

## **NORTH LITTLE ROCK PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING**

**APRIL 15, 2013**

The North Little Rock Parks and Recreation Commission meeting was called to order by Mrs. Vicki Stephens at 5:00 p.m., on April 15, 2013, at the North Little Rock Community Center.

**Commission Members Present:** Neil Bryant, Tom Davis, Charles Jones, Chandra Martin, Otistene Smith and Vicki Stephens. Bruce Waller was out of town and excused.

**Staff Members Present:** Bob Rhoads, Jan Eberle-Wilkins, Willie Elizandro, Tina Worrell, Jeff Caplinger, Jennie Cunningham, Katrina Wilbon and Renee Henson.

**Others Present:** Connie Phillips, Jeral Howard and Trina Johnson.

**Disposition of Minutes:** Mrs. Stephens presented minutes of the March 18, 2013, Parks and Recreation Commission meeting.

Mr. Bryant made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Martin, to accept the minutes as presented. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

**Presentation of NLRPR Starz:** Tina Worrell stated that one (1) of two (2) cheerleading squads (12 girls) for the recreation center's basketball program went to the National competitions, April 6 and 7, 2013, in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

Jennie Cunningham stated that they won the National Recreation Division of Cheer Champions Competition title, which consisted of dance, cheerleading, tumbling and other routines. There were 300 teams from across the nation in competition. In the Level One division, there were 54 teams, and this was North Little Rock Parks and Recreation Department's first competition. The girls won a National trophy, championship medal and jacket. The girls performed a cheer.

Ms. Cunningham stated that the volunteer coach is Trinity Johnson. She has been volunteering for approximately five (5) years. She is a senior at North Little Rock high school and a four (4) year member of the Charging Wildcats Varsity Cheerleaders. She goes above and beyond to help the girls and credit goes to her for getting the girls to this point in winning the title.

Mr. Rhoads stated that he forgot to announce at the beginning of the meeting, but the Parks Superintendent's job is being advertised and Willie Elizandro is filling in as the interim superintendent.

**Public Land Development Task Force Report:** Mr. Rhoads introduced Connie Phillips, chair of the Public Land Development Task Force.

Mrs. Phillips stated that the 13-member task force was formed last fall by Mayor Hays to review 140 public parcels of public and park land. They will be making a presentation to the City Council on Monday, April 22, 2013, and eventually make a formal recommendation to them. Task force recommendations will be based on economic impact, beautification and the cost. Areas studied and comments:

- Easements along Pike Avenue could be secured with an iron fence and used as community gardens in a park like setting. Two (2) aldermen conducted a survey and residents are very favorable. She said she is aware that parks cost money due to maintenance and equipment. Economic development money needs to be found to offset the costs.

**Public Land Development Task Force Report (continued):**

- At 20<sup>th</sup> Street and Pike Avenue, a vacant city building could be used for community garden storage or a place to meet.

- There is a need for a lodge and small community center at Burns Park for tournaments, events and meetings. This is an idea that the task force would recommend, as it would enhance what is already at Burns Park.

- It is the consensus of the task force and those attending the public hearing that the quarry remain public land only. Economic development is off the table, although there are safety issues with the rocks. It could be used as a park or conservation area. Partnering with another organization to maintain it was discussed to help with the expense and maintenance.

Mr. Rhoads stated that a land conversion of approximately 60 acres is required to build a lodge and the conversion could be done with quarry land.

Mrs. Martin stated that the Baring Cross area has been requesting a recreation center and safe place for the children to play. Could the vacant city building be used for this?

Mrs. Phillips said that both ward aldermen had conducted a survey in that area and residents were very favorable to having a recreation center. The old city building is not very large and was originally built for a dentist's office.

The public hearing was publicized at every neighborhood meeting and signs were put up in various places for over a month. Approximately 50 people attended. No one from the Baring Cross spoke for a recreation center, but no one said they opposed it.

The task force will be giving a recommendation to the City Council, but it will be up to them (City Council) as to what action they would want to take.

- There are two large pieces of land by the Baring Cross bridge. A railroad museum was discussed with Union Pacific Railroad, which would be another tourist attraction.

- Smart House Way near the Arkansas River is currently under contract for development of condominiums or apartments.

- Young Road could have economic development at that location.

Mrs. Stephens said that a public hearing was held for suggestions.

In reference to the agenda summary statement indicating the idea of the funds from the sale or lease of Burns Park land, Mrs. Smith asked that if money could be used for the recreation centers.

Mrs. Stephens said that the commission could make the decision, and it will be contingent if these projects happen. The department cannot even maintain what is current, and the task force understands this.

Mrs. Stephens thanked Mrs. Phillips for serving on the task force and coming to the commission meeting.

**Optimist Association 2012 Annual Report and 2013 Agreement:** Jeff Caplinger stated that by the operational agreement, the Optimist Club is required to submit an annual report to the commission in relationship to its operation of the American Legion baseball program.

Jeral Howard, representative of the Optimist Club, said a lot of good things have been done. In two (2) years, 35 new teams were picked up. The teams will eat and stay in North Little Rock, which will bring money into the area. The ballfields need to be ready by the end of May 2013, as there will be a Memorial Day tournament. He complimented the department for their hard work.

Mrs. Stephens said she appreciated their organization bringing these tournaments back to the North Little Rock facilities.

Mr. Jones made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bryant, to accept and file their 2012 annual report. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

Jeff presented the 2013 agreement for the Optimist Club. He said that their agreement is similar to other ball organizations.

Mr. Bryant made a motion, seconded by Mr. Jones, to approve the agreement. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

**Batting Cage Agreement:** Mr. Rhoads stated that after further thought and consideration, Rob Fisher, owner of the batting cage at Burns Park, has verbally indicated that it would be in his best interest to no longer operate the batting cage. Thus, there is no need to do a new agreement. He seems to be willing to sell the facilities for whatever he can get to parks and recreation. If the department is not interested, he may have found a buyer for machines and equipment.

Per the current agreement, he is supposed to return the park areas to their original state, so legally there is no obligation for the department to purchase it. The department could buy all or part of the amenities if there was the need or desire to do such. Mr. Fisher has asked the department to buy the restroom and the parking lot in the amount of \$40,000.

In 2006, the commission reviewed in detail the option to purchase the facility. At the time, Mr. Fisher owed \$130,000 on the facility and it was appraised for \$70,000. He was not interested in selling it for that price. Staff also reconsidered owning and operating the facility, but felt it would not be economically feasible at that time. The only possible use might be a ranger station, office for the softball association or a disc golf concession.

Mrs. Stephens said she does not feel that the department needs the facilities.

Mr. Jones made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Smith, to reject the offer on the table from Mr. Fisher. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Stephens asked Mr. Rhoads to find out what timeframe Mr. Fisher has to remove items as stated in the agreement.

Mr. Rhoads agreed and stated that if Mr. Fisher offers to give the department the restroom building, he will bring this back to the commission for consideration.

**Capital Program 2013:** Mr. Rhoads presented the capital list approved in 2013. The capital process starting in May 2013, will be critical this year to determine priorities for the next few years. To do a bond, it will cost \$373,000 overall in interest. If a bond is not done, there will be \$300,000 to spend each year for three years and \$1,000,000 thereafter for a pay-as-you-go plan. A recommendation will be brought to the commission in the future.

Mr. Bryant asked what the interest was on the last bond, as it seems to be more than 3%.

Mr. Rhoads said he got these numbers from the finance department but will recheck this information.

Mrs. Stephens said she feels that right now, the department should live within their means. One big expense is the baseball complex parking lot, and she is not sure that the money needs to be spent on parking at this time.

Mr. Davis suggested asking a large national company to sponsor a facility or complex, and name the facility after that corporation as a possible way to get the funding.

Mrs. Stephens said she liked his idea of finding a corporate sponsor, and this needs to be seriously thought about.

#### **Director Reports:**

**Recreation Advisory Committee Update:** Mrs. Smith reported that 12-13 members are active. Meetings are held the second Tuesday of every other month at 6:00 p.m. Their goal has been to get three (3) issues from each center, Funland, and the North Little Rock Community Center fitness center. There are recreation advisory committee (RAC) guidelines that have been approved by the committee. The committee is seeking to solve problems.

The marketing sub-committee believes that parks, Funland and the recreation centers are under marketed, even though they are advertised.

Grants workshops have been held and grants are going to be the key to resurging money for their needs.

Glenda Parker at the North Heights Recreation Center is researching how to find additional space and is looking at use of the closed elementary school next door and portable buildings. Renee Henson at Sherman Park is trying to see who is responsible for the lease of the Holman Hall building and to whom rent is being paid. Katrina Wilbon at Glenview wants more lights and clearing done on the walking trail to make it safer.

A committee is working on the process of how to get volunteers to work at Funland and recognizing them.

Mr. Rhoads suggested that the committee check with the city's Volunteer Office.

Mrs. Worrell said she had checked with the volunteer office in the past and they had asked that the department not request recreational type volunteers. They want volunteers that have gone through their program to work with senior activities.

Mrs. Smith said there should be some way to recruit volunteers to help with some of the activities. Travis Young is working on this project also.

The committee feels that the Glenview splash park should be marketed for birthday parties. The area needs to be cleaned up, painted and the building power washed.

The Recreation Advisory Committee has a 501(c)3 non-profit status.

**Director Reports continued (Recreation Advisory Committee Update):**

Mrs. Stephens asked if they could solicit contributions for non-profit organizations.

Mrs. Worrell stated that there is a North Little Rock Foundation but the department does not know of any individuals that serve on that board. Individuals that serve on the committee would need to come forward with information. The Foundation Board is not familiar with the Recreation Advisory Committee business.

Mrs. Stephens said now that she knows that the Recreation Advisory Committee is set up to take donations, she would like to make one.

Mrs. Smith thanked Mr. Rhoads, Mrs. Worrell, staff, center directors, Chandra Martin and those that have attended the Recreation Advisory Committee meetings.

Mrs. Stephens said she appreciated the report by Mrs. Smith.

**Intern Employee:** Mrs. Worrell introduced Josh DePriest, Intern Employee. Mr. DePriest said he has attended various meetings, worked programming, assisted with activities including the Easter egg hunt, and worked at park maintenance, athletic complexes, golf course and Funland. He attended Arkansas Tech and will continue working another two (2) weeks with the department.

Mrs. Stephens they were glad to have him.

**Remedial Investigation Meeting:** Jeff Caplinger stated that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will hold a public meeting at the Laman Library, 6:00 p.m. on April 18, 2013, regarding an upcoming remedial investigation study in Burns Park.

**Burn Plan Deadline:** Mr. Caplinger stated that the burn plan deadline has been moved to April 30, 2013. It will depend on the weather as to whether another planned burn will be held. The next location will be the RV Park. If weather does not cooperate, the plan will be moved to the fall.

**Calendar of Events:** Mrs. Stephens stated that the next commission agenda deadline is Tuesday, May 7, 2013, at 2:00 p.m. Any items need to be called in by that date and time to the Parks and Recreation Administration Office.

The next regularly scheduled commission meeting is Monday, May 20, 2013, at 5:00 p.m., in the North Little Rock Community Center.

A public hearing will be held immediately after the May 20, 2013, commission meeting.

**Adjournment:** Mrs. Smith made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bryant, to adjourn at 6:23 p.m. All voted aye, and the motion passed unanimously.

**Public Comments:** Mrs. Stephens opened the meeting for public comments but there were none.

Submitted by,

Otistene Smith, Secretary