

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

### **April 21, 2025**

The North Little Rock Parks and Recreation commission meeting was called to order by Mrs. Vicki Stephens at 5:00 p.m. on April 21, 2025 at the North Little Rock Community Center.

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

**Vote for Excused or Unexcused Absences:** All members were present. Ms. Stephens noted that the Commission needed to formally excuse the absence of Neil Bryant from the March 18, 2025 meeting. Mrs. Smith made a motion, seconded by Mr. Skrivanos to excuse Mr. Bryant. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

**Staff Members Present:** Kenny Stephens, Amy Fields, Jennifer Fields, Jessie Morgan, Jason Rhodes, Joe Ralston, Jamie Pettit, Casey Canady, Greg Zonner, Jeff Caplinger, Katrina Wilbon, Tina Worrell, and Daniel Cornelison.

**Others Present:** Officer James Neeley, Councilman Scott Fowler, London Morgan, Deanna Garretson, Sharon Bennett, Heather Kouns, and JD Borgeson.

**Financial Report:** Ms. Juels presented the financial report for the first quarter of 2025. The department generated a total revenue of \$1,417,308 for the quarter. She reported that departmental expenditures were at 19% of the annual budget by the end of the first quarter.

She continued by highlighting revenues from specific facilities. Burns Park Golf Course brought in \$167,806 in revenue. The Arkansas Inland Maritime Museum (AIMM) reported \$28,610 so far this year. Total revenues from the clubhouses and pavilions in 2024 amounted to \$58,135. In the first quarter of 2025, the River House generated \$8,450 in revenue, and the Hospitality House brought in \$12,835. Miscellaneous revenues totaled \$8,915. The Heritage room revenues came to \$10,170. Idlewild Clubhouse reported \$3,150, and the pavilions brought in \$14,020.

Mrs. Stephens stated that Ms. Juels would begin breaking down the financial reports in a way that provides a clearer understanding of the information. She also noted that commissioners had been provided with a copy of the Advertising and Promotion (A & P) hospitality and hamburger tax breakdown, which explains how the funds are divided between the Parks Department and A & P. Ms. Juels will further research the totals and provide additional clarity regarding these figures in future reports.

**Disposition of Minutes:** Mrs. Stephens presented the March 18, 2025 minutes to be approved. Mr. Skrivanos made a motion, seconded by Ms. Juels, to approve the minutes. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

City Attorney, Amy Fields, provided clarification regarding the sales tax funds discussed with Ms. Strange at the previous meeting. She stated that, after consultation with Ms. Stephens and Director Kenny Stephens, it was confirmed that the \$750,000 in sales tax capital improvement funds referenced was not yet spent. This amount stemmed from a 2023 sales tax budget amendment.

**Disposition of Minutes Continued:** Following that, the Funland project exceeded its budget requiring the Parks and Recreation Department to request additional funding approval from the City Council. The Council approved a budget amendment to allocate additional funds to cover the overruns at Burns Park.

City Attorney, Amy Fields, reiterated that Ms. Strange had confirmed in the last meeting that City Council was required to approve the budget amendment and that the \$750,000 in capital improvement funds could be used for other eligible park projects. She also noted that Director Kenny Stephens had previously proposed potential projects for these funds, including yurts, archery, and shade structures for Burns Park. Although specific dollar amounts were not recorded in the March minutes, a motion to approve funding for these projects from the \$750,000 had passed unanimously. However, each project will need to be individually presented to the commission for expenditure approval.

Ms. Stephens noted that Mr. Burkett had asked about the \$750,000 during a prior budget meeting at the City Services building. She inquired whether these funds had already been spent or were still available. Ms. Fields responded that, to her knowledge, the funds had been carried over into the current year's budget and remained available for capital improvements.

Mr. Burkett clarified that two (2) funding sources were discussed in the last meeting: a \$500,000 operating surplus available for general use, and the \$750,000 capital improvement fund, which remained unspent. He stated that he believed the financial details were accurately reflected in the March minutes, a sentiment echoed by Ms. Amy Fields.

Ms. Amy Fields emphasized that Ms. Stephens wanted to ensure each proposed project would be brought separately to the commission for review and approval, allowing the commission flexibility to reevaluate the use of funds. Director Kenny Stephens confirmed that the proposed projects were not final and could be adjusted in the future.

Mr. Skrivanos made a motion, seconded by Ms. Juels to approve the presented minutes. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

**Proposed Fee for Recreation:** Tina Worrell presented the proposed vendor fee for the Funland area in Burns Park. Ms. Worrell stated that this fee would create an opportunity to generate additional funding for the parks. She recommended setting the vendor fee at \$50 during the week and \$100 on weekends or during special events. Ms. Worrell explained that vendors would likely be agreeable to the fee, as the sales volume in the Funland area would allow them to recover the cost.

Ms. Stephens stated that vendors would also be charged the proposed fee at the areas of the rocket Slide, pickleball complex, North Little Rock High School Softball Field, and One Heart Playground (south of the indoor tennis courts).

**Proposed Fee for Recreation Continued:** Ms. Worrell further explained that the softball and baseball complexes would be exempt from the vendor fee, as food vendors at those locations struggle to generate sufficient sales due to many guests bringing their own coolers with food and drinks.

Mr. Bryant asked who is responsible for selling permits to the food vendors and collecting the fees. Ms. Worrell responded that food vendors purchase permits for designated time periods, and that Park Rangers monitor vendors' selling times. She added that Betty Perkins, the concession coordinator, is at Burns Park nearly every day sells the permits and will ensure that vendors have paid the appropriate fees.

Ms. Stephens stated that Parks Director Kenny Stephens recommends approval of the proposed fee, effective immediately.

Mr. Bryant made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Smith, to approve the vendor fee effective immediately. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

**Outdoor Recreation Grant:** Ms. Stephens introduced Ms. Heather Kouns, Vice President of Strategic Sales for the North Little Rock Tourism Bureau, who presented information regarding the Outdoor Recreation Matching Grant and a proposed project at Big Rock Quarry.

Ms. Kouns began by explaining that the purpose of the North Little Rock Tourism Bureau is to support projects that improve the city for residents and visitors, making it a better place to live, work, and play. She referenced a packet provided to the Commission members before the meeting, highlighting a map on the first page, which showed North Little Rock marked with a star and four (4) blue dots representing other urban areas offering outdoor climbing opportunities.

Ms. Kouns stated that the North Little Rock Tourism Bureau is requesting the Parks Commission's support to develop a new recreation project at Big Rock Quarry, which would include six (6) mountain biking trails, a via ferrata (a climbing route featuring iron rungs and safety cables), and an outdoor artificial bouldering area. She emphasized that if completed, North Little Rock would become one of only five (5) cities in the U.S. to offer this unique blend of urban outdoor recreation.

Ms. Kouns stressed that this development would be transformative, enhancing North Little Rock's profile and sense of identity. She noted that sports and outdoor recreation are vital to physical and mental health and promote team building and community engagement. Additionally, the new biking trail would increase the city's total number of mountain biking trails to over 70, surpassing Bentonville, Arkansas, which is recognized as the Mountain Biking Capital of the World.

The historical significance of Big Rock Quarry was also highlighted. Ms. Kouns shared that the formation played an important role in the founding of North Little Rock, as early settlers established the community near the landmark. Developing the quarry would offer residents and visitors a way to connect with the city's roots while enjoying modern outdoor recreation.

Ms. Kouns addressed the accessibility of the proposed recreation features, noting that the artificial bouldering area would require no special equipment, thus allowing individuals to participate regardless of income level.

**Outdoor Recreation Grant Continued:** Ms. Kouns emphasized that this low barrier to access would make the project especially valuable for those unable to afford gym memberships or private recreation opportunities.

Ms. Kouns concluded her presentation by stating that this initiative is about more than just recreation—it is about building community, honoring local heritage, and providing healthy, inclusive, and meaningful experiences for everyone in North Little Rock. She stated that with the addition of 4.5 miles of mountain biking trails in Central Arkansas, North Little Rock would become the premier city for outdoor recreation in the region.

Ms. Kouns emphasized the economic potential of the project. She referenced conversations with representatives from cities like Colorado and Chattanooga, Tennessee, where similar via ferrata developments have generated significant tourism revenue. Chattanooga's via ferrata, for example, brings in approximately \$14,000,000 annually. She proposed that a project like this could double North Little Rock's A & P tax revenue, providing more funding for Parks and Recreation improvements, especially to Burns Park, a key asset to the city's identity and tourism.

Ms. Stephens then stated that based on a letter she reviewed, North Little Rock Tourism, formerly known as Advertising and Promotions would like the Parks and Recreation Department to contribute \$500,000 toward the project. Ms. Kouns clarified that this matter would be between Mayor Terry Hartwick and the A & P Commission and that her request to the Parks Commission was solely to allow the project to move forward.

City Attorney, Amy Fields, explained that expenditures from the sales tax capital improvement fund must be approved by the Parks Commission, not by the mayor or City Council. Ms. Stephens raised concerns about the department's lack of available funds, explaining that the money would have to come from the half-cent sales tax, and that community centers had been promised renovations funded by this tax. With the sales tax set to expire in 2027, the department was hoping to secure enough funds to fulfill commitments to the community centers.

Ms. Stephens emphasized that while she thought the Big Rock Quarry project was a good idea, there was a historical precedent of proposed trails falling through, referencing a failed project with the Walton Foundation. Sharon Bennett clarified that the Walton project would have been significantly more expensive, around \$13,000,000 while Director Kenny Stephens confirmed that \$5,000,000 of that was just for the mountain biking trails.

Ms. Stephens also pointed out that there are currently no plans, blueprints, or concrete proposals for the Big Rock Quarry project—only the possibility of securing the \$750,000 Outdoor Recreation Matching Grant, which would then fund the planning phase. She expressed concern that even if Parks provided \$500,000, there was no guarantee the project would be completed without additional funding.

Ms. Kouns assured the commission that she had researched the expected maintenance costs, speaking to operators of via ferratas in Colorado who reported approximately \$1,000 per year for maintenance. Sharon Bennett corroborated that maintenance for via ferratas is generally minimal, recommending inspections every five (5) years.

**Outdoor Recreation Grant Continued:** Commissioner Burkett expressed support for the concept but stated that without detailed plans, he was hesitant to vote for the project. He noted that the half-cent sales tax was passed with the specific intent of repairing community centers and that shifting funds would contradict voter expectations. Mr. Bryant agreed, stating that essential repairs at the Burns Park Tennis Center, like broken indoor fans, still needed funding. He questioned whether the promised return on investment would materialize.

Ms. Stephens and Mr. Bryant both expressed disappointment that the Parks Commission had not been consulted earlier in the process, emphasizing the importance of coordination between the Parks Department and the Tourism Bureau. Ms. Stephens echoed these concerns, noting that the project should have first been brought through Parks since the quarry falls under their jurisdiction.

When asked if \$1,500,000 would cover the full cost of the project, Ms. Kouns confirmed that it would. However, Ms. Stephens noted that Funland cost more to develop, raising skepticism about the estimate. Ms. Kouns reiterated that the grant process is moving rapidly, having begun only about five weeks ago, but emphasized that collaboration between Parks and the Tourism Bureau would be necessary.

Mr. Bryant asked where the \$3 billion in tourism revenue mentioned by Ms. Kouns had gone, to which Ms. Kouns responded that she could not speak to that and that it would be a question for the city administration.

Ms. Kouns acknowledged that communication between the A & P Commission and the Parks and Recreation Commission needs improvement and asked for suggestions on how to repair the relationship. Ms. Stephens recommended that A & P have a representative attend Parks Commission meetings regularly and that future projects involve the Parks Department from the beginning stages.

Mr. Bryant agreed that, while relations have improved recently, historically there has been little collaboration between A & P and Parks, particularly regarding the Burns Park Tennis Center.

Ms. Stephens stated that while she personally could not vote in favor of approving the project at this time due to funding obligations to existing parks and community centers, she liked the concept. She indicated that if external funding could be secured and the Parks Director was involved from the start, she would be more open to supporting it. She emphasized the importance of maintenance, suggesting that the city consider implementing usage fees to support ongoing operations.

Ms. Kouns suggested the formation of a committee involving the Parks and Recreation Department to guide the project moving forward. Ms. Stephens concluded by affirming that better communication and collaboration would be essential for the success of any future joint projects.

Ms. Stephens inquired whether there was a way to entertain a motion regarding the matter under discussion. City attorney, Amy Fields, responded that procedurally, the Commission could table the item, make a motion to proceed in support of the project, or make a motion not to proceed with support. Alternatively, no action could be taken, in which case the item would fail due to a lack of a motion. Mr. Skrivanos asked whether a motion could be made to proceed with the project if no funding was required from the Parks Department. City attorney, Amy Fields, clarified that the item

**Outdoor Recreation Grant Continued:** currently under discussion was not related to funding and that such a decision was not included on the agenda for the evening. Mrs. Smith expressed that she would like to see more detailed information regarding the matching grant. Drawing from her background, she stated the importance of having all details confirmed, particularly assurance that no funds would be requested from the Parks Department and that the project was fully funded.

Director Kenny Stephens questioned how the current proposed mountain biking trail project could cost only \$1.5 million when a previous plan had estimated the cost at \$5 million. Sharon Bennett responded that the earlier figure was grossly overvalued. Ms. Bennett explained that she had reviewed the master plan and consulted with Mitchell Allen of the Arkansas Parks Foundation, who has extensive experience constructing and mapping mountain biking trails throughout the state. According to Mr. Allen, some elements proposed in the original plan had already been implemented, which partially accounted for the reduced cost. Ms. Bennett noted that the original plan included substantial bulk and a 10% contingency, and the estimates were significantly inflated.

Mrs. Smith stated she would prefer to table the matter until more information about the plan is available. Ms. Bennett asked whether the project would be considered in the future if a master plan were in place and funding was secured by Ms. Kouns. Ms. Stephens stated that the Commission could potentially move forward with the project at a later date. She also clarified that the agenda summary indicates that \$500,000 would be provided from the City of North Little Rock's half-cent sales tax fund and \$250,000 from North Little Rock Tourism, with no funding coming from the Parks and Recreation Department's operating budget. City Attorney, Amy Fields, added that there is a distinction between the operating budget and the capital improvement budget. Mr. Bryant noted that Tourism had previously taken \$500,000 from the Parks budget under a former mayor's administration, and that funding had not been restored.

Ms. Stephens acknowledged that two commissioners preferred to table the item and revisit it in the future when more concrete plans are presented. Ms. Smith added that future presentations should include specific details on how the project will be funded. Ms. Stephens informed Ms. Kouns that Ms. Smith has experience working for the State Department of Education and was involved in grant writing, which informs the nature of her questions. Ms. Smith emphasized the financial strain the department continues to face due to tornado damage and ongoing efforts to rebuild and remodel facilities such as the community centers, tennis courts, and BMX area. She affirmed her commitment to protecting park funds, regardless of the working relationship between A&P and the Parks Commission. Ms. Kouns expressed her intention to demonstrate how tourism can support the department's budget through sports tournaments, lodging, and dining tax revenue. Ms. Stephens concluded by stating that she looks forward to working with Ms. Kouns in the future. Ms. Kouns confirmed she would attend the next Parks Commission meeting.

**Arkansas Climber's Coalition Progress at Rock Quarry:** Mr. JD Borgeson presented an update regarding the Arkansas Climbers Coalition's progress at Big Rock Quarry. Mr. Borgeson stated that he had previously provided the Parks Commission with a letter detailing the development at Big Rock Quarry. He reminded the Commission that he had come before them last year to present the

**Arkansas Climber's Coalition Progress at Rock Quarry Continued** original development plan for the quarry. He explained that it took some time to finalize the necessary agreements, but a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was released in February.

Since the release of the MOU, the Arkansas Climbers Coalition have installed approximately forty rock climbing routes and built a trail from the parking area to the climbing area. Mr. Borgeson noted; that their original project timeline was very conservative because they were uncertain about the level of participation. However, they received double the amount of volunteer support they initially anticipated. As a result, the Coalition has fully developed and prepared the first two (2) sections of the cliff line for public use. Although there are a few minor trail improvements still needed, the area is approximately ninety-five percent ready to open. They plan to complete the remaining work within the next few weeks.

Mr. Borgeson explained that the original plan was to develop each "crag" individually and open them sequentially. Due to the increased interest and rapid progress, they now intend to complete two (2) crags. Phase one (1) of the project originally included three (3) crags; the Coalition has completed two (2) of the three (3). Mr. Borgeson stated he was present to discuss what the Parks Commission would require before allowing the area to open to the public.

Mr. Borgeson reported that a few tasks remain on their to-do list, including final trail work to stabilize the trail and belay areas. He noted that much of this work has already been completed during a recent trail workday. He stated that they are working to finalize signage and would like input from both the Parks and Recreation Commission and Parks Director Kenny Stephens regarding what signage would be needed before the public opening.

Ms. Stephens suggested that Mr. Borgeson meet directly with Director Kenny Stephens to discuss the necessary signage for the Big Rock Quarry rock climbing area. Ms. Amy Fields agreed, emphasizing that the MOU specifies Parks and Recreation's involvement in signage development and noting that signage should clearly state that the City of North Little Rock is not responsible for injuries.

Ms. Smith asked Director Kenny Stephens if he would be conducting a walkthrough of the site with the Arkansas Climbers Coalition. Director Kenny Stephens confirmed that he would be doing a walkthrough. Mr. Borgeson added that he has been in regular contact with Jason Rhodes and Patrick Isabell during workdays at the quarry, and they are fully aware of the project's progress.

Ms. Stephens asked Mr. Borgeson if he was planning to open the site in mid-May. Mr. Borgeson confirmed that he would like to open the site on May 17, 2025. Mr. Bryant stated that naming the crags should be left to the Arkansas Climbers Coalition. Mr. Burkett suggested that the names should reflect the history of North Little Rock, referencing themes such as Argenta or the area's mining history.

Mr. Borgeson explained that each individual climbing route already has a name and that the themes are North Little Rock-related, including references to "Dogtown." He stated that there are only five (5) crags and offered the Commission the opportunity to be involved in naming them. Ms. Amy Fields suggested that the Coalition bring proposed crag names to a future Parks Commission meeting for consideration.

**Arkansas Climber's Coalition Progress at Rock Quarry Continued:** Mr. Burkett emphasized the importance of ensuring all signage is completed and stated that the City is willing to assist with marketing and advertising for the Big Rock Quarry project. Ms. Stephens instructed Mr. Borgeson to coordinate with Jeff Caplinger regarding publicity efforts.

Ms. Bennett informed the Commission that the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* was interested in doing a feature on Big Rock Quarry climbing this summer, with a major article in the Style section. Ms. Amy Fields noted that Shara Hutchcraft and Jeff Caplinger are both very effective at promoting city projects and getting the word out to the public.

Mr. Caplinger stated that he has been in communication with Director Kenny Stephens and Shara Hutchcraft. He added that Shara is ready to assist with organizing a ribbon cutting event and can coordinate with the Mayor's office to schedule it. Mr. Borgeson indicated that while climbing groups typically preserve existing crags rather than developing new ones, he was very open to the idea of a ribbon cutting ceremony and is willing to work with the city to coordinate the event.

**Director Reports:** Jamie Pettit reported for Field Reservations and Special Events. She stated that Casey Canady was at the fields that evening and wanted to ensure that it was communicated that the Adult Softball Leagues have started. The Death by 5K event was successful, with no complaints or issues reported. Pettit also reported that Burns Park Athletic Association (BPAA) has started their games on April 9th; however, their participation numbers are significantly down. Lakewood has 330 participants, while BPAA has 80 participants, and they are currently playing on two fields per week. Pettit noted that there may need to be a future conversation about these numbers. She reported that upcoming events include the Ultra Marathon at the soccer unpaved trails, and a Walk and Run event at Riverfront Park. Additionally, the D2 Original Baseball Tournament is scheduled for May 2–4, the Pulaski County Fair will begin May 16, and from May 15–17 the City will host the 3A State Soccer Tournament and the 6A State Baseball Tournament.

Daniel Cornelison reported for the Burns Park Tennis Center. He stated that tennis activities have officially kicked off and they are moving into tournament season. This past weekend they hosted a large tournament, and this coming weekend they will host the Southern Athletic Association (SAA) Conference Tournament from Hendrix College. Mr. Cornelison mentioned that they successfully completed the bid process for tournament hosting. He also reported having discussions with Ember Strange regarding a matching grant to resurface nine (9) tennis courts. Mr. Bryant asked if there was a work order placed for fixing the indoor fans. Cornelison responded that he was unaware of any issues with the indoor fans. Director Kenny Stephens clarified that the indoor fans were working as of the previous week. Cornelison explained that the fans were functional, but had simply not been turned on.

Mr. Cornelison further discussed a financial reporting issue. Ms. Stephens thanked Mr. Cornelison for including percentages in his reports and noted that according to CFO Ember Strange, Burns Park Tennis should generate \$30,000 annually in tournament fees. Cornelison explained that when entering tournaments into the Civic Rec system, revenue is categorized under Burns Park Tennis courts rather than specifically under tournaments, which causes financial discrepancies.



**Director Reports Continued:** He explained that even when manually setting the GL field to "tournament fee," the system often defaults back to "court fee." Ms. Strange indicated that tennis should have \$160,000 in court fees and \$30,000 in tournament fees. Cornelison expressed confusion regarding how those figures were calculated and stated that most tournaments come from USTA events, with limited opportunities for higher-level tournaments. He suggested that expanding into pickleball could be a faster way to generate additional revenue.

Mrs. Smith reported that facility improvements were noticeable, including painting the walls, relocating pictures downstairs, cleaning restrooms, and improving the floors. Mr. Bryant stated that A&P provided \$5,000 to purchase new furniture for the tennis center. Mr. Cornelison stated that staff had begun assembling the furniture. Director Stephens noted that there was no communication between the Parks Department and A&P regarding the furniture donation.

Greg Zonner reported for the Arkansas Inland Maritime Museum. He stated that school groups have kept the museum staff busy. They are preparing for a USS Darter submarine reunion, which will bring approximately 40 attendees plus their spouses. After the Pulaski County Fair, the museum will celebrate the 20-year anniversary of the submarine's arrival. Zonner also mentioned they are working with the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra for a tentative event on September 2nd to celebrate the Orchestra's 100th anniversary, which would begin at the submarine and conclude at the Orchestra's location. Director Stephens asked if board meetings had resumed. Mr. Zonner replied that board meetings would start back the week following the Commission meeting.

Katrina Wilbon reported for the Glenview Community Center. She stated that the second Saturday in April, Glenview hosted a Kids Action Business Fair, where children showcased and sold items they made, such as keychains, bows, and necklaces. Glenview also held an Easter Egg Hunt, which drew approximately 400 participants. Additionally, a 55-and-older Easter Egg Hunt was held with around 15 senior participants. Wilbon also reported that Glenview would be hosting a Lupus Awareness Workshop, which is open to the public.

Tina Worrell reported for the Recreation Division. She stated that Easter Egg Hunts were held at multiple locations across the city. The event at Burns Park was featured in television and news articles, with thousands of children in attendance. Sherman Park hosted approximately 400 participants, Rose City had around 100, and North Heights welcomed about 350. Worrell emphasized that the success of these events was largely due to the collaboration with community partners. She acknowledged Katrina Wilbon and her team of three (3) employees at Glenview Community Center and noted that without the support of community helpers, the events would not have been possible.

Worrell also reported that Funland is currently open and that the pavilions are available for rental in three (3) hour increments. Each pavilion can seat about 30 people. She noted that Saturdays and Sundays are booking quickly and, with summer approaching, weekday rentals are expected to increase as well.

The after-school program remains active, and the Spring Break Camp concluded successfully. Registration for the summer program is now open.

**Director Reports Continued:** Ms. Wilbon stated that the program costs between \$80 and \$85 per session. She further reported that an early bird special is available for \$225, covering all three sessions if paid before May 23rd. This fee includes breakfast, lunch, and field trips.

Mrs. Worrell added that the youth basketball and cheerleading seasons have recently ended, and registration for adult leagues is currently open. Interested participants have until April 26th to form a team. She also announced that a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the renovated North Little Rock Community Center will take place on April 22nd.

Additionally, Worrell recognized Renee Henson for being honored at the State Capitol and celebrated Glenda Parker's 30 years of service with the City of North Little Rock. She concluded her report by stating that the department is in need of concession workers and lifeguards, and encouraged high school and college-aged individuals to apply for summer employment opportunities.

Joe Ralston reported on Burns Park Golf Course, total revenues were \$109,572. Record breaking months. Golf is full every day. Mr. Ralston reported that North Little Rock Tourism sponsored the Arkansas Open last year about 2500 people. Mr. Bryant asked what the status of golf association building. Mr. Ralston informed Mr. Bryant that is no longer happening. Someone donated land and they decided to build there in the Crystal Hill area. Mr. Burkett stated that he could not match the numbers to the budget from director's reports. The budget report provided ending on 3/31 does not match this. Mrs. Pettit stated that deposit on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month could be money that was from the previous month.

Jeff Caplinger reported that the Recycled Bikes for Kids grant application is nearly complete. The grant has been approved by City Council, and they are awaiting the official notice to proceed. He stated that staff have been diligent about updating the City website and distributing flyers for events like the Easter Egg Hunts. Ms. Stephens asked if he had taken most of the photographs of the events, and Mr. Caplinger confirmed that he had, including drone photography.

Director Kenny Stephens reported that the department has purchased a Turf Tank machine for the sports fields at Burns Park at a cost of \$37,000. Ms. Pettit explained that the Turf Tank can paint a full-size baseball field in 15 minutes, an 11v11 soccer field in 30 minutes, and two (2) 7v7 soccer fields in 45 minutes, significantly reducing staff labor time. The machine also stores field layouts for future use. It was also used to paint an Easter Bunny design and has other designed that are programmed into the machine.

Mrs. Stephens asked Officer Neeley about enforcement related to accessible parking. She reported seeing a black Mercedes Benz parked in an accessible parking spot without a visible decal and asked if tickets could be issued. Officer Neeley confirmed that tickets could be issued, but officer availability could be an issue. Mrs. Stephens inquired if park staff could write tickets. Amy Fields responded that parks staff do not have that authority. Ms. Pettit asked if the Park Ranger could issue such tickets. Ms. Fields stated that she would need to review the Park Ranger's authority and that it might be something to consider adding.

**Director Reports Continued:** Director Kenny Stephens informed that Jessie Morgan has moved to the mayor's office and Jennifer Fields has taken over the position.

Ms. Katrina Wilbon raised a concern regarding safety measures in City parks, particularly in light of a recent shooting incident at a park in Conway, Arkansas. She asked if the City is considering implementing additional safety measures. Officer Neeley stated that there is already a juvenile curfew in place—10:00 PM on weekdays and midnight on weekends. Mrs. Stephens asked if pavilion rentals require permits. Director Stephens confirmed that clubhouses and pavilions are rented via permit. Mrs. Stephens requested that safety measures for City parks be added to the agenda for the next Commission meeting.

**Calendar of Events:** Mrs. Stephens stated the agenda deadline for the next meeting is Tuesday, May 6, 2025 at 2:00 p.m. The May commission meeting will be held Monday, May 19, 2025. The meeting will take place at 5:00 p.m. at the North Little Rock Community Center.

**Adjournment:** Mr. Burkett made a motion, seconded by Mr. Skrivanos, to adjourn the meeting at 6:38 p.m. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

**Public Comments/Visitors:** Mrs. Stephens opened the meeting for public comments. There were none.

APPROVED BY:

  
Chair, Vicki Stephens

SUBMITTED BY:

  
Secretary, Otistene Smith