

**MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE
SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY PARK BOARD
Friday, May 8, 2020
Via Tele-conference Call**

I. ROLL CALL

Ms. Carolyn Gerdes, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

Members Present (on call): Scott Bailes, Randy Blackwood, Mike Chiles, Carolyn Gerdes, Cynthia Lipscomb, Tammy Mast, Sidney Needem, Michele Risdal-Barnes

Members Absent: none

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

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Sidney Needem made a motion to approve the April 10, 2020, Park Board Minutes; seconded by Ms. Michele Risdal-Barnes. Motion was approved unanimously.

III. PARKS PICK-ME-UP ON-LINE PROMOTION

Mr. Bob Belote, Director of Parks, stated that the Parks Pick-Me-Up social media campaign started as a way to focus that parks were still open, provide activities that our community could do during the stay-home orders, and lift community spirits a little bit. Every day since March 26, our Communications Division featured videos or photos about a different park or activity, including fitness demonstrations, art projects, quizzes, tours, and Board member testimonials about their favorite parks. Several of our partner organizations were featured such as Sister Cities and Friends of the Garden. We received a lot of positive comments regarding the campaign.

IV. PARKS COVID-19 UPDATE

Mr. Belote reviewed the most recent Parks news release dated May 1, which stated we would begin reopening facilities on May 4 following the City and County updated civil emergency order. Mr. Belote revealed that our three family centers, Jordan Valley Ice Park, Cooper Tennis Complex, and the Skate Park would reopen with modified hours and follow social-distancing protocols. Rutledge-Wilson Farm Park Gift Shop will reopen allowing fishing pole rentals and catch-and-release fishing to resume. The animal barns are also open, but the playground and classroom remained closed. Canoe, kayak, and paddleboard rentals at Lake Springfield Boathouse will resume on Monday, May 11. The meeting room and Northwoods Pavilion remains closed. Valley Water Mill Equestrian Center will reopen on Monday, May 11 to conduct private riding lessons. Dickerson Park Zoo remains closed, but we are working through to

reopen as soon as we can. Mr. Belote stated that playgrounds, pavilions, and restrooms remain closed as we have been unable to hire seasonal staff, due to the City's hiring freeze, to help maintain enhanced cleaning protocols. Due to City and County civil emergency orders, which prohibit contact sports through May 31, the following activities are postponed including sports leagues, ballfields, Lake Country Soccer, and O'Reilly-Tefft Gym remain closed for games and practices for softball, baseball, sluggers, T-ball, soccer, volleyball, basketball, football, ice hockey, and Miracle League. Outdoor swimming pools will not open as planned on Memorial Day weekend in part due to the interruption of seasonal hiring and training of lifeguards. Our current aquatics staff has been unable to train in the water until yesterday, but we hope to open indoor pools sometime around the Memorial Day holiday weekend. Mr. Belote commented that City buildings are still not currently open to the public.

V. MDC GRANT APPROVAL FOR LAKE SPRINGFIELD PARK

Mr. Belote stated that the Park Board is being offered another opportunity to partner with the Missouri Department of Conservation for the removal of non-native invasive plant species throughout Lake Springfield Park. This is the third year in a row that we have received the grant. As a result of this \$12,000 project, we will remove the plants as designated on the park map, totaling 10 acres, which was provided to the Board, and install signage provided by MDC to identify the project and MDC's support. Mr. Randy Blackwood made a motion to accept the MDC grant in the amount of \$12,000.00; seconded by Ms. Michele Risdal-Barnes. Motion passed unanimously.

VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

There were no Committee Reports to discuss.

VII. DIRECTOR'S REPORTS

Ms. Anne-Mary McGrath, Superintendent of Recreation Ms. McGrath stated that despite facility closures and event cancellations, the Recreation Division's spirit, creativity, and sense of humor flourished. Staff became efficient in different ways to communicate both internally and externally through Zoom calls, conference calls, and email blasts to our patrons. We answered patron calls while facilities were closed to make sure they received current information, while also communicating information through social media. Facility staff has been deep cleaning equipment, while maintenance staff has been completing projects that are difficult to do when the facility is opened to the public. Our Accessible Recreation staff conducted video chats with their patrons, while our Northview staff called our senior patrons for a wellness check, including singing Happy Birthday to homebound seniors to help celebrate their special day. We provided curbside racquet stringing at Cooper Tennis Complex. School-Park has been offering creative activity challenges to their SPARC participants via Zoom and emails. With the reopening of several facilities, Park Operations staff has added "sneeze guards" at facility Front Desk counters and provided additional personal protection equipment, along with recommended cleaning supplies for enhanced protocols. Ms. McGrath mentioned that several large community events have rescheduled such as Artsfest, which will be held in conjunction with Cider Days in September. The Price Cutter Charity Championship is still planning to hold their tournament later this summer.

Mr. Jon Carney, Superintendent of General Services Mr. Carney stated that the golf operation is heavily supported with seasonal employees, which we have been unable to hire yet, but the full-time staff and golf pros are doing their best to be efficient, while still providing quality customer service. We recently received a MDC Trim Grant to conduct a tree inventory including the kind of tree and specific species. The inventory list of 25,000 trees is available to the public on our website. By conducting this inventory, research indicates that the trees bring a value of \$600,000 to our community.

Ms. Jenny Fillmer Edwards, Public Information Administrator Ms. Edwards stated that she was proud of her team as they have each learned new and challenging ways to function through technology including editing and uploading video content with closed captioning. She appreciates the participation and support of everyone who recorded a Parks Pick-Me-Up video. Ms. Edwards believes that maintaining the parks message through daily positive social media posts has been beneficial to the community.

Ms. Kim Reser, Assistant Director Ms. Reser stated that many of us have had to learn new ways to communicate through technology. She appreciates the guidance that Tim McCrea, Business Systems Analyst, has provided by creating training videos, and being patient and assisting with equipment and technology set-ups for Management Team and Park Board meetings. Ms. Reser stated she appreciated our staff and the Board's flexibility as we anticipate and adjust accordingly to meet the CDC and Springfield-Greene County Health Department guidelines and protocols.

Mr. Matt Coats, Superintendent of Special Facilities Mr. Coats mentioned that there are several new baby animals to visit at Rutledge-Wilson Farm Park including a new calf and baby goat twins. Mr. Coats reported that for the first time, all 60 urban Community Garden plots are rented. With the support of Special Facilities staff, Hillbilly Smokers handed out food three Friday afternoons to more than 1,500 people at Rutledge-Wilson Farm Park. Timmons Hall Coordinator, Christine Peoples, is planning a special anniversary celebration on June 29. T-shirts with the new facility logo will be available for sale with the proceeds benefiting Timmons Hall.

Mr. Jerry Mitchell, Superintendent of Business Operations Mr. Mitchell reported that May sales tax is up compared to this same time last year, but we are expecting to see a 20 percent or more reduction for the remaining months of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020. Mr. Mitchell stated that we are continuing to monitor our current year budget as a result of expected decreases in revenue due to the temporary closure of many of our facilities, programming and events. We have conducted department-wide budget saving measures, which include not hiring for vacant positions and seasonal employees and significant reductions to divisional budgets. Business Operations staff continues to track all expenses related to COVID-19.

Mr. Mike Crocker, Assistant Director Mr. Crocker stated that we will reopen the Zoo for FOZ members first towards the end of the month, so we can monitor crowds and determine which facilities can reopen and which services can be offered. During the Zoo's closure, staff has completed a variety of maintenance projects that are nearly impossible to do when the Zoo is open such as replace sidewalks and make repairs on the Zoo entrance structure. Mr. Crocker

mentioned that he is working to maintain a summer internship program, although some of the guidelines have changed.

Mr. Miles Park, Assistant Director Mr. Park mentioned that approximately 60 percent of the Fulbright Springs Trail Phase 4 has been completed, but persistent rain has prevented paving work to continue. Renovation work continues to progress at the Springfield Botanical Gardens Rose Garden. The gazebo installation and the remaining concrete walks should be completed soon. This project is mostly funded by a generous donation from Ms. Rosalie Wooten. Progress continues on the construction of a new shelter near hole #3 at Horton Smith Golf Course, thanks to long-time Horton Smith golfer, Allyn Matthews. We are currently in the process of seeking architectural and engineering designs for a new water fountain to be constructed at Nathanael Greene/Close Memorial Park, which is being donated on behalf of the estate of Thomas J. Kachel. Mr. Park mentioned that the tree inventory we conducted as a result of the MDC Trim Grant will be a great tool to manage our tree assets, including tracking service performed on trees and placement of memorial trees.

Mr. Jim Fisher, Assistant Director Mr. Fisher mentioned that the Golf Division has done really well at the start of this year's season. Although they have had to cancel some of the scheduled tournaments, several organizers are postponing the tournaments until this fall. The recent hailstorm caused some damage to the greens and the roof of the Rivercut Clubhouse. Mr. Paul Byer, Park Ranger, is retiring after seven years with the Park Board, and a law enforcement career that extends more than 45 years. The CAPRA reaccreditation process has started, and the rough draft will be due this summer. We received notification that we can utilize the services of the City Planning Department's vendor to conduct our Parks Master Plan.

Mr. Bob Belote, Director of Parks Mr. Belote stated he appreciated the work Tim Carpenter, Park Ranger Administrator, and the Park Rangers have performed lately helping to keep patrons safe and remind them to practice social distancing while visiting our parks. He also stated he appreciated Ms. Lana Woolsey, Parks Assistant City Attorney, for her work in completing several contracts. Mr. Belote stated that he will present our modified FY 2020-2021 budget proposal at the City Council Luncheon on May 12. We have received good support from the City as we try to balance this year's and next year's budget. However, the City is recommending that staff will not receive any merit increases or cost of living adjustment raises this year. We are also considering a similar plan for our part-time and seasonal employees, but we are concerned that we will not remain a competitive employer if we do not implement the new minimum wage rates.

The World TeamTennis League is still planning for a 2020 season, although currently the League is discussing the possibility that all matches will be played at one host site. The WTT season will likely be the first tennis event after the COVID-19 pandemic, so it may increase visibility for WTT and each of its nine franchises. The WTT league will facilitate in running the matches at whichever venue is selected to host the season.

VIII. CHAIR'S REPORT

Ms. Carolyn Gerdes, Chair, stated that there has been a lot of good work completed during a time when facilities were closed and programs, activities, and events were cancelled. She

stated that she hopes our citizens do not take Parks for granted, and perhaps the public's awareness of parks has been raised since our parks and trails did remain open during the pandemic. Ms. Gerdes stated she appreciated all the creative and dedicated efforts of staff under these difficult conditions.

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business to discuss.

X. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Randy Blackwood, Board member, stated that he was amazed how our staff created and offered activities that benefited our community throughout the pandemic. He especially appreciated staff reaching out to our senior population through wellness check phone calls since many members of this population were greatly limited to visitors.

XI. CALENDAR

The next regularly scheduled Park Board meeting is scheduled for Friday, June 12, 2020. At this time, we are hopeful that the meeting can be held at a Park Board facility.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Randy Blackwood made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Ms. Michele Risdal-Barnes. Motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned to Closed Session at 9:59 a.m.