

NORTH LITTLE ROCK PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES

February 25, 2025

The North Little Rock Parks and Recreation commission meeting was called to order by Mrs. Vicki Stephens at 5:00 p.m. on February 25, 2025 at the North Little Rock Community Center.

Commission Members Present: Randall Bradley, Neil Bryant, Laura Juels, Don Skrivanos, Otistene Smith and Vicki Stephens.

Vote for Excused or Unexcused Absences: Toby Burkett notified that he was unable to attend the commission meeting due to work. Mrs. Juels made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Smith, to excuse Mr. Burkett. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

Staff Members Present: Kenny Stephens, Jessie Morgan, Jason Rhodes, Joe Ralston, Jamie Pettit, Casey Canady, Katrina Wilbon, Tony Pate, Greg Zonner, Jeff Caplinger and Daniel Cornelison.

Others Present: Stan Jackson, Jay Bartholomew, Brandon Chapman, Bernard Bracely, Mike Sullivan and Ruby Steward-Brown.

Election of Officers: Mrs. Stephens informed the commission that it is time to elect officers to serve on the North Little Rock Parks and Recreation Commission.

Neil Bryant made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Juels, to elect Vicki Stephens as Chair.

Mrs. Juels made a motion, seconded by Mr. Skrivanos to elect Neil Bryant as Vice-Chair.

Mr. Bradley made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Smith to elect Mrs. Juels as Treasurer.

Mr. Bryant made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bradley to elect Otistene Smith as Secretary.

Mrs. Stephens informed the commission that Mrs. Smith is not as involved with the writing of the minutes. Mrs. Stephens thanked Mrs. Smith for committing another year as Secretary to the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Mrs. Stephens requested personnel from the Finance Department present at the March commission meeting. Mrs. Smith provided a list of questions regarding funding to Director Kenny Stephens following up from the meeting held on November 26, 2024. Mrs. Smith would like the questions relayed to Finance Department in preparation of the March meeting.

Mrs. Smith explained still having questions to be answered by the Finance Department. The commission would like a list of grants that have been applied for on behalf of the Parks and Recreation Department. The commission would like additional information on sales tax funding that is going towards the community centers. The commission would like to know if funding for improving the community centers would be rolled over to 2025.

Disposition of Minutes: Mrs. Stephens presented the November 26, 2024 budget meeting and December 16, 2024 commission minutes. Otistene Smith reported changes to Director Kenny Stephens to be revised.

Disposition of Minutes (cont.): Mrs. Smith has relayed her corrections to the minutes to Director Kenny Stephens. Mrs. Stephens stated that the minutes will not be approved until the commission reviews the corrections made.

Financial Report for 4th Quarter of 2024: Mrs. Juels presented the Financial Report for the 4th Quarter of 2024. As of December 31, 2024, the Parks and Recreation Department's revenues were \$9,286,046.48, 90% of the projected revenues. The department's expenditures ended the fourth quarter at 95% of the budget used. The total expenditures were \$9,349,692.51.

Total revenues for Burns Park Golf Course were \$1,056,772. Arkansas Inland Maritime Museum's revenues were \$154,430. Soccer Gate Admissions came to a total of \$51,596. Soccer Field Rentals totaled \$48,038. Youth Baseball Revenues total to \$41,990.

Total Revenues from Clubhouses and Pavilions in 2024:

- The River House revenues – \$42,675
- The Hospitality House revenues – \$60,359
- Miscellaneous revenues – \$32,500
- The Heritage Room revenues – \$39,605
- Idlewild Clubhouse revenues – \$13,002
- Pavilions revenues – \$57,725

Stone Links Clubhouse rentals and Old Mill wedding reservations fall under Miscellaneous.

2025 Stan Jackson Service Agreement: Jamie Pettit presented the 2025 Service Agreement between North Little Rock Parks and Recreation Department and Stan Jackson. The Parks and Recreation Department agrees to pay Stan Jackson an annual retainer of \$4,000 as two (2) \$2,000 payments. Stan Jackson will provide a report each month tracking his time and activities for events under his contract.

Mrs. Pettit informed the commission that the Mayor's Office has a separate service agreement with Stan Jackson. Director Kenny Stephens and the Mayor's Office recommend executing the current agreement for 2025. Staff will combine the contracts with Stan Jackson across the departments for upcoming years.

Stan helps the department manage special events at Riverfront Park upon request of the department. Mr. Bryant made a motion, seconded by Mr. Skrivanos, to execute the Service Agreement between the Parks and Recreation Department and Stan Jackson. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

Baring Cross Community Garden 2024 Annual Report: Jamie Pettit presented the Baring Cross Community Garden 2024 Annual Report. Mrs. Pettit informed the commission that association members were not present at the meeting. Mrs. Pettit reported that the greenhouses at the community garden are not in the best of shape. Staff passed around photos of the greenhouses for the commission to view. The association is working towards a plan for the greenhouses.

Mr. Bryant made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Juels, to approve the Baring Cross Community Garden 2024 Annual Report. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

Burns Park Athletic Association Report and Agreement: Jamie Pettit presented the Burns Park Athletic Association's 2024 Annual Report and 2025 Agreement. Association President Jay Bartholomew was present to answer any questions. Mr. Jay Bartholomew stated that the association spent roughly \$14,000 on marketing to prepare for the 2024 fall and 2025 spring season. The spring season had 51 more players compared to previous seasons. Mr. Bartholomew explained that the Burns Park Athletic Association had hoped the improvements to their website would help the upcoming seasons. The fall season did not generate enough players to sustain the league. Instead the association held a two (2) night clinic, and gave the registrants a partial refund for the fall season. The association plans to have a league this fall.

Mrs. Juels made a motion, seconded by Mr. Skrivanos, to approve the Burns Park Athletic Association 2024 Annual Report. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Bryant made a motion, seconded by Mr. Skrivanos to execute the 2025 Burns Park Athletic Association Agreement. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

North Little Rock Wildcats Football Report and Agreement: Jamie Pettit presented the North Little Rock Wildcats Football 2024 Annual Report and 2025 Agreement. Association President Bernard Bracely was present to answer any questions. Mr. Bracely expressed his concern to the commission regarding a water leak in the concession stand. The league has had no scoreboard or working lights. Mrs. Pettit stated that work orders have been made for the issues. The wiring was stolen from the scoreboard and lights causing them to not work. Mr. Rhodes informed the commission that the season had ended by the time the parts came in to repair the scoreboard. Director Kenny Stephens informed Mr. Bracely that the issues would be addressed for their spring season.

Mr. Skrivanos made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Smith, to approve the North Little Rock Wildcats 2024 Annual Report. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Bracely inquired about other recreation football leagues that play at Vestal Park and Rose City Community Center. Staff are looking into the other teams, and stated that should be reporting to the North Little Rock Parks and Recreation Commission. Mr. Bracely informed the commission trespassers driving on the football field. Mr. Bracely stated having exhausted his options on keeping unwanted vehicles off the football field. Director Kenny Stephens requested staff to get a quote for fencing around the Wildcats' field. Mr. Bracely informed the commission that next year the North Little Rock Wildcats' will be 20 years established, starting in 2006.

Mr. Skrivanos made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bradley, to execute the 2025 North Little Rock Wildcats Agreement. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

North Little Rock Softball Association Report and Agreement: Jamie Pettit presented the North Little Rock Softball Association 2024 Annual report and 2025 Agreement. President Association Mike Sullivan was present to answer any questions. Mrs. Stephens inquired about the number of players the softball league had.. Mrs. Pettit informed the commission that their league is based off of how many teams they have. Each team has an average of 12 players, 36 teams in the fall and 16 teams for the spring would make an estimated total of 624 adults in the softball league.

North Little Rock Softball Association Report and Agreement (cont.): The association has brought it to the commission's attention that the lights at the Burns Park Softball Complex are a major concern. The association must move games around to fields that have working lights. Mr. Sullivan informed the commission that the association raised concession prices in 2024. The concessions do not reflect a high dollar amount due to low tournaments at the softball complex.

Mrs. Smith made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bradley, to approve the North Little Rock Softball Association 2024 Annual Report. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Skrivanos made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Juels, to execute the 2025 North Little Rock Softball Association Agreement. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance 2024 Annual Report: Jamie Pettit presented the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance 2024 Annual Report. Brandon Chapman was present to answer any questions. Mr. Chapman reported having an unwarranted amount of vehicle traffic on the cart paths at Stone Links. Motor vehicles are not allowed on the cart paths, and the visitors are stealing watermelons being grown in the field. Mrs. Smith made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Juels, to approve the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance 2024 Annual Report. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

Proposed Sports Complexes Policy: Jamie Pettit presented the Proposed Sports Complexes Policy to the commission. the proposed policy for the following sports complexes: The Senior Baseball Complex located at Burns Park, the Softball Complex located at Burns Park, the Youth Baseball Complex located at Burns Park, the Soccer Complex located at Burns Park, the Disc Golf Courses located at Burns Park and Stone Links, and the Cricket Pitches located at Burns Park and Stone Links. Legal has reviewed the policy. City Attorney Amy Fields thanked Mrs. Pettit for her work on the Sports Complexes Policy. Mr. Skrivanos made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Smith, to approve the Sports Complexes policy effective immediately. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Smith requested the commission to continue reviewing the Parks and Recreation Policies.

Approval of Special Event Death by 5k: Casey Canady presented the Death by 5k Special Event application. RunStrong LLC would like to host a 24 hour 5k challenge, Death by 5k Little Rock, in Burns Park on March 8-9, 2025. Due to this being a 24 hour event, they are requesting to allow participants to stay overnight at Burns Park Soccer Complex. Director Kenny Stephens requested confirmation of North Little Rock Police for security. Mr. Skrivanos made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Smith to approve the Death by 5k Special Event as long as RunStrong, LLC adheres to the department's requirements. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Special Event High School Ultramarathon: Casey Canady presented the High School Ultramarathon Special Event application. Bentley Blackmon would like to host a High School Ultramarathon in Burns Park on April 26-27, 2025. Event staff will be setting up in the soccer complex near field 4 and the rugby field. They will run a continuous race on a 4 mile loop on the unpaved trails in the park. Staff is requesting permission for the event to be in the park after hours with the provision to hire North Little Rock Police, and full payment of the event fee.

Approval of Special Event High School Ultramarathon (cont.): Mr. Casey confirmed having received insurance from the event holder. Mr. Bryant made a motion, seconded by Mr. Skrivanos, to approve the Ultramarathon Special Event as long as the event holder adheres to the department's requirements. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

Tennis Professional Management Contract: Director Kenny Stephens presented the Tennis Professional Management Contract. The proposed contract with Thomas Andersson starts March 1, 2025 and effective until December 31, 2026. Legal has reviewed the contract. Director Kenny Stephens met with Thomas Andersson regarding the details. The proposed contract has a paragraph including the Junior Tennis Academy. There have been increases to the percentages that the Parks and Recreation Department keeps. Concessions were increased to 10% and Pro Shop Merchandise was increased to 5%. Mrs. Stephens informed the commission that the original contract and amendment were combined to make the proposed Tennis Professional Management Contract more uniform.

Mr. Bryant reported a complaint from his wife regarding the Burns Park Tennis Center. Mr. Bryant stated that an indoor court was not available for play. Tennis Director Daniel Cornelison informed the commission that three (3) indoor courts were reserved for Tennis Professionals in the event of bad weather. Mr. Cornelison stated that a court was available for Neil Bryant's wife at 10:30 a.m. on that date. When indoor courts are not booked, the Tennis Professionals are able to book and pay for the indoor courts for lessons.

Mrs. Stephens informed the commission that the Finance Department projected the Burns Park Tennis Center to bring in \$160,000 last year. The court fee revenues were roughly \$110,000. Mrs. Stephens stated that the budget reflects the Junior Tennis Academy bringing in \$90,000, but the Parks and Recreation Department only keeps 15% of that revenue. Mrs. Stephens asked for more ways to bring in additional revenue at Burns Park Tennis Center.

City Attorney Amy Fields recommended removing the paragraph in the Tennis Professional Management Contract regarding the Junior Tennis Academy. The paragraph regarding the 2.5% fee on all card transactions would be added as paragraph four (4), section c. Mr. Bryant would like the commission to review the Junior Tennis Academy before approving the contract with it included.

Mr. Skrivanos made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bradley, to execute the Tennis Professional Management Contract based off the following terms: Terms of contract March 1, 2025 through December 31, 2026, and adding the 2.5% transaction fee to paragraph on four (4), section c. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

Naming Proposal: Director Kenny Stephens presented a naming proposal received from Mr. Ken Brown of North Little Rock. The naming Proposal requests Burns Park Tennis Center's Indoor Courts to be renamed after former Tennis Professional, Larry Walton. As stated in the Parks and Recreation's Naming Policy, the applicant must receive sponsorship from a North Little Rock City Council Member or the Mayor.

Naming Proposal (cont.): Mr. Brown has not acquired sponsorship for his request. Director Kenny Stephens wanted the Parks and Recreation Commission to be aware of the request. All commission members in attendance stated they are not interested in renaming the Burns Park Tennis Center.

Director Reports: Director Kenny Stephens reported a fence is now being put up surrounding Funland in Burns Park. The North Little Rock Community Center is reopening to the public, staff are working to get work stations back in order. Director Kenny Stephens is unsure if the BMX Track will be open for a new season at this time. The Association President of Bonzai BMX, Dave Larson removed asphalt from turns on the BMX track and they are unable to get the track running. Jamie Pettit reported that the BMX Agreement expired and has not been renewed. Mrs. Stephens asked Amy Fields to review the association agreement between the department and Bonzai BMX.

Director Kenny Stephens reported having replaced air conditioning units at the Hospitality House, Sherman Park Community Center and Rose City Community Center. North Heights Community Center exterior will be painted next and floors will be done. The North Little Rock Community Center was opened as a warming center in January.

Joe Ralston reported for Burns Park Golf Course. Burns Park Golf Course had another record year for revenues in 2024. The greens were covered for 31 days total. January revenues were still up \$1,000.

Greg Zonner reported for Arkansas Inland Maritime Museum, having their 20th anniversary this year. Staff spent the last three (3) days fixing a leak on the submarine.

Tony Pate reported for the Recreation division. Staff are staying busy with youth basketball league and cheer competitions. Mr. Pate informed the commission that the saunas at the North Little Rock Community Center should be in by late March. Staff are waiting for the contractors to receive a certification of occupancy at their final inspection today. Once received, the North Little Rock Community Center will officially be opened to the public.

Jeff Caplinger reported having been working downtown at City Hall with Shara Hutchcraft. Jeff has been working with Recycled Bikes for Kids as they have been awarded another grant cycle. The City of North Little Rock has integrated a new cell phone application "Apptegy" that will help transmit notifications to city employees.

Jamie Pettit reported for field reservations. Staff have been scheduling high school and college teams at the Senior Baseball Complex in Burns Park. There are not many softball games being scheduled in Burns Park as Central Arkansas Christian built their own softball field.

Jason Rhodes reported on the Maintenance division. Staff are spraying chemicals to prepare for the warmer temperatures. Staff have been helping at Funland and taking care of flowerbeds.

Mrs. Smith inquired how the baseball field is doing after the fungus. Mr. Rhodes stated that it appears to be taking hold and staff will fertilize this week.

Mr. Bryant inquired about what has been purchased from Capital Improvements. Director Kenny Stephens reported purchasing a mower with bush hog for the trails.

Director Reports (cont.): Daniel Cornelison reported for Burns Park Tennis Center. Mr. Cornelison stated based off the current revenues for 2025 that the court fees should bring in \$167,000 this year. Staff are preparing for upcoming tournaments in March.

Mrs. Smith inquired if Daniel Cornelison had applied for any more grants for the Burns Park Tennis Center. Mr. Cornelison stated that Ember Strange has taken over the grant process.

Calendar of Events: Mrs. Stephens stated the agenda deadline for the next meeting is Tuesday, March 4, 2025 at 2:00 p.m. The March commission meeting will be held Tuesday, March 18, 2025, instead of Monday, March 17, 2025 due schedule conflicts. The March 18, 2025 meeting will take place at 5:00 p.m. at the North Little Rock Community Center.

Adjournment: Mrs. Smith made a motion, seconded by Mr. Skrivanos, to adjourn the meeting at 6:28 p.m. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

Public Comments/Visitors: Mrs. Stephens opened the meeting for public comments. Ruby Steward-Brown from the Baring Cross Community came to the North Little Rock Parks and Recreation Commission meeting to speak on behalf of her community. Mrs. Ruby Steward-Brown is an active member of the Baring Cross Community in North Little Rock. Mrs. Steward-Brown wishes to seek support from the Commission and the Parks and Recreation Director to get signage placed in the community that would identify it as the Baring Cross Community. The commission suggested Mrs. Steward-Brown to discuss further with the City Council Member in her ward to get additional signage identifying this area as the Baring Cross Community.

APPROVED BY: 
Chair, Vicki Stephens

SUBMITTED BY: 
Secretary, Otistene Smith