

Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission
Meeting Minutes
June 21, 2016

1. Call Meeting to Order/Roll Call

The Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission met in a regular meeting on Tuesday, June 21, 2016, at the Council Chambers located at 707 Acequia Street, Visalia, California. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Carla Calhoun at 5:30 p.m.

Present: Carla Calhoun, Shann Blue, Jason Kent and Peter Thomas

Absent: Justin Sweet and Ben Filiponi

Staff: Jeannie Greenwood, Jeff Fultz, Laurissa Roggenkamp and Brenda Miernik

2. Review and Approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting, May 17, 2016. Commissioner Blue moved to approve the minutes as presented, Commissioner Kent seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 4 -0

3. Public Comment: Mr. Huott thanked the City, the Visalia Police Department and the Commission for the improvements at Lincoln Oval Park. He said the Arts Consortium has also done a great job with their programs. He said he supports the motto “Visalia, the heart of the City.” He noted he had a signed petition requesting a walking path at the Oval Park and presented it to Ms. Greenwood.

4. Request by the North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory Committee to Remove Amenities at Lincoln Oval Park. Ms. Greenwood, Director of Parks and Recreation, supplied the following information regarding the history of the Oval Park.

- On February 25, 1875, the Oval became Visalia’s first park, originally known as North Park, and for the next two decades suffered from considerable neglect.
- In 1892 it was revitalized, and in 1893 a recommendation was made to add a water system to water the trees and grass. The City began plowing, walkways were planned, trees were planted and the water system was installed.
- The ladies of the Visalia Floral Society were asked to plant flowers in the park. Trees and plants were donated for installation and city prisoners were utilized to maintain the park. It was also recommended to build a pavilion in the center of the park.
- In 1896 a \$10,000 bond issue was passed by voters to build a separate high school in the Lincoln Oval and in 1897 the park became the site of Visalia’s first high school – Lincoln High School. In 1911 ten acres of West Main Street were purchased and a two story, 16 classroom, building was erected. Students moved into the new building and the high school at the Oval became Lincoln Elementary School. In 1922 the Lincoln School building was demolished and the plot became known as Lincoln Oval Park. The Visalia Women’s Club planted six memorial trees in the park.
- A large evergreen tree in the south end of the park has been decorated as the City’s Christmas tree since 1953. In the early 80’s, merchants located at the Oval partnered with the City, and a Community Services Building was constructed and dedicated in 1983. In 1988, a Tot Lot was added to the park along with benches, picnic tables and an outdoor staging area.
- In 2013 the North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory Committee presented the following recommendations: to install a new playground and shade covers at the existing playground; to install 940 feet of six foot wide sidewalk creating a walking path around the park; remove the restroom and expand the amphitheater on the Oval Service Center; install 90 feet of trellis along the new sidewalk by the amphitheater and update the electrical system to accommodate special events.

At the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting on August 20, 2016, the Commission recommended to Council the following:

1. To install new playground equipment and shade covers at the existing site, with the addition of a fence surrounding it. Project estimated cost: \$155,000. The project was supported by Council.
2. To install 940 feet of six foot wide sidewalk creating a walking path around the park. The concept was supported by Council and the project estimated cost: \$80,000.
3. To remove the restroom, which the department already planned to do, was supported by Council.

4. To install four new park lights and security cameras. Commission supported the project and asked that new light poles match the existing poles in the park. Staff noted that electrical conduit and wiring would need to be replaced to comply with current code. Project estimated cost: \$120,000.
5. To expand the amphitheater at the Oval Service Center; install 90 feet of trellis along the new sidewalk by the amphitheater and update the electrical system to accommodate special events. There was no input from Commission on this item. Staff had questions and concerns with the design and would want to provide input if, and when, the project progressed. Project estimated cost: \$140,000.

The Parks and Recreation Commission added another project: the addition of a four foot high wrought iron fence with roses and irrigation to the east side of the park. Estimated cost of project: \$60,000.

At the time, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding became available in the amount of \$175,000. The commission recommended that Council place artificial turf at Village Park but Council chose the projects at the Lincoln Oval Park as their priority. They designated the funding for the lighting and security camera project and the fencing along the east side of the park.

The Parks and Recreation Department partnered with the Parks & Recreation Foundation and applied for a First 5 grant from Tulare County and it was approved. The funding was used to purchase Tot Lot equipment; and the City partnered financially with the Foundation to provide fencing and shade sails. The installation was completed this month.

The restroom has been removed at the Lincoln Oval Park and four new park lights and security cameras will be installed this summer. The fencing and roses to the east side of the park will be completed this month.

Currently, the North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory Committee has requested that the City remove four picnic tables from the park, eight benches, and the concrete base under the gazebo. The justification for this is that it will dissuade illegal activity (consumption of alcoholic beverages, drug use and sales, gambling, etc.) and its corresponding behavior (public urination and defecation, littering, violence, etc.). The committee feels this would reduce calls for service to the Visalia Police Department and provide a more inviting environment for families.

Staff comments:

- Once amenities are removed, it is very difficult to get them back, i.e. the recent petition for a bathroom at the park.
- Amenities have been removed at other parks when they meet operational functions or needs such as Garden Street Plaza. This was done to accommodate concerts, an ice rink, and multiple special events.
- When equipment is damaged or broken and there are no funds in the budget for replacement, such as at Pappas Park, amenities have not been replaced.
- Improvements are still taking place at Oval Park which is designed to impact the behaviors and conditions at the park.
- Visalia Rescue Mission is vacating the Oval building, which will create opportunities for programing.
- Many of the activities taking place at Oval Park are illegal and therefore a law enforcement issue. The police do have a presence at the park and patrol it several times per day. One of the goals of the Parks and Recreation Department is to expand and develop the Park Ranger Program and potentially build a volunteer Ranger Program to assist the current efforts in the park.

Staff is not in favor of removing amenities at this time and recommends that the Commission defer until such a time that an evaluation of the effectiveness of the new lighting and cameras can be performed. Staff also recommends that the Parks and Recreation Commission and the North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory Committee schedule a joint meeting to discuss other alternatives to making positive change at the Lincoln Oval Park.

City Council has asked the Commission to work with staff to review and update the park ordinance which will better assist our rangers and the law enforcement officers.

Commissioner Calhoun requested each commissioner to share his or her views on the report.

Commissioner Kent: He agrees with the staff recommendation. The security cameras need to be in place long enough to impact the park. He liked expanding the Ranger Program plan to include volunteer services.

Commissioner Calhoun: She agreed with the staff recommendation. She envisions a design that reflects a broader interest in the community and to encourage families to visit the park.

Commissioner Blue: Agreed with the staff recommendation. The five priorities have not been completed yet and now the committee is asking for amenities to be removed. He would like to see the results of the improvements before moving ahead.

Commissioner Thomas: He agreed that a joint meeting would be a great venue to share ideas and further progress. He asked what the cost would be to remove the amenities in Oval Park. Mr. Fultz responded removal of the restroom was reasonably inexpensive; but building a new one would cost over \$100,000. Commissioner Thomas asked about the removal of benches at Garden Street Plaza. Mr. Fultz said the Plaza was designed to be a thorough fare between buildings and it was not serving its purpose. He said the benches are easily removed and can be returned at any time. Commissioner Thomas said he agrees with the staff recommendation at this time and he approves the plan to have volunteer rangers in the parks.

Public comment:

Ryan Stillwater – He stated he has been swayed by the conversation; but would like to ask some questions. 1) did the staff comments include any comments from the police department. She replied no. 2) why haven't the Garden Street Plaza benches been put back in place? Ms. Greenwood said that the benches restrict the function of the plaza; presently equipment can be brought in and more tables and chairs can be provided for special events. Mr. Ryan noted the Rescue Mission is still in the Oval building but is short staffed. He complimented the department and the police for the job they have done at Oval Park.

Bill Houtt – He said he feels he has been adversarial regarding this issue and he no longer feels this way; he too has been swayed by the conversation this evening. He stated that the volunteer programs at the Oval building are a great idea, and so is the joint meeting. He thanked the commission for their work.

Commissioner Calhoun said she would accept a motion to accept the staff recommendation to defer removal of amenities at Oval Park until an evaluation of the park improvements can be performed; and to establish a date for a joint meeting between the North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory Committee and the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Commissioner Kent so moved and Commissioner Blue seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 4 -0

5. Annual Report on Youth Sports & Tiny Tots Programs. Ms. Roggenkamp, Recreation Manager, provided the following information.

- Volleyball Camp – 2014, 60 participants and 2015, 58 participants. Revenue – 2014, \$4,985 and 2015, \$4,475.
- Golf Camp – 2014, 54 participants and 2015, 60 participants. Revenue – 2014, \$1,350 and 2015, \$1,500.
- Spring Golf Camp – 2015 and 2016, 30 participants and revenue remained at \$750 for both years.
- Fall NFL Flag Football – 2014, 380 participants and 2015, 492 participants. Revenue – 2014, \$24,301 and 2015, \$30,793. Team requests were 41 and 71, respectively.

The ages of the children range from 3 years old to 6th grade and the increase in participation this year is approximately 29%. Revenue increased by \$6,500.

- Fall Youth Volleyball – 2014, 234 participants and 2015, 255 participants. Revenue – 2014, \$15,603 and 2015, \$17,504. Team requests were 43 and 39, respectively. Fall 2015 had a 9% increase in participation.
- Spring Youth Volleyball - 2015, 334 participants and 2016, 383 participants. Revenue – 2015, \$22,344 and 2016, \$25,392. Team requests were 68 both years. Spring 2016 increased by 15% from the previous year. Increase due to additional division, Spikers, grade 9th through 12th.
- Winter Basketball - 2015, 724 participants and 2016, 827 participants. Revenue – 2015, \$45,720 and 2016, \$51,982. Team requests were 92 and 91, respectively. 2015 increased 7.26% from 2014 and 2016 increased by 14% from 2015.
- Spring Baseball - 2015, 336 participants and 2016, 448 participants. Revenue – 2015, \$22,280 and 2016, \$29,207. Team requests were 16 and 36, respectively. In 2016 there was a 33% increase from previous year.
- Youth Scholarships – Children must be Visalia residents and the scholarship only covers half of the registration fees per program. Scholarship amounts are limited to \$125 per person or \$250 per family for a fiscal year. Income criteria are based on the U.S. Department of Food & nutrition-free meal program at public schools and applicants must conform to those regulations.

Basketball, 2014-15/36 participants, 2015-16/20 participants. Volleyball 2014-15/20 participants, 2015-16/14 participants.

Baseball, 2014-15/12 participants, 2015-16/8 participants. Totals by year are 2014-15/68 participants and 2015-16/42 participants.

- Tiny Tot Enrichment – This program includes art, education and sports. Socialization is taught and encouraged with peers, parents, teachers and adults. Programs offered are Jumping Jollies, Art Explosion, Tiny Dancers and the Mickey Mouse Clubhouse. Kindermusic is a contract class for 1-4 year olds; there are 4 classes per month and they average 15 participants per month.

Classes offered in 2014-15, including all seasons, totaled 39, with 546 participants. Classes offered in 2015-16 totaled 49, with 779 participants.

- Mother & Son Campout – In 2015-16 there were 158 participants and in 2016 there were 161 participants. Organized and spontaneous play is encouraged, a movie in the park was offered and this is a fun family event.
- Mother's Day Tea Party – This year's theme was a Princess Concert and the Disney princesses, Belle and Cinderella, came for photos and fun. Cinderella sang and the children danced with their mothers, grandmothers and aunts. Gifts were presented to all participants.

Commissioner Calhoun said she appreciated the classes presented by the City as Tulare County has a high rate of poverty in the state and for many children this is how they socialize. She also noted the scholarships; how they enrich the lives of our low income families.

Commissioner Kent asked what the increase in programs is attributed to. Ms. Roggenkamp said she attributes it to the quality of programs, marketing, and the brochures that are mailed to residents and made available to local schools.

6. Update on City Council Reports & City Staff Announcements.

- **Upcoming Recreation Programs & Special Events.** Ms. Roggenkamp reported the following:
 - Camp Kaboom is averaging about 80 participants per day. The drop-in program at Manuel Hernandez is averaging about 85 per day. On the 15th they served 110 lunches to children.
 - The Loop bus has been activated for the summer. It provides transportation to the Boys and Girls Club, the Manuel Hernandez Community Center, the PAL Program, the Anthony Community Center, and from there they can walk to the pool at Redwood High for the public swim. The service is free to the public.
 - Specialty programs are as follows: Cheerleading camp had about 40 participants; this Friday will be the Summer Night Lights program at Hernandez Center and Teen Idol auditions will be held this Friday and Saturday nights. Twenty audition packets were handed out to interested parties. This coming Saturday will be out Princess Musical from 6 to 7:30 pm, at the Enchanted Playhouse downtown. Thirty-four tickets have been sold at \$10 each.
 - Swim lessons have begun and we had 221 participants in Session One. Session Two has begun and we are already at 260 participants. Public swim is held Monday through Saturday from noon to 3 pm, at Redwood High School. The average daily participation is 89. In 2013 the average was 30 per day. The increase is due to the fact that many non-city programs like the Boys and Girls Club and day camps are bringing groups to swim. Sessions were added to the Pediatric/Child CPR & First Aid and the Babysitting Certification because they were so popular. They are certified by the American Red Cross.
 - Adult sports will be beginning soon. Soccer began and has 17 teams. Basketball has 30 teams and softball begins tonight and has 102 teams.
 - Movies in the Park have begun and we had 150 participants for Inside Out. 375 participants came to see Jurassic Park. We duplicate the movies for our Dive-in Movies on Saturdays.
 - The Senior Center is averaging about 40 lunches a day. For the Father's Day luncheon there were 86 in attendance.

Commissioner Blue asked how the swim teams were doing.

Swim teams are doing very well; the Buccaneers are at 170, the Seahawks are at 190 and the Waves are at 150.

Commissioner Blue said he spoke to some participants and overall everyone is pleased.

- **Upcoming Parks & Urban Forestry Projects, Programs & Special Events.**

- The Oval Park playground is ready to open. The Foundation is working on a date for the dedication. First 5 and Children Only signs have been installed. The irrigation is working well and new trash cans have been installed.
- The Oval Park lighting is working and there are still a few bugs in the irrigation. The cameras are ready for installation.
- The well at Fairview Park is being drilled; it should be complete today or tomorrow. Willits Pump will be installing the pump in mid-July.
- The Riverway Sports Park soccer fields have been under renovation, seeding took place last week and the irrigation is now on three - four times per day for the next 21 days.
- The parking lot on the west side of Whitendale Community Center has been replaced and it is a lot nicer now.
- **Director's Report on Administrative Items.** Ms. Greenwood reported the following.
 - Staffing: recruitments went out for both Recreation Supervisor and Recreation Coordinator that closed Friday, June 10. The goal is for all four positions to be on-board by August 1.
 - The Park Ordinance Sub-committee meeting will be held Thursday evening, 6 pm, in the conference room just down the hall from the chambers.
 - A meeting will be held this week with Pickleball players to discuss their requests and funding.
 - City staff is continuing to work on the public outreach portion of the Sales Tax Measure. The City is going to make the decision by July 18 if they want to move forward with this. It hinges on a spending plan and the level of accountability for the City.

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

- **Parks & Recreation Foundation.** Commissioner Kent received an update from Carol Hays, Foundation Director, which included a fund raiser in October, scheduling a date for the dedication of the Oval playground and the Oval Christmas Tree Lighting Event. They are working on building their membership and he will send out a flyer to anyone who would like one. Commissioner Calhoun asked to receive one.
- **Community/Aquatic Center Ad Hoc Committee.** Commissioner Blue said there have been no meetings yet. Ms. Greenwood said City Manager Mike Olmos has requested this item to be presented to Council because there is at least one Council member who wants an aquatics center. She said it would be on the July 18 City Council Agenda. Commissioner Blue said in his opinion, the area selected for the Community Center is not large enough for both facilities.
- **Senior Citizens Advisory Committee.** Ms. Greenwood said she attended the meeting and a discussion took place regarding staff changes. The department has been approved for one new Recreation Coordinator position, which eliminates two hourly positions: one at the Senior Center and one at the Manuel Hernandez Community Center
- **Waterways & Trails Committee Report.** Ms. Greenwood said the committee is trying to recruit new members. Four members termed out in June and at last night's Council meeting Council was asked to extend six months' time for two members, to appoint one new member and to reduce the committee from 13 members to 11. The new bike map is ready to be published.
- **North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory Committee.** Commissioner Thomas did not attend. He asked if the department had received a petition requesting a walking path from Mr. Huott. Ms. Greenwood said she did but the path is already in the Master Plan.

8. **Adjourn to the regular meeting, July 19, 2016, at the Council Chambers located at 707 W. Acequia Street, at 5:30 p.m.**

Commissioner Blue moved to adjourn and Commissioner Thomas seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 4-0

Brenda Miernik,
Senior Administrative Assistant