

NORTH LITTLE ROCK PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING

AUGUST 19, 2013

The North Little Rock Parks and Recreation Commission meeting was called to order by Mrs. Vicki Stephens, at 5:00 p.m., on August 19, 2013, at the North Little Rock Community Center.

Commission Members Present: Neil Bryant, Tom Davis, Vicki Stephens and Bruce Waller. Charles Jones had to work and Otistene Smith was absent due to a family member illness. They were excused.

Staff Members Present: Bob Rhoads, Jan Eberle-Wilkins, Jason Rhodes, Tony Pate, Steve Ralston, Jeff Caplinger, Ian Hope, Jennie Cunningham, Matthew Peterson and Paula Jones.

Others Present: Chandra Martin, Jacob Wells, Shannon Harris and Billy Lawson, Jr.

Financial Report - Second Quarter 2013: Bruce Waller reported that the department is a little behind in revenue collection, and under anticipated expenditures.

The Hamburger Tax has resulted in \$600,020 through July 2013. Collection amount fluctuates quarter to quarter.

Mr. Bryant made a motion, seconded by Mr. Davis, to accept the financial report as presented. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

Utility Cost Report - Second Quarter 2013: Bob Rhoads reported that utility costs are down and some of the reasons are that it has been a mild summer with a lot of rain.

Disposition of Minutes: Mrs. Stephens presented minutes of the July 15, 2013, Parks and Recreation Commission meeting.

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

Presentation of Plaque: Mrs. Stephens presented a plaque to Chandra Martin for her leadership and dedicated community service while serving on the Parks and Recreation Commission. On behalf of the commission, Mrs. Stephens thanked her for her service, and said they would miss her.

Mrs. Martin stated that she was not resigning from the commission, but that she was not reappointed for another term. She stated that she enjoyed her time of service and it has been a pleasure.

Request for Waiving of Fees for Marathon: Mr. Rhoads stated that new fees were implemented to begin in 2013 for non-sponsored Parks and Recreation special events in city parks. At the last commission meeting, criteria was set for requests for fee reductions.

The Three Bridges Marathon (3B26), LLC is conducting an inaugural marathon on behalf of the Big Dam Bridge Foundation. They are requesting seven (7) aid stations along the Arkansas River Trail in North Little Rock, of which three (3) of these would require use of a restroom (Cooks Landing/Campbell Lake Park, Victory Lake and Riverview Park), on December 28, 2013.

They would be charged \$300 total under the new fee structure for use of the restrooms. This group has applied but not yet received their non-profit status. They have offered a partnership to North Little Rock, which would include the department's logo and link to the department's website, and the option to staff one of the aid stations in North Little Rock.

Request for Waiving of Fees for Marathon (continued): Registration for this event opened Memorial Day weekend and sold out in just a few days, putting this inaugural marathon on the track to success months before the event will take place.

Jeff Caplinger stated that eight (8) miles of a stretch from Cooks Landing to the base of the Clinton Library would be used on the North Little Rock side. This is a nationwide event. The event coordinator, Jacob Wells with 3B26, LLC, is in the process of getting their non-profit status. USA Track and Field will insure the event.

The city and department will get publicity and will bring people in town. The event will advertise North Little Rock as a partner.

Mr. Rhoads stated that people with the race will clean the grounds, and department will clean the restrooms.

Mr. Wells stated that this race is to celebrate the three bridges and the central Arkansas river trail. The race sold out in three (3) days and there are over 130 on the waiting list. Most running clubs in the state have committed to volunteer. Nationwide there are 18 states and 31 out of state participants including Canada.

The fee to participate is \$75. Benefits to North Little Rock include that this event will continue to build the interest to the Arkansas river trail and will bring interest locally and from out of state. The growth will be nationwide.

Advertisement will include a Parks and Recreation link on the marathon website and Facebook. Those coming to the area will be eating and staying in North Little Rock. Neither Pulaski County nor the City of Little Rock have asked for fees.

Mrs. Stephens asked who would be cleaning up after the race.

Mr. Wells said volunteers at the aid stations will take care of their area, and park maintenance will clean the restrooms.

Mr. Bryant asked if there would be corporate sponsors or a host hotel.

Mr. Wells said they are working on both of these items. They will have race vendors and volunteers will be in North Little Rock all day.

Mrs. Stephens stated that the participants and visitors would need to eat at the North Little Rock restaurants, and if he would advertise this, it would generate revenue to offset some of the costs by the department. Parks and Recreation Department revenue is generated from the Hamburger Tax.

Shannon Harris said Advertising and Promotion would be supplying North Little Rock brochures and city guides to the participants.

Mr. Bryant asked if there would be vendors selling shoes and t-shirts.

Mr. Wells said there would be race vendors.

Mr. Bryant made a motion, seconded by Mr. Waller, to waive the \$300 fee for this event. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Stephens thanked him for coming to the meeting.

Garage Sales in Parks: Mr. Rhoads said that at the last commission meeting, garage sales in parks was discussed. As was previously mentioned, a request was made by a church to have a garage sale in one of the parks. Also, a neighborhood association has mentioned that they would like to have three (3) or four (4) garage sales a year in a different park. Staff has some concerns for allowing such activity in the parks.

Generally, this type of event takes away aesthetically from the park. There is a potential for generations of a large amount of trash, particularly if they leave items that are not sold. Also, negative impact on grass and landscaping could occur.

Further review and discussion is desired. Those for the sales felt if they paid their fees and cleaned up the area, they should be allowed as rentals. A clean-up deposit would be recommended.

Mr. Bryant stated that a city park is not an appropriate place for garage sales. There are issues of sales tax, bonding, location, what they are selling and sales permits.

Mrs. Stephens said she is against the idea also. The department would have to have staff there to make sure all of the criteria is met.

Mr. Waller stated that if they meet the requirement and pay the fees, they should have the right to be there. It is about fairness. Garage sales are not prohibited in the City of North Little Rock. He stated that he agrees these sales are not appropriate in parks, but said that he is talking about rental fairness. People rent the parks for family reunions, picnic celebrations, etc. The commission would be setting itself up solely to determine what activities would be allowed in the parks. If garage sales rentals were allowed, they would have to meet all of the city tax codes, licensing and all other requirements.

Mr. Bryant stated that the commission should not decide what activities are in the park. They would also have to meet the tax code. There should be a list of stipulations such as city licenses, city permits, and city tax guidelines. When the tennis vendors sell at the tournaments, they have to have all of the city licenses and codes.

Paula Jones stated that sales tax has to be charged unless it is on premises devoted to residential use. If items such as arts and crafts are made and produced by the seller, then they were exempt from collection of sales tax.

Mr. Caplinger said the Parks and Recreation Ordinance can be modified to prohibit sales, but a garage sales definition would have to be explained.

Mr. Bryant said that if the commission chooses not to allow garage sales in parks, then a recommendation should go to the City Council to add to banning of garage sales in the parks. If garage sales are going to be allowed, the participants should be required to pay sales tax, get licensing, etc.

Mr. Waller said that a definition of garage sales needs to be established.

Paula Jones said she would get the definition for the commission.

Jeff Caplinger said he would check with other cities regarding their policies and give this information to Mrs. Jones.

This item will be discussed at the next regularly schedule commission meeting.

Proposed Salary Scale for Parttime Employees: Mr. Rhoads said that he wants to reward and retain good employees. It has always been a challenge to recruit, hire and keep parttime year round and summer employees. Part of the issue has been the salaries that are offered. Prior to 2007, Parks and Recreation had no mechanism to give raises to award merit and/or longevity of work performed by parttime employees. In 2007 a parttime scale was developed and was reviewed for 2010. For 2014, a revision in the parttime salary scale is being requested to be more competitive in recruiting quality parttime employees.

The annual net cost for these parttime raises is \$20,964. Also by introducing the sale at this time, it limits the financial impact on 27 employees who are currently working 30 hours a week. Their work time will be reduced to 27 hours or less a week in 2014 so health care will not have to be paid by the City for these employees mandated under new Federal guidelines.

Originally for 2014, employees who averaged 30 hours a week or more were required to have health insurance provided by their employer. This would mean an additional \$133,056 per year paid for single health insurance coverage. If one-half of the employees needed family coverage, the total cost would be \$193,558 per year.

Implementation of the Federal plan has been delayed until 2015, but to limit the salary impact on the employees, it would be best to decrease hours in 2014.

The impact on about two-thirds of the employees would mean around a \$2.50 to \$9.00 per week increased pay. The other one-third of the employees would earn \$4.50 or less per week less in pay.

Mrs. Stephens said she does not want any of the current employees to lose money with the new pay chart.

Mr. Rhoads stated that the park maintenance and golf course divisions are impacted differently than recreation parttime employees that work year round. Parks and Recreation have the most parttime city employees.

Steve Ralston said neither he nor his parttime employees have a problem with this recommendation.

Mr. Rhoads stated that Mr. Ralston wants to make one (1) person fulltime, decrease two (2) other employees to parttime, and drop another parttime position at the golf course. The remaining parttime employees will be working 27 hours per week.

Mr. Waller stated that an 11.1% hourly pay increase would need to be made to even out with the reduced hours per week. He asked who set these hourly rates.

Mr. Rhoads replied that this hourly per week change is based on finance's recommendation to reduce the weekly hours to 27. It is the staff that sets the rates with the commission's approval. Step raises would be given every year until the maximum pay is reached.

Mr. Waller said that the decision to change the parttime employee's hours is based on the Federal insurance mandate. It is outside of the department's control and the department cannot afford to take a \$135,000 insurance hit without cutting something else in the budget. He agrees with the idea to reduce the weekly hours to minimize the insurance impact, but because it is out of the employees control and not an indication of their work performance, there is somewhat of an obligation to maintain the current wage expectation they understood when they went to work. Therefore the department should adjust the hourly rates so no employee loses pay. If a current employee leaves and then returns, they would start at a new hire rate.

Proposed Salary Scale for Parttime Employees (continued): Mr. Bryant made a motion, seconded by Mr. Waller, to approve the request to adopt the hourly pay scale for new parttime employees, the hourly pay scale for current employees, and amend the budget to make sure every incumbent employee, as of August 19, 2013, receives their weekly pay equal to what they are currently making, effective January 1, 2014. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

Operation Budget for 2014: Mr. Rhoads presented the following budget request for 2014. It is basically the same as 2013 with a few modifications.

Currently, the budget is balanced. Potential budget changes that could occur later will be a health insurance cost increase and possible raises. Some possible cuts in line items and increases in revenues would have to be made to adjust the budget if this occurs.

BUDGET SUMMARY

REVENUE

The Hamburger Taxes for 2014 are budgeted at 3% above the current budget figures. In a typical year, this is the expected increase for these taxes.

EXPENSES

Generally, expenses are the same as last year with some adjustments made based on actual expense patterns.

All parttime raises impacted by the proposed parttime salary scale have been included. Overall, the impact is a \$20,964 increase.

For Parks Maintenance: The 2013 budget had 15 summer seasonal positions. Staff was successful in only filling about one-half of those. To provide more consistency and staffing, seven (7) seasonal positions will be dropped and replaced by three (3) year-round 25 hour per week employees (each). The additional cost is \$3,162 for this change, but was possible due to several retirements in parks maintenance. With those employees being paid at the top of the scale and new employees coming in at the lower part of the scale, money was available to cover this cost difference.

For Recreation: The maintenance of buildings and grounds budget was increased by \$19,000 to cover the cost of painting the entire interior of one (1) center. This was done since painting is not considered a capital expense.

For Burns Park Golf: One (1) 30-hour parttime Golf Assistant position will be eliminated and another will have hours reduced from 30 to 20 hours per week. A fulltime Golf Assistant position will be added to cover the hours made with the parttime position. This change was perpetuated when it was discovered by city staff that the one (1) parttime Golf Assistant was also working for the Ralston Pro Shop in the same capacity. This scenario provides opportunity for potential problems related to overtime, workmen's comp, etc. To eliminate these problems, a fulltime Golf Assistant position will be funded.

To make this possible, Ralston Pro Shop is willing to pay one-half of the health insurance for single coverage, and one-half of the retirement premium (6% of salary) per year. Based on the current rates and projected salary, that would be \$3,081 owed by the Ralston Pro Shop in 2014. Also, Ralston Pro Shop would cover staffing of the facility while the employee is on approved leave.

Operation Budget for 2014 (continued): No other major changes have occurred in the budget. Discussion continues about the possibility of no longer operating Emerald Park Golf Course. If this does occur, the Emerald Park budget would have limited activity.

After review, Mr. Waller made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bryant, to approve the budget as presented, with the exception that staff shall amend the budget to see that no incumbent parttime employees, as of August 19, 2013, shall receive less pay per week due to a reduction in their hours. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

Ralston Pro Shop Contract Amendment: Mr. Rhoads stated that per the discussion in relation to the budget, Ralston Pro Shop is willing to pay annually for one-half of the actual cost for single health insurance cost and one-half of the employer's shares of the retirement funds, based on fluctuating rates, to have a fulltime Golf Assistant in the pro shop. These payments will be made in monthly increments. Ralston Pro Shop will also cover the position duties with his staff when the Golf Assistant is out on leave. At the current health insurance rate and retirement for a \$20,550 per year employee salary, the cost would be \$3,080.

Mr. Bryant made a motion, seconded by Mr. Waller, to approve the fulltime position and amend the Ralston Pro Shop agreement to reflect the changes. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

Director Reports: Mr. Rhoads presented the written director reports.

Mr. Rhoads stated that the American Legion Tournament was successful but staff was very busy, especially with rain delays. He thanked Mr. Bryant for coming to the event.

Mr. Bryant said the staff did a wonderful job on this event.

Mrs. Stephens said she appreciated the staff that made it successful.

Mr. Ralston said the lawnmower ordered for the golf course is due to arrive any day.

Calendar of Events: Mrs. Stephens stated that the next commission agenda deadline is Tuesday, September 3, 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, September 16, 2013, at 5:00 p.m., in the North Little Rock Community Center.

Adjournment: Mr. Waller made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bryant, to adjourn at 6:07 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,

Jan Eberle-Wilkins for Otistene Smith, Secretary