The North Little Rock Parks and Recreation Commission meeting was called to order by Ms. Vicki Stephens at 5:00 p.m., on August 15, 2011, at the North Little Rock Community Center.

**Commission Members Present:** Tom Davis, Jeanne Hyde, Chandra Martin, Vicki Stephens and Bruce Waller. Charles Jones had to work and Otistene Smith was at the hospital with her father. These were excused.

**Staff Members Present:** Bob Rhoads, Jan Eberle-Wilkins, John Crow, Jeff Caplinger, Travis Young, Tony Pate, Jennie Cunningham, Pam Smith, Katrina Wilbon, Glenda Parker, Renee Henson, Ernest Peoples, Kate Finefield and Assistant City Attorney Paula Jones.

**Others Present:** Alderman Debi Ross, Alderman Beth White, Alderman Steve Baxter, Bernadette Gunn, Rod Himon, Bobby Gosser, Jr., Kevin Grace, Bill Byrd, Norm Denny, Robin West, Ron Oberlag, Connie Settle, Shannon Harris, Shanta Baro and Joshua Pangle.

**Financial Report - Second Quarter 2011:** Mr. Waller reported that as of June 30, 2011, revenues are running about 44.8% of budgeted, and expenses are running 43.9%. Based on this report, at the end of the year the budget would be about $9,000 over committed, but noted that this report only goes through June 2011. Staff has done a good job in keeping expenses down and in line with revenues.

Mr. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Hyde, to accept the report. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

**Utility Costs – Second Quarter 2011:** Mr. Rhoads reported that utility charges on the June 2011 second quarter report are actually usage through May 2011. Usage and billing for June and July 2011 will show on an upcoming report. These two (2) months were hot and dry and utility costs are expected to increase due to the watering required.

Mr. Davis asked if ball season is over.

Mr. Rhoads replied that softball season is not over.

**Minutes:** Ms. Stephens presented the minutes of the July 18, 2011, Parks and Recreation Commission minutes.

Mr. Waller made a motion, seconded by Mr. Davis, to accept the Parks and Recreation Commission minutes. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Martin stated that minutes from the Vision, Goals and Objectives meeting held July 18, 2011, with the staff need to be clarified. The reason that the commission voted to raise the After School program rates is that they (the commission members) had understood that more staff was needed at the recreation centers.

Ms. Stephens presented a list of recreation employees, duties and programs at each recreation center that was submitted by Travis Young. She said if there are any questions pertaining to this report, it can be discussed the next time the commission meets with the staff. She thanked Mr. Young for all he is doing in addition to the center directors and staff. She thanked the staff for having them (commission members) meet with them last month.
**Fit2Live Presentation:** Mr. Rhoads introduced Bernadette Gunn, Fit2Live Coordinator, and Rod Himon, North Little Rock Communities Putting Prevention to Work Grant Administrator. Their goal is to make North Little Rock the healthiest city in Arkansas.

Mr. Himon stated that their mission is to create an environment that empowers the North Little Rock community to recognize and adopt healthy life choices, look and collect evidence based data, be a partnership to identify and share resources, develop and reinforce policy initiatives that support these goals, and promote and implement innovative programs and practices.

In 2010, the North Little Rock received a grant from the National League of Cities for $1,500,000 to work on this initiative through obesity. North Little Rock was only one (1) community in 50 across the nation that received funding. Funding must go to the underserved areas to refurbish existing areas. The funds must be spent by September 2012.

Their goal is to work to change policies, systems and environments within the city and school districts to increase assets to ensure schools have opportunities for physical activity throughout North Little Rock neighborhoods.

Ms. Gunn stated that the grant requires refurbishing existing locations and not building new. Some of the areas and projects involved will include refurbishing basketball courts at local recreation centers, soccer fields, baseball fields, teaching lessons, and working with the after school program. She will be working with Mr. Rhoads to identifying what is needed at all of the recreation centers.

Mr. Himon stated that the joint use agreements are to establish written agreements between schools and community organizations in underserved areas to provide accessible places for physical activity in North Little Rock. Another aspect is healthy food options, which encourages the availability of healthy food options in city owned or operated facilities.

Ms. Gunn said worksite wellness will involve a program for the North Little Rock employees, to encourage them to eat healthier and work out more. A North Little Rock early childhood program will look to see how to incentivize child care and help encourage them to make healthy improvements in nutrition and physical activity standards. The special events and promotion area will allow workers to get out into the community to promote Fit2Live and educate the public by talking about fitness and provide resources.

Ms. Gunn said that $18,956 was awarded to seven (7) local community garden projects in June 2011 and more grants are to come. There will be an informational meeting about these gardens on August 27, 2011, at City Hall.

Ms. Stephens thanked her and Mr. Himon for the presentation.

**Urban Farm Project (formerly Community Garden) at Vestal Park:** Mr. Caplinger stated that the Urban Farm Project representatives and Police Athletic League representatives will meet to discuss cooperative use of Vestal Park.

Mr. Rhoads reported that the Urban Farm Project area was reviewed and staff is recommending an agreement be executed with the Argenta Community Development Corporation for the use of 1.1 acres at Vestal Park so they can proceed with this project.
Urban Farm Project (formerly Community Garden) at Vestal Park (continued): Highlights of the agreement that may be different follow:

- A five-year term with the option to renew for another five (5) years if approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission and Argenta Community Development Board.

- Area may be fenced at the expense of the Argenta Community Development Corporation.

- Area inside the fence, non-planted areas, and off-season will be maintained, weeded, and mowed to comply with the City Code.

- Parks and Recreation will assist in supplying water to the area and will pay for reasonable usage.

The City Attorney’s office is presently reviewing the agreement for form and content.

The Police Athletic League had wanted to use the garden area for parking, but there is ample room for parking on the other side of the park.

Ms. Stephens said the Police Athletic League organization only has use of the land inside the fence.

Mrs. Martin made a motion, seconded by Mr. Waller, to execute the agreement with the Argenta Community Development Corporation as presented and approved by the City’s legal department. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

Baseball/Softball Operation for 2012: Mr. Rhoads reported that starting 2012, staff is recommending that the maintenance and concession operation for the Burns Park Athletic Complex, Softball Complex, and the Senior League/DeSalvo Stadium fields be operated by Parks and Recreation staff. This would provide better and more consistent maintenance, and help assure quality facilities are provided for all citizens’ use. Associations would still be in control of their leagues and tournaments they desire to host. Not all of the operation has been worked out at this time.

Parks and Recreation staff would do field maintenance and run the concession stands based on the budget projections. Associations would be allowed to run their leagues, host tournaments, and collect fees associated with such. Meetings have been held with representatives of the Burns Park Athletic Association, North Little Rock Softball Association, Optimist Club, and the North Little Rock School District. The Burns Park Athletic Association and the North Little Rock School District is favorable to the proposed changes. The Softball Association is somewhat different since it is an adult program only, and wants to keep the concessions and have the department to do the maintenance only. The high school program and American Legion is involved at the DeJanis field, and run by the Optimist Association. The Optimist Association prefers that the department does not take over the program.

Mr. Rhoads asked for approval to proceed on the concept of Parks and Recreation operating and doing the maintenance and concessions at those facilities and return to the commission after talking with the groups more. The final fees, charges and procedures to implement and pay for the change proposal will be finalized for approval at the September regularly scheduled commission meeting. Discussion with promoters that have had tournaments in those complexes have been held to see how they would entertain these changes.

Ms. Stephens opened the meeting to those persons wanting to speak on this, and asked that one (1) representative from each program speak for their group.
Baseball/Softball Operation for 2012 (continued): Bobby Gosser, Jr., with the Burns Park Athletic Association, stated that this great idea has sustainability wants to help with the new program. It is a win-win situation for both entities. This will give them an opportunity to run tournaments and share in those costs, as well as help Parks and Recreation retrieve some of the money for operation. Their organization appreciates Mr. Rhoads and the commission members.

Robin West with the North Little Rock Optimist Club, said their club had problems with the financial part of the proposed plan. Most of their money comes from gate fees, which they use to pay their umpires. If Parks and Recreation takes a part of the gate money, it will impact them on what they can do for the tournament. They do not feel that the Parks and Recreation Department has the experience to maintain a quality field. He appreciates the concept and is worried about over usage of the fields, but will work with the department on whatever they decide to do. He asked who would be scheduling events. They have two (2) teams and play June 1 through July 31. They have a Memorial Day tournament and a state tournament at the end of the year.

Mr. Rhoads said the Parks and Recreation Department staff will schedule the events.

Bill Byrd, volunteer baseball coach with the North Little Rock High School baseball team, said their group is in total support of the proposed change. Their group is limited in ways under the Optimist Club. They would like to see the field have more use, and to put up a sign showing that the DeJanis ballfield is North Little Rock High School’s home field.

Ron Oberlag, Optimist Club member, said he cannot understand why the department wants to take over their program that they have handled for over 50 years with volunteers.

Ms. Stephens said the facility is to be used for the youth. She has been told that the American Legion type of ball is not what the youth want to play, which is unfortunate. At this time, youth are changing to the professional type ball. She appreciates the Optimist Club’s hard work and labor. The staff believes and is recommending that the commission approve the department take over these fields that belong to the people and youth of North Little Rock.

Kevin Grace, President of the Burns Park Athletic Association, agreed that field usage is most important. He has worked with the North Little Rock Optimist Club, as well as the Burns Park Athletic Association, and the volunteers have put in a tremendous amount of hours. He feels that a letter of gratitude should be extended to them for their years of service and time, and that their service should be recognized.

Mr. Davis asked how many employees would be hired for this proposed change.

Mr. Rhoads stated that there would be three (3) fulltime employees, and five (5) parttime or seasonal employees hired for all of the facilities.

Mr. Crow stated that one (1) of the current park maintenance employees has worked with professional and college level baseball programs. All employees will be trained to work on these fields and to maintain the same level of quality the Optimist Club has shown over the many years.
Baseball/Softball Operation for 2012 (continued): Ms. Stephens asked if more than two (2) teams would be playing at the DeJanis field.

Mr. Rhoads stated that during the school year, the Central Arkansas Christian and North Little Rock high schools play. American Legion plays during the summer and sometimes in the fall.

Mr. Crow stated that with the condition of the field and using the two (2) senior fields, more tournaments can be held, which will result in more revenue.

Mr. Davis asked how these changes would be funded.

Mr. Rhoads replied that the staff is still meeting with the ball organizations to get the details worked out. At this time, the North Little Rock High School representatives have agreed to an increase in fees. The Burns Park Athletic Association has agreed to the proposed recommendation. The Softball Association is an adult league and different and willing to change, but terms have not been worked out. The Optimist Club (American Legion) with two (2) teams and two (2) fields, has a little more difficulty figuring out how they are going to raise money that they are used to getting. Numbers will be revised and a budget for this plan presented to the commission at the September 2011 regularly scheduled commission meeting.

Mrs. Martin asked if there was another alternative or way to negotiate a compromise to deal with the concerns mentioned (financial and field over usage) so every entity has what they want, and still do what the department needs to do.

Mr. Rhoads said that the staff has shown they are capable of taking care of maintenance at the soccer fields and feels comfortable that maintenance needs will be taken care of at the ballfields. The field usage will be monitored. Priority use will be the North Little Rock High School, American Legion, and Central Arkansas Christian school. Currently there has not been American Legion teams playing on the DeJanis field in the fall.

Mr. Waller stated that the staff is asking the commission to authorize them (staff) to proceed with the concept and return in September 2011 with the recommended budget.

Mr. Rhoads said there are two (2) proposals. Tournament play usually has a gate charge. Associations will keep the gate fees for league play. The two (2) proposals include having the department receive either 20% level or 25% level of gate fees (to cover maintenance costs) if the association hosted the tournament. The department would receive 100% of the net concession sales.

Mrs. Martin asked what the difference was in private school and public school team charges.

Mr. Rhoads stated that because public schools are a governmental entity, they would not be charged as much as an entity that was charging a large amount of money to participate to attend school.

Mr. West stated that AAA gets $4.00 of a $5.00 gate fees if any high school state tournament, district tournament or zone tournament is associated with them (AAA).
Baseball/Softball Operation for 2012 (continued): Mr. Rhoads stated that allowances have been made to address this. The proposed agreement states that schools may charge admission and keep all gross gate receipts for jamborees and AAA tournaments. This was discussed with the school and they were in agreement with the 25%.

Mr. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mr. Waller, that Parks and Recreation staff continue to proceed with this plan to perform maintenance and concession operation for the Burns Park Athletic Complex, Softball Complex, Senior League Field and the DeJanis Field/DeSalvo Stadium. Fee arrangements will be worked out and brought back to the commission at the September 2011 regularly scheduled meeting. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

Policy Concerning Youth Left After Facilities Close: Mr. Young stated that staff is having problems with parents not picking up their children by the time the recreation center closes. The recreation centers are not a daycare. At the last staff meeting held prior to the commission meeting, staff was asked to develop a policy concerning handling of children not being picked up and left at the recreation center after the time of closing. Recreation staff met and recommends the following:

- All parents/guardians will be required to read and sign that they have read and know the hours of operation of the center and that they understand the closure policy for the recreation center.
- For first time offenders, the parent/guardian and child will receive a written warning that further instances of not being picked up on time could mean suspension from the program.
- For the second offense, the individual will be suspended from the program/center for three (3) days and notified in writing of such.
- For the third offense, the child will be suspended indefinitely until a meeting is held with the Recreation Superintendent, Center Director, participant and parent/guardian. Action will be determined and recommended to the Director of Parks and Recreation. Further suspension can be recommended or the child may be allowed to return to the program. If the parent/guardian does not agree with the suspension time, it can be appealed at the next regularly scheduled Parks and Recreation meeting. The appeal must be filed in writing within five (5) business days after the written determination by a representative of the Parks and Recreation Department, and by the first Tuesday of each month.
- If appealed and after full review by the Parks and Recreation Commission, final disposition will be made by the commission.
- Higher appeals of the commission’s decision may be made to the *Board of Adjustments.
- The problems mostly occur on Friday. So one (1) staff member will be scheduled for 30 minutes past closure. If all participants are picked up on time, staff will clock out at normal closure time.
- If a child is left after the extended 30 minutes. The police will be called to pick up the child.

*Changed from original statement of District Court.
**Policy Concerning Youth Left After Facilities Close:** Fulltime recreation center directors and program staff are also being asked to sign a document stating they concur with the policy.

Ms. Stephens asked how the correct home address could be verified and kept current.

Mr. Young stated that based on the commission's approval, all parents/guardians will be required to read and sign that they have read and know the hours of operation of the center, that they understand the closure policy for the recreation center, and that they have received a copy of the recreation center hours and policy. This information will be kept with the after school program registration information. Some parents or guardians may be hard to contact if someone else consistently picks up the child, but the staff will work to locate them.

Mrs. Hyde asked if the form could also require two (2) emergency contact names and phone numbers.

Mr. Young said this information is already included on the form.

Mrs. Martin stated that she was asked by a few parents to report to the commission that this policy will cause the child to be punished for the irresponsibility of their parents.

Mr. Waller asked Mrs. Jones if the commission was on solid legal grounds to go forward with this policy.

Mrs. Jones said yes, this policy is legal, and added that the policy should also state that parents would be responsible to report a change in address or phone numbers to the recreation center staff.

Ms. Stephens asked that Mr. Young bring a report back to the commission as to how this policy is working.

Mr. Young agreed.

Mrs. Martin asked if overtime worked would be paid to the staff.

Mr. Rhoads said that all staff working are paid, and the problem is more prevalent at the North Heights Recreation Center.

Mr. Young stated that Renee Henson with the Sherman Park Recreation Center already had it approved by Tina Worrell to schedule a staff member to stay 30 minutes after regular closing hours on Fridays. Each recreation center has their different needs. Most of these employees are 30-hour per week employees.

Mrs. Hyde made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Martin, to accept the policy and change the wording from District Court to Board of Adjustments. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

She thanked Mr. Young for getting the policy together with the staff.
Sherman Park and Burns Park Grants: Mr. Rhoads reported that staff is recommending that the department proceed on doing this year's Arkansas State Parks Outdoor Grant for Sherman Park's outdoor area, and for Burns Park by adding Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility. Several items for Sherman Park were not funded in a previous year's awarded grant. A grant request for $241,400 is being made for:

- Sherman Park to include rebuilding and drainage of the multi-use athletic field, upgrading the athletic lighting, and updating backstops and fencing.
- Burns Park ADA accessibility will be done in the Center Stage area on Funland Drive to include walkways, replacing restroom with ADA compliant restroom, and accessible playground impact surfacing. Near the covered bridge ADA parking and sidewalk accessibility will be made to the gazebo, and a new accessible pavilion and picnic area will be added. In the soccer complex at Quad 4, two (2) new accessible pavilions will be added.

Federal dollars of $120,700 would be matched with city funds, in-kind labor and materials. Included is the budget for the project, which needs to be approved and forwarded to the Mayor and City Council for final disposition. Funding for the project will be $94,700 from Parks Capital Fund and $26,000 from city labor and equipment.

Mr. Caplinger reported that he has been meeting with those involved for site visits to get this grant complete. The grant request needs commission approval so staff can forward to the City Council for their approval.

Mrs. Hyde made a motion, seconded by Mr. Davis, to accept the grant application and forward to the City Council for their approval. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

Parks and Recreation Needs Request Priorities for 2012: Mr. Rhoads stated that per request at the July 2011 commission meeting, the capital priority list was corrected. New items (those not mentioned in past years) have been noted with a star symbol. Nineteen (19) of the top 20 items were items requested in previous years. The priority list was distributed to the staff.

Mr. Davis asked what the old golf pro shop was being used for.

Mr. Rhoads replied that this building houses the concession stand, men and women’s main restrooms and lockers, and an area to watch television that stays on the golf channel (provided by the men’s association). Tournaments are sometimes started and ended there. There was a tree near the old golf pro shop that was struck by lightning and exploded. Twenty-three windows were knocked out, and electrical damage was done to the computer, television, and possibly other equipment. Items are being assessed.

Mr. Waller made a motion, seconded by Mr. Davis, to approve this priority plan for 2012. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.
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**Parks and Recreation Priority Five-Year Plan:** Mr. Rhoads presented a five-year plan derived from the priorities, community outreach, and public hearing meetings. The top 20 items from the 2012 priority plan was put in the 2012 and 2013 list. From the 2014 through 2016 year list, other items were listed. Items needing purchase and projects to be done will only occur as money is available. When the Hamburger Tax bond is available again, the commission will have another chance for input. General fund money, which is controlled by the Mayor and City Council, is all that would be available to get these items. The list will be submitted to them for consideration at that time. The recreation center director’s have seen this final priority list.

Mr. Waller made a motion, seconded by Mr. Davis, to approve this priority five-year plan. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

**Operation Budget for 2012:** Mr. Rhoads presented two (2) department organizational charts, one (i) for current positions and (i) for the proposed changes. Staff promotions and changes have required reorganization in duties and positions. He commended Jeff Caplinger for the good work he did on the charts.

Mr. Rhoads presented the 2012 budget proposal. The budget is in a new format as required by the Finance Department. It represents a balanced budget with significant reorganization being implemented. The reorganization had minimal impact on additions or deletions of employees except for the new employees to do sports ballfield maintenance and operate ballfield concessions.

**Several positions have been moved from one budget to another because of the reorganization.**

- The Parks Ranger has been moved from the Administration budget (033) to the Special Projects (formerly Athletics 041).
- The (17) parttime Soccer Concession Workers have been moved from the Athletic budget (041 now Special Projects) to the Concession budget (040).
- One (1) Concession Worker position (041) is being changed to a parttime Laborer position and being moved to Park Maintenance (034). The position has been marking and painting soccer field lines.

**New positions for 2012 follow:**

- **$4,844** One (1) parttime Laborer is being added to Park Maintenance (034) to assist with marking of the soccer field lines. Formerly, the Project Coordinator (041) assisted with marking of the lines.
- **$28,279** Two (2) fulltime Park Maintenance Workers are being added to Park Maintenance (034) to do ballfield maintenance.
- **$11,160** Three (3) intermittent or temporary Intermittent Laborers are being added for ballfield maintenance to Park Maintenance (034)
- **$38,329** Seventeen (17) parttime Concession Workers are being added to the Concession budget (040) to do ballfield concessions.
Operation Budget for 2012 (continued): Revenues derived from the operation and maintenance of the ballfields and concessions are anticipated to pay for or nearly pay for the new salaries and expenses related to taking on these new responsibilities. The proposed budget revenues are figured under the plan as previously presented under the Baseball/Softball Operation agenda item at receiving 20% of the admission.

The Hamburger Tax for 2012 is figured at 2.3% increase over 2011 projection. This was based on the current trend of 2011 taxes being 2.3% above the 2010 taxes.

For expenses, the Boys and Girls contract ends December 31, 2011. The $35,000 annual payment of the $45,000 contract amount was not included. The whole intent was for them to take over the operation and slowly decrease the department’s support. Initially $45,000 was given to them each year, but the last two (2) years only $35,000 was given to them each year. Cindy Doramus, President of the Boys and Girls Club, knows about this plan, but thinks they (Boys and Girls Club) still wants to use the building.

The four (4) Intermittent Recreation/Program Aides added last year were left in the budget. They will only be continued to be filled if needed for operation of the programs.

The First Tee program continued to be budgeted at a $5,000 level. At this time, staff is being asked to take and review the budget and make any recommended changes. Staff will present a final budget for approval at the September 2011 regularly scheduled commission meeting. The final fees will be set for ballfield usage, which is anticipated to have some, but minimal impact to what is currently being presented.

Minor changes and adjustments to the proposed budget will probably be made before the September 2011 commission meeting based on what is decided with the baseball/softball programs. Normally the City Council does not change the Parks and Recreation budget after being approved by the commission. However, changes were made in 2010 to the 2011 budget by the City Council when they increased one (1) of the department’s line items from $80,000 to $150,000, for Advertising and Promotion. The budget will have to be approved at the September 2011 commission meeting.

Mrs. Martin asked if the Midnight Basketball program will be funded for 2012.

Mr. Rhoads stated that funding for this program is in the budget for 2012. The program is still active and running now, it was just stopped for the summer months.

Mr. Rhoads said that if the commission members had questions or comments, please call or email him at least two (2) weeks before the September commission meeting so he can make the changes to finalize it before then.

Director Reports: Mr. Rhoads presented the director reports.

Ms. Stephens said the commission always appreciates getting them.

Jeff Caplinger stated that the Arkansas First Lego League grant for the second Lego team was approved.
Calendar of Events: Ms. Stephens stated that the next commission agenda deadline is Tuesday, September 6, 2011, 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, September 19, 2011, at 5:00 p.m., in the North Little Rock Community Center.

Ms. Stephens said she would like for the commission members to meet with the staff for another Vision, Goals and Objectives meeting on September 19, 2011, at 4:00 p.m. Commission members will need to let the staff know if there are items they would like to discuss.

Mr. Waller asked that the commission members be given notice when a planning meeting will be held, by the agenda deadline date so arrangements can be made to attend.

Mr. Rhoads agreed.

Mrs. Hyde stated that other commission members will also need to be notified.

Mr. Rhoads stated that the intent is to start working on mission goals, which will tie in with the Parks and Recreation accreditation information. The staff is working now to get accreditation items done that will not cost money. The full comprehensive accreditation plan will cost approximately $60,000 plus, which has not yet been budgeted.

Mrs. Hyde asked Mr. Rhoads if he had found who was responsible for cleaning up the I-30 basketball court area on Broadway.

Mr. Rhoads stated that park maintenance and the street department are working together at this time. It has not been decided whose responsibility it will be in the future. The Street Department is getting fence bids and new fencing will be installed. If it is decided that it will be considered a park, there will be stricter enforcement. Time for basketball play only will be regulated for opening and closing with hours posted. It is temporarily closed for repair.

Mr. Rhoads asked Mr. Crow to install signs printed in both English and Spanish, when wording is decided.

Mr. Crow agreed.

Adjournment: Mrs. Hyde made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Martin, to adjourn at 6:35 p.m. All voted aye, and the motion passed unanimously.

Public Comments: Ms. Stephens opened the meeting for public comments.

Submitted by,

Jan Eberle-Wilkins for Otistene Smith,
Secretary