

MINUTES
SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY PARK BOARD
Cooper Tennis Complex, 2331 E. Pythian, Springfield, Missouri
Virtually via Microsoft Teams Platform
Friday, March 10, 2023

I. ROLL CALL

Mr. Randy Blackwood, Chair called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.

Park Board Members Present: Randy Blackwood, Leslie Carrier, Ann Compton (via Teams), Curtis Jared (via Teams), Mark McNay, Heather Noggle, Dr. Dianna Parker (via Teams), Susie Turner

Park Board Members Absent: Royce Reding

Park Board Staff Present: Bob Belote, Jon Carney, Tim Carpenter, Matt Coats, Mike Crocker, Jenny Edwards, Jim Fisher, Ben Kellner, Tim McCrea, Karen Mellinger, Jerry Mitchell, Miles Park, Kim Reser, Jeff Smith, Jackson Thompson, Lana Woolsey

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Susie Turner, Secretary, stated that there were minutes from three meetings presented for approval. Ms. Heather Noggle made a motion to approve the Budget Workshop minutes from the January 31, 2023, meeting; seconded by Mr. Mark McNay. Motion was approved unanimously. Ms. Leslie Carrier made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 10, 2023, Park Board Meeting; seconded by Ms. Noggle. Motion was approved unanimously. Mr. McNay made a motion to approve the March 10, 2023, Closed Park Board Meeting minutes; seconded by Ms. Carrier. Motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Mike Crocker introduced Jackson Thompson, who was recently promoted to the Superintendent of the Zoo position. Mr. Thompson has worked at Dickerson Park Zoo for over 15 years, and most recently, he served as the Head Keeper of the Tropical Asia exhibit area, including elephant management. Mr. Thompson will be attending Board Meetings in the future.

III. COOPER PARK UPDATE – COMPLEX PROJECTS AND UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Mr. Jeff Smith, Senior Park Planner, reviewed several renderings regarding the Cooper Soccer Master Plan with the Park Board members. The East Master Plan and Phase One Exhibit shows the replacement of the Greenwood Championship Field and the two supplemental fields, a Press Box for fields 1 and 2, dual locker rooms south of Field 2 that will include ADA access to the showers, along with physical training and therapy and offices for coaches. In future phases, we hope to add an upgraded concessions area and restroom facility. We also would like to create a “sense of arrival” at the east entrance and upgrade the sidewalk entry area. The West Master Plan and Phase One Exhibit shows fields 4-8 receiving turf, with two of the fields identified as “super fields” to allow more varied activities on the fields and upgraded field lighting. The

restroom facility will stay, but we hope to add an upgraded restroom facility, concessions area, and parking in future phases.

Mr. Smith also reviewed a rendering of the Cooper Youth Baseball/Killian Softball Project Scope Exhibit. At Killian Youth Softball Complex, there will be six new turf fields, with additional seating to the existing stadium field, new concessions facility, and a new restroom facility. In the Cooper Youth Baseball/Softball area, there will be five new turf fields, with a conversion of the south field to a stadium-style field, and renovated concessions and restroom facilities. This will be the next phase after the soccer project, as the consultant should be selected soon, and we are hopeful to be under contract this summer. Mr. Smith stated that the flexible lawn areas are designed for various uses such as staked tent canopies for families and possibly vendors during tournaments. Mr. Smith indicated that we are consulting with turf vendors about recommended equipment and maintenance protocols to be used with the new turf fields. Mr. Belote stated that we are working to conduct the site work in phases to still allow games to take place during the field restoration projects.

Mr. Miles Park, Assistant Director, mentioned a few recent improvements at the Cooper Tennis Complex, including the north courts (1-8) that were resurfaced last fall and the south courts (9-16) that will be resurfaced this fall. The fence surrounding Cooper Tennis on the north side was replaced, and the posts and nets were also replaced. Mr. Belote mentioned that our courts at Cooper Tennis are in high demand as four local universities, plus area high schools, use Cooper as their home court. Mizzou Tennis will also be utilizing Cooper Tennis as their home court this spring. We are fortunate to make these improvements, and we will continue to work with contractors to minimize impact to our tennis patrons while the renovations take place.

Ms. Kim Reser, Assistant Director, provided a list of events taking place this year throughout the Cooper Park Corridor. We are hosting several high school tournaments in tennis, softball, and baseball, including the Missouri State High School Athletic Association Boys Tennis Championships in May, the MSHSAA Girls Softball Championships in May, the Greenwood Classic at Lake Country Soccer, and several USSSA tournaments at Killian and Cooper Fields. Ms. Reser stated that we have been expanding and increasing our numbers of softball and baseball teams, while the national trends show that team registrations are slightly declining. We have noticed a big trend in homeschool sports activities and now have a dedicated section in our Park Bench. Other events include a large regional pickleball tournament in June this year and next year at Cooper Tennis Complex. Killian Softball Complex will be the site of a national softball tournament next year. Special Olympics will take place at Killian Softball Complex this August, with 18-30 teams and 250-450 fans and volunteers in attendance. Mr. Belote stated that we are thankful for the commitment of the Cooper Family nearly 40 years ago, and the financial support we have received from the City of Springfield and other groups throughout the years. Mr. Mark McNay suggested that we try to make connections with professional athletes such as the Springfield Cardinals and other national-caliber performers like the Hamilton cast that recently performed in Springfield or other notable guest artists. Ms. Reser indicated that we did offer clinics and special appearances with the Springfield Lasers, but we would welcome the additional partnership opportunities with the Springfield Cardinals and other professional athletes and artists, and possibly archery champions and fishing or wildlife experts, as well,

IV. COMMITTEE REPORT

There were no Committee Reports.

V. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Jon Carney, Superintendent of General Services Mr. Carney stated that the weather has been unseasonably warm, with very wet conditions most of the month, causing difficult access to many areas. Parks staff constructed a concrete pad to access the new scoreboard at the Killian Softball Complex for future adjustments and maintenance. Mr. Carney stated that with the revised policy allowing for payment of overtime hours over 40 hours, it has increased our flexibility to complete more projects during the winter months.

Ben Kellner, Superintendent of Jordan Valley Park and Facilities Mr. Kellner mentioned that the Police Department vs the Fire Department ice hockey game was exciting for the sold-out crowd. The Learn to Skate program wraps up this month and had 197 participants. We had 19 skaters from the Learn to Skate program move up to the Little Blues hockey program. Missouri State University and Drury University have wrapped up their home games at the Ice Park for the season. A local Earth Day organization is hosting a full day of concerts in celebration of Earth Day at Jordan Valley Park, from 11:00 am to 8:00 pm on April 22. The Ozark Mountain Daredevils are the featured performers for the event. The Park Board will be one of the three local organizations who will benefit from the proceeds of the event.

Matt Coats, Superintendent of Special Facilities Mr. Coats mentioned that the Rutledge-Wilson Farm staff welcomed a new Hereford/Angus mini-cow named WeeBee as a great addition for our educational programs. The first Hike and Beer Tasting Event was held at Lake Springfield Boathouse. After a three-mile hike, each participant received a flight of beer from a local brewery. The next Tasting Event is March 24. Conservation Coordinator, Caleb Sanders, completed the Lost Hill Woodland Management Plan, which included a Woodland Inventory sampling of over 50 acres, which will help determine future management practices for the site. Ms. Christine Peoples hosted the Freedom Class 101 program, with a panel of three African American females who made a difference in their community. The Special Facilities Maintenance section installed the new disc golf course bridge within Lake Springfield Park.

Jerry Mitchell, Superintendent of Business Operations Mr. Mitchell reported that the Fieldhouse Sportscenter revenue is up by \$16,390 for the eight months ended February 28, 2023. Jordan Valley Ice Park revenue is also up significantly compared to this time last year, which is equated to having Drury University's Ice Hockey team as a tenant. Mr. Mitchell mentioned that he is reviewing our recent utility billing statements in comparison with last year's cost for services. Golf revenues continue to be strong, exceeding expenditures through the winter months. The next few months are historically the largest revenue months, especially if we have favorable weather conditions.

Jenny Edwards, Public Information Administrator Ms. Edwards mentioned that the summer camp brochure and website information are now available. The Communications team is assisting the organizers in promoting the Earth Day event scheduled for Saturday, April 22, in Jordan Valley Park. Ms. Edwards stated that there is sewer work being conducted throughout

Springfield, and some of the repair work may slightly impact park areas from time to time. Ms. Edwards reminded everyone to vote on April 4 and explained the City-oriented ballot initiatives that will be presented to voters.

Kim Reser, Assistant Director Ms. Reser mentioned that the National Christian Home School Basketball Championships will be held in Springfield March 13-17, with over 1,000 teams. The Fieldhouse Sportscenter and O'Reilly-Tefft Gym will both be utilized as game sites. Ms. Reser stated that we are launching a new initiative, the Pool Connection, to enhance customer safety and security at outdoor pools this summer. Patrons can fill out the application online, on paper, or in-person at a family center or outdoor pool, and then complete the process by having their picture taken at one of the family centers or pools. The Pool Connection is not a physical ID as it will be accessed through the Park Board's Active online registration database. There is no charge for the Pool Connection ID. Ms. Reser mentioned how the ID would be advantageous for emergency situations especially with youth over the age of 12 who might be at the pools without a parent or guardian. After more discussion, the Board acknowledged the positive impact the Pool Connection ID will have for our patrons and aquatics staff.

Miles Park, Assistant Director Mr. Park stated that volunteers worked to improve the Hosta Garden area in Nathanael-Close Memorial Park. On April 1, Sister Cities staff will host the Cherry Blossom Kite and Pinata Festival at the Springfield Botanical Gardens.

Jim Fisher, Assistant Director Mr. Fisher reported that February golf rounds and revenues were strong and exceeded the rounds/revenue numbers compared to February 2022. On the department level, we have 11 employee positions posted for recruitment, with interviews to follow soon. Ms. Reser stated that we have retained many lifeguards from last year, but we still are interested in hiring more seasonal staff for the summer. All of our pool facilities will be open this year, but on a rotating schedule, so not all pools are opened every day.

Mike Crocker, Assistant Director Mr. Crocker stated that the Zoo's re-accreditation application was submitted several weeks ago. He will receive information soon on the dates of the Zoo's site visit, which could be as early as April. Mr. Crocker stated that we have a four-month-old, 40-pound, female mountain lion, Drax, which was brought to the Zoo after she was found in the state of Washington. As Drax builds her strength and trust in the keepers, she will slowly be introduced to the adult female cougar, Cali.

Ms. Susie Turner, Secretary to the Board, mentioned that Friends of the Garden will host a Garden Gala on September 30, with the proceeds benefitting the Sensory Garden at the Springfield Botanical Gardens at Nathanael Greene/Close Memorial Park. The future Sensory Garden will have self-contained garden areas or "garden rooms", to allow visitors to enjoy a wide variety of sensory experiences through plants, materials, and features for people of all ages and abilities.

VI. CHAIR'S REPORT

Mr. Randy Blackwood, Chair, stated that he appreciated the Park Board staff looking out for the safety of visitors, patrons, and employees, with the implementation of the Pool Connection ID.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business to discuss.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business to discuss.

IX. CALENDAR

The next Park Board meeting is scheduled for April 14, 2023, at 8:30 a.m., with the location to be determined.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Susie Turner made the motion to adjourn to Closed Session, after a five-minute break; seconded by Mr. Mark McNay. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:51 a.m.