

MINUTES
SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY PARK BOARD
Davis House and Property, 5780 S. Farm Road 141, Springfield, Missouri
Friday, December 8, 2023

I. ROLL CALL

Mr. Randy Blackwood, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

Park Board Members Present: Randy Blackwood, Leslie Carrier, Don Chenevert, Jr., Ann Compton, Curtis Jared, Mark McNay, Dr. Dianna Parker, Royce Reding, Susie Turner

Park Board Members Absent: none

Park Board Staff Present: Bob Belote, Jon Carney, Tim Carpenter, Matt Coats, Jenny Edwards, Jim Fisher, Ben Kellner, Anne-Mary McGrath, Karen Mellinger, Jerry Mitchell, Miles Park, Heather Parker, Kim Reser, Jeff Smith, Jackson Thompson, Lana Woolsey

Guests: Austin Fax, Greene County Counsel; Karen Gordon, Kristin Norris, Mark Pon, and Bob Horton—Ozark Pickleball Club Members

II. READING AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Mark McNay, Park Board Secretary, presented and made the motion to approve the minutes from the October 13, 2023, Park Board Meeting; seconded by Mr. Don Chenevert, Jr. The motion was approved unanimously. Mr. McNay presented and made the motion to approve the minutes from the October 13, 2023, Closed Park Board meeting; seconded by Mr. Don Chenevert, Jr. The motion was approved unanimously.

III. REPORTS OF THE OFFICERS

a. **Park Board By-Laws Review Workshop Update** Mr. Randy Blackwood, Chair, thanked the Park Board members for their interest to review and suggest any necessary updates to the by-laws at the workshop held on November 30. Mr. Blackwood provided a summary of the workshop discussion in which the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) from 2011 was reviewed. At that time, one of the objectives of the IGA was to research the possibility of a Park District. The Board continued to discuss that the possibility of a park district become a new focus of the Park Board. Due to the Board's decision to research and explore a park district, the Board is pausing the review of the by-laws as they may need additional changes based on how we proceed. Mr. Chenevert stated that the November workshop was a good strategic discussion of sharing ideas.

b. **Recent Park Events** Mr. Blackwood thanked Ms. Leslie Carrier, Board member, for representing the Park Board at the Roseann Bentley Musical Playground Dedication within Phelps Grove Park on November 21. He stated that this new amenity is a great destination playground for families and honors Ms. Bentley, a retired Senator and Greene County Commissioner, for her lifetime work of serving as an advocate for children. Mr. Blackwood

encouraged everyone to walk through the lighted display at Gardens Aglow or drive-through Candy Cane Lane at Rutledge-Wilson Farm Park. It is a great time to be in our community with so many festive activities for friends and families to visit and enjoy. Mr. Blackwood thanked everyone who contributes to the success of these events.

IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a. **Ozarks Pickleball Club – Queen City Open Check Presentation** Mr. Belote mentioned that Kim Reser, Assistant Director, has been working with the Ozarks Pickleball Club (OPC), along with the assistance of Miles Park, Jon Carney, and other park operations staff, in developing new pickleball courts as funding allows. Ms. Karen Gordon with OPC thanked the Cooper Tennis staff for their assistance with the second Queen City Open, which had 417 participants from eight different states, making this the largest non-sanctioned pickleball tournament in the state. The Nick Hostler Pickleball Tournament held at the Gillenwaters Complex had 376 participants, which was the largest pickleball fund-raising event in the state. The Ozark Pickleball Club has approximately 500 members, with 2,500 followers on Facebook. There is no fee to be part of the club. Open play is available on Sunday nights at Cooper Tennis Complex during the winter. On average, there are about 100 people who play on Sundays. There is a strong interest for more indoor pickleball courts. Mr. Bob Horton, Queen City Open Sponsorship Chair and former Park Board Chair, stated that the Queen City Open has raised \$90,000 in two years. He stated that participants like to come to Springfield because they are treated well, and we have good facilities; we just need more courts. The great participant experience during the tournaments would not be possible without the generosity of the sponsors: Big Shots, SRC, Dynamic DNA, Wil Fisher, and Thompson Sales. Additional comments were made regarding the growth and demand of the sport, and the interest in developing and funding of a dedicated indoor pickleball complex. Ms. Gordon presented a check in the amount of \$44,688 to Mr. Blackwood representing the proceeds from the Queen City Open held earlier this year.

V. NEW BUSINESS

- a. **Gardens Aglow Event Overview & Invitation** Ms. Heather Parker, Friends of the Garden Coordinator, provided an overview about the Gardens Aglow, walk-thru, lighted display at the Japanese Mizumoto Stroll Garden. Ms. Parker said 6,000 people have already visited the Stroll Garden to see the lights. On December 7, staff hosted an adult-only, pre-ticketed event called Sip and Stroll, and nearly 200 people attended. A private corporate event was held at Gardens Aglow this week, as well, on an evening not opened to the public. Ms. Parker recognized the design efforts of Amber Gossen, and several other parks staff members, who work to set up the display. Bill Fullerton, a Friends of the Garden volunteer, also built two new lighted frames this year, which makes 10 frames he has built for the event so far. Ms. Parker stated that over 850 volunteer hours of service are provided to put up lights, work the ticket booth, and assist with parking. A video of last year's display was shown courtesy of 417 Drone Imaging. To see the new displays totaling over 200,000 lights, everyone was invited to visit the Gardens Aglow. Ms. Susie Turner, Board member, stated that the dedicated volunteers who help take care of the gardens make the park feel so welcoming.

b. **Davis House and Property Lease Extension** Mr. Belote stated that today's meeting is being held at one of Parks' key facilities, the Davis House and Property. The property serves as a home office for our Community Sports Development Program, providing indoor and outdoor facility areas to our CSDP Archery Program, along with a Park Ranger sub-station, and other administrative offices. This property is also used as a high-end rental facility available to the public for weddings, meetings, and corporate retreats, and serves as a headquarters for other Parks amenities in the area such as Rivercut, Riverbluff Cave, Ward Branch Trail, and the undeveloped area of the Kreider Property. Our current 10-year, no cost lease with Greene County to utilize this property is due to expire at the end of this year, so we are looking to extend that agreement for another six months. We hope to work with Greene County for a longer-term lease that will mutually benefit both parties' long-term needs and interests. Mr. Belote stated that we do not have a capital fund to purchase the property, but it is critical to keep this location as a park facility. Ms. Lana Woolsey, Parks Assistant City Attorney, stated that the current lease expires December 23, 2023, so she would recommend that we sign the addendum to extend the lease for six-months now, and she will work with Parks Administration and Greene County to develop an additional long-term agreement. Mr. Belote stated that this situation could be further discussed with the Board during the 2024-2025 budget process. Mr. Curtis Jared made a motion to approve signing the six-month extension; seconded by Dr. Dianna Parker. The motion was passed unanimously.

c. **Director of Parks Report/Items of Importance** Mr. Belote once again thanked the Board members who attended the Roseann Bentley Musical Playground Dedication in November. We also held the 29th annual Turkey Trot event on Thanksgiving morning with over 5,300 participants. Anne-Mary McGrath, Superintendent of Recreation, will have a full report about the Turkey Trot event for the Board in January. Mr. Belote updated the Board on the ARPA funds for the Killian/Cooper Youth Baseball Improvements indicating that we will present the consultant contract for Phase II of the project for approval of City Council on Monday, December 11. Mr. Belote stated that we still need \$3,000,000 to complete all of the amenities that would benefit the three sports complex areas. Mr. Belote also provided an update regarding Drury University's involvement in raising money for improvements such as an artificial new turf field, new fencing, drainage, and additional dugout work at Meador Park baseball field.

He encouraged the Board to review the staff's reports for more information regarding activities and events throughout the park system, which were distributed in their packets. Mr. Belote thanked the Board for their time and service on the Park Board this past year and wished everyone happy holidays.

Mr. Chenevert had a few questions on the financial report regarding the cost for temporary/variable hour employees, which was discussed and answered by Mr. Jerry Mitchell, Superintendent of Business Operations. The City's decision to become self-insured, how it is calculated and funded, and the cost and benefits to Parks, was also a topic of explanation, as well.

VI. CALENDAR

The next scheduled Park Board Meeting is Friday, January 12, 2024, at 8:30 am, at Lake Springfield Boathouse.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Leslie Carrier made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Ms. Ann Compton. The motion was passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:45 am.