

MINUTES
SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY PARK BOARD
PARK BOARD FALL RETREAT
Lake Springfield Boathouse, 2312 Lake Springfield Park Road, Springfield, Missouri
Virtually via Microsoft Teams Platform
Friday, December 9, 2022

1. ROLL CALL

Mr. Randy Blackwood, Chair called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m.

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

Park Board Members Absent: none

Park Board Staff Present: Bob Belote, Tim Carpenter, Mike Crocker, Jenny Edwards, Jim Fisher, Tim McCrea, Anne-Mary McGrath, Karen Mellinger, Jerry Mitchell, Miles Park, Kim Reser, Lana Woolsey

Mr. Bob Belote, Director of Parks, stated that today's retreat format was requested by Park Board members, and the Park Board Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary helped to organize the Agenda discussion items.

2. SUNSHINE LAW REFRESHER FOR BOARD MEMBERS

Ms. Lana Woolsey, Parks Assistant City Attorney, presented information relating to the Sunshine Law, and Missouri's Open meetings and Records Law. Ms. Woolsey stated that as a public policy of the state, all meetings, records, votes, actions, and deliberations of public governmental bodies are open to the public. According to the Missouri's Attorney General, "the Sunshine Law applies to all records, regardless of what form they are kept in, and to all meetings, regardless of the manner in which they are held."

Ms. Woolsey reviewed and explained what constitutes a quorum, provided examples of situations for an emergency meeting, appropriate discussions in social gatherings, acceptable discussions for Closed Meetings, repercussions related to transmission of public business information to board members via personal cellphone or computer, and social media posting guidelines. She also mentioned that an aggrieved person, taxpayer of the state, citizen of Missouri, the Attorney General or Prosecuting Attorney may seek judicial enforcement for violations. Ms. Woolsey stated that meeting notices must be posted at least 24 hours in advance and the City Clerk is the Designated Custodian of Records and Sunshine Requests are facilitated through the City Clerk's Office. Ms. Woolsey also provided recommendations on how to properly conduct meetings and closed meetings by determining how the public would be best served. Mr. Blackwood stated that the information is a good reminder that any Board communication is subject to media requests, and Board members should be aware of their responsibilities as a public board. Ms. Heather Noggle mentioned that she appreciated the information as the Board would want to make sure that what we are doing is being done correctly.

3. **PARKS PROGRAM UPDATES REQUESTED**

- a. **Park Board Youth Recreation Scholarship Program** Ms. Kim Reser, Assistant Director, reviewed a Park Board Youth Recreation Scholarship report that included the scholarship criteria, application process, and how the scholarship is promoted. In 2022, we awarded 146 scholarships, totaling \$13,104. Also in 2022, we were awarded the Springfield Public School's SHINE grant in the amount of \$305,000, which provided 258 scholarships. The report also provided the breakdown of the section distribution of scholarships over the past five years. Ms. Anne-Mary McGrath, Superintendent of Recreation, stated that proceeds from Turkey Trot and our partnership with the Price Cutter Charity Championship are where we receive the most financial contributions for the scholarship program. Ms. Leslie Carrier suggested reaching out to several refugee organizations within our community to help increase awareness of the program. Mr. Belote encouraged the Board members to let us know of any other organizations that they may want to specifically receive the scholarship information.
- b. **Equitable Distribution of Parks Programs and Outreach Efforts** Ms. Jenny Edwards, Public Information Administrator, provided a Distribution of Outreach report in the packet, and explained the various ways we communicate with our audience including through our website, email blasts to registered participants, printed materials and the Park Bench, social media pages, and advertising. The Park Board website promotes our programming with offerings for pre-school age to Senior Citizens. We print 20,000 Park Bench brochures, with 13,000 dedicated for distribution to Springfield Public Schools. We continue to seek permission to distribute the Park Bench at private schools and home school networks, but we are not as successful. Ms. Edwards stated that she would gladly accept from the Board any contact information they may have to other organizations to increase distribution of the Park Bench. The Board discussed several other ways to distribute programming information including more online accessibility through QR codes and how to store and use data from past program participants to relay future programming and event information.

4. **ON THE HORIZON: ANTICIPATED IMPACT ITEMS FOR 2023**

- a. **Cooper Park Projects/ARPA** Mr. Belote stated that more information regarding the funds needed to complete all phases of the Cooper Park Project will be discussed during the upcoming budget process. Although we are extremely grateful for the \$22 million dollars received through the ARPA funds, we estimate that approximately \$5-\$8 million dollars will still be needed to fund all phases of the three projects. As the Board is aware, we do not have any capital resources to fund a project of this magnitude, so we continue to find ways to partner with university athletic programs for financial assistance, along with several prominent donors within the community. Mr. Miles Park, Assistant Director, indicated that we are nearly finished with the Cooper Master Plan, which details the phases such as improving parking and traffic flow, and ADA accessibility.
- b. **Other Property Issues: Nichols Park, Silver Springs Park**
Nichols Park Mr. Belote indicated that is likely that SPS will announce a bond issue for next year that is heavily focused on middle school upgrades, which will include a proposal to build a middle school within Nichols Park. Mr. Belote reviewed the other

planned proposal upgrades to Nichols Park as previously discussed in our past meetings. We anticipate meeting with SPS staff shortly, as needed.

Silver Springs Park Mr. Belote stated that the most recent drawings received from the Neighborhood Coalition for improvements to Silver Springs Park were included in the packet. The challenges for building development within the park still remain due to stormwater and flood plain considerations, the proposed removal of historical elements, LWCF restrictions for certain amenities currently residing in the park, and the cost involved in constructing, maintaining, and operating a family center type of facility operation.

- c. **Zoo Reaccreditation Efforts** Mr. Belote reviewed information provided in a memo from Mike Crocker, Assistant Director, regarding Zoo accreditation concerns. Dickerson Park Zoo has been accredited for 35 years, and in order to maintain accreditation, several budget items must be addressed in the 2023-2024 budget process. The number one priority is for an additional Veterinarian, which is required for accreditation, and will also help better address daily operational needs. Mr. Crocker stated that the most challenging part of accreditation is that the rigorous standards keep changing, but they help to ensure institutions are upholding and incorporating the best practices in animal welfare and management, along with embracing modern AZA philosophies.
- d. **Parks Employment Challenges/City Charter Issues** Mr. Belote reviewed several issues that have impacted the Parks Department regarding current City Charter interpretations. Over the last year, we converted 33 contract employees to regular full-time employees. We worked to create financial agreements to continue support for Ozarks Greenways and Springfield Regional Arts Council as keeping the Director positions for these organizations as contract employees with the City was no longer an option. Additionally, we are now using a third-party vendor to hire our part-time work force in order to be consistent with the City Charter, which is costing us 30 percent more in part-time salaries. We are hopeful that a ballot initiative will be proposed soon to update the City Charter and offer additional employment options as this significant additional cost is not sustainable even with additional sales tax revenue.
- e. **Homeless/Transient Issues Within Parks** Mr. Belote stated that we have been working to deal with homeless situations within several Parks, but most recently, in Grant Beach Park. It is a difficult situation balancing the moral, ethical and legal responsibilities, and there are many points of view on the best way to handle the issue. Mr. Tim Carpenter, Park Ranger Administrator, mentioned that it is not illegal to be homeless, and our Rangers work to be helpful to those individuals that will accept guidance and information about agencies designed to assist them. Mr. Belote stated that further discussion about this topic is likely needed in order to hear how the Board feels would be our best way to approach the situation.

5. **PARK BOARD BYLAWS**

- a. **Executive Committee Roles and Responsibilities** Mr. Blackwood mentioned that with the Secretary to the Board position now occupied by a Board member, it was discussed that the Park Board Bylaws may need some additional review and

recommended updates. Dr. Dianna Parker, Leslie Carrier, and Randy Blackwood agreed to form a committee to review and make any necessary recommendations to the Board. It was suggested that a collection of other Park system bylaws should be obtained for the committee's review. Ms. Woolsey stated that she had already begun a review of the Bylaws, and she would send her redlined changes to the Board for their review and consideration. Although there is no proposed deadline for a review and adoption of new by-laws, Ms. Woolsey did state that any new recommended and approved changes by the Board would also require City Council approval. It was suggested that the review process and recommended changes take place within the next six to twelve months.

2022 Park Board Committees and Roles

Mr. Belote mentioned that one of the newly created Board Committees, Parks Networking and Engagement Committee, has not met yet, and he proposed meeting sometime after the budget process. Dr. Parker has agreed to be a member of this Committee to replace former Board member, Sidney Needem. Mr. Mark McNay suggested that Royce Reding join the Networking and Engagement Committee to help with the technology component that may help us gain access and increase communication to other networking groups. Mr. Reding agreed to join the Committee to assist in this capacity.

6. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR THE BOARD

FY 2022-23 Unfunded Priorities Update

Mr. Belote stated that an updated List of Top Unfunded Priorities document was provided in the packet for the Board's review. We do have several financial challenges, but we are proud of the projects that we have completed through the support of grants, donors, and dedicated use of surplus sales tax funds to address the most critical needs. The Board agreed that the lack of a dedicated capital fund and significant projects to be completed will not go away, but we will need to continue to manage it. Mr. Belote stated that \$22 million will be removed from the list due to the recent award of ARPA funding. Also, we continue to be creative in funding opportunities by seeking grants, prioritizing any surplus sales tax revenue, and using our operational funding as prudently as possible. We do re-prioritize this list each year during the budget process, so many projects will stay on the list, and there may be some new projects added. Mr. Belote stated that we are continuing to add one percent of our budget into our Parks Reserve Fund, which at the end of FY 2023, it will total \$1.5 million.

7. PARK SYSTEM PERSPECTIVES – CITY/COUNTY OFFICIALS

Mr. Belote mentioned that the Board requested the Greene County Commissioners and City Manager attend today's meeting to gain their perspective and vision for the Park Board.

Greene County Commission: Presiding Commissioner Bob Dixon and Associate Commissioner Rusty MacClachlan

Mr. Bob Dixon, Presiding Commissioner, mentioned that he and Mr. Belote met a few months ago for a Parks update. Through the communication he has with some of the four County appointees serving on the Board, and the other Park Board members and staff, he feels we are doing a good job serving the community. Mr. Rusty MacClachlan, Associate Commissioner, stated that the upcoming soccer field upgrades in Cooper Park is an exciting project for the community. Mr. Belote reviewed the project timeline for the Cooper Park projects for soccer, baseball, and softball field upgrades. Mr. Dixon asked about any updates with the Silver Springs Park project in which the Neighborhood Coalition was awarded Greene County ARPA funds for their proposed project. Mr. Belote mentioned receiving revised

drawings and indicated we would continue discussion with the group, which we hope would include discussions with the neighborhood to help determine the community's needs. Mr. Curtis Jared inquired about how the ARPA funds were awarded and if there would be any restrictions to changing the proposal. The Commissioners mentioned that their intent was to provide funds to improve the park, so perhaps some modifications to the proposal may be made that would allow for some other amenities. The Commissioners shared their thoughts about future growth and long-range plans for Greene County. Mr. McNay stated that many of the initiatives the Commissioners mentioned have to do with collaboration opportunities with other organizations and communities, and the Park Board is known for being a great partner and stewards of the resources we have. As a Board, we would like to continue to move the Park Board forward and stay aligned with Greene County's long-range plans.

City of Springfield: City Manager, Jason Gage, and Deputy City Manager, Maurice Jones

Mr. Gage mentioned that the Quality of Place initiative is important to City Council, and he appreciates the role that the Parks Department plays in our community. Mr. Gage stated he recognizes that parks generally affect everyone in a positive way, and we find resources to do more programs and events that impact the community better than most organizations. Mr. Gage is aware of the Parks maintenance list and decisions to move resources to areas that need it most is a constant discussion among City officials. He stated that trail connections remain important, along with increasing sports tourism opportunities. Reinvestment in facilities is also very essential, along with having the necessary operational funds to help support the user experience is equally important.

Mr. Jones mentioned that the Forward SGF initiative has Parks listed throughout the document, and he feels that our city has everything we need to continue to create new opportunities for others. Mr. Jared inquired about the city parameters and how statistical reports gather data to measure our city nationally. Mr. Gage indicated that we do absorb challenges from other area communities who do not offer the same services that Springfield offers to address homelessness, hunger, or crime, which does increase the number of people we serve and potentially negatively impacts reported information on income levels, safety, housing information, and other statistics for Springfield. Mr. Gage mentioned that regional discussions should take place to better address these issues, collect and report the data in a more representative manner. Ms. Susie Turner inquired about how we keep the Forward SGF plan in focus, especially since Parks is heavily mentioned. Mr. Gage stated he feels that the whole community should be committed in developing strategies to achieve and pay for the specified goals within the Forward SGF plan.

Mr. Belote thanked Mr. Gage and Mr. Jones for their support including providing funding to help purchase the Fieldhouse Sportscenter, their involvement in Parks being awarded State and City ARPA funds for the Cooper Park projects, and development of the Chadwick Flyer trail. Mr. Belote stated that we look forward to future Forward SGF discussions to determine how Parks can best partner with the City and other organizations to implement goals of the plan. Mr. Belote stated he appreciated the City's efforts and support through the COVID-19 crisis, as no City jobs were lost while we navigated through the challenging situation.

8. Adjournment

Ms. Heather Noggle made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Curtis Jared. The motion was passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 12:15 pm.