

MINUTES
SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY PARK BOARD
Cooper Tennis Complex, 2331 E. Pythian, Springfield, Missouri and
Virtually via Microsoft Teams Teleconferencing
Friday, March 8, 2024

I. ROLL CALL

Mr. Randy Blackwood, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

PARK BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Randy Blackwood, Leslie Carrier, Don Chenevert, Jr., Ann Compton (via Teams), Curtis Jared, Mark McNay (via Teams), Dr. Dianna Parker, Susie Turner

PARK BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Royce Reding

PARK BOARD STAFF PRESENT: Tim Carpenter, Matt Coats, Mike Crocker, Jenny Edwards, Jim Fisher, Ben Kellner, Tim McCrea, Karen Mellinger, Anne-Mary McGrath, Jerry Mitchell, Miles Park, Heather Parker, Kim Reser, Jeff Smith, Jackson Thompson, Lana Woolsey

GUEST: Ms. Carol Hutchins, Environmental Advisory Group

II. READING AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Mark McNay, Park Board Secretary, presented and made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 30, 2023, By-Laws Workshop; seconded by Mr. Don Chenevert, Jr. The motion was passed unanimously.

Mr. McNay presented and made a motion to approve the minutes from the January 31, 2024, Fees and Charges Committee; seconded by Mr. Chenevert. The motion was passed unanimously.

Mr. McNay presented and made a motion to approve the minutes with a correction to list Ms. Leslie Carrier as absent at the February 9, 2024, Park Board meeting; seconded by Mr. Chenevert. The motion was passed unanimously.

Mr. McNay presented and made a motion to approve the minutes with a correction to list Ms. Leslie Carrier as absent at the February 9, 2024, Budget Workshop; seconded by Mr. Chenevert. The motion was passed unanimously.

III. REPORT OF THE OFFICERS

- a. **Park Board Chair Report and Comments** Mr. Blackwood, Chair, mentioned that he attended the new field ribbon-cutting ceremony at Meador Park on March 2. He was very impressed with the refreshed look of the field and appreciated the fund-raising efforts of the baseball coach, Scott Nasby, and Drury University. Mr. Blackwood also thanked Miles Park, Assistant Director, for coordinating the project.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

- a. **Approval of Parks FY 2024-2025 Budget** Mr. Jim Fisher, Interim Director of Parks, stated that staff revised the budget documents to reflect the Board's requested changes of increasing the rates for the show wagon and bleacher rental. Mr. Blackwood thanked the Fees and Charges Committee for their detailed review of the fees and charges, along with the staff for preparing the budget documents, as it represents a lot of work to create information that is easily understood. Dr. Dianna Parker made a motion to approve the Parks FY 2024-2025 Budget: seconded by Ms. Leslie Carrier. The motion was approved unanimously. Mr. McNay commented that the budget documents reflect the Board and staff's commitment to reinforce the funded and unfunded priorities and continue to be diligent in keeping our park system well-maintained.
- b. **Gardens Aglow Event Recap and Check Presentation** Ms. Heather Parker, Volunteer and Education Coordinator, thanked the Gardens Aglow sponsors, Rosalie O'Reilly Wooten, Mr. Electric, All About Trees, and Simmons Bank for their support, along with the Parks Communication staff for their assistance in preparing the flyer and promoting the event on the Park Board's social media platforms. Additionally, Park Board staff members, Ms. Ambur Gossen and Ms. Angela Keith, provided a significant amount of guidance in the design and installation of the lights and displays. Ms. Parker showed a 30-second public service announcement video highlighting the lighted displays. Ms. Parker mentioned that there were over 100 volunteers, who provided over 1,000 volunteer hours during the event. This year we added eight new lighted frames to the park with the assistance of volunteer, Bill Fullerton, and Kodiak Trailers. We had five food vendors throughout the event. We partnered with the Grey Campbell Farmstead on two evenings, and they offered a craft night and photos with Santa Claus. Staff hosted two private events and one night for members only in addition to the 21 nights that were open to the public. Sip 'N Stroll was a new event in which the 192 adults-only crowd enjoyed walking through the lighted-display in the park. Ms. Parker shared a five-year history of the event including visitor totals, gross revenue, and the number of pre-sale tickets from online purchases. It is a goal to only offer pre-sale tickets for the event in 2025 to help for staffing and food preparation. Ms. Parker presented a check to the Park Board in the amount of \$77,615.41 representing 50 percent of the proceeds from the Gardens Aglow event. Mr. Blackwood thanked Ms. Parker, Parks Staff, Friends of the Garden and other volunteers, for another successful year.
- c. **Approval of MDC Grant for Doling Park** Mr. Matt Coats, Superintendent of Special Facilities, stated that we have an opportunity to enter into a cost-share agreement with Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) for installation of three state-of-the-art floating wetlands at Doling Park. The project will improve the aquatic habitat and water quality of the lake, along with the water downstream and throughout the Little Sac watershed. The total project cost is expected to be \$7,800, in which the Park Board would initially pay these costs, and MDC would reimburse the Park Board for 90 percent of the project costs. MDC will also assist in the installation and follow-up care of the installed wetlands. Mr. Coats mentioned that this practice has been improved throughout the years, and it is possible that it could be duplicated in other water areas. Mr. Curtis Jared made the motion to approve applying for and accepting the cost-share grant from the Missouri Department of Conservation, as part of its Aquatic Habitat Improvement Program and

authorizing the Interim Director of Parks, or their designee, to execute the Cost Share Request Agreement and all other documents on behalf of the Park Board that are necessary to proceed with this Project; seconded by Ms. Susie Turner. The motion passed unanimously.

- d. **RAISE Grant Update** Mr. Jeff Smith, Senior Parks Planner, provided an update regarding the RAISE (Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity) Grant that the City of Springfield submitted on February 28, 2024. The requested funds of \$24,822,313 would be used to help work toward the UNGAP the MAP priorities listed in the Forward SGF Comprehensive Plan. The Department of Transportation is scheduled to provide 14.3 billion dollars through 15 rounds of funding, with the next round to be awarded by June 27, 2024. The projects are focused on poverty stricken or disadvantaged areas, with a zero-dollar local match. Mr. Smith provided more details and the descriptions of the projects included in the City of Springfield's application, which included the Jordan Creek Greenway Trail, the Wilson's Creek Greenway Trail, and the Trail of Tears Greenway Trail. If we are not selected to receive the grant this year, we can obtain feedback and resubmit an application for next year. Mr. Fisher stated he appreciated all of Jeff's work as part of the grant application team.
- e. **Interim Director of Parks Report and Comments** Mr. Fisher stated that the Meador Park field dedication on March 2 was well attended, and he appreciated the work of the Park Operations crews for their help in getting the complex ready for tournament play. Mr. Fisher mentioned that several Park Board staff were attending the annual Missouri Park and Recreation Association conference this week in St. Charles, Missouri. The latest edition of the Park Bench publication was distributed to schools and facilities this week, and a copy was also given to Board members today. Next week, the National Homeschool Basketball Tournament will be held in Springfield, and three of our Park Board gym facilities, including the Fieldhouse, O'Reilly-Tefft, and Doling Family Center, will be used to host the 300 teams. The Cherry Blossom Festival will be held at Nathanael-Greene/Close Memorial Park on April 6. Mr. Fisher thanked Jennifer Shepherd in Recreation for her weekly updates of Park Board activities. The Properties Development/Assessment Committee will receive possible dates to schedule a meeting soon to review several property matters.
- f. **Mike Crocker, Assistant Director** Mr. Mike Crocker, Assistant Director, will retire on March 29, after nearly 48 years of service to the Dickerson Park Zoo and the City of Springfield, with 36 years as the Zoo Director. Mr. Crocker read a prepared, heart-felt letter, stating his desire to spend more time with family, fly-fishing, and catching snakes. He shared one of his famous stories that we have all become accustomed to hearing from time to time. Mr. Crocker, his stories, and his legacy for conservation of wildlife and connecting people and animals to save species, will always be remembered.

Ms. Leslie Carrier, Board member, thanked Mike Crocker for his stories, humor, and his ability to recognize that he raised everyone's animal IQ. Mike's commitment to the Zoo and dedication to the animals for nearly 50 years is remarkable as he has seen many changes in zoo practice and management. The Board and Park Board staff continued with additional words of appreciation and gave Mike a standing ovation.

- g. **Guest: Carol Hutchison, Environmental Advisory** Ms. Carol Hutchison, with Environmental Advisory Group, addressed the Board and expressed concern about the proposed Lake Springfield Park Project, specifically the water quality. She understands that the Lake Springfield Park Project is being presented to City Council to be approved, even though there is no funding identified for the project. Ms. Hutchison invited the Board and Park Board staff to attend her group's next meeting on Wednesday, March 13, at 8:00 am, at the Environmental Services building.

V. CALENDAR

The next scheduled Park Board meeting is Friday, April 12, 2024, at the Lake Springfield Boathouse.

VI. CLOSED SESSION Pursuant to RSMO. Section 610.021 (3)

(3) Hiring, firing, disciplining, or promoting of particular employees by a public governmental body when personal information about the employee is discussed or recorded. However, any vote on a final decision, when taken by a public governmental body, to hire, fire, promote or discipline an employee of a public governmental body shall be made available with a record of how each member voted to the public within seventy-two hours of the close of the meeting where such action occurs; provided, however, that any employee so affected shall be entitled to prompt notice of such decision during the seventy-two-hour period before such decision is made available to the public. As used in this subdivision, the term "personal information" means information relating to the performance or merit of individual employees.

Mr. Don Chenevert, Jr. made a motion to move into Closed Session after a short break; seconded by Ms. Susie Turner. By roll call vote, the motion was unanimously approved to move into Closed Session.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The open session ended at 9:45 a.m.