

PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

MEETING DATE: March 24, 2021
LOCATION: Virtual Zoom Meeting
CALLED TO ORDER: 7:02 p.m.
MEETING ADJOURNED: 7:46 p.m.
NEXT MEETING: April 28, 2021

ROLL CALL

NAME	PRESENT	ABSENT
David Addison, School Board Liaison	X	
Tracey Downing	X	
Ben Eckler-Chair	X	
Dana Gilgrist		X
Tammy Hoyt	X	
Kate Krieger	X	
Lindsey Michaud		X
Peg Pedersen		
Vacant		X
Sarah Richardson, Council Liaison	X	
Scott Davis, Staff Liaison	X	

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Hoyt moved to approve the minutes. Addison seconded. Minutes were approved by voice vote with no dissent, abstention.

No visitor comments.

STAFF REPORTS-presented by Scott Davis

PARKS

The prairie burn in Lockwood Park in February went great. Always a scary day, but we didn't burn down the city. All the prairie burned that we needed to. Already signs of rejuvenation! More room for the native species to bloom.

Happens every 3 years. 3 years ago, weren't able to burn because it was too wet, so this was the first burn in 6 years.

Blackburn Park is currently getting all new concrete pathways and trails. Trails have been there since the turn of the century. Public Works helping out with staffing and resources. Saved us 30-50% of the budget. This project will last probably another 4 weeks. It is our goal to keep at least one walking loop open at all times. The Edgar sidewalk is not being replaced, only paths in the park – even in the wooded areas.

All restrooms in the parks are open. Ball fields will all be playable by next week.

We lost a major field rental organization (WG baseball/softball) this year so the fields will not be as heavily utilized this summer. So, we're short on rentals this year, and down a bit on revenue but not a tremendous hit.

RECREATION

Since our last meeting St. Louis County has published an event planning guideline, which is new. We are currently writing our COVID-19 plan for our summer events following this guideline so that we can submit them to County for approval. Not so much guidelines as a series of 20 questions. We will be submitting for both fireworks and parade for Independence Day.

As of today, we are still planning on opening the Aquatic Center this summer. We are still waiting on County to provide an updated guideline for public water recreation facilities. Scott was part of 2-3 directors that sat down, and redlined guidelines produced last summer and submitted what we thought should be done as doable and reasonable. Ex: the one-way panting on decks as unreasonable. They said they appreciated the submission and that they thought they'd be able to accept and make the suggested changes.

David: are other pools around opening and will they keep the same rules/allow outsiders in?

Scott: at my last meeting it seems everyone will be opening, though we're all waiting on the county guidelines for what it's going to look like (sign up in advance for time slot? Completely open and just show up?). We're in a holding pattern.

We have recently entered into an agreement to purchase a new Zamboni for the rink. We have made the decision to switch from a propane fueled system to an all-electric model. It's a much safer system for participants, though the current isn't unsafe, as there will be no exhaust vented into the building. It'll also be cheaper in the long run since we won't need propane to power it. Batteries will need to be replaced in ~7 years.

We have also entered into an agreement to purchase all new HVAC systems for the Recreation Complex. The existing system is original to the building? This system will be more efficient and have much better controls. We will be able to see the system online and get notifications from it if there are issues. In addition, we will be able to control our ice rink chiller plant, cooler towers, etc. and also see it online and get notifications and monitor it remotely.

The new brochure came out last week. You can find it online or pick up a hard copy at the Rec Complex or City Hall. Not being mailed anymore. You can call and request a mailing, too. All new online registration software helps route folks to the online catalogue.

We are bringing egg hunts to your house this year. Next week we are providing At-Home Egg Hunts where we will come to your house, hid a dozen filled eggs, and leave a goodie bag on your porch. Then we will text you it is done so that you can take the kiddos out. Cost is \$15. It's getting to be pretty popular.

We are also excited to have Peter Cottontail hop around to homes on April 3. Cost is \$50 and included photo op with Peter and an egg hunt. Trying to fill the gaps since you can't go to the mall, etc. to see the Easter Bunny

Arbor Day Celebration will be on April 27 at 5:30 pm. Tree plantings begin at 3:00 pm. In honor of Missouri's bicentennial, we are planting 200 trees in Blackburn Park.

Ben: where are the trees being planted?

Scott: bird sanctuary and also in the wooded areas. We're not converting green space into wooded space.

Sarah: Are we part of the exchange for Bradford Pear trees this year?

Scott: No, though we have in the past. That is usually run through Forest Releaf.

Both camp and softball registrations are also open right now. They're not filling up, but we're getting good numbers so far. We're hoping to have a closer to a full camp than we did last year.

COVID guidelines for camp? Nothing put out yet, but we can handle it based on the face that we made it work last year.

Tracy: how do we set policy for safety guidelines? Does the council sign off on protocols?

Scott: anyone can see the guidelines on the County's website. Covers everything from indoor restaurants to sports. Scott looks at them once a week to keep an eye on updates, as it significantly changes operations. Scott reviews them, writes a memo and sends to city manager who sends it to council. WG doesn't have a public health dept so we follow the county's guidelines, though we could be more restrictive if we choose to. County mostly follows the CDCs recs, though is sometimes more stringent.

Tracy: wants to help support/protect Scott and also the city from pushback from residents. How can we help? Fellow commissioner, interested in a safety committee? So as to ease the burden on staff. If it helps.

Scott: For COVID, it changes so quickly, so it's a staff-level job to stay on top of. As for fireworks type stuff, the commission can get involved and make suggestions.

Tracy: As someone at the burn clinic for 6 weeks, I'd like to help.

Tracy: What are the subcommittees?

Scott: We don't have any, though it's available as long as it's inside sunshine law (any more than 3 folks meeting or even emailing, can't do it without it being an open meeting). Also, if Tracy wants to just talk one-on-one, we can do that without violating sunshine laws. Scott will look into it and get back to Tracy.

David: questions about concessions: what are we doing this year?

Scott: we didn't renew the contract with previous provider. We've taken it over and we're doing it in-house. Getting new concessions staff vaccinated (hep a, etc.). Hopefully be able to sell out of pool this summer.

COUNCIL REPORTS-presented by Sarah Richardson

We have use tax on the ballot, you'll see something in the mail. Lots of questions about what it is and how it's collected. We're allowed to answer questions, though not advocate one way or another. If we as WG haven't decided/voted to collect it, it will go to the state and not to WG. It's confusing, but the mayor and city finance director are the best ones to answer your questions. Coming up on 4/6. Short election, not much else on the ballot.

Development project in Webster North discussions. We're starting to get more info from the County about traffic impact and cost assessments. Once we've got it, it'll be made public/available to those interested.

Lots of questions about Community Days carnival. WG is a partner, but not the one running it. It's a Lion's Club event. Lots of questions about locations, but the city has no new info.

We still have an open spot on Parks & Rec Commission and quite a few applicants. What do you want? Are there parts of Webster missing?

Tracy: We're an all-white group and I'd love to see some diversity. I don't know where we all live, but I'd like to see some diversity. And what is the disagreement with the Lions Club? Who does what?

Scott: WG hosts parade, fireworks and kids, Lions host carnival and food. It can't be on the blacktop because of construction on Hixon, so no idea where it will be hosted.

Ben: Is the construction extended back to the blacktop?

Scott: I think the Lions are close to a new location. As far as construction goes, I've heard that it's more an issue of staging and overflow than specific construction.

OLD BUSINESS

Ben: I don't recall seeing a secret shopper survey

Scott: Kate reminded me, I was taking notes and talking, so I forgot to send the Doodle poll. Scott will get that sent out for the upcoming month.

Ben: trash clean-up day

Kate: we talked about talking about it more

Scott: I talked to the Park Superintendent about getting school/kids involved. The areas that could use it most aren't the most kid-friendly: medians on Lockwood, and upper Deer Creek along Marshall Avenue. You all could go at any time in any area though. We can provide trash bags and they can be dropped off by or near a trash receptacle in that park for pickup by staff the next business day.

Ben: We decide and let you know a few weeks out?

Scott: Just do it, basically.

NEW BUSINESS

Secret Shopper updates – see above

SET NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting scheduled for 7 pm. Wednesday, April 28, 2021.

Eckler moved to approve, Addison seconded. All approved.

ADJOURNED

Eckler moved for adjournment. Tracy seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:46 p.m.