

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Thursday, April 17, 2008, 7:00 p.m.

ARC, 1701 West Ash

MINUTES

Commission Present: Terry Kloeppe, Marin Blevins, Bill Pauls, Dan Devine, Julia Grus, Gary Kespohl

Staff Present: Mike Hood, Gary Ristow, Mike Griggs, Tammy Miller

Kloeppe called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

Agenda: Kloeppe requested to switch Items 4 and 5 on the agenda, moving the public meeting up on the agenda and the Boards questionnaire down one spot. The agenda was approved as amended on a motion by Kespohl, seconded by Pauls.

Minutes: The March minutes were approved on a motion from Grus, seconded by Kespohl.

Monthly Report: Blevins asked how many part-time rangers would be hired for the summer.

Griggs said there would be two this year, as opposed to just one.

Pauls asked about training?

Griggs answered that they were both in training now, and would be on their own soon.

The March monthly report was approved on a motion from Pauls, seconded by Blevins.

PROS Consulting / Fees and Charges Public Meeting

Hood introduced Barbara Heller of PROS Consulting, the firm that is conducting the fees, charges and staffing study. The firm is looking at staffing needs, existing fees and revenue recovery goals. Of the department's budget, about a third of it comes from fees and charges for recreational programs and facilities. The fees are reviewed every year and set by ordinance as part of the budget process. But the revenue recovery goals that are in place were established in the mid 1980s. Hood said staff felt it was time to review those goals and see if changes need to be made. Heller is conducting the public meeting to gain input on those fees.

Heller opened her presentation by describing her background and company. She also described the steps the company was taking in obtaining information and coming to the final recommendations. PROS has reviewed the master plan and met with key community leaders and focus groups to get input. PROS is collecting data and doing cost allocations and pricing analyses. A staffing analysis is being done at a later date with meetings with staff, analyzing how time is spent. All of the information gathered will be compiled into a final report.

Heller said after the meetings she has held so far on fees and charges, she has heard a wide divergence of thoughts. The public meeting opened:

Ellen Kackley, 904 Sunset Lane—Kackley said she was part of the shrinking middle class. She and her husband have a golf annual pass, which she considers to be a good value. However, they would also like to join the ARC but are amazed at the prices in place for memberships. She commented that since they have the golf pass, they are unable to afford the ARC membership. Her husband just turned 60 which qualifies him for the senior membership, but she does not qualify since she is not 60 yet. She requested a consideration of the senior couple membership fee, and a possible classification for a couple when one person is a senior and the other person is not.

Wendy Remus, 32 East Clearview Drive—Remus said she enjoys all the facilities in Columbia, but is

disappointed about the choice that was made when the ARC was built. Before that, residents of Boone County qualified for the scholarship program. However, when the ARC was built, the decision was made that only residents of Columbia were eligible. Remus said she lived just outside the city limits and her children attended Columbia public schools and got the school flyers from Parks and Recreation. However, her family could no longer take advantage of the affordable rate. She asked about allowing Columbia public school students to participate in the scholarship program. She said her family set aside funds for occasional visits to the ARC, but would like to have a membership.

Becky Markt, 1661 High Quest—Markt is speaking on behalf of Phil Steinhaus from the Columbia Housing Authority. The comments were made on behalf of families living in public housing. Markt shared statistics of 732 persons in the downtown and Elleta Boulevard family neighborhoods. She said that last summer, fees at Douglass Pool kept many low-income individuals from taking advantage of the facility. The organization is pleased to see a new fee of \$1 admission this summer at Douglass Pool. She said the fee made the pool affordable and also by charging a minimal fee, ensured that patrons respected the value of the opportunity. She said that not much income is available to these families to take advantage of recreational opportunities. Markt, on behalf of Steinhaus, encouraged reduced rates for organized sports and assistance with uniforms and equipment. She encouraged the expansion of the youth scholarship fund and the development of cooperative relationships with other organizations whereby youth could earn recreational incentives, such as swim passes for books read. Markt added that access to recreational activities offers positive outlets for youth while teaching character and respect. She said that a common theme in crime forums sponsored by the Youth Community Coalition was that youth who felt connected to the community also show respect.

Ashley Turner, 1611 Towne Drive—Turner spoke as a representative of Rainbow House. She said the organization would like to bring more youth to the ARC as a recreational outlet, but cannot afford to do so, as often as they would like. Often, they have to use donated passes to be able to afford admission. She said it would be nice to see some sort of family pass for organizations such as hers, where they could purchase one annual pass and have it cover a particular number of youth for group outings. She said such a pass would be especially beneficial in the winter time. She said the organization would be willing to buy even two passes to cover the number of admissions needed. She said a daily admission of \$5 per child is not something they could easily afford for the number of times they would like to visit the facility. She said the organization normally brings about five youth to the ARC at a time.

Devine asked Hood if these questions have ever come up before, particularly about city limit restrictions on the scholarship program?

Hood answered that every time a fee is adjusted, there is public input. He said many cities charge resident and non-resident fees for programs, but we have chosen to not do that. He added that at the time the ARC was built, City Council decided that residents only would have eligibility for scholarships, since those funds come from the City's general fund. The ARC fees, family passes, and senior passes are discussed annually. Devine asked about the amount of scholarship money available?

Hood said the fund usually is about \$40,000 with \$5,000 of that used for adults.

Ristow added that last fiscal year, \$38,500 of that amount was used.

Kespohl said he was concerned about the number of rounds golf from the monthly report. He thought the decline may suggest that fees are not high enough, if we are having trouble meeting revenue recovery goals?

Heller commented that nationwide, golf numbers are flattening out.

Blevins said that the increases in fuel must make the cost of running some programs more expensive, which may be a factor to consider.

Pauls commented that he liked the idea of considering public schools as the boundary for the scholarship program, rather than the city limits. He thought the public comments were insightful. He added that he

thought the costs of public programs must still be lower than many private entities.

Grus agreed, saying she thought the classes at the ARC were very reasonably priced and punch cards provide an alternative to those who do not want to purchase an annual membership.

Heller asked about recovery goals?

Ristow distributed information about cost recovery goals and commented that the aquatics area covered mostly outdoor pools, not the ARC.

Hood added that aquatics are usually difficult, because pools are expensive to operate but are only open about three months of the year.

Devine asked about the improvements being completed at Hickman Pool?

Hood said that is a capital expense.

Kloeppel commented that it seemed the goals for aquatics were kind of low. Kespohl agreed, saying 50 percent probably is too low.

Grus said another benefit of the pools to users is the twilight fee which takes effect in the evenings.

Heller said the next question has to do with facility charges that the department has with an assessment of 10 percent to go into the capital fund. She asked for thoughts?

Kloeppel asked that same question of staff?

Hood said there are three areas that have such fees, with the golf course improvement fee, the ARC improvement fee, and all other recreational programs and sports user fees. There is not enough money there to pay for all capital improvements; the park sales tax pays for most of those. The improvement fee at the golf courses has been beneficial as it was used to pay for major renovations to the turf, irrigation system and cart paths. At the ARC, the fee is mainly used for equipment upgrades.

Kloeppel commented that the fee seemed like a good method because the users paying that fee are paying for upgrades to the facilities and services they use.

Devine agreed and added that he is glad to see public hearings held to gather input on how those funds should be used.

Heller asked the Commission their thoughts on how the department could rely more on other sources and less on park sales tax and revenue?

Blevins mentioned he thought the department received grants for various projects.

Hood confirmed this, saying that staff tries to monitor what is available and he believes they do a good job at taking advantage of opportunities. The department has not had much success with foundations.

Devine commented that the department receives nice donations of land and property as well. He said he would be concerned about a source of funding that was a one-time source that may not be available the following year. He said another concern of his regarding corporate or private sponsorships or support was making sure no inappropriate brand or product was associated with Parks and Recreation. He said staff did a good job of ensuring that didn't happen.

Kespohl mentioned investment opportunities and endowment funds, asking if anyone had thought about those things?

Hood said the City's finance department handles all City investments. The City's New Century Trust Fund was established to seek contributions and work to establish endowments.

Pauls said he would be interested in locally based corporations, to determine if they would provide any support. He said it seemed like that would be great public relations for any company.

Kloeppel said he thought there were good corporate sponsorships for youth and adult sports leagues.

Kespohl commented that a local business last year provided \$75,000 for Little League programs and they have done that again this year. He said he thought Parks and Recreation could get similar type of support.

Heller thanked the Commission and public for their input.

Boards and Commissions Questionnaire

Kloeppel and the Commissioners reviewed the Boards and Commissions questionnaire that was requested by the City Clerk's office. He took notes on each of issues. Commissioners named as their projects/issues the Crane property, ballot for the renewal of the park sales tax, and rezonings.

On the second question regarding policy changes or issues, Pauls expressed the desire to monitor the work of GetAbout Columbia.

Devine asked if there was some way to be consistent with asking for donations of park land from developers who are planning residential developments?

Hood answered that the City could enact a land dedication ordinance to that effect, but Council has never chosen to pursue such an ordinance.

Grus mentioned that there are a lot of requirements of developers such as stormwater controls, she wondered if it would be possible to require green space?

Devine agreed, saying he would like to keep that topic at the forefront.

Pauls said he thought that the City did pretty well in that area with the number of neighborhood parks and land donations that are made.

Griggs said the obstacles were really in the new developments in north Columbia; there is not much space there as land is being rapidly developed.

Hood said the whole issue has been debated for a long time—is setting aside green space or parkland something the developer should do or is it asking too much? He said the City always tries to suggest the need for park land, and several donations have happened in that manner. But, many donations don't happen at all. He said the issue raises legal issues and questions that are difficult to deal with.

On the third question of planned results, the Commission answered continuation of the work of the Parks and Recreation Department and a master plan for the new regional park.

On the fourth question of funding, the Commission answered that nothing additional was needed.

On question five about additional duties, Kloeppel asked if the Commission is in line with most other boards?

Hood said yes, that the majority of boards were advisory in nature.

Grus said she would consider having more responsibility over some issues. She said there were things the Commission felt strongly about that she would like the Council to consider more strongly.

Kloeppel said he thought the structure of the Commission was set up well, that he thought Council does listen to Commission recommendations for the most part.

Blevins added that he'd like to know what Council expects of the Commission. He thought it was up to Council to consider each board and decide if they wanted to expand duties.

Pauls said he thought if duties changed, then the qualifications of Commissioners should change to require more Parks and Recreation experience. He said he thought staff did a great job, and they were the qualified professionals.

Kespohl asked if the Commission dialogue was ever brought to the City Council?

Hood told the Commission that the Council gets copies of the minutes from every meeting. The minutes are not done verbatim, although public hearings are often recorded word for word.

The Commission answered no on the last two questions of the survey.

Council Items

Hood updated the Commission on Council items:

Field School/Parkade: Now that Field School will be closing, the new playground equipment that was supposed to be installed there will be installed at Parkade instead.

CARE: Council expressed interest in adding more available positions to the CARE summer program. At this

point, 175 positions have been filled out of 450 applications. Council has allocated more funds that would allow an additional 20 youth and 1 job coach to be hired.

Kloeppel asked about the program, how much they were paid?

Ristow said the program (for 14-18 year olds) paid minimum wage provided by the City. The employer provides the work site and supervision.

Hood added that the change in minimum wage has really impacted the CARE program and the number of youth that could be served.

Kespohl asked if there would be enough jobs available for an additional 20 kids? He also commented that some employers may consider funding the positions if asked.

Ristow replied that some employers had been approached about that in the past with mixed response. He said that some of the youth require more attention and supervision, so many employers feel that is their main contribution to the program.

Hood said another issue with CARE is the possible relocation of the office. The office would move from its current site to the one on Orr Street to share with the CARE Gallery. It would make more sense for the office and gallery to be together.

Liability Insurance: The issue is expected to come before the Council on May 5.

Capital Project Update

Griggs shared these updates:

Oakland Ballfields: Repairs were made to the fence after vandalism occurred.

Stephens Lake Park: Fence was installed around the beach, after work was done to move it slightly.

Hickman HS: New fence was installed at the tennis courts and a new net and scoreboard repairs were made at the baseball field. The pool was also painted. This work is conducted in exchange for use of the facilities during non-school hours.

Flat Branch Park: Work is being done to prepare for the dedication....stone bases for plaques were installed.

Harris Shelter at Cosmo: New curbing was added to help storm water runoff.

Atkins fields: Chain link backstops are being installed.

Antimi: Shade structure bases are being installed.

Stephens Lake: New sidewalk connectors have been built in the sprayground/beach area.

Commission Comments

Kloeppel mentioned that he stopped by the Open House at the Stephens Lake Activity Center and thought it was a nice facility.

Hood said the facility has been well-received and it was proving to be beneficial to be near Stephens Lake Park and Riechmann Pavilion.

Staff Comments

Hood reminded the Commission of the Flat Branch dedication on May 3 and mentioned that the dedication of the Louisville and Longview Parks would be June 14.

Public Comments

None

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.