

NORTH LITTLE ROCK PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING

FEBRUARY 19, 2015

The North Little Rock Parks and Recreation Commission meeting was called to order by Mrs. Vicki Stephens at 5:00 p.m., on February 19, 2015, at the North Little Rock Community Center.

Commission Members Present: Neil Bryant, Tom Davis, Otistene Smith, Vicki Stephens and Bruce Waller. Randall Bradley and Charles Jones had to work

Staff Members Present: Bob Rhoads, Jan Eberle-Wilkins, Jason Rhodes, Jeff Caplinger, Jennie Cunningham, Glenda Parker and Paula Jones.

Others Present: Cindy Doramus, Brian Hardin, Don Winton, Aaron Winton, Matt Mahlick and Ryan Osborne.

Vote for Excused or Unexcused Absentees: Mrs. Stephens asked that a motion be made to excuse Randall Bradley and Charles Jones from this meeting.

Mrs. Smith made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bryant, to excuse these members. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

Financial Report – Fourth Quarter of 2014: Mr. Waller stated that the year 2014 ended with a surplus of \$174,000 although \$500,000 under anticipated revenue. Most of the revenue shortage came from the Hamburger Tax. The staff did a fine job of managing the budget.

Mr. Bryant made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Smith, to accept this report. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

Utility Cost Report – Fourth Quarter of 2014: Mr. Rhoads indicated that water costs are included with the utility cost. Due to increased rain and not having to irrigate as often, costs are significantly less. Electrical costs are up a small amount. Facilities located south of the river in Burns Park operate on propane. Overall, utility costs are 9% less than last year's actual expense.

Disposition of Minutes: Mrs. Stephens presented minutes of the January 20, 2015, Parks and Recreation Commission meeting.

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

Employee Recognition: Mr. Rhoads recognized Jeff Caplinger (Project Coordinator) for his ten (10) years of service to the department, Glenda Parker (North Heights Center Director) for her 20 years and Rickey Trammell (Custodian) for his 25 years.

Mr. Rhoads and the commission members said they appreciated them.

Approval of Association Annual Reports for 2014: Mr. Caplinger presented 2014 annual reports for the Boys and Girls Club, Arkansas Boathouse Club and Police Athletic League. As a part of their agreement, they are to provide a report at the beginning of each year, including selected copies of their bank statements.

Cindy Doramus with the Boys and Girls Club stated that they appreciated the commission's support. The programs have impacted many youth.

Approval of Association Annual Reports for 2014 (continued): Brian Hardin reported that the Arkansas Boathouse Club had a great year and thanked the commission for their support. They had a sanctioned Six Bridges Regatta, and it is now a nationally sanctioned event. Participants from six (6) states contributed. The next event will be September 19, 2015. They also made improvements to the boathouse.

Youth membership is growing and two (2) local colleges will be joining. They are looking for partners and a permanent coach. Iowa participants will be here March 18-20, 2015, and it will be their third year for this event.

Ryan Osborne with the Police Athletic League said they have 500 participants in their programs. They received a grant. The funds were used to cover a concrete floor with vinyl, improve restrooms and to paint other miscellaneous items at the Police Athletic Association site.

Mr. Bryant made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Smith, to accept and file. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

2014 Arkansas Waterski Club Annual Report and 2015 Usage Dates: Mr. Caplinger presented the 2014 Arkansas Waterski Club annual report and requested 2015 use dates at Victory Lake. Once approved, the dates are posted. 2015 dates requested are:

May 23-24	August 1-2, 15-16 and 29-30
June 6-7 and 20-21	September 5-6 and 19-20
July 4-5 and 19-20	October 3-4

Don Winton reported that their club has made improvements at Victory Lake and they appreciate the commission letting them continue to use the area.

Mrs. Smith made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bryant, to accept the 2014 annual report and approve the 2015 area usage dates. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

Policy for Firing Rockets in Burns Park: Mr. Caplinger reported that Gene Pfeifer has been out of town and staff has not been able to discuss rocket launching with him. Staff met with Keith Jones and Brian Copher, who support rocket launching at Burns Park. From this meeting, it was suggested by Mr. Copher and Mr. Jones:

- Those wanting to launch be able to schedule such by a phone call
- A model rocket club be established
- Post Burns Park rocket launching information with rules where rockets are sold

Staff has been in contact with the North Little Rock Airport and they do not have issues with rockets being launched using size "D" or smaller engines. Also spoke with an education representative from Estes Rocket Corporation (Mr. Copher had asked them to contact the parks department on his behalf). Once they understood the property limitations, they have no issue with the proposed policy and complimented staff on the research and understanding of the hobby. Staff also spoke with the Federal Aviation Administration District expert on model rockets, and based on the distance from the two (2) local airports, they would only get involved if the rockets were Class II or above (much larger than the department would allow). It is up to the department to determine any restrictions on Class I model rockets. Staff additionally asked about drones (quadcopters, etc.). The Federal Aviation Administration District said they are still working on their policy regarding these.

Policy for Firing Rockets in Burns Park (continued): Staff has researched and reviewed policies from other communities and found various ways they have handled the issue. Staff has discussed and received input from model rocket enthusiasts in central Arkansas and neighboring property owner.

Staff wants to allow the use of model rockets from specific locations in Burns Park and by use of a permit. There will be a one-time application and \$25 fee (originally recommended at \$50). This permit can be renewed yearly with an application review and renewal fee of \$25. A free launch permit will be required for actual launch dates and times (weekdays and some weekends during daylight hours). A group/special launch permit will be available for larger size rockets and rocketry events.

Mrs. Stephens asked if these rockets could be shot from back yards. Her concern is that there are so many other people that use the park, and these users will outnumber those firing rockets.

Mr. Caplinger said that at this time, there are no ordinances prohibiting firing of rockets in the city limits. Most of the proposed firings would be done on the weekends, and that is when the children will be out there. Ideally, they need a lot of open space to launch. There are no associations currently in Arkansas formed for model rocketry as far as he knows.

Mr. Waller said this policy is reasonable.

Mr. Waller made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bryant, to approve the staff proposal to allow and limit these model rockets as written, up to size "C", and add the \$25 annual fee to the 2015 schedule of fees. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Stephens commended the staff for their hard work on this.

Vestal Park/Police Athletic League Agreement Proposed Changes: Mr. Rhoads stated that he has had the privilege of working with Ryan Osborne (Police Athletic Association), Andrea Newton (Habitat for Humanity) and Harlan Hunter (Baring Cross Neighborhood Association) regarding Habitat for Humanity upgrades to Vestal and Witkowski parks, and proposed changes to the Police Athletic League agreement. The northeast field would be where the proposed amenities would be incorporated. The southeast field would be open play for neighborhood pickup softball games, touch football, kite flying, etc.

Signs would be posted indicating that the Police Athletic League had priority use of the southeast field for March, April and May of each year. Parks would still mow outfield the areas with the 15' Batwing mower, which would add minimal mowing to their schedule. The Police Athletic League would work/build the infield to the standards they desire. As was mentioned last month, the priorities for Vestal Park are open space, pavilion, playground, multi-purpose hard surface court and splash pad.

Funding is currently available for the pavilion and accessories (\$20,000 total) through a grant obtained by Habitat for Humanity. Ultimately, Habitat for Humanity and the Baring Cross Neighborhood Association volunteers will build the pavilion. Parks and Recreation will build the multi-purpose slab.

Habitat for Humanity has obtained a playground grant from the Kaboom organization to build a park in the Baring Cross neighborhood. The original location was for Vestal Park, but due to having new playgrounds at Boone Park Elementary school and a playground at nearby Jim Roberts Park, the Kaboom playground will have to be built elsewhere. Currently it is being considered for Witkowski Park.

Vestal Park/Police Athletic League Agreement Proposed Changes (continued): As of now, Habitat for Humanity has scheduled a community work day on March 21, 2015, to begin removing fencing from the internal fenced areas. The park division will follow and remove the fence posts. The outfield fence would be left now for security considerations.

A gate would be created to allow for use and access to make it possible to lock the area in case unwanted activities begin to occur in the evenings on the multi-purpose hard surface area or in the pavilion. The height of the fence between the east and west quadrants would be increased from 4' to 6' to separate the Police Athletic League program from the open play area.

Funding for the fence changes would be handled with parks and recreation hard surface funds and Habitat for Humanity volunteers or grant funds. A Habitat for Humanity work day would be scheduled later in the year to complete the pavilion.

The Police Athletic League agreement would be modified (amended) to show those changes.

Mr. Waller made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Smith, to proceed with the master plan as proposed, amend the Police Athletic League agreement to exclude use of the two (2) east fields, outline maintenance responsibilities and to allow the Police Athletic League priority use during the baseball season of March, April and May each year. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

Recurring Requests to Serve Alcohol in Parks: Mr. Rhoads stated that in 2013, the commission approved a policy to allow the Director of Parks and Recreation to approve recurring requests to serve alcohol in the park. Commission asked for the request to be brought back each January for review. The Director was given permission to approve recurring requests for alcohol at special events if for two (2) consecutive years the commission had approved prior request and the group had demonstrated the ability to property and responsibility distribute alcohol. The only group that this policy has impacted is CARTI for its annual Tour De Rock bicycling event.

With four (4) commission members present at the January 2015 commission meeting, a motion was made and passed to table this agenda item until the February 2015 meeting.

Mr. Bryant made a motion, seconded by Mr. Waller, to approve and extend this policy for another year, reviewing it again at the January 2016 regularly scheduled meeting. The vote was:

Mr. Bryant:	Aye	Mrs. Stephens:	Aye
Mr. Davis:	No	Mr. Waller:	Aye
Mrs. Smith:	No		

The motion passed.

Burns Park Campground Policies and Fees: Mr. Rhoads reported that over the last few years, the Burns Park Campground has begun allowing long-term camping in the park. Initially, people who were working on a commercial project for nine (9) months to one (1) year were allow to camp. Now, some people that are not working on commercial projects have stayed as long as three (3) years.

On the positive side, this has been financially a good situation. In 2010, campground revenues were \$63,500. In the last few years, the revenue has jumped to around \$130,000.

Burns Park Campground Policies and Fees (continued): Jason Rhodes stated that the primary purpose of the facility was one of recreational use, but now is becoming a place of short-term and long-term residence. This has caused some additional issues such as junky sites, demands for park access after midnight and before 6:00 a.m., and conflicts between recreational and long-term residence users.

Due to these problems, a policy has been developed for the commission's review and consideration. Much study and review of other campground/RV park policies around the state and nation were considered by parks and recreation staff.

Staff focused on the longest stay that most campgrounds allowed, which is for six (6) months. A few were found with longer stay. These were mainly along the coast in south Texas and Florida, which caters to the northern people traveling in camper type vehicles to flee from the extremely cold weather. Most other camping areas were found to have a maximum of a 14-day stay. Several had options to extend stays for one (1) and sometimes two (2) more stays based on if it was high season or low season (usually October through March). Since the Burns Park demand for use is not as high, staff is recommending a maximum of two (2) months stay. Special exceptions can be made for up to one (1) year. New forms requiring additional information and revised rules have been designed by the staff and will be given to each camper for clarity.

Metal policy signs will be constructed and installed.

Mr. Bryant said he is not interested in the department running a trailer park. He wants this to stay a campground for short stays.

Mr. Bryant made a motion, seconded by Mr. Waller, to approve these staff recommendations and review again in one (1) year. Any current campers would be required to abide by the policy within the next (60) days. Any individual who has resided in the campground for longer than one (1) year, would be given (60) days to vacate. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Waller stated that at some time, he would like the staff to look at the campground overall and see what improvements could be made such as leveling pads and designing a pull through.

Director Reports: Mr. Rhoads submitted director reports for the month of January 2015.

- Staff is waiting to get costs from the Parkhill Neighborhood Association to **add Parks and Recreation to the new Idlewild, Fearnelyough and Crestview Park signs**. Aldermen in that ward will be asked to help get this information from the association.

- With the recent land conversion and exchange of Burns Park land and the Big Rock Quarry property, the maintenance responsibilities for mowing and upkeep were reviewed with the Street Department and city administration staff. Out of the meetings, it was agreed that the Street Department would mainly be responsible for right-of-ways and medians. Parks and Recreation would be mainly responsible for parks and trails. In the past, there had been considerable overlap. **Maintenance duties have been changed to the following.**

Director's Report (continued):

Mrs. Stephens said the area could be used for multi-purposes, but not a golf course. The commission members should start thinking about what could be done with this area. Most golf courses are losing money. If the city has the money to invest in a golf course, then it should be for the Burns Park golf course.

Mr. Rhoads stated that a game called Foot Golf is being looked at as a possible new sport to be played at the Burns Park Golf Course.

Mr. Waller asked that if the city gave the department funds to open and operate the Stonelinks golf course, is there someone on staff that could draw up some ideas for a formal presentation.

Jason Rhodes said he might know someone that could do this.

Mr. Bryant suggested Mr. Rhoads talking with the Stonelinks Association.

Mr. Waller stated that the department does not have the money to take over this golf course.

Mr. Davis said he would like to see a walking trail or something similar done on top of the levee in the Willow Beach area.

Mr. Caplinger said there is a group wanting a place to race remote cars.

Mr. Rhoads said he would keep the commission posted on the Stonelinks golf course. The mayor told him (Mr. Rhoads) to think of ways to use this area.

Calendar of Events: Mrs. Stephens stated that the next commission agenda deadline is Tuesday, March 3, 2015, 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 Tuesday, March 16, 2015, at 5:00 p.m. in the North Little Rock Community Center.

Adjournment: Mr. Bryant made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Smith, to adjourn at 6:33 p.m. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

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

Submitted by,

Otistene Smith, Secretary