

**Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission**  
**Meeting Minutes December 18, 2012 - CORRECTED**

**1. Call Meeting to Order/Roll Call**

The Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission met in a regular meeting on Tuesday, December 18, 2012, at the Council Chambers, 707 W. Acequia Street, Visalia, California. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Mann at 5:30 pm.

**Present:** Lesa Mann, Carla Calhoun, Ben Filiponi, Dolores Taylor, and Shann Blue

**Absent:** Commissioner Doi

**Guests:** Scott Woodhouse

**Staff:** Vince Elizondo, Jeannie Greenwood, Jim Bean, Jeff Fultz, and Brenda Miernik.

**2. Review and Approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting, November 13, 2012.** Commissioner Mann requested a motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner Calhoun moved to approve the minutes, and Commissioner Filiponi seconded the motion.

**MOTION**

Motion passed 4-0

**3. Public Comment:** Mr. Huott, private citizen, requested the department to send an email to the commission regarding Item 4 on the December Agenda (former BMX area at Riverway Sports Park). He asked the commission to vote negatively on the project because he feels a greater need for a park in the Houston Elementary area.

**4. Proposed Concept Plans for Undeveloped Property at the Riverway Sports Park (Former BMX Area).** Mr. Elizondo, Parks and Recreation Director, stated the Commission acts in an advisory capacity to the City Council and this item will go to the Council as a recommendation. He acknowledged a former commissioner, Mr. Jeff Boswell, in attendance.

Mr. Elizondo said the property under discussion is approximately 1.8 acres and was the former BMX area, which was unsuccessful. Council provided a budget of \$400,000 for the project and granted the commission permission to hire the HLA Group of Sacramento, previous designer for the Sports Park, to design ideas for the use of this area. Mr. Canada, Principal of the Group, attended the November commission meeting to present and discuss Concepts 1 through 4.

Mr. Steve Canada stated he previously presented Concepts 1-3 in November and would present Concept 4 tonight, which is a Preferred Concept, and visualizes the commissions input from last month. The property is surrounded by a fence and has four sports lights.

Concept 1 – Keeping the area as is and grassing it to provide an enclosed play space. There would also be an opening in the fence to the entryway of the Cal Ripken area where there are benches and a drinking fountain.

Concept 2 – This concept has more multi-use advantages. The maintenance yard is kept intact and fencing is removed in some areas in order to open the area to the park itself. There would be two tennis courts, a center walkway, two bocce ball courts, benches and trees, two handball courts, and two half basketball courts.

Concept 3 – This concept is the most ambitious of the concepts. There will be a single handball court, and a free court area with dasher board around it, where multiple games can be played. The large element is a regulation indoor soccer field with a roof over it.

Mr. Canada stated the Commissioners ask him to create a new model using Concept number two and include the free game court.

Concept 4 – This is the Preferred Concept that the commission ask for at the November meeting. There is a proposed cell tower to the north, between the maintenance yard and BMX area. It is proposed to move the tennis courts to the north. At the south end of the tennis courts there will be half basketball courts and a walkway including benches and drinking fountains. The bocce ball courts, a handball court, and the free game court are included here.

Mr. Canada said the surface of the free game court is covered with an asphalt or concrete overlay. He said footsol, kickball, basketball, and indoor soccer are some of many games that can be played here. The current lighting does not have the candle power required by tennis courts. This will be augmented or moved to another area within the property. The conduit and wiring to facilitate this has already been installed.

Commissioner Mann asked the commissioners for their comments or questions.

Commissioner Taylor asked what the cost will be for Concept 4. Mr. Canada responded \$620,000, including construction, administration, soft costs and the 15% contingency fee (\$75,000). He noted that Concept 2, without the

courts was \$450,000, and that would not include the cost of new lighting hardware (\$110,000). He commented that new lighting would need to be added for the tennis courts either way.

Commissioner Mann asked for comments from the public.

Mr. Boswell said he represents Cal Ripken and last year they had 905 children and they grew by 17%. He said the problem is they are running out of space to accommodate all the kids that want to play. He asked the commissioners to reconsider Concept 1. The considered area would handle 3 fields beginning from the corners, three permanent backstops. This would accommodate approximately 250 kids every Saturday. He said the best attribute of this area is that it is enclosed and easy to control.

Mr. Boswell said Visalia Youth Baseball has invested over \$30,000 in improvements to the baseball fields at Riverway Sports Park, including new scoreboards and supporting structures, infield improvements and maintenance. He noted the 2011 World Series held at Riverway and many tournaments in 2012.

Mr. Elizondo asked if the growth was new kids or kids changing from other programs to VYB. Mr. Boswell stated he felt the kids registering were new to baseball. Mr. Elizondo also asked if he could coexist with soccer if necessary. He said yes, in the past pop-up nets have been used, but it is not very safe.

Commissioner Mann asked if the Phase III turf area could be used for his purposes. Mr. Elizondo explained that this project is currently going out to bid, and consists of 5.7 acres of turf intended for open play. Mr. Boswell stated this would not provide safety for the children. Commissioner Mann asked if he had a plan for growth if the Sports Park were not available, and what will happen if you have 17% growth again? Mr. Boswell said, as things stand today, he could probably grow another 500-600 kids without a problem.

Mr. Elizondo asked what the cost would be for Concept 1a and b. Mr. Canada replied that 1a/b would be \$225,000.

Mr. Richard Rasner, Galaxy Soccer Coach, said he would like to see Concept 1 accepted due to the cost savings and there is a definite lack of field space. Field turf that can be used rain or shine, and for multipurpose, would be ideal for the kids in the community.

Mr. Chad Nelson, AYSO, stated that Visalia is a growing city and so are the athletic choices. Field turf is at a premium. He said he is concerned about the 4-5-6 year olds that are playing near the parking lots and roads. An enclosed area is safer for these kids. Parking is an issue at the Sports Park.

Mr. Nelson said Concept 4 will look nice but he said he is not sure how much it will be used. He said handball courts are a graffiti zone and Bocce Ball, again, how much will it be used? He said field turf would be used 95% of the time.

Commissioner Mann asked how he would use the 5 acres of turf coming in August 2013. Mr. Nelson replied he could use both areas but the lights and the fence would be ideal. He said when the kids play baseball on the soccer fields you can see it.

Mr. Dominguez stated he is President of Visalia National Little League and he said the future of baseball lies with children ages 4, 5, and 6. He said it all starts with the 4-year olds, and a good start will teach them to love the game. He said Little League does not turn kids away and they utilize scholarships.

Commissioner Taylor asked where he played his games and Mr. Dominguez replied they play at Green Acres School. He said the kids have to walk a long way just to get to the playing fields and he has about 200 children.

Mr. Kevin Wood, parent of a VYB player, said Concept 1 is the best idea for the use of the property. He said his total concern is for the 4, 5, and 6 year-olds safety. He said the fenced in area is perfect for these kids and when speaking about budget, leaving the fence and the lighting in place would be much more feasible.

Mr. Craig Barnes, Vice President of Visalia National Little League and Visalia Youth Tackle Football, he said there are 700 players in the League. Currently the games are played at Golden West School from 6:30 in the morning to 10 pm, and they have added three to five teams every year. He said they get permits to play at the school from Visalia Unified. Signups have been discontinued at this time. The largest cost to the league is equipment and field availability. Concept 1/1a would be very helpful to his teams.

Mr. Roland Soltesz, affiliated with Visalia Youth Soccer and Galaxy Soccer, stated he is also a Planning Commissioner for the City of Visalia. He noted that parking is an issue at the Sports Park and Phase III has been overflow parking for park users. He said during spring leagues the park was full of multi-game users. He said he feels the city should charge for parking, which would discourage multi-car parking.

Mr. Tim Hyer, coach and educator, stated he supports Concept 1a. He stated he would appreciate the commissioners considering that involved children are less of a burden on our community. Research proves that children involved in positive activities, i.e. soccer, baseball, football or basketball are less apt to get into trouble, which is costly to communities.

Mr. Elizondo stated he has heard the suggestions to use synthetic turf in the park but it is cost prohibitive. He asked Mr. Canada if he knew the cost. Mr. Canada said he remembered it to be \$750,000. He said game lines are easy to accommodate and playability is great.

Mr. Elizondo asked Mr. Canada if he could quickly expand upon the park concept and the community meetings that were held.

Mr. Canada stated there were three meetings held, about 150 people each, and then the concept was taken to City Council. A Task Force was chosen, 25 citizens representing different youth sports, to gather information and ideas. He said during the Master Park Plan process, it was decided that 10 to 15% of the property would be set aside for community park elements. This included the water feature, group picnic areas, and the Leathers Playground. Mr. Canada said the original Master Plan included a community center, a promenade that connected to the tennis and basketball courts, and a farmers market. He said the Master Plan was then modified.

Commissioner Mann asked the Commission what they wished to do at this point.

Commissioner Calhoun stated she understood the needs of the many youth sports organizations, however there are less organized advocates for senior citizens and we have a responsibility for their recreation and activity also. She suggested City staff consider that if we dedicate this small space to more soccer, baseball and football where would other possibilities be for seniors. She noted there are not many public spaces for tennis players.

Commissioner Mann said she represents the Commission on the Senior Advisory Board and very frequently they tell us that youth sports receives a lot of public money. The seniors desire to see their needs met in the community also and she said diversity is good within the community.

Commissioner Taylor said that as the mother of small children, she understands the safety of children. She asked what the demand is for space. She said everyone here exemplifies the fact that we need more space.

Commissioner Blue requested more time to consider the growth of youth sports.

Commissioner Filiponi stated he wants to see adult activities in the park.

Commissioner Mann requested more time to consider the needs of the community and the proposed Concepts.

Mr. Elizondo asked for clarification that the Commission desired to table this item until the January meeting. Commissioner Mann replied yes. He stated that Phase III has already gone out for bid per the plans, but things can change in years to come how the space is used.

Commissioner Taylor asked if there are any plans to build another sports complex in Visalia. Mr. Elizondo said the City owns 90 acres on the east side of town and it has been designated undefined in terms of exact use. Park impact fees, grants, and donations would drive the timeline for when this might happen.

Commissioner Calhoun asked staff to consider if Concept 1 was approved, where might the adult multiuse activities be relocated.

**5. Review and Adoption of Priority Use Policy for City Facilities.** Ms. Greenwood, Recreation Manager, stated the objectives of this policy are as follows.

- To provide a fair distribution of facilities to maximize participation,
- To incorporate maintenance periods,
- To communicate financial issues in our cost recovery policy, and
- To outline facility use regulations.

Ms. Greenwood stated this is a timely topic after discussing the need for more playing fields and your understanding of staff's responsibilities to all organizations in their scheduling time for everyone.

Ms. Greenwood said she would only go over changes made since the last Commission meeting (November).

**I. Definition of Terms:**

**Visalia Resident** – a person residing within the city limits of the City of Visalia.

**Open Membership** – organizations, or portions of organizations, that have open registration regardless of skill level. The organization must have an "everyone plays" philosophy, be recreational in nature, and utilize scholarships.

**Non-profit Status** - provide documents with financial statements, a list of officers, and a list of contacts for City staff.

**Basic vs. Special Services** – basic services include the maintenance of safe, clean, attractive parks and buildings and the provision of recreation services for the general public. Special services include trash service, extra restroom cleaning during the day, and the privilege of using the facilities to the exclusion of others and without interference.

**Game and Practice Slots** – refined to be a reasonable amount of space for a team, for that time slot.

**IV. Eligibility**

**Priority 1:**

Visalia resident (at least 90% or more), youth programs, open membership, non-profit organizations or leagues.

**Priority 2:**

Visalia resident (at least 51% or higher), youth programs, non-profit organizations, or leagues.

**Priority 3:**

Visalia resident (at least 51% or higher), adult programs, open membership, non-profit organizations, or leagues.

Resident status will be determined from the prior season's actual rosters (fall season for fall season, spring season for spring season).

The total number of all Visalia residents registered in all organizations within that priority use class will then be determined. Each organization resident number will be divided by the total of all residents registered to determine the percentage of use to be allocated to each group.

**Example:** Baseball Group A has 750 Visalia residents, and Baseball Group B has 900 Visalia residents  
Total Visalia residents registered in other organization is 1,650

750 divided by 1,650 equals 45%. Group A would receive 45% of the available time.

900 divided by 1,650 equals 55%. Group B would receive 55% of the available time.

**Tournaments:**

A goal of the City of Visalia has been to recruit larger events into Visalia in order to drive tourism and the economic impact that events bring to the City. Requests for large events can be made up to three years in advance, and normal season play can be requested up to three months in advance. The City will work with organizations sponsoring larger Regional, State or National events. User agreements entitle organizations access to the facilities.

Ms. Greenwood stated this document has taken months to create and refine and she thanked Commissioners Doi and Filiponi for their time and also the user groups who provided feedback, which was implemented into the document. She said staff recommendation is to receive public comment and to adopt the policy for implementation in the 2013 season.

Mr. Roland Soltesz stated he understood that the policy was to place everyone on equal footing and fairness. He said the policy is good, but he has concerns as follows:

- smaller groups have a hard time with becoming a non-profit due to expense.
- "recreational in nature" is a very weak definition.
- three months in advance for larger events. How is this timeframe determined?
- Game slots. A game consists of two teams, which should equal one half of a field. He noted that if a new group appeared they would not be able to get a game slot because they did not play the year before.
- Tournaments are important to the City. Several years ago a State tournament was held in Visalia and it was determined that 500 hotel rooms were used that weekend.

Mr. Soltesz stated the following.

- ✓ No matter what priority or level a group is in, no group should be able to have all the time slots in a field in one day. Fields should always be set aside for other groups. The fields are supported by the taxpayers of Visalia and should be available.
- ✓ The cost structure should be the same for all groups.
- ✓ The policy also does not address the concession stands.
- ✓ Priority #1. Facility use agreements (organizations having special status assigned by City Council action as a result of having had historical use of facilities). He said he believes by contract law this line should not be in this policy.

Chad Nelson, with AYSO, said the field allocation needed to be done a long time ago. He said knowing in advance is very useful to planners and the policy is a good thing. He said AYSO has adopted this policy and stated they need to know if the City is going to move them around.

Commissioner Mann asked Ms. Greenwood if staff considered these issues in the policy process. Ms. Greenwood stated Mr. Doi is not here tonight but Mr. Filiponi is and could report on the discussions that were held. Many of these items have been vetted and settled. Mr. Soltesz first stated that the policy is fair and places everyone on an equal basis and she agrees. Ms. Greenwood stated that non-profit status is important, and it was discussed at length that Visalia residents should take priority. Mr. Filiponi stated there have been many changes in the document as discussions ensued. Ms. Greenwood stated that concession stands and charging for parking generally are not addressed in policies, rather in use agreements. She said policies should be flexible and changeable.

Ms. Greenwood stated that using prior years data is logical and a starting place for a policy.

Commissioner Taylor asked how a group would achieve special status by City Council. Ms. Greenwood stated Cal Ripkin, National Little League, and AYSO have a facility lease agreement with the City for exclusive use of Riverway Sports Park, which is a special status. These agreements were instituted due to involvement with the City from the conception of the park, and include financial contributions.

Mr. Elizondo stated at the time, in 1999, AYSO was the only organization in town. Since then other groups have developed. He said at some point all the agreements will expire and the dynamics will change.

Commissioner Mann asked Mr. Filiponi if he had a recommendation for the commission. Commissioner Filiponi stated he believed the policy is ready for adopting. He understands there are issues but the season is beginning and he feels that it should be implemented this year.

Commissioner Calhoun stated that since both City staff and the sub-committee have gone to great lengths to ensure that everyone was heard and all comments were considered, she believes that the vote is called for. She said once we have gained experience with the new policy, changes might be called for, but at this time, the policy should be moved forward.

Commissioner Mann said with these comments and very thorough consideration of this issue I call for a motion to adopt the policy. Commissioner Filiponi moved to approve, Commissioner Calhoun seconded the motion.

#### **MOTION**

Motion passed 4-0.

- 6. Review and Approve the Annual Plaza Park Raceway Schedule.** Ms. Greenwood stated that Plaza Park Raceway has been under operation of an outside vendor since 2001 and a new agreement was established with Plaza Park Raceway LLC last year, which will be in effect for a three year term. She said Mr. Scott Woodhouse, owner and operator, is here to present his proposed schedule for the 2013 racing season. The agreement allows for "28 (racing) events per year restricted to Fridays with the exception of up to three Saturday evening races per year." Per the contract, hours of operation are from 5:30 p.m. until 11:00 p.m. Mr. Woodhouse, owner and operator, understands the City's concern for noise pollution and continues to work to have races end by 10:30 p.m.

Ms. Greenwood said the City understands that this has been a challenging year for the vendor who began the year with a \$17,463.50 balance. On July 1, 2012, the balance remained at \$16,014.28 and staff requested the vendor bring the account current or provide a payment plan showing how and when the past due balance would be paid.

Mr. Woodhouse responded with an immediate payment of over \$9,000 and a plan to pay \$1,000 after each event to keep the account current. As of December 1, 2012, the account balance is \$9,577.73. \$4,000 of the balance is being retained in anticipation of a credit adjustment from the City for repairs to the press box at the track. This leaves the past due balance of approximately \$5,577.71.

Ms. Greenwood said the staff recommends Commission approve the proposed 2013 Plaza Park Raceway, LLC schedule as submitted by Mr. Woodhouse. The Department has checked the schedules for the days requested and find no conflicts.

Mr. Woodhouse stated it has been a strenuous year for him. He said the building maintenance was in disarray, half the billboards were businesses that did not exist anymore, and the business lost the title sponsor which was over a \$35,000 loss between two courses.

Mr. Woodhouse stated the electronic scoreboard, newly implemented, takes only one person versus four people doing it. That reduced payroll by \$5,600. Participation numbers have increased. Our conduct policy was updated and enforced. He said that many of his participants are from out of town and 540 hotel rooms were used last year at one event.

As far as his City debt, Mr. Woodhouse said he had a meeting with his sponsors and he should have money from them in February 2013 and start the New Year even with the City.

Commissioner Filiponi stated he was not aware of the level of debt but he congratulated Mr. Woodhouse on his effort.

Mr. Elizondo asked Mr. Woodhouse about the noise level at the track. Mr. Woodhouse stated he places tarps under the billboards to push the sound up. He also goes into the center of the track and tries to keep the noise at 100 decibels.

Commissioner Mann requested a motion to approve the request as presented. Commissioner Calhoun so moved and Commissioner Filiponi seconded the motion.

#### **MOTION**

Motion passed 4-0.

- 7. Annual Park Maintenance Presentation.** Mr. Jeff Fultz, Park Maintenance Supervisor, stated the department has a full time Park Ranger and a seasonal Ranger on staff for 2012, Homero Alcazar and Jennifer Hardin. In fiscal year 2012 they spent 855.5 hours patrolling the parks keeping them safe for public users.

Mr. Fultz reported the following projects in 2012.

- Remove existing tree of heaven in the southwest corner of Blain Park where the old arbor 2 was removed last year and added about 30 fifteen gallon Coastal Redwood trees during Arbor Day to help provide a noise screen for the neighboring homes as well as adding evergreen color.
- Blain Park – added new irrigation to all the Redwood and to the trees along the ditch. Repaired the lighting in the park due to broken wires. Resurfaced both parking lots.
- Completed the installation of all the No Smoking and Smoke-free Playground signs in all the parks.
- Purchased a new Chip In Visalia project and tool trailer for Parks & Urban Forestry projects. [Chipin@ci.visalia.ca.us](mailto:Chipin@ci.visalia.ca.us)
- Completed numerous irrigation repairs throughout the city parks due to breaks in lines, vandalism, and new construction. Most of which was repaired by city staff using 2,918 man hours.
- 2,116 City staff hours was spent on tree services in the parks in 2012. However, this service is now completed by our contractor, West Coast Arborist and we anticipate fewer hours spent in the parks due to larger crews.
- Plaza Park – City staff repaired and re-enforced the old damaged bridge, added trek wood planks and new stem walls to keep the bridge going another 30 years. A contractor made repairs to the drive bridge between arbor 6 and the horseshoe pits. The old restroom was also removed. Both the restroom/office building and ball field restroom facility received new roofs.

Mr. Fultz stated many repairs were accomplished in the City parks including continuing efforts to repair damaged and raised concrete sidewalks to help prevent trips and falls. He said Cal Ripken installed a memorial flag pole and plaque in honor of Clyde Soto at Riverway Sports Park CR Shannon Complex. He said more lighting was added by Southern California Edison at Jefferson Park and at St. John's River Park to provide more lighted areas for citizens while they walk in the park. He reported that fencing was replaced at Rotary, Whitendale, and Jefferson Parks, and the roof was replaced at the Truilli Building.

Mr. Fultz proudly announced the new development of Kiwanis Park. This is a 4.5 acre park with a basketball court, a playground, skate element, and a small picnic arbor. It also has a looped sidewalk for walkers. He said it was dedicated November 2012.

Detailing Make a Difference Day Mr. Fultz reported the following.

- Planted 700 trees and shrubs to the Packwood Riparian Trail project.
- Planted 28 trees at Fairview Park.
- Planted shrubs at Rotary Park.
- Soroptimist Club planted annuals at Soroptimist Park.
- Planted more trees, grasses, and shrubs at St. Johns Riverwalk project.
- Painted picnic tables at Plaza Park arbors 1 and 2.

Mr. Fultz said future goals for the department are to continue working with the community and police department to provide green, clean, and safe parks, to create Park and Landscape Design Standard Guidelines for the City of Visalia and continue to work with service groups on community projects.

Mr. Fultz announced the following Park Employee Service Awards.

Melissa Tracy – 5 years, Homero Alcazar – 5 years, David Pendergraft – 25 years, and Jim Bean – 30 years.

**8. Discussion of New Commission Applications.** Commissioner Mann requested comments from the Commission and by consensus it was decided to invite the applicants to a meeting at a later date.

**9. Update on City Council Reports & City Staff Announcements:**

- **Upcoming Recreation Programs & Special Events.** Ms. Greenwood reported the following.
  - The Senior Center Holiday Luncheon is taking place this Friday and you are invited to stop by. Reservations are closed at 200. The patio is looking great.
  - November was debut of the Rec Report in the Times Delta. Allison is doing a great job.
  - The spring brochure will be out in January.
  - Sports Park scheduling is busy.
  - Youth basketball has 543 participants currently.
  - The Father Daughter Dance will be held February 8.
  - A draft amendment with AYSO for an extension is in progress.
- **Upcoming Parks & Urban Forestry Projects, Programs & Special Events.** Mr. Bean, Parks & Urban Forestry Manager reported the following.
  - Packwood Trail Project is in progress.
  - The Recreation Park basketball courts are almost complete.
  - Playground shade structures – the poles came in today and the project should be complete in March.
  - The Garden Street Plaza poles came in also so that project will start soon.
- **Director's Report on Administrative Items.** No report.

**10. Commissioner's Requests & Comments:**

- **Parks & Recreation Foundation Monthly Report.** Commissioner Taylor said the Foundation held their annual retreat. She said they talked about projects they wanted to work on and they wanted to sponsor Movies in the Park. She said they also talked about moving the 4<sup>th</sup> of July show due to safety reasons.
- **North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory Committee.** No report.
- **Senior Citizens Advisory Committee Update.** No report.
- **Waterways & Trails Committee Report.** Commissioner Filiponi said they are discussing membership because terms are ending. He said the hospital expansion is also being discussed and Mr. Mann is scheduled to attend a meeting.

**11. Adjourn to Regular Meeting December 18, 2012, at 707 W. Acequia, City Council Chambers at 5:30 pm.**  
Commissioner Taylor made a motion to adjourn and Commissioner Blue seconded the motion.

**MOTION**

Motion passed 4-0

Brenda Miernik  
Senior Administrative Assistant