

Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission
Meeting Minutes August 20, 2013

1. Call Meeting to Order/Roll Call

The Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission met in a regular meeting on Tuesday, August 20, 2013, at the City Council Chambers, Visalia, California. The meeting was called to order by Vice Chairperson Filiponi at 5:30 pm.

Present: Ben Filiponi, Robert Doi, Lesa Mann, and Shann Blue

Absent: Carla Calhoun

Speakers: Michael Kreps, Carlos Medina, Paul Jaramillo, Jimmy Contreras, Bill Huott, Freeman Stone, and Jessica Cavale

Staff: Jeannie Greenwood, Jim Bean, Freddy Arias, and Brenda Miernik

- 2. Review and Approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting, July 16, 2013.** Commissioner Filiponi called for a motion to approve the July 16 minutes. Commissioner Doi moved to approve the minutes as presented and Commissioner Blue seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 4-0

- 3. Public Comment:** None.

Written Communication: Mr. Ken Marvin regarding the temporary parking lot at the Riverway Sports Park. He is concerned about the speed of autos in the area being in excess of 55 mph and the safety of children at the park. Mr. Marvin feels a crosswalk is necessary, along with a lower speed limit to protect pedestrians, and enforcement. He stated that the park is a "beautifully planned and maintained facility and kudos to the Recreation and Maintenance Department."

- 4. Proposal to Establish a Special Event Overflow Parking Lot on City Owned Property North of Riverway Sports Park.** Mr. Bean, Parks & Urban Forestry Manager, stated the City owns a seven acre parcel of land along Riverway Drive, just north of Riverway Sports Park. This land is vacant and was acquired for future development.

Mr. Bean said that with the development of Phase III, the facility will lose a large area that has been used as overflow parking on heavily used days. City staff is proposing that approximately four of the seven acres be utilized as overflow parking during peak facility use times, about thirty occurrences per year, primarily on weekends.

Mr. Bean explained the parking lot will be constructed of asphalt grindings and cable fencing. It will include traffic control signage as recommended by the City's Traffic Safety Division and comply with all requirements imposed by the City's Site Plan Review Committee including a setback area. Fencing will be placed at the east and west ends of the proposed temporary parking area to provide a buffer between the lot and the neighboring homes.

Mr. Bean said City staff is bringing this proposal to the Parks and Recreation Commission to solicit feedback on the concept and seek approval for the project. He said the Department has notified property owners along Riverway Drive of this meeting so they could provide input and share any concerns they may have.

Commissioner Filiponi, Chairperson, opened the discussion to public comment.

Public Comments: Jimmy Contreras, 640 Riverway Avenue, said he is concerned about his privacy from the public, and he does not feel that post and cable is adequate. He said he assumed that the lot would be locked when not being used. He said in the past residents have called the police due to foul play in the park and he is concerned it will happen in the parking lot. He also had a concern about speed limits because they already have the problem of speeding in the area. He asked what the county and city limits were and who he should call if there is an incident.

Mr. Bean replied that some discussion has taken place regarding site plan approval and there may be a requirement for a six or seven-foot fence for the lot. He said this would help with privacy issues and he said Mr. Ken Marvin expressed speed safety concerns in an email to the department. He said it is possible during the site plan process to get the speed limit lowered. He said many of the properties in the area are still part of the county but the city property has been annexed into the city. Mr. Contreras asked for confirmation that he could call the Visalia Police Department for problems at this location and Mr. Bean replied yes. He said another venue would be the Parks & Recreation Park Ranger and he would supply that number after the meeting. Mr. Contreras asked if those were after hour's phone numbers. Mr. Bean said the Rangers work only on weekends until 8 pm. Mr. Contreras asked what the follow-up would be after this meeting. Mr. Bean stated there might be other public comments this evening, including comments by the Commissioners, and he will keep in contact with the residents.

Mr. Freeman Stone said he owns the property just west of the seven acre parcel and he is concerned about privacy. He said he has a shop to the rear of his property and most of the time it is locked. He said kids think the riverbank is

public property, but it is not to the west. They like to jump into the river to play in the water. He said he preferred not to have a lot of kids entering his property.

Mr. Stone said the proposed cable fencing would be in an area where several oak trees are growing and he preferred these not be taken down. He said there has been a homeless encampment near the riverbank and deputies have come out almost daily to try to keep them out. However, there is still a tent there.

Mr. Stone said traffic flow has been a problem. He said people stop in the middle of the road to let kids out, and kids run back and forth across the street. He said extra effort is necessary to control the traffic.

Mr. Bean said he would call Code Enforcement and they will remove the tent if it is on City property. If it is on county property Code Enforcement will work with the County to get it removed. Mr. Stone said he thought the City owned 14 acres along Riverway Avenue. Mr. Bean said he would follow-up on City ownership of the acreage and get back with Mr. Stone.

Mr. Stone said that when the park was initially created there was discussion about closing the street to create a round-a-bout. He asked if that was a possibility. Mr. Bean replied no decision has been made.

Mr. Doi asked how long is "temporary." Mr. Bean replied he did not know because there is no Master Plan for the road, or information yet from Site Plan Review. Mr. Doi also asked how many cars could be parked in seven acres. Mr. Bean said 150 cars could be parked there but he did not foresee that many cars in the lot. He explained that during the Site Plan process many items could be required such as a crosswalk, a flashing sign for the crosswalk, and stripping. He said the City wants to be good neighbors and would keep the public informed of what is to come.

Commissioner Filiponi called for a motion for the staff recommendation. Mr. Doi said he would like to see a proposed plan with more detail for the parking lot including signage, privacy fencing, and stripping.

Mr. Blue moved to table this topic until a more specific plan was brought to the commission. Mr. Doi seconded the motion.

Ms. Greenwood said after the Site Plan Review this topic and a more defined plan would be provided to the adjoining property owners and would be brought back to the September meeting for more public comment.

MOTION

Motion passed 4-0

5. **Update on Proposed Improvements at Oval Park.** Mr. Bean said on June 18, 2013, the North Visalia Advisory Committee (NVAC) proposed five improvements for the Oval Park to the Commission. He said at that time Commissioners asked staff to discuss the improvements and return to this meeting with projected costs. The improvements and discussion results follow:

a. Install new playground equipment and shade covers at the existing playground.

- *Commission:* The commission agreed that a new playground and shade covers should be installed. They also stated that the installation of a new fence around the playground would keep the users safe.
- *Staff:* The installation of a new playground, playground shade structure, and fencing around the playground should be a priority since the existing playground is out of compliance.
- *Cost:* The estimated cost for this improvement would be \$155,000.

Mr. Bean noted that the funding that would be used for these projects would be completed at prevailing wage requirements and this was taken into consideration in these cost projections.

b. Install 940 feet of six foot wide sidewalk, which would create a walking path around the park.

- *Commission:* The commission agreed that the looped sidewalk would be a nice amenity to the park to be utilized for exercising. Similar walkways have been installed in other parks throughout the City.
- *Staff:* The looped six foot sidewalk would be a great addition to the park, which would create a walking path around it, and would promote exercise to our park users.
- *Cost:* The estimated cost for this improvement would be \$80,000.

c. Remove park restroom.

- Parks staff advised the commission that the park restroom was already scheduled for removal in 2-3 weeks.

d. Install four new park lights and security cameras.

- *Commission:* The commission thought the additional lighting would be a nice improvement to the park, but wanted new light posts to match the existing ones. They also thought that adding security cameras in this park would help deter some of the illegal activities in the park.
- *Staff:* Staff believes that adding additional lighting is a good project, and recommended that all the electrical conduit and wiring be replaced to comply with current codes and to support the proposed improvements. The current electrical system would not be able to handle the additional electrical load from the new lights. Staff also agreed that the security cameras would be a good addition to the park, but is concerned about the ongoing cost of monitoring these cameras, which cost approximately \$1,200 per month.

➤ *Cost:* The cost for this improvement would be \$120,000 plus the annual cost of \$14,400 to monitor the cameras.

e. Expand the amphitheater on the Oval Service Center, install 90 feet of trellis along the new sidewalk by the amphitheater, and improve power for the amphitheater users.

- *Commission:* No input was offered by the commission from our last meeting on this improvement.
- *Staff:* This trellis will only provide partial shade for events held at the Oval Service Center. It should be redesigned to provide a solid cover for the amphitheater. The trellis is more of an architectural improvement. The electrical improvements would be a great addition to the park for special events. Staff recommends that a solid shade cover be installed at the amphitheater and feels that the trellis project needs to be discussed further to decide if this is the best option for the park.
- *Cost:* The cost for this improvement is \$140,000.

f. Recommendation by Commission: The addition of four foot high wrought iron fencing, roses, and irrigation to the east side of the park.

- *Staff:* Staff agrees with the Commission that this would be an improvement to the park, and would guide pedestrians to the crosswalk.
- *Cost:* The cost for the wrought iron fencing, roses, and irrigation installation would be \$60,000.

Public Comments:

Mr. Paul Jaramillo said he is not a member of the NVAC and lives about a block west of the park. He said it is commendable that the City wants to make improvements to the park, but "let's be realistic, who is going to take their kids to the Oval Park? No one in this place for sure." He said he spends time in the park daily and there are illegal things happening in the park. He said he is not sure what the solution is but he feels the homeless need to relocate, but they have been there for many years.

Mr. Michael Kreps said he is a member of the NVAC and he assisted with the proposal for the Oval Park. He said he would like to address the trellis. He said the idea was to provide shade for the amphitheater but time constraints did not allow for detailed analysis. He allowed that further deliberations should be considered. He noted that the perimeter walks would be conducive for the neighborhood to actually use the park and it is long overdue for the City to consider renovating the park. He said many of the neighborhood residents support the efforts put forth by the City.

Commissioner Mann asked Mr. Kreps to comment on Mr. Jaramillo's opinion. Mr. Kreps replied that his opinion is a valid one. He said the NVAC has struggled with these conditions for a long while. He noted the Committee now meets at the Service Center at the park in order to create some additional activity. He said there is no easy solution, but it cannot be ignored. He said the park is an icon for the north side and with the Shopping Cart Ordinance and the Caltrans improvements, there are huge changes coming. He said the Visalia Rescue Mission is working with people one-on-one and moving some into housing and connecting them with social services.

Carlos Medina said he owns a barber shop within the Oval area, and he was once a member of the NVAC. Mr. Medina said that for 30 years the City has been trying to clean the park and this issue has always been discussed. He said now even more people are in the park. He said that as a business man he looks after neighboring businesses because park users go into businesses to steal. He said the City needs to move the homeless to another location away from the businesses. He said he feels that if the City can clean the park the business owners can do their part.

Mr. Bill Huott stated that he can relate to Mr. Jaramillo's statements. He stated he used to have a Labrador dog that he walked in the park and the menace that inhabits the park would yell "here comes the f-ing rat with his f-ing dog." He said it scared him and he would not walk his dog in the park thereafter. He said the efforts being put forth are positive and in the right direction. He said it won't solve all the problems but that is why we meet as a City, as committees, and bring things to the Commission, these are steps in the right direction. He said the five proposed projects are great and the Shopping Cart Ordinance, passed last evening by City Council, are all positive steps for the Oval Park. Mr. Huott said that once mom's come with their children to the park, once the shopping carts are gone, and once the walking path is used, there will be a new vibe to the park, with a new energy. He said the Rescue Mission is making an impact in the park and good things are happening.

Commissioner Filiponi called for any other public comments and there were none.

Commissioner Mann asked what the options are for the trellis. Mr. Bean said a solid structure could be installed or possibly shade sails could be used.

Commissioner Doi asked if there was funding for the park at this time. Mr. Bean replied there were no funds currently in the budget. He said the NVAC is striving for approval from the Parks and Recreation Commission to go to City Council with a plan of action in order for the Council to set aside future funding for the project.

Mr. Doi also asked if the current park clientele could be removed by law. Mr. Bean said many conversations have taken place with Code Enforcement and he recalled the photos staff have presented to the Commission with no shopping carts in the park. He noted it looked as if folks were just enjoying a day in the park. He said the Visalia Police Department has been in the park trying to eliminate the illegal activities as a way to clean up the park, and the Rescue Mission is continuing the endeavor. Mr. Doi said the added amenities will help change the direction of the park. Mr. Bean said the proposed projects will be a good beginning.

Ms. Greenwood said the ultimate goal is to bring positive activity into the park, and changing the negative image it carries now. She said she thinks of things that will draw people into the park, and looking at the proposed improvements, she is not sure these accomplish the goal. Ms. Greenwood said a half basketball court would draw older teens and younger adults, more so than a walking path. She said Oval Park needs a plan that can be presented as a joint Commission/Committee plan that has been discussed and thought out. She said there has not been much feedback from Commission members to what their priorities might be.

Commissioner Mann said Ms. Greenwood has a good point. What is the feature that will bring the right population into the park? The Commission needs to discuss it and recommend it to Council.

Commissioner Doi stated he likes the NVAC proposal but it needs more amenities. Mr. Bean said the NVAC is trying to get a starting point for future funding with City Council.

Commissioner Blue stated deciding who the target clientele is would be a determining factor of what goes into the park. He said options could be created for the park with cost projections included. He asked if the improvements would be phased in. Mr. Bean said they probably would due to funding issues.

Ms. Greenwood said the funding would primarily come from Community Development Block Grant funds, phased in small increments. Projects would be planned as funds become available over several years. Amenities should be prioritized in a timely fashion.

Commissioner Doi said a Master Plan was needed for this park.

Commissioner Mann suggested a new playground with a fence around it would make mom's feel safe in the park. She said she attended a conference and timed, locking gates were exhibited. She asked if there would be any reason to use these at the Oval Park.

Mr. Bean stated those would not be appropriate for the park. He said the homeless have rights to use the parks also and they are in almost all parks just too varying degrees.

Mr. Kreps noted that this park is very small and has many historical points of interest. He said basketball courts were discussed but illegal gambling was considered. He suggested that if the improvements, as proposed, were not approved by the Commission the whole project may languish for another 4 or 5 years.

Jessica Cavale, Director of Development, Visalia Rescue Mission, stated there has been a lot of talk about changing the culture in the park. She said the Mission is striving to do that but before folks can be asked to attend events at the park it needs to be a safe place. She said the improvements that the NVAC are trying to put into place are great first steps and will go a long way for the safety of the park.

Commissioner Doi made a motion to take the improvements to City Council for approval and Commissioner Blue seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 4-0

6. **Proposal from Zishawn Lokhandwalla to Plant Aloe and Lavender Gardens in City Parks.** Mr. Bean reported that on July 16, 2013, Mr. Zishawn Lokhandwalla made a presentation to the Commission proposing that the City allow foo DIY to plant Aloe and Lavender Gardens in two City parks. Foo DIY's intent is to grow these gardens in City parks so that park users could use the plants for consumption for the treatment of diabetes, gum disease, and liver disease, to name a few. Staff was concerned that the proposal could be a liability to the City if someone were to consume these plants and have an adverse reaction. Foo DIY's proposal was submitted to the City's Risk Management Division to get their prospective.

Based on discussions with Risk Management, the consensus was that plants intended for human consumption, planted in public parks, will pose too much of a liability to the City due to the unknown affects of the plants for the end user.

Staff recommends that the Parks and Recreation Commission deny foo DIY's proposal to plant Aloe and Lavender Gardens in City Parks.

MOTION

Motion passed 4-0

7. **Annual Youth Division Summary Report.** Mr. Arias, Recreation Supervisor, stated the Recreation Department's Youth Enrichment Division is dedicated to providing quality programs, services, and classes to the youth of our community. From tiny tots, afterschool programs, and community wide special events, the youth division focuses on providing positive recreation opportunities to youth of all ages.

Mr. Arias said current programming is as follows.

After school activities. Elementary schools served include Hurley, Oak Grove, Manuel Hernandez, Shannon Ranch, and Shannon Ranch Kinder-Care. The program structure includes snacks, homework, enrichment activities, recreation, field trips, and more. The average daily attendance is 197 students at 5 sites.

Manuel F. Hernandez Community Center. A drop-in program is offered free to children ages 6 to 17. The program structure includes arts and crafts, homework, computer lab, dance arts, and sports. Hours of operation are 2:30 pm to 6:30 pm. The average daily attendance during the summer is 85 kids and during school year it is 30.

The Loop Bus. This program is free to children ages 6 to 17. The bus provides safe transportation from neighborhood sites for children to participate in community center activities. It only operates during the summer months and this year the ridership tripled from 11 riders 31.

Tiny Tot Programs. This program is for ages 1 to 5 and parent participation is required. There are a variety of classes to choose from and develops social and motor skills. Classes include crafts, singing, science, karate and more. In 2011-12 participation was at 359, in 2012-13 participation was 481.

Kids Club Day Camp. Camps are offered during Visalia Unified School District breaks. The program structure includes themed weeks, field trips, arts and crafts, recreation activities, lunch, and snacks included. 2013 summer field trips included Scicon, CA Science Center, Avila Beach, Island Water Park, and CA Living Museum. Camp participation in 2011/2012 was 2820 and in 2012-2013 participation was 3154.

Specialty Camps. The camps were 1 week in duration for 4 hours per day. Camps included a daily snack, camp T-shirt, and a keepsake photo. In 2012 participation was 184, and in 2013 were 279 participants.

Dance Classes. Classes offered were Jazz and Hip Hop, Ballet and Tap, and new for this year are Contemporary dance and Ballet Folklorico classes. Classes were for children ages 3 to 16 years. 2011 classes had 181 participants and 2012 had 287 participants.

Enrichment Classes. These classes included guitar, clay, and piano. In fall 2012-13 77 classes were offered. In fall of 2011-12 81 classes were offered. Piano was not offered in winter and spring.

Martial Arts. Karate classes were held in 2012 with 656 participants and in 2013 there were 576 participants. Visalia Judo Club classes were offered in May and July with 67 participants.

Special Events. This includes the Father/daughter dance (792 participants), the Mother/son campout (163 participants), the Eggstravaganza, the Dia Del Nino, Story time with Santa, Summer Night Lights, and the new Fishing Derby.

Mr. Arias stated the goals for 2013-2014 include the following.

- ✓ Continue to offer quality programs to the community.
- ✓ Focus on implementing a 2nd KinderCare program.
- ✓ Develop programs and classes for teens.
- ✓ Continue to offer family friendly programming to the community.
- ✓ Expand the already popular Father/Daughter dance.
- ✓ Look to develop partnerships within the community to help foster special events.
- ✓ Expand classes to offer more evening and weekend classes.

Commissioner Mann asked if the department had offered ukulele classes. Ms. Greenwood said a teacher is hard to find for that class.

Mr. Arias gave tickets to the Commissioners to attend Teen Idol.

8. **Update on City Council Reports & City Staff Announcements.**

- **Upcoming Recreation Programs & Special Events.** Ms. Greenwood reported the following.

- The soccer exhibition planned to be held at the Plaza Park Raceway was cancelled. However, the concert that was planned at the raceway is moving forward and Mr. Woodhouse will return to the Commission with a report.
- Ms. Greenwood also reported that in August 2012 Galaxy Soccer requested a fee reduction at a Parks and Recreation Commission meeting. In September the Commission granted a fee reduction to equal a 50% reduction. Galaxy soccer appealed to City Council and they held to the decision that the Commission had laid out. Corporate Games is in process and is accepting participants. They will be held late September and early October. Games have been extended this year; it is now a 15 game tournament. By spreading the games out companies can better fill their teams.
- New events this year include Geocaching – a GPS treasure hunt and a Spelling Bee.

- The fall brochure is a little behind this year, but should be out the end of this month.
 - Jim's staff takes care of the fields at the Riverway Sports Park and since the protective fences have come down two incidents have occurred. Turf damage was caused twice by vehicles in the park. The department is going to prepare a media campaign to let the public know how to report activity when they see it.
 - Last night was the last reading of the Shopping Cart Ordinance in parks. It will go into effect in 30 days. Mr. Bean commented that signs will be designed and installed in Seven Oaks, Riverway Sports Park, Oval Park, and St. John's Trail. He also said the damage to the turf at Riverway Sports Park has been repaired as much as possible.
- **Upcoming Parks & Urban Forestry Projects, Programs & Special Events.** Mr. Bean, Parks & Urban Forestry Manager reported the following.
 - Landscape standards were presented to City Council on August 5, and were approved. The document includes procedures for many types of work and installations that are done in the parks.
 - Recruitment for the City Arborist position has been released. Applications have been coming in since September 5.
 - Make a Difference Day is October 26, 2013 (last Saturday in October). The department will be planting 500-600 trees this year. Smaller projects will be planned as the event gets closer.
 - The asphalt trails at Harold's Grove Park have been repaved.
 - Riverway Sports Park Phase III is moving forward. The project is less than 60 days away from being completed. Arbors, rest rooms, and the amphitheater are up. The grass has been planted and the playground equipment will be ordered soon.
 - **Director's Report on Administrative Items.** Ms. Greenwood reported the following for Mr. Elizondo, who is on vacation. Mr. Salomon, City Manager, is retiring. Ms. Miernik has given each of you a flyer and you are invited to attend his going away event.

9. Commissioner's Requests & Comments:

- **North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory Committee.** Mr. Doi said he could not attend the last meeting nor can he attend the next meeting. He said he would like to see a Commission meeting scheduled at the Oval Service Center. Ms. Miernik took note of the request.
- **Parks & Recreation Foundation Monthly Report. Vacant.**
- **Waterways & Trails Committee Report.** Commissioner Filiponi reported the Committee has new members and they need 2 more.
- **Pillars of Fame Sub-Committee:** Mr. Bean said the recruitment for the nominations closes August 25. He said he has two applications and a meeting will be scheduled to review qualifications.
- **Senior Citizens Advisory Committee Update.** Commissioner Mann said the meeting is tomorrow.
- **Commission Alternate Position.** Ms. Miernik stated no applications have been received for the Commission Alternate position, but she will keep the Commission apprised if she receives any.

10. Adjourn to Regular Meeting, August 20, 2013, at the Council Chambers at 707 W. Acequia Street, 5:30 pm. Commissioner Filiponi made a motion to adjourn and Commissioner Blue seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 4-0

Brenda Miernik
Senior Administrative Assistant