

MINUTES
SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY PARK BOARD
Lake Springfield Boathouse, 2312 Lake Springfield Park Road, Springfield, Missouri, and
Virtually via Microsoft Teams Platform
Friday, May 13, 2022

I. ROLL CALL

Mr. Sidney Needem, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

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

Park Board Members Absent: Leslie Carrier

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

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Randy Blackwood made a motion to approve the April 8, 2022, Park Board minutes; seconded by Ms. Susie Turner. Motion passed unanimously. Mr. Mark McNay made a motion to approve the April 8, 2022, Closed Session minutes; seconded by Ms. Heather Noggle. Motion passed unanimously.

III. SCHOOL-PARK SECTION UPDATE

Ms. Diana Ellison, School-Park Administrator, explained the many changes and transitions the SPARC staff endured as they navigated through the pandemic. To meet the health protocols and precautions for their staff, children in programs, and their families, the staff reduced the sizes of groups, moved locations, kept children with the same counselors, and continued to shift and adapt to accommodate the various childcare needs of our community. Diana and her staff focused more on what they could do safely in their programs instead of what they could not do including creating activity kits that participants in our virtual clubs could pick up and complete at home. Ms. Ellison stated that during the pandemic, the Division was operating with only 60 percent of a full-time staff, but now, are approaching being nearly 85 percent fully staffed.

The pandemic forced many students to have to learn differently through virtual and home-school environments. Our SPARC program received funding through Springfield Public Schools with the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) to assist with the learning loss recovery, which we offer through educational afterschool programming. Our SPARC staff received Positive Behavior Model (PBIS) training, funded by the Musgrave Foundation, and it was implemented into all SPARC Programs. The SPARC staff reported a 45 percent decrease in challenging behaviors at the Before and After school sites after implementing the PBIS training.

Our SPARC program also received ESSER Funding through the SHINE partnership with Springfield Public Schools, which serves to bridge the learning gap and provide funding for academic coordinators at Before and After school sites. We awarded 171 scholarships to qualifying youth and funded eight additional sites with eight academic coordinators. The Springfield Downtown Rotary Club also provided \$16,000, which helped to award an additional 201 scholarships. Ms. Ellison also stated that her SPARC staff is currently completing additional mental health training provided by Burrell Behavioral Health to learn how to better identify and respond to our community's mental health needs.

IV. LAKE SPRINGFIELD MASTER PLAN PROCESS

Mr. Jeff Smith, Senior Park Planner, provided a brief history on Lake Springfield and the immediate area. City Utilities originally designed Lake Springfield in 1957 to support the James River Power Station. By damming the James River, the lake was created to serve the power station's cooling needs. The Missouri Department of Conservation partnered with CU in the early 1990's to construct a boat ramp, fishing dock and several fishing platforms. Due to a long-term lease agreement between City Utilities and the Park Board, Lake Springfield Park and Boathouse are part of the Springfield-Greene County Park System and access to water-based activities predominately takes place from the park. The James River Power Station was officially decommissioned on January 28, 2021, after more than 63 years of serving the community. The implosion of the power station's four flue-exhaust stacks took place on February 19, 2022.

Mr. Smith stated that the Lake Springfield Master Plan project will be funded by a one-time \$800,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) and \$200,000 from the Hatch Foundation, City Utilities of Springfield, and the City of Springfield's Environmental Services Department. The EDA grant was made possible by the American Rescue Plan and EDA's \$300 million Coal Communities Commitment. This project was the first competitive American Rescue Plan grant to be awarded in the region.

The master plan and vision will include hydrological studies of Lake Springfield and the James River. Additionally, a planning study with recommendations regarding the recreational, economic and transportation opportunities in the study area will be included to guide future project implementation and must be completed by the end of the grant period. The project will build upon the regional planning efforts led by the Southwest Missouri Council of Governments. EDA funds, in cooperation with the City of Springfield Departments of Economic Vitality, Environmental Services, Parks, City Utilities, and the Hatch Foundation, will coordinate the public and private sectors to create an economic development plan to strengthen the regional economy, support private capital investment, and create jobs.

Mr. Smith stated that the Lake Springfield Master Plan Committee is planning a community visioning process for the future of Lake Springfield, which will include public engagement events, a presentation tour, and a city-wide survey. The process will outline what the community would like to see for the Lake Springfield area, and residents, neighbors, business owners, developers, schools, parks, non-profit agencies, and others are welcome to collectively to take part in identifying opportunities and concerns. The community's input process will help the Committee identify a list of specific goals for the project to achieve. All project planning efforts must be completed by August of 2024.

V. COMMITTEE REPORT

a. Park Development/Property Assessment Committee Mr. Belote stated that the Park Development/Property Assessment Committee met on May 2, 2022, which included Board Members Susie Turner, Mark McNay, Curtis Jared, and Park Board Chair, Sidney Needem, along with Park Board staff Bob Belote, Jim Fisher, Mike Crocker, Miles Park, Kim Reser, Lana Woolsey, and Jeff Smith. The Committee discussed possible topics to review such as grants and deed restrictions of park space and current/future property issues. All concurred that it was a good initial meeting, and the Committee looks to meet again sometime this summer.

VI. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. Anne-Mary McGrath, Superintendent of Recreation Ms. McGrath stated that after a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, Miracle League is starting the spring season with 187 participants. With the Rotary Grant of \$17,500, improvements such as a new shade structure, permanent sound system, dugout lights, and fresh paint for the field lines/batter box/bases and home plate were completed at the Miracle League field. Ms. McGrath reported that over 1,000 kids attended the Easter at the Farm event that included an egg hunt, take home activity, and a bag of candy that was exchanged for the collected eggs. Staff also hosted a floating Easter Egg Hunt at the Chesterfield Family Center pool with 88 participants. Our Community Sports Division will be hosting several major tournaments, including the MSHSAA Softball Championships and Boys Tennis Championships, in the next month. We will also host the Southwest Missouri Senior Games and pools will open Memorial Day weekend.

Mr. Jeff Cumley, Superintendent of Jordan Valley Park and CSDP Mr. Cumley stated that we only have one sheet of ice during the summer season to conserve on utilities, and we also use the dry floor for CSDP summer camps and training. Mr. Cumley mentioned that Rotary International will be installing several more "Peace Poles" throughout our park system like the one in K-Park, which will be dedicated in June. The 20th Snowfest event in Jordan Valley Park is scheduled from 12:00 pm to 4:00 pm on Saturday, June 18.

Mr. Jerry Mitchell, Superintendent of Business Operations Mr. Mitchell stated that sales tax revenue was up again in April, and it has exceeded last year's monthly total, as well. Total expenditures are up over the prior year as budgeted and expected mainly because we are operating at or very close to pre-pandemic levels, which includes an increase in salaries for full-time employees and an increase in minimum wage for part-time employees. Zoo revenue and attendance numbers continue to be higher than this time last year. Golf Fund revenue and rounds also continue to be higher compared to last year. Business Operations staff conduct internal reviews of receipts and procedures at over 60 locations, and recently visited several of them, in which no significant issues were noted.

Mr. Matt Coats, Superintendent of Special Facilities Mr. Coats mentioned that Rutledge-Wilson Farm Park has two new calves named Clementine and Ferdinand. Nearly 3,300 kids have signed up for field trips this spring at the Farm Park. The Lake Springfield Boathouse staff hosted 23 events in May. A second-grade class from Mark Twain Elementary recently visited Valley Water Mill Equestrian Center to read to the horses as part of the Horse Tales

Literacy Program. Mr. Coats mentioned that the new horses that recently joined the Equestrian Center team are doing very well as we continue to train them for our programs.

Mr. Jon Carney, Superintendent of General Services Mr. Carney mentioned that with the above average amount of rainfall, keeping up with the grass mowing has been a challenge. Our staff who maintain the greenway trails have also been busy removing debris from the trails due to heavy rainfall. The new video scoreboard was installed at Killian in time for the Missouri Valley Conference Softball Championship, and it is a very nice addition to the complex.

Ms. Jenny Edwards, Public Information Administrator Ms. Edwards stated that our new Marketing and Sponsorship Coordinator, Garrison Pendergrass, recently sold the last court sponsorship at the Fieldhouse and is busy renewing and pursuing other sponsorships. Ms. Edwards mentioned that Kara Remington, Web Designer, is updating our photo data base for social media and website publications by attending several park events. Our outdoor pools will open on Memorial Day weekend, but we will continue to advertise for more lifeguards. We will have all the pools open, as long as appropriate staffing is available.

Ms. Kim Reser, Assistant Director Ms. Reser mentioned that she continues to work with the partnering group, Ozark Pickleball Club, to raise funds to support the maintenance and future expansion of the Meador Tennis/Pickleball Complex. The Queen City Open Pickleball Tournament is scheduled for June 17-19 and 170 players have already registered.

Mr. Miles Park, Assistant Director The Butterfly Festival is scheduled at Nathanael Greene/Close Memorial Park on June 18. The Kachel Fountain is nearly complete except for landscaping, which will be done by Park staff, and fountain operational training with the contractor will begin soon. A new project at the entrance of the Rose Garden, on behalf of former Park Board Chair, Carolyn Gerdes, is also imminent. The sundial project has been delayed due to the weather and artist availability. Mr. Belote suggested a walking tour through the gardens with the Board to view the new projects in Nathanael-Greene/Close Memorial Park.

Mr. Jim Fisher, Assistant Director Mr. Fisher stated that seven more contract employees are in the process of being converted to full-time employees. After the recent heavy rains, Rivercut Golf Course was closed for a few days until the water receded and the course could be cleaned of debris. Crews worked to get the course ready for the Annual Home School Golf Championship, MSHSAA State Golf Tournament, and other tournaments that were scheduled throughout the month.

Mr. Mike Crocker, Assistant Director Mr. Crocker stated that the Zoo is a popular field trip location during the spring and summer months. Mr. Crocker mentioned that the Zoo Train Depot is a great space to host business events or large family gatherings as it can accommodate approximately 100 people. We will host a Friends of the Zoo membership after-hours event at the Zoo on May 26 with several special events for members. The new Jumpin' Jewels water feature opened last week, and visitors have enjoyed the upgraded amenity. Mr. Crocker also shared a story from his recent book publication about bringing a snake on a plane in his carry-on luggage many years ago.

Mr. Bob Belote, Director of Parks

Mr. Belote stated that we received good news in that the State of Missouri has forwarded the ARPA budget funding to the Missouri Governor for approval, which includes \$13.5 million dollars for Cooper Park improvements. Adding turf fields will help to ensure championship tournaments can continue to play even after significant rainfall. The additional fan-friendly amenities will also help attract larger tournaments to the community. Mr. Belote acknowledged Missouri State University for their recent donation of nearly \$300,000 for the new video scoreboard installed at Killian Complex, just in time for the Missouri Valley Conference Softball Championships. This new board will be a great addition for our high school and college teams that play at the Killian Complex, as well.

Park Board member, Mark McNay, suggested a weekly email list of our events and activities be sent to board members.

VII. CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair did not have a report.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business to discuss.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business to discuss.

X. CALENDAR

The next scheduled Park Board meeting will be held on Friday, June 10, 2022, at 8:30 am, at the Springfield-Greene County Botanical Center.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Randy Blackwood made a motion to adjourn to Closed Session; seconded by Mr. Mark McNay. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:51 a.m.