

MINUTES
PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD
CITY COMMISSION ROOM
November 7, 2016 - 4:30 P.M.

Present were the following members of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board: Mr. Ed Klimek, Ms. Marcia Rozell, Mr. Mark Bachamp, Ms. Leah Fliter, Mr. Dave Schafer, and Ms. Linda Teener.

Absent: Dr. David Dzewaltowski.

Employees present: Mr. Eddie Eastes, Director of Parks and Recreation; Ms. Susan Adams, Flint Hills Discovery Center Director; Mr. Randi Clifford, Recreation Director; Ms. Ella Casey, Assistant Director of Sunset Zoo; Mr. Casey Smithson, Park Superintendent; Mr. Wyatt Thompson, Senior Park Planner; and Mr. Brian Johnson, City Engineer.

MINUTES

Mr. Klimek called the meeting to order. It was moved by Ms. Rozell, seconded by Ms. Teener, to approve the minutes of the regular meeting held on October 3, 2016. On vote, motion carried 6-0.

RFQ Sunset Zoo Master Plan

Mr. Wyatt Thompson, Senior Park Planner, and Ella Casey, Assistant Zoo Director, presented the board with the Request for Qualifications for the Sunset Zoo Master Plan. Ms. Casey shared the history of the zoo with the board. In 1987, the first zoo master plan was created as part of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums rigorous accreditation process. In 1998, the current master plan was created in-house by Staff to update some amenities for the zoo and animal exhibits. The Sunset Zoo needs to have a master plan to meet AZA accreditation standards and plan for future growth and changes. The zoo has had a 63% increase in attendance since 1988 and that attendance creates a new set of challenges with parking, admittance, and staffing. Mr. Thompson outlined the request for qualifications process and presented a timeline for the board. Ms. Rozell asked about the reciprocity program through the AZA. Mr. Klimek requested additional information about the attendance and revenue figures for the 1988 Master Plan and current operations. Ms. Casey shared with the board that Sunset Zoo is comparative to other zoos in the State of Kansas. Mr. Eastes shared funding source information with the board. Mr. Bachamp asked about goals mentioned in the RFQ. Ms. Casey discussed the AZA accreditation process and benchmarks designed for specific exhibit types.

It was moved by Ms. Rozell, seconded by Ms. Fliter, to recommend the City Commission support issuing an RFQ to solicit professional services for the Sunset Zoo Master Plan project (CIP #SZ025P). Ms. Rozell added that this was a necessary project because a master plan has not been completed for over 20 years. On vote, motion carried 5-0.

TRAIL USE EVALUATION STUDY

Mr. Wyatt Thompson, Senior Park Planner, provided updated information on the trail use study to the board. The Trail Use Study is a partnership with the Sunflower Foundation and Center for Research Strategies. Online surveys, intercept surveys, key informant interviews and focus groups were among the evaluation tools utilized in this study. The online survey received almost 2,000 responses. We had 262 interactions with on-site surveys. We also hosted nine (9) focus groups with 52 participants. The key findings show that a majority of people are using the trail for recreation with transportation being the second use. The Linear Trail is the most used and community park trails were second highly used. Hiking and nature trails are used by about half the users surveyed. A strength identified for our trail system is the diversity of trail surfaces. All users (96-98%) report that the trail system has helped increase their physical activity. The considerations generated for future trail projects are park master

plans, pedestrian-bicycle connectivity, trail loops and trail connectors, and mix of surface types and trail experiences.

Ms. Diane Novak shared interest in trail connectivity for the East side of Manhattan. USD 383 has purchased land on Lake Elbo Road and is concerned about connectivity to that land at a future date. Ms. Novak provided an update on the Wam-Sag-Man Trail. Ms. Novak and her husband are avid bikers and they see everyone on the trails. Mr. Klimek felt that we have an opportunity to have some very nice trails with our landscape. Ms. Teener would like to see the City share the neighborhood trail guide with the school district, neighborhood complexes, and other entities to provide the information to the public.

POOL YEAR END REPORT

Mr. Clifford shared with the board that city waterparks had record attendance in 2016, as reflected by the highest revenue since the opening season of our current facilities. Total attendance in 2016 was 135,912 for all three locations, when combining daily admissions with classes, swim team, swimming lessons, rentals, and special events. Mr. Clifford also discussed the lifeguard shortage and strategies to operate waterparks, pools and beaches across the nation.

Waterpark revenues for 2016 were \$399,583 which was a 10 percent increase over 2015 revenue. In contrast to the 2015 aquatics season which started off cool and wet, this year we experienced hot and dry weather in the first half of the season. This scenario contributed to much higher attendance early in the season including several days when we were near peak capacity. A significant increase in season pass sales reflected the value that our pass program offers for frequent swimmers. Our group admission process was also further refined this year to allow pre-approved groups of 20 or more entering a waterpark at the same day/time to receive a half-price discount on admission fees.

Expenses in 2016 were \$27,698 less than 2015 expenses, with savings occurring in Commodities due to shifting some expenses for big ticket maintenance items over to excess sales tax funding. Similar to last year, personnel costs were impacted by the need to run full shifts for the increasingly popular twilight swims at the City Park location and the longer extended season that was switched to City Park in 2015.

For the second year, City Park waterpark remained open daily through Labor Day for our extended season. In 2016 the facility was open from 1pm to 7pm on weekends and 6pm to 8pm weekdays (\$1 admission) as well as for noon hour swims, and had 4,350 admissions which was an increase of 531 over the 2015 extended season. Aquatic exercise classes were also extended into this timeframe for the first time this year.

Mr. Clifford provided the board with the discussion items for the City Commission on Twilight Swim Pricing, Extended Season, Future Operating Subsidy, and Additional Projects Funded Through Excess Quality of Life Sales Tax. The board expressed a consensus of support for increasing the fee for twilight swim to \$2 because this program benefits families in the area who are of low income. The board was supportive of increasing season pass fees. The board was in favor of continuing the extended season and evaluating which pool should remain open.

STAFF UPDATES

Mr. Thompson provided a project update on the Day Lily Garden in City Park, which has been officially designated as a registered garden with AHS. The Selection Committee for the Douglass Community Center indoor renovation project recommended BG Consultants of Manhattan, KS. A contract for design services will be considered by the City Commission later this year. Manhattan Trail Works did a volunteer project to improve a couple crossings on the trail in Wildcat Creek Linear Park. The City will host a public meeting December 1, 2016, to discuss CiCo Park Improvements that are part of the Facility

Feasibility Study. Mr. Thompson attended the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Landscape Architects in New Orleans, LA in October.

Mr. Smithson shared that park crews have been working on seeding. Water features have been turned off for the winter. The ice rink was set up and ice is ready for November 14th opening day. The Mayor's Christmas Spirit Lighted Parade and float applications are being accepted by the City of Manhattan and Downtown Manhattan, Inc. Mr. Smithson is working on projects to update and repair the waterparks. The Parks division will be assisting with a new event on December 3: the Red Cedar Holiday Harvest at the Park at Lee Mill Heights

Mr. Clifford shared that fall sports are getting completed. Winter adult sports are beginning shortly. Youth sports programming has added Little Dribblers for 1st and 2nd graders to learn basketball. Ice rink operations are preparing for opening day on November 14th. Ice Rink staff are learning to work with the ice and other operations. Several tournaments and special events occurred in October.

Ms. Casey indicated that attendance has been pretty strong in 2016. Spooktacular served about 8,000 people this year. Winter hours started on November 1st and the zoo is now open 12p-5p this year. Maddie, the Golden Labrador, moved to his forever home in October. Finn, the maned wolf, is headed to the Washington, DC area to the conservation zoo to help impact the endangered maned wolf species. The education department is continuing the Science on Tap program. Science Saturdays start in November as well.

Ms. Adams shared that the attendance at the Flint Hills Discovery Center has increased as well. The FHDC has partnered with Wyatt Thompson to provide educational opportunities at the Park at Lee Mill Heights. The FHDC hosted a youth theatre and a Go See It Lecture for adults. The FHDC is hosting the Military Appreciation Day on November 11th and will also be celebrating their volunteers that day as well. November 12th, FHDC will have an adult dinner theatre event "Brewers & Bootleggers". FHDC will have Breakfast with Santa on December 3rd and December 10th.

Mr. Eastes discussed the timeline provided for the Facility Feasibility Study information for the community that extends into fall 2017 for a possible sales tax question. Administration is planning to provide an update to the board in December 2016 and the City Commission January 10, 2017, Work Session. The delay was created by storm water concerns in the CiCo Park planning process. Mr. Klimek asked about indoor aquatics and mentioned that the Genesis Health Club project includes indoor lanes. Mr. Brian Johnson, City Engineer, discussed the process with the Planning Board for Genesis.

RFQ Warner Park Master Plan

Mr. Eastes updated the board that the City Commission tabled the RFQ for the master plan at Warner Park. The City Commission would like administration to contact KSU Landscape Architecture program for some design assistance. Mr. Eastes indicated that completion of the project in house will slow down the process due to Mr. Thompson's current projects with Lee Mill Heights and City Park. Mr. Klimek shared that he was in agreement with the City Commission's decision. Mr. Thompson shared an update since the City Commission meeting. The department has been working to map trails in the park using GPS and one of our interns has started developing the community survey for the Warner Park Neighborhood.

Mr. Eastes shared that Dr. David Dzewaltowski has resigned his board position because of moving his research to a different university. Angela Sutton has decided to continue her education and resigned her position with the city. We will look to replace that position in the near future.

Meeting Adjourned.