

MINUTES
PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD
CITY COMMISSION ROOM
January 8, 2018 - 4:30 P.M.

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

Absent: Mr. Darrell Edie and Mr. Curt Herrman.

Employees present: Mr. Eddie Eastes, Director of Parks and Recreation; Mr. Randi Clifford, Recreation Director; Mr. Scott Shoemaker, Sunset Zoo Director; Ms. Rachel Herrod, Marketing and Development Officer; Ms. Melissa Kirkwood, Community Relations Officer; Mr. Wyatt Thompson, Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation; Mr. Alfonso Leyva, Park Planner; Mr. Casey Smithson, Park Superintendent; and Mr. Robert Ott, Director of Public Works.

Guests: Lori Guthridge, RLA, ASLA, Vice-President & Landscape Architect Studio Lead for GLMV.

MINUTES

Mr. Klimek called the meeting to order. It was moved by Mr. Dave Schafer, seconded by Mr. Mark Bachamp, to approve the minutes of the meeting held on November 6, 2017. On vote, motion carried 5-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

NEW PARK PLANNER INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Eastes introduced Mr. Alfonso Leyva to share his biography. Mr. Leyva indicated that he graduated from Kansas State University. Mr. Leyva shared that since graduation, he had been working for Norris Design, a Landscape Architecture firm in Denver, Colorado. Mr. Leyva is excited to be back in Manhattan and eager to assist with the ongoing and future projects with the city.

VMI TRACT

Mr. Eastes shared that the city has an opportunity to acquire some property along K-18 that would become park land in the department inventory. Mr. Robert Ott, Director of Public Works, shared background information on the property. Mr. Ott indicated that the property is a remnant piece of land that was utilized by KDOT during the construction of K-18. The tract is landlocked and has no public access for motorized vehicles. The City has easements on the property for water and sanitary sewer mains, as well as a lift station. There are pedestrian easements on the adjacent parcels (east and west sides) that would allow pedestrian access to the site. Significant portions of the tract are located in the flood plain. In September 2016, the City Commission considered bidding on the property at a public auction in October, and decided not to submit a bid due to the high cost of acquisition. KDOT received no bids at the auction. Since that time, Public Works has continued conversations with KDOT. KDOT has offered to donate the land to the City for public use.

Mr. Wyatt Thompson shared the future potential use of the property as park land. The property has the potential to provide significant open space and trail connectivity in the southwest part of the city. The Parks and Recreation department has interest in the property for trail connectivity and potential recreation opportunities on this site could include, but not be limited to, the following: Passive Trails, Cross County Events, BMX Bike Circuit, Soccer Fields, Disc Golf Course, Dog Park, etc. The recreation uses were mentioned during the Lee Mill Heights planning process, but the space for these items is not available on that site. Mr. Thompson shared some maps to show the potential uses and areas of interest. There is an

opportunity to connect from the Stonehaven/Miller Parkway area down the hill to this tract and up the hill connecting to the park at Lee Mill Heights and further north to the LedgeStone trail and sidewalk to take you through Hunter Drive and into Anneberg Park. There is no vehicular access to this tract of land, but the City has considered possibility of purchasing lots in the Scenic Meadows subdivision to provide that access if it is of interest to the community.

Mr. Ott mentioned a meeting that had occurred prior to the land use. The meeting included Rod Harms, Kansas State University Cross Country coach, and Manhattan Cross Country coach. They discussed cross country potential for this property. Mr. Ott indicated that KSU had been interested in linking the tract through Stonehaven onto trails in Scenic Meadows further onto Miller Parkway. Mr. Thomason indicated that cross country meets in Anneberg Park have a lot of vehicular traffic and that would be an issue. Mr. Ott indicated that this was why the City would consider purchasing a lot in Scenic Meadows to allow vehicular access.

Mr. Bachamp indicated his approval of the acquisition. Mr. Ott reaffirmed that the donation is restricted to having the land open for public use only. Mr. Thomason shared that this would be a good acquisition and agrees with the suggested use. Mr. Thomason was concerned about the maintenance cost for this large parcel of land. Mr. Eastes indicated that the department would plan to mow the property a couple times a year. Mr. Bachamp indicated that the City could also have a farmer bail the property for the bails that were produced.

Mr. Klimek presented that the largest challenge to the property would be allowing the public to access the property. Mr. Ott indicated that the next step would be to evaluate the adjoining neighborhood lots to provide access. Mr. Bachamp asked if street construction was available in the proposed area. Mr. Ott indicated that a preliminary plat allowed for the street to extend past the current cul-de-sac plat. Mr. Schafer asked about lot prices. Mr. Ott indicated that the lots are selling for approximately \$30,000-40,000 and the properties are also subject to specials. Mr. Thomason shared that the property is isolated and shared concerns about public safety. Mr. Thompson shared that the City has several parks in remote locations that are not patrolled by Riley County Police Department (RCPD). RCPD is willing to assist if the City requests patrol of the area. The property is highly visible off K18 as well.

Mr. Klimek asked about the resort that used to be in Eureka. Ms. Teener indicated that it was closer to the Flint Hills Job Corps. Mr. Thompson indicated that it was further west. Mr. Ott indicated that Britt's farms the property. Mr. Klimek invited Ms. Britt to speak. She primarily came to hear the discussion and see if a potential to farm the property exists. Ms. Britt said they are interested in farming the land.

Mr. Ott indicated that he needed to hear a recommendation from the board good, bad, or otherwise to share with the City Commission during his presentation on the property acquisition. Mr. Schafer was happy that the property was being donated to the City, but there would obviously be costs on making the property accessible.

Mr. Bachamp motioned to support the City entering into an agreement with KDOT to acquire the VMI tract, adding to look for future access to the property. Mr. Klimek indicated that no access was not favorable and the board should include that access to the property be a part of the acquisition. Ms. Teener indicated that pedestrian and bicycle access would be available. Mr. Bachamp stated that he felt acquisition of the property to provide access should not limit this process. Mr. Eastes shared that this property provides an important trail link to multiple existing parks and trails.

Mr. Eastes shared the possible motion that a recommendation to the City Commission to accept transfer of the VMI Tract from KDOT to the City of Manhattan for public use with vehicle access being critical to the property. Mr. Bachamp made that motion, Ms. Teener seconded. On 5-0 vote, motion carried.

SUNSET ZOO MASTER PLAN

Mr. Scott Shoemaker, Zoo Director and introduced Lori Guthridge from GLMV Architecture, to present an update on the Sunset Zoo Master Plan / Strategic Plan. Ms. Guthridge shared that GLMV Architecture is working in conjunction with Zoo Advisors as financial business advisors. Zoo Advisors has conducted an organizational profile. They did benchmarking against national comparable zoos and Kansas zoos. GLMV did a site assessment. GLMV did some visual concepts and conducted an online survey, with over 900 responses, on the direction the community would like to see the zoo take in the future. After tonight's presentation, GLMV will take input from the commission, as well as a third listening session with the community at large, and incorporate it into their final presentation. They will then deliver a final site plan and written strategic plan to the zoo.

The organizational profile evaluates the attendance. Attendance has grown over the last several years. Top line financials indicate increasing revenues and expenses are outpacing revenue with the highest expense as personnel. The key revenue categories showing increasing resale and the education programs are outpacing the gate sales. This speaks positively to the zoo. The comparison of Sunset Zoo to national comparable facilities show areas for growth opportunity in the organizational profile.

The first site visit included stakeholder interviews with key community organizations. The zoo Trust is in a great position for fundraising. The zoo, Trust, and Foundation all work well together which is a real positive for the organization. The community desires expansion in exhibits, Zoo Sprouts, and event opportunities. The zoo needs to be more walkable and accessible. The zoo needs more animals in general and share behind the scenes potential. The zoo is lacking in technology.

GLMV met with the zoo staff and identified assets of the zoo and potential expansion plans. The new parking lot will be a great addition to zoo assets. Expedition Asia will be an area that needs to be retained. There are many areas of the zoo that need a facelift and accessibility plans for those areas. The pavilion is an asset that is being recommended for retention and updating. The children's zoo definitely needs some updating.

The second site visit allowed a more in depth review of potential changes including parking, service, circulation, exhibits, etc. A proposal to move the entry for the zoo to the main level would address a majority of the accessibility issues. The entry for Zoo Sprouts would be on the proposed main level of the zoo. This allows the Nature Exploration Center to be used for more rental opportunities and education programs and allows room to grow the Sprouts program. Ms. Guthridge also presented the proposed changes to current exhibits. The zoo trust responded favorably to the move of the entrance. A fourteen-question survey was conducted and received over 800 responses. Most people want to see giraffes, penguins and big cats at the zoo, in addition to other experience opportunities. The community desires experiences that get you closer to the animals, ex. Keeper Talks. The community would like more programming for the elderly and special needs community.

After receiving feedback from the community through two surveys, GLMV started working on the strategic plan with staff. The entrance needs to be well-defined to promote the zoo and really allow people to understand they have arrived at the zoo. The proposed gate movement to the zoo main level would help create this entrance directly from the street. The Sprout entrance would be moved to this level with some proposed animal exhibit integration near those classrooms. It would also move the nature play area for the Sprouts program away from the public view and eliminate the need for staff to educate guests that the area is designated for the Sprout program. Different exhibit potentials were shared with the board.

Mr. Thomason asked about the suggested attendance potential being compared to Topeka Zoo. Ms. Guthridge indicated that would be a question for Zoo Advisors. Mr. Thomason indicated that he saw the

accessibility for the senior population as a current issue. Ms. Guthridge indicated that all proposed exhibits would be at a 5 percent incline. This reason alone was a driver behind suggesting moving the main entrance. Mr. Shoemaker indicated that topography has been a struggle since inception. Mr. Klimek asked about the existing parking lot and the new proposed parking lot. GLMV was proposing another parking lot below near the main level of the zoo. Mr. Shoemaker indicated that the main lot would become an auxiliary or event lot. The new parking lot would become a main lot. Mr. Klimek indicated that he feels this plan is aggressive. Mr. Shoemaker indicated that he has charged GLMV to create a plan that allows Sunset Zoo to grow for the next 20-30 years and still comply with ADA regulations and AZA accreditation standards. Ms. Guthridge indicated that this plan was developed in conjunction with the current zoo staff. Mr. Klimek asked if the existing trails near the zoo property were being considered. Ms. Guthridge indicated that this was part of the master plan process. Mr. Shoemaker indicated that would become a park planning project, but would like to have connectivity to the trail system for zoo attendees. Mr. Thomason asked how the plan addresses the growth of other zoos in Kansas. Ms. Guthridge indicated that Zoo Advisors would be equipped to provide a response to that inquiry. Mr. Shoemaker indicated that collection changes, such as adding giraffe and zebra, would help with attendance in and of itself. Ms. Guthridge indicated that penguins and jaguars could also increase attractiveness to the zoo. Mr. Klimek indicated that the pavilion area was an area of interest for the community. Ms. Guthridge stated that the gathering space nearby the heart of the zoo was going to help improve the accessibility for the community.

POOL REPORT

Mr. Eastes informed the board that we were sharing information on the 2017 waterpark season. No recommendation to fees for 2018. The commission would like to see at least a 50 percent cost recovery for the waterparks. We met that range for 2017 and have budgeted 2018 to fall in that range as well. Mr. Randi Clifford, Director of Recreation, provided an update on 2017 waterpark operations. City waterparks had good attendance numbers again in 2017, declining slightly from last year's record numbers but still exceeding the five-year average by 4%. Total attendance in 2017 for all three locations was 131,306 and was comprised of daily admissions, exercise classes, swimming lessons, swim team, rentals, and special events. Daily admissions generated 103,580 in attendance with 28,131 (27%) of those admissions coming from the use of season passes and unexpired punch passes. In combining pass usage with twilight swim use and group discounts, there was potential for nearly half of the swimmers who visited our waterparks to receive a discounted rate. Mr. Clifford indicated that staying within the 50 percent cost recovery was an important goal for operations. The 2018 budget will be impacted by the sunset of the original quality of life sales tax that helped construct the waterparks, but we are still anticipating being able to meet that goal. Mr. Clifford indicated there is a tremendous expense to operating an extended season.

Mr. Klimek asked when the waterpark projects were completed. The City park project was completed in 2010 and the other two waterparks were completed for the 2012 season. Mr. Klimek asked about income after the opening of the waterparks. Mr. Eastes shared the history of admission pricing since the opening of the waterparks. Mr. Klimek asked about increase in attendance. The waterparks dramatically increased annual admissions from the previous pools.

Recreation staff does not recommend admission fee changes for the 2018 season. Revenue has been on an upward trend over the past three years, due in part to the incremental increases that have occurred with season passes and other discount rates. From our patrons' point of view, there is a perceived benefit in establishing a consistent fee structure for several years without major changes. This also allows Recreation staff to track trends and make future recommendations on fee adjustments. Mr. Bachamp voiced concerns about a flattening of attendance at the water parks and increased maintenance costs over time for the waterparks. Mr. Bachamp also asked about a community sales tax initiative to cost the cover of maintenance for the waterparks. Mr. Eastes replied that the cost of maintenance will have to be considered in future discussions about fees and maintenance costs. Ms. Teener mentioned that the cost of

the extended season would need to be considered for future cost recovery. Mr. Klimek shared that parks are being used less by community members from his observation. Mr. Eastes indicated that there are trends across the nation that people are using the outdoors less and initiatives are being developed nationwide to promote outdoor space. Mr. Thomason asked about the slide inspections for the waterparks. Mr. Smithson indicated that the inspections were completed and some signage needs to be updated.

MONTHLY STAFF REPORT

Mr. Clifford shared that the Winter/Spring Activity Guide is getting ready to launch. In December, the Red Cedar Harvest event was successful with cooperation from Forestry Division. The 2018 tournament schedule is complete and will begin games in early April. Athletic fieldwork is being done with Parks Maintenance assistance. The ice rink has had high attendance during the winter break for USD383.

Mr. Shoemaker mentioned that the zoo hosted Science Saturday on December 13. Adventure camps are having good attendance for the winter break.

Ms. Kirkwood shared the new Winter/Spring Activity Guide with the board. CivicRec will make registration easier for customers. The Summer Activity Guide planning has started.

Ms. Kirkwood also shared that the Discovery Center hosted Breakfast with Santa had two sold-out sessions with 300 attendees each. The Family New Year's Eve Night was also sold-out with 241 in attendance.

Mr. Smithson shared that the holiday lighting for Triangle Park was successful. The Parks Division has been spending time indoors working on equipment repairs and inside maintenance. The Union Pacific Depot project will be underway by end of January and anticipate completion by April 2018.

Mr. Thompson shared that the West Anderson roundabout is complete and the trail is nearly complete to the Wildcat Creek Bridge. The roadway grading project at Sunrise Cemetery will begin this week. Mr. Leyva has been involved with the Fremont pedestrian improvements. Work is starting with a KSU spring class to work on the Warner Park Master Plan.

FUTURE BUSINESS

Mr. Eastes indicated that a proposal of changes to facility fees will be brought to the board to include commercial and non-commercial rental rates. The Cemetery By-Laws update will be delivered in February. The Cemetery Board currently reports through the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. It was determined during discussions about the bell tower that the Cemetery Board should report directly to the governing body as opposed to through another advisory board, but the by-laws changes were never completed. The Cemetery Board will come in February to propose a change in reporting. Warner Park Master Plan and City Park Master Plan will be coming to the board at future meetings. The Southeast Neighborhood Recreation Center is going to the City Commission with 30 percent design. The Neighborhood Recreation Complex designs have had a Request for Qualifications has been posted and interest is high in this project. Mr. Eastes asked if board members would like to be a part of the selection process for the Neighborhood Recreation Complex. Mr. Klimek volunteered to serve on the selection committee.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

Mr. Thomason indicated that he and his wife were planning to move back to Indianapolis and announced his resignation from the board.

Meeting Adjourned.