

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Thursday, June 19, 2008, 7:00 p.m.

ARC, 1701 West Ash

MINUTES

Commission Present: Marin Blevins, Dan Devine, Gary Kespohl, Kristen Heitkamp

Staff Present: Mike Hood, Gary Ristow, Tammy Miller

Blevins called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm. He introduced Kristen Heitkamp as the new Commissioner in the at-large position.

Agenda: The agenda was approved as amended on a motion by Kespohl, seconded by Heitkamp.

Minutes: The May minutes were approved on a motion from Kespohl, seconded by Devine.

Monthly Report: Hood said the rain has really affected attendance, particularly at the golf courses and for adult softball games. The Friday night leagues have only played twice, due to rainouts.

The monthly report was approved on a motion by Kespohl, seconded by Devine.

Naming Recommendation for Atkins Property

Hood said that after the last meeting, staff had moved forward in working with the Atkins family to name the property. Mr. Atkins has requested that the City consider naming the property after his father—the Thomas E. “Country” Atkins Jr. Memorial Park. Hood said staff felt comfortable with the name and felt it would be appropriate since Mr. Atkins donated the land. The County Commission passed a resolution endorsing the name, and Hood said staff would like the Commission to also consider endorsing the name to the City Council. Devine said he felt it was a very easy decision and he fully supported the name.

Kespohl made a motion, seconded by Devine, to recommend to the City Council that the Atkins ballfields be named the Thomas E. “Country” Atkins Jr. Memorial Park.

All in favor: Blevins, Devine, Kespohl, Heitkamp

Motion passed.

July Tour

Hood reminded the Commission that the July meeting will start at 5:30 and will feature the annual park tour. He said if there were any particular parks Commissioners wanted to visit, to please let staff know.

Devine said he would like to visit the Atkins fields.

Blevins asked if all Commissioners would be there?

Heitkamp mentioned she had a family obligation and would not be able to attend.

Miller said that as far as she knew, other Commissioners would be there.

Council Items

Hood updated the Commission on Council items:

Liability Insurance: Hood reviewed the background of the issue for Heitkamp’s benefit. A four-tiered system is now in place that defines the level of risk for events and identifies the amount of liability insurance needed. Those levels are low risk, moderate risk, high risk and excessive risk, which essentially means the event could not be held. Hood said staff is just beginning to work with this new system so time will tell how it will work.

Blevins asked who is monitoring it?

Hood said the City’s risk management office works with Lida Lenz, who works in the downtown office on the liability issues.

Devine asked about hot air balloons and if parks have been identified where launches could take place?

Hood said staff is working on that now, but only parks would be allowed with low activity, no lighted fields

and no golf courses.

Grasslands neighborhood park: Hood told the Commission that the neighborhood raised \$600,000 for the site, then donated the land to the City to develop as a park. After numerous meetings with the neighborhood, the site plan is in place and will be presented to the Council for approval. The park will include the usual neighborhood park amenities, with an open play field, a playground, and trail. The neighborhood opted for several one-table shelters, rather than one larger shelter, Hood said. The park may eventually connect to the MKT Trail.

Heitkamp asked about the other trail connector planned in that area off of Garth Avenue?

Hood said the connector is listed by Get About Columbia as a project, but the neighborhood has objected to it. He said the decision to build the connector there will likely be a political one.

Heitkamp said she thought the area being discussed for the Garth connector was very steep and asked if the plans were to cut into that land there? She said she did not think the expense of doing all of that construction would be worth it and asked who exactly would be using the connector.

Hood responded that the connector would link that neighborhood to the MKT, as well as Grant Elementary, providing easier access for pedestrians and cyclists.

Heitkamp then asked how far from Flat Branch Creek was the development of the Grasslands park?

Hood said he would have to get the exact dimensions from the park planners but there is adequate distance from the creek. He noted that the stream buffer ordinance allows a trail to be developed near the creek.

Heitkamp said she noticed there was a lot of brush in the southern part of the site. She asked if that area would be left natural?

Hood said yes, it would.

Devine asked if there was agreement with the neighborhood for future use?

Hood said the city owns the whole site, so any other development would go through the City.

Heitkamp asked about the accessibility of the park, as far as parking?

Hood said that neighborhood parks were intended to be for the area, so parking lots were not included in the development.

Heitkamp asked if the park would meet ADA standards?

Hood said yes, but since there is no parking as part of the park, those standards are not applicable. All equipment in the park will be accessible and the trail will be accessible.

Garth Nature Area: Hood said the new parking spaces at the Garth Nature Area would be on the agenda for the next meeting. Councilman Janku had requested more parking to accommodate the large crowds at the dog park. The new parking lot would add 22 spaces.

Devine asked if that would be enough?

Hood said yes, staff felt it would. The lot will be nearly identical to the lot at the Forum Nature Area.

Blevins asked if the new leash-free areas had led to decreased citations for off-leash dogs in the parks?

Hood said it probably had not, however, it gives Park Ranger Arens another tool when issuing warnings. She is able to direct them to multiple off-leash areas in the park system.

Capital Project Update

Slides were shown of recent park events, including Art in the Park, dedications of Longview and Louisville parks, a recent CARP project and the Stephens Lake Park spraygrounds in use.

Hood shared these updates:

Cosmo Bethel restrooms are being replaced. The new ones should be built within eight weeks, weather permitting.

Cosmo restrooms at the shelters are also being replaced. These restrooms are being funded by the park sales tax.

Atkins lighting is in but electricity has not been run yet. The entrance road is complete. The work is about two months behind schedule because of all the rain. It is the hope to have it completed for the Show Me Games in mid-July.

Douglass Pool has a new ADA access. Attendance at the pool has tripled for the first few days of the season from last summer, after the fee reduction to \$1. Hood said staff was very pleased with how that is working out.

Douglass Park features new scoreboards for Moonlight Hoops.
Cosmo Bethel's new shelter is under construction with excavation work taking place.
Antimi Sports Complex now has shade structures.
PMC repairs are coming to an end.
Longview Park's trail connection has been completed.
Oakland Pool water slide should be open soon. Rainy weather has delayed its opening too...the slide company will have to inspect the slide before it will open.
Blevins asked about safety of the slide?
Hood said there will be two guards there, one at the top and one at the bottom. There will also be height restrictions for children, similar to an amusement park.

Commission Comments

Devine asked about recent problems at Douglass Park and how parks and recreation staff is involved?
Hood said yes, that staff had been in communication with the police. They are increasing patrols in the park. Parks and Recreation staff had already requested increased lighting near the shelter, and that request will be followed up with to make it more of a priority. Staff has also investigated the possibility of security cameras, but had received a quote of \$80,000 which is not possible.
Devine commented that that quote seemed high.
Hood agreed, but said the high cost seemed to be related to the fact these would be outdoor cameras. He said staff has been trying accentuate the positive events in the park, such as Douglass baseball, Moonlight Hoops, the pool and the playground.
Devine said that he had recently taken his granddaughter to the sprayground at Flat Branch and she had a great time. He added that there were a lot of people using the park too.
Kespohl asked about attendance at the outdoor movies?
Ristow said the weather conditions have been lousy for both movies so far, but we have had crowds of about 200 for each.
Kespohl said he had heard the radio ads about the park dedications, which mention the park sales tax. He said he is concerned that there will be many issues on the ballot in the next couple of years and he is afraid the sales tax will be lost in the shuffle.
Hood said staff had those same concerns and that efforts have been ramped up to show the public what their tax dollars are going toward.
Kespohl then expressed an interest in having an employee appreciation picnic for Parks and Rec.
Hood said the department generally has a year-end meeting where lunch is served, and other smaller events are held throughout the year. He said he felt that was important to show appreciation, but those things are normally kept low-key.
Kespohl and Blevins both said perhaps the Commission should discuss hosting something for department employees.

Staff Comments

Ristow shared information about the Twilight Festival activities at Flat Branch Park. Other ongoing activities are Moonlight Hoops and upcoming events include Fire in the Sky, the Show Me State Games and the Mid America State Games.
Hood mentioned the NRPA Conference in Baltimore in October. Registration materials are available, and if any Commissioners are interested, they should let Tammy know. Hood said he was unsure if any staff would be attending.

Public Comments

None

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm.