

MINUTES
SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY PARK BOARD
Jordan Valley Ice Park, 635 E Trafficway, Springfield, Missouri, and
Virtually via Microsoft Teams Platform
Friday, March 11, 2022

I. ROLL CALL

Mr. Sidney Needem, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m.

Park Board Members Present: Randy Blackwood, Leslie Carrier, Ann Compton (via Teams), Curtis Jared (via Teams), Mark McNay, Sidney Needem, Heather Noggle, Royce Reding

Park Board Members Absent: Susie Turner

Park Staff Present: Bob Belote, Jon Carney, Tim Carpenter, Mike Crocker, Jeff Cumley, Jenny Edwards, Jim Fisher, Tim McCrea, Karen Mellinger, Anne-Mary McGrath, Jerry Mitchell, Miles Park, Heather Parker, Kim Reser, Jennifer Shepherd, Lori Vandersnick, Lana Woolsey, PARK RANGERS

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Randy Blackwood made a motion to approve the February 11, 2022, Park Board minutes; seconded by Mark McNay. Motion passed unanimously. Ms. Leslie Carrier made a motion to approve the Budget Workshop minutes; seconded by Mr. Royce Reding. Motion passed unanimously.

III. GARDENS AGLOW EVENT RECAP

Ms. Heather Parker, Volunteer and Education Coordinator at the Botanical Center, reported that a record-number 27,559 people visited the Gardens Aglow event. She thanked the more than 100 volunteers, who performed a variety of tasks including training other volunteers, turning on lights, serving as cashiers or fast pass line checkers, counting guests, and other duties. We had over 150,000 lights displayed throughout the Mizumoto Stroll Garden. Local musicians provided a variety of music, while guests enjoyed hot chocolate and the ambiance of the firepits. This year's event was sponsored by Rosalie Wooten and Hogan Title, and Ms. Parker plans to work with some other local organizations to perhaps sponsor the design and construction of other lighted display areas. Ms. Parker showed a short video captured by 417 Drone Imaging to showcase the park's display. Ms. Parker also shared images of ideas for future added elements to the Gardens Aglow event, and thanked our Park Operations staff for their assistance with the event.

IV. PARK LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSOCIATION'S PLATINUM AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Mr. Tim Carpenter, Park Ranger Administrator, stated that our Park Ranger Division was recently awarded the prestigious Platinum Award of Excellence from the Park Law Enforcement Association, which is given to an agency that "...demonstrates a commitment to excellence in

park law enforcement, safety and education, and has demonstrated a commitment to sustainability, crime reduction, interagency collaboration and accountability to the taxpayer in reducing duplicative services.”, (ParkRanger.com/Awards-and-Scholarships.). Mr. Carpenter and David Bright, Park Ranger, attended the annual PLEA conference and awards ceremony representing our Ranger Division. Mr. Carpenter stated that we have seven Rangers, who work two shifts, 365 days/year. Last year, we documented 1604 incidents, including 35 warrants and 13 drug arrests. Mr. Carpenter and Tim McCrea, Business System Analyst, reviewed and updated 34 alarm systems, in an effort to save money from the rising cost of the operation of landlines. By converting many of the 92 landlines to cellular or internet service, we saved \$170,000 per year. Mr. Carpenter introduced the other Park Rangers at the meeting present today. He mentioned that Park Rangers try their best to obtain voluntary compliance through interaction and education, so that everyone can enjoy their visit to our parks and facilities.

V. 2022 MISSOURI PARK AND RECREATION ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE REVIEW

Mr. Belote stated that we hosted the 2022 Missouri Park and Recreation Association Conference in Springfield March 1-4. He shared the following facts with the Board:

*Over 400 registered delegates *Sold out exhibit hall with 120 booths *Collected a near-record amount of sponsorship support *Offered 80 educational programs over eight emphasis areas *An award-winning key-note speaker *Four onsite tours *185 CEU cards *43 student room hosts *133 silent auction items with a record-setting total of \$12,794 raised for MPRA *Presented 21 awards

Mr. Belote stated that we had one current employee and two retirees receive awards during the conference. Richard Dutcher, who recently retired after 30 years of service in our Turf Management Division of Park Operations, received a meritorious retirement award during the General Session Luncheon. During the Awards Ceremony, we surprised and recognized Renee Evans, with the MPRA Support Staff Award. Renee, who works with revenue, handles payroll, trains cashiers throughout the park system, and manages the Springfield Lasers ticket window, has worked for the City for more than 30 years, with 16 of those years in Parks. We also had the opportunity to recognize and honor Jodie Adams, former Parks Director and 34-year employee, as she was inducted into the Missouri Recreation and Parks Hall of Fame. Two Park Board members attended portions of the conference and stated that they found the delegates were pleased with the diversity of educational sessions offered and the overall conference itself.

VI. REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF FY 2022-23 PARK BUDGET

Mr. Belote stated that we worked to achieve the one percent contribution to our Parks Reserve Fund as requested by the Park Board, which required staff to add \$254,051 to the \$100,000 we had already recommended for the FY 2022-23 budget. We were able to do so by increasing our departmental position vacancy rate, reducing departmental operating expenses, and increasing our anticipated Parks Sales Tax rate slightly (one half percent). Mr. Mark McNay, Board member, commended Parks Administration for their receptiveness to the Board’s comments and suggestions. Mr. Belote stated his appreciation for the Board’s direction and agreed that it was a good suggestion as we continue to achieve a Parks Reserve Fund that ultimately represents 8-10 percent of our operating budget.

Mr. Belote reviewed a three-year comparison of Unfunded Priorities, which shows the project items and initiatives that were added to the list in FY 2020-21, FY 2021-22, and FY 2022-23. We itemized the projects with any cost increases or decreases, along with those new items that were added. There were some projects that have been completed and removed from the list, as well. Mr. Belote mentioned that being a part of the Forward SGF Comprehensive Plan Process and developing a new Parks Master Plan played significant roles in identifying some of the newer prioritized items over the last one to two years.

Mr. Belote stated that we also provided our FY 2022-23 list with the most critical or highest priority items highlighted. Identifying these projects allows us flexibility when sharing potential unfunded projects with prospective individual donors or organizations based on their specific interests or grant funding opportunities.

Mr. Belote mentioned as we discussed at the Budget Workshop, we continue to work with the Convention and Visitor Bureau's sponsored Plan for ARPA projects that support sports tourism. Several 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 strong local support, this collaborative package of projects seeks to obtain state level funding, which could mean nearly \$30 million dollars of funding for Parks projects, and consequently, those projects could potentially be removed from our summary of unfunded projects list. The collaboration of local funding with potential state funding will bring facility improvements to our local families, but it will also generate significant tourism dollars for our community.

Mr. Belote stated that we recommend Board approval of the revised proposed Parks FY 2022-23 Budget today, so it can continue to move forward to the City of Springfield for review and adoption. Mr. Curtis Jared, Board member, suggested that the Board discuss the possibility of updating the Cash Reserve Policy, to include one percent of the operating budget contribution to the reserve fund each fiscal year to build the Reserve Fund. Mr. Jared also recommended that the one percent contribution not be considered for future budget cut decisions without Board approval. Mr. Belote indicated that we have experienced extreme budget cuts over the last few years but reducing our contribution to the reserve fund was never a considered option. If so, it would require Board approval. Mr. Belote indicated that we will work to provide a draft policy making this one percent annual budgetary commitment so that the Park Board can review and consider for adoption. Mr. Jared indicated his support of the budget and appreciates the opportunity to discuss amending the Cash Reserve Policy in the future. Mr. Randy Blackwood made a motion to approve the revised proposed Parks FY 2022-23 Budget; seconded by Ms. Leslie Carrier. The motion was approved unanimously.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORT

There was no Committee Reports to discuss.

VIII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mike Crocker, Assistant Director Mr. Crocker stated that staff is gearing up for spring field trips and continued strong facility attendance. Zoo supervisors are having more success hiring part-time staff for the season. Mr. Crocker mentioned that he is conducting book signing events and doing local interviews promoting his recent book featuring a collection of stories during his 45-year career at Dickerson Park Zoo.

Matt Coats, Superintendent of Special Facilities Mr. Coats reported that staff parked over 600 cars of interested citizens who gathered within Lake Springfield Park for the recent event in which City Utilities imploded the smokestacks. We welcomed twin dorper sheep, Bader and Molina, at Rutledge-Wilson Farm Park. At Timmons Hall, Mr. Akbar Cook's recent presentation was well attended, including organized "watch parties" where citizens were streaming the event. We are still averaging 75 horse riding lessons at Valley Water Mill Equestrian Center. The Special Facilities Maintenance staff continue to work on the Lake Springfield Boathouse landscaping project.

Jeff Cumley, Superintendent of Jordan Valley Park and CSDP Program Mr. Cumley reported that the Learn to Skate program participant numbers in the current session have doubled, which is likely due to the recent Winter Olympic Games. The Little Blues hockey program will be coming back to the Ice Park in the fall. On February 26, the Springfield Police Department vs Springfield Fire Department ice hockey game was sold out, raising \$7,300 for the Greene County 100 Club, which provides immediate financial support to a surviving spouse of a law enforcement officer killed in the line of duty.

Jon Carney, Superintendent of General Services Mr. Carney stated February was a critical month as crews begin preparing for activities and crowds in our sport complexes. Mr. Carney stated he appreciated the opportunity to recognize Mr. Richard Dutcher, a recent Parks retiree, at the MPRA conference last week, with his wife and family present.

Jenny Edwards, Public Information Administrator Ms. Edwards stated that our Communications Team designed the Gardens Aglow logo and flyer, and it was gratifying to see their artwork logo as a lighted display within the park. The City Utilities implosion event had over 19,000 views from our website pages. Ms. Edwards introduced Mr. Garrison Pendergrass, Marketing and Sponsorship Coordinator, who previously worked in Sales and Marketing for the Springfield Cardinals. Garrison replaces Diana Tyndall who is pursuing new opportunities.

Jerry Mitchell, Superintendent of Business Operations Mr. Mitchell stated that we budget for rising fuel costs, so at present we feel comfortable with our fuel consumption costs. We review our budget expenditures often throughout the year to make adjustments as needed. We experienced a slight sales tax revenue decrease for the first time since July 2020, but the March report was more than anticipated compared to last year. We had 3,926 more rounds of golf played in February, compared to the same time last year. Zoo attendance is also up by more than 5,400 visitors compared to last February. Revenue for the Jordan Valley Park and Archery Division also increased primarily because the Missouri State Ice Bears returned to a normal schedule with full capacity crowds.

Anne-Mary McGrath, Superintendent of Recreation Mr. Belote thanked Ms. McGrath and Mr. Carney for their work in coordinating the MPRA Conference educational sessions. Ms. McGrath stated that she appreciated several staff making presentations including Ms. Lana Woolsey, Parks Assistant City Attorney, who provided several law-oriented sessions applicable to departments of all sizes. Ms. McGrath briefly discussed several highlights in her division including SPARC enrollment numbers, which continue to rise and are closer to pre-Covid numbers. The Aquatics Division just hired two new full-time staff members, and we are participating in several hiring opportunities and career fairs to seek out additional part-time staff for the summer season. Ms. McGrath stated this week we will host the National Homeschool Basketball Championships with over 300 teams. We are excited to announce that we plan to have Turkey Trot in person for 2022, along with a virtual option, and planning has already begun for the popular Thanksgiving morning walk/run event.

Kim Reser, Assistant Director Ms. Reser mentioned that Ozark Pickleball Club and the Park Board continue to raise funds to support the maintenance and future expansion of the Meador Tennis/Pickleball Complex. To date the group has raised over \$25,000. The Queen City Open pickleball tournament will be held June 17-19 at Cooper Tennis Complex.

Miles Park, Assistant Director Mr. Park reported that the construction of the Kachel fountain at the Botanical Gardens continues to go well. Mr. Jeff Smith, Parks Senior Planner, continues to work on the human sundial project with the artist, Christine Schilling. We staffed a booth at the annual Lawn and Garden Show and showcased a lot of garden-related merchandise from the Botanical Center Gift Shop and shared information about the park.

Jim Fisher, Assistant Director Mr. Fisher stated that on March 24, Horton Smith Golf Course will celebrate being open for 60 years, with contests and specials, including \$19.62 green fees.

Mr. Bob Belote, Director of Parks Mr. Belote mentioned that we have copies of the Community Focus Report and the Watershed Committee's Annual Report for anyone who would like a copy. Mr. Belote state that we always enjoy hosting MSHSAA basketball championships, as it is great for area schools to get to compete locally, but also because of the significant visitor spending dollars the tournament brings to the community. Springfield hopes to be awarded the five-year contract again as the next bid proposal process takes place soon.

Bass Pro Shops is celebrating its 50-year anniversary with a World Fishing Fair on March 30-April 3. Jeff Cumley is serving on a City committee with Bass Pro to stay informed of parking locations and any impact the expected 500,000 people will have on the community's infrastructure (and our parks).

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.

XII. CALENDAR

The next Park Board meeting is scheduled for April 8, 2022, at 8:30 am. The meeting location will be determined.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Mark McNay made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Ms. Heather Noggle. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 10:14 am.