cart rental fee.

Parks Special Emphasis Mr. Belote reviewed the Park Board's FY 2022-23 Budget Proposal areas of special emphasis, which includes our ongoing need for a long-term Parks funding source that allows us to reinvest in our older parks and facilities. We continue to offer facilities, programs and services as safely as possible by pursuing community health and wellness initiatives. With significant financial contributions from the City of Springfield, several key projects will move forward in FY 2022-23 in support of key sports tourism initiatives. We will continue to support Ozark Greenways, our trail-building partner, with additional trail connection opportunities, including the Chadwick Flyer regional greenway trail from Springfield to Ozark. Over the past five years, we have received over $2,000,000 in support of neighborhood park reinvestment from Federal HUD funds, City of Springfield's Neighborhood Works Program funding, donors, and other key partners. We continue to emphasize park system safety, security and stewardship through our Park Ranger Division. We propose upgrades in salary to assist in our recruitment efforts in key employment areas, continue to grow our Golf Division and implement course improvements, and continue to collaborate with nearly 300 organizations in a variety of ways.

Mr. Belote reviewed the charts of the operating revenue sources and expenditures, noting that 64 percent of our expenditures are allocated for full-time staff, which is lower than the typical 70-85 percent allocation for staff in other park systems across the country.

Funded Priorities Mr. Belote reviewed the summary of Funded Priorities which includes mandatory or required projects, critical need projects, capital lease-purchase equipment, and personnel funding.

Unfunded Priorities Mr. Belote reviewed the summary of Unfunded Priorities. Mr. Belote stated that the Unfunded Priorities list was prioritized by categories at the request of past Board members to allow us flexibility when sharing potential unfunded projects with prospective individual donors or organizations based on their specific interests.

In an effort to build the reserve fund to a balance that is 8-10 percent of our operating budget, Mr. Curtis Jared, Board member, suggested that we might consider increasing the allocation to the reserve fund to 1 percent of the operating budget instead of $100,000 each year to help keep up with inflation. Mr. Randy Blackwood, Board member, stated that adding $500,000 to the reserve fund with the increase of parks sales tax revenue was a good use of this year's surplus funding.

Park Board members discussed the increase in the dollar amount of Unfunded Priorities from previous years. Mr. Belote explained that the Unfunded Priorities document is an internal document designed to keep track of the many projects that must be addressed as our infrastructure continues to age. Additionally, projects are removed when they have been completed or added as it becomes necessary. The Park Board did develop a 20-year plan to implement and address some of these projects, but we were only able to phase in 10 years of this plan, which means we have been operating for over 10 years without a capital equipment or long-term funding option. The 20-year plan also identified additional sites for school-park programs, which we have only been able to fund about half of the proposed sites.

Mr. Belote addressed the Board's comments and concerns about how we assess programs and activities to make sure they continue to be valuable to our community. Over the last six years, we have made major budget cuts, while working to achieve an equity balance of offerings throughout our park system. Mr. Belote also explained that we use our current operating budget as much as we can to address equipment repairs or projects with a safety concern.

Some of the Board members inquired about a review of the summary of unfunded priorities from previous years.

Debt Issuance Summary Mr. Belote reviewed the current debt issuance summary document with the Board. It was noted that that we will retire the Dan Kinney Family Center debt payment in FY 2026-27. The City of Springfield allocated $4.3 million dollars as part of the financing to purchase the Fieldhouse Sportscenter facility. The City of Springfield will make the debt service payments on the Fieldhouse until FY 2026-27, at which time, we will assume the payments on the facility.

Fieldhouse Sportscenter Review Mr. Belote stated that over 90 percent of the teams at the Fieldhouse have remained enrolled in leagues since we assumed operations at the facility. Our staff has worked to make the transition as easy as possible for the coaches and players, including keeping the league rates the same. However, we do plan to make some rate adjustments in January 2023, as noted in the fees and charges document, which will allow for additional revenue for other events and activities during the off-time of basketball, volleyball, and pickleball court use and league play. He explained that our goal is to be more than just a court-use rental facility and provide programs not previously offered in order to increase revenue and service during not-peak use times. Should we be successful in building additional gym space at the Fieldhouse, we will also be able to host larger regional-type tournaments. Ms. Anne-Mary McGrath, Superintendent of Recreation, reported that we currently have 330 basketball teams and 51 volleyball teams, totaling more than 3,800 athletes participating in leagues, with about 50 percent of the athletes from Springfield-Greene County area and 50 percent from outside of the immediate region. From October to January, we have had 68,000 people come to the facility. Mr. Jerry Mitchell, Superintendent of Business Operations, provided an overview of our estimated revenues and expenditures before we assumed operations of the facility, and then, an updated operational budget after the first four months that better reflects the actual revenue and costs at the facility, which we are still projecting over $17,000 to apply to the capital repair fund for the facility.

Proposed ARPA Funds to Benefit the Travel Industry and the Community Mr. Belote reviewed the CVB-sponsored Plan for ARPA projects that have been discussed with community leaders and city/county officials. He explained that should the City and County officials commit 10 percent of their available ARPA funding, along with financial support from the other organizations such as Ozark Empire Fairgrounds, Lake Country, Ozark Greenways, and the Park Board, our community could potentially receive up to a 50 percent funding match from the State of Missouri ARPA funds, which could potentially fund millions of dollars of travel and tourism projects that would benefit our community. He stated that one of our local universities is spearheading a capital campaign to raise money to enhance amenities at Meador Park baseball field, which would serve as their home field. A local high school baseball program is interested in making Meador Park their home field and plans to help with reinvesting in the facility, too.

The Park Board would need to commit to one million to $1.5 million over the next two to three fiscal years to participate in this ARPA proposed funding plan, which could be allocated from sales tax growth funding and perhaps some of our reserved funding. Many of the proposed projects would benefit the Park Board including the expansion of the Fieldhouse Sportscenter courts, Cooper Park/Lake Country Soccer Improvements, Killian Softball and Cooper Baseball Complex Improvements, and Greenway Trail projects with the Chadwick Flyer Trail project listed as a priority. With this potential funding, totaling nearly $30 million dollars, these projects could then be removed from our summary of unfunded projects list. The Board discussed in more detail the potential benefit and return on reinvestment the Park Board and other entities would receive from the collaboration of financial community support. Several Board members suggested that the proposed projects be prioritized in case not all of them can be funded and encouraged staff to build in contingency plans, which we do include when we calculate project budgets. After continued discussion, the Board was agreeable to moving forward with the ARPA proposed project funding and suggested that Parks staff allocate our funding portion by using a combination of the park sales tax growth funding, reserve funding, and operational budget funds, if this CVB proposal actually moves forward. Mr. Belote stated he would keep the Board informed of any updates regarding the proposal and proposed projects.

III. <u>ADJOURNMENT</u>

Mr. Randy Blackwood made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Mr. Curtis Jared. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:24 a.m.