

Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission
Meeting Minutes February 19, 2013, Corrected

1. Call Meeting to Order/Roll Call

The Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission met in a regular meeting on Tuesday, February 19, 2013, at the Rawhide Stadium, 300 N. Giddings, Visalia, California. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Mann at 5:30 pm.

Present: Lesa Mann, Carla Calhoun, Robert Doi, Ben Filiponi, and Dolores Taylor.

Absent: Shann Blue

Guests: Scott Woodhouse, Ralph Barrera, and Evan Raycraft.

Staff: Vince Elizondo, Jeannie Greenwood, Jim Bean, Kim Loeb, and Brenda Miernik.

2. Review and Approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting, January 15, 2012. Commissioner Mann stated the minutes were not available at this time.

3. Public Comment: None.

4. Annual Election of Chair and Vice Chair. Mr. Elizondo stated that the Parks & Recreation Commission Charter calls for election of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson every twelve months. Chairperson Mann said she has enjoyed herself as Chairperson but she is ready to pass the gavel. Commissioner Calhoun stated she is ready to serve as Chairperson.

Commissioner Doi moved to accept Commissioner Calhoun as the new Chairperson for the commission, and Commissioner Filiponi seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 5-0

Mr. Elizondo turned the meeting over to Chairperson Calhoun, new Chairperson.

Commissioner Calhoun asked if there was anyone interested in the Vice Chairperson position. Commissioner Filiponi expressed his interest.

Commissioner Mann moved to accept Commissioner Filiponi as Vice Chairperson and Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 5-0

5. Interview Potential Candidates for Commission Alternate Position. Commissioner Mann welcomed the candidates and asked if they would come to the front when called and introduce themselves.

Mr. Evan Raycraft introduced himself, stating he is 25 years old and previously worked with Tulare County as a Property Tax Accountant. He said he graduated from San Diego State College, and is currently pursuing his Master's Degree in Finance. He said he is interested in the Parks and Recreation Commission because he is proactive in a healthy lifestyle. He says his opinions will represent the youth of Visalia. He says he has worked with the Bethlehem Center, which works closely with the under privileged in our community. He said he has attended meetings for the Environmental Committee and the North Visalia Advisory Committee.

Commissioner Doi stated the commission deals with a wide variety of Parks and Recreation issues, is there a particular area you are interested in? Mr. Raycraft said he likes community projects like Earth Day and Arbor Day because it is about educating the public and enjoying the outside environment. He said he would enjoy events to promote youth.

Commissioner Calhoun informed Mr. Raycraft that the commission meetings are once a month, third Tuesdays. She asked if he was able to make that commitment. He replied he could.

Commissioner Mann said the commissioners volunteer on other committees during the month also. She asked if he could make that commitment also. Mr. Raycraft asked if he could be a member of two committees simultaneously. Commissioner Mann said he could not be on two committees. Mr. Raycraft stated he would be available to serve the commission. She asked him if he played sports or visited the park system in Visalia. He replied he visits Ruiz Park, which is close to his house and plays basketball at the parks.

Having just arrived, Commissioner Taylor asked Mr. Raycraft why he is interested in the Parks and Recreation Commission. Mr. Raycraft said he felt he would bring a youthful outlook to the commission.

Ms. Miernik stated she had received an e-mail from Mr. Shelton rescinding his application. Commissioner Mann noted that applicants Jeremy Alcaraz and Juan Lopez did not attend as scheduled.

Commissioner Doi made a motion to recommend Mr. Evan Raycraft to City Council as an Alternate Commissioner. Commissioner Filiponi seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 5-0

Mr. Elizondo introduced Mr. Freddy Arias, the new Recreation Supervisor, who replaces Mr. John Bradley, in the Youth Division. Mr. Aria is a Dinuba native, graduated from Fresno State with a degree in Recreation Administration. While attending Fresno State he served the Visalia Parks and Recreation Department as an Intern. He has been working for the City of Madera for four and ½ years as a Recreation Supervisor.

Mr. Arias stated he is happy to join the Visalia team. He accepted the position in Madera and gained experience with facility management, aquatics, and after school programs. He said he was actually a Parks and Recreation Commissioner for the City of Dinuba for six months.

6. **Request by Plaza Raceway for Car Show Event to be held Saturday, March 24, 2013.** Ms. Jeannie Greenwood, Recreation Manager, stated that Plaza Park Raceway has been approached by local promoter, Ralph Barrera, to host a car show at the Raceway. The proposed event will allow approximately 200 cars to be displayed in the line pit area and the race track for viewing and judging. She said a stage would be placed on the strait-way on the west edge of the track for live music, and speakers would be pointed south-east to minimize noise impact to Plaza Park. The event will take place from noon to 5 pm, and requires paid admission (\$6).

Ms. Greenwood said that Visalia parks are very busy on the weekends and amplified sound will impact park visitors, particularly areas 7 & 8. City staff is recommending that Plaza Park Raceway, LLC, shall provide the City with a certificate of insurance naming the City as “Additionally Insured” for the date and location of the event.

Ms. Greenwood states that staff further recommends that the commission approve the proposed car show at Plaza Raceway on Sunday, March 24, 2013, with the following conditions:

1. Plaza Park Raceway and/or Mr. Ralph Barrera must obtain an Assembly Permit and comply with all conditions set forth by the Visalia Police Department, Visalia Fire Department and the City’s Traffic Safety Division.
2. Event organizer, Ralph Barrera must reserve picnic areas 7 & 8 at Plaza Park for the event.
3. Per the existing agreement between the City of Visalia and Plaza Park Raceway, LLC, a fee of \$400 shall be charge to Plaza Park Raceway, LLC, for the use of the facility on March 24, 2013.

Ms. Greenwood introduced Mr. Scott Woodhouse to answer questions from the commissioners.

Mr. Woodhouse stated the arena is a perfect place for this event because it is fenced. He said the show will include vendor booths and a grandstand stage with live music. Mr. Woodhouse introduced Mr. Barrera, a local promoter.

Mr. Barrera said he has been promoting events for ten years and he said he will sponsor an event called Taste of the Valley in July 2013, which includes food and wines from many vineyards in the area and jazz music. He said Plaza Park is a beautiful park and the fencing around it is perfect for the event. He said safety is his number one goal.

Commissioner Doi asked if he was interested in doing this event annually. Mr. Woodhouse replied that he was very interested in creating a family event that everyone can enjoy.

Commissioner Mann asked if alcohol was going to be served. Mr. Barrera replied yes and Commissioner Taylor asked about security. Mr. Woodhouse replied absolutely, it will be provided like a regular race night.

Commissioner Calhoun requested a motion to approve the City staff recommendation for the car show on March 24, 2013, at Plaza Park Raceway.

Commissioner Mann moved to accept the recommendation for the car show. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 5-0

7. **East Side Regional Park.** Mr. Elizondo introduced Mr. Loeb, Manager of the Natural Resource Conservation Division, and said he is representing the proposed East Side Regional Park. Mr. Elizondo said the staff recommendation is to receive the information and collect preliminary comments or suggestions for the project.

Mr. Elizondo referred to the Groundwater Recharge map in the commission packets and noted the 103 acres. He said this area has been owned by the city for a while and has always been earmarked for a regional park. He said in recent years the City has purchased additional land adjacent to the 103 acres. He said currently the land is an orchard leased to Blain Farming, the original owner. He explained that this is the project site that Mr. Loeb will be speaking about. He said years ago the City applied for a grant to develop the property but did not receive it; however, the City did create a Master Plan for the property, seen on map two in the packets.



The property will be divided between useful parkland and recharge basins, designed for storm water to percolate into the ground.

Mr. Loeb said that for years the City has had an active groundwater replenishment program. Most city water comes from wells maintained by California Water Service, replenished by snowfall from the Sierra Mountains. Population is using the water faster than nature can replenish it and the water table has been dropping. The City has a partnership agreement with Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District regarding the Oakes Basin. Mr. Loeb stated groundwater flows generally in the same way rivers flow and land slopes, generally west, south-west. He said the land under discussion is well suited to this purpose because there are three waterways that run through the property – Mill Creek, Oakes Ditch, and Packwood Creek.

Mr. Loeb said the water conservation plant upgrade project is the largest capitol project the city has ever undertaken. All waste water that the city generates will be traded to the Tulare Irrigation District (TID) for use for agricultural needs. The City will receive water from the TID and allow it to be ponded so it will percolate into our groundwater system.

Mr. Elizondo said the plant upgrade is a \$140 million project. He said the connection of the Creeks into the park will be very interesting in the future and there will be large Southern California Edison (SCE) transmission lines that will run north-south. The City is also in the process of creating a trail all along the SCE corridor and this trail will connect with the park.

Mr. Elizondo asked the following questions:

- a) How deep will the basins be? Mr. Loeb said it depends on where the funding comes from. He said a FEMA pre-disaster mitigation grant for flooding was considered but the basins have to be deeper than for groundwater recharge purposes. He said the largest cost for flood control is digging out the soil and hauling it away. In the conceptual plan the basins would be 8 feet deep (6 feet below the ground surface), with a ground slope above the ground of 2 feet. The slope will be shallow. Mr. Loeb said that if the City cannot obtain the FEMA grant they will build the basins shallower.
- b) Will the basins have water in them all year long? What is the vision? Mr. Loeb said the basins will be empty most years due to lack of rain. He said wet years usually occur in three year intervals. At that time, they may fill up.

Commissioner Mann asked for an example of a current park that is dug to the projected depth of the basins. Mr. Loeb said he did not know of an example in Visalia.

Mr. Loeb said this project has a good opportunity for multiple use purposes. He said with the conceptual plan showcases the facility and the potential uses.

Commissioner Calhoun asked if he thought this kind of park development would attract wild birds to the area. Mr. Loeb said this would be beautiful mountain snow runoff and he said the birds would love it.

Mr. Elizondo stated this is an informational topic only but the City would like comments and thoughts on the plan. The commission will be involved in this project for many years to come.

8. Annual Report for Senior and Adult Programs. Mr. Ramon Sanchez stated the Senior Center is staffed by Jason Glick, Recreation Supervisor; Ramon Sanchez, Recreation Coordinator; two hourly Office Assistants, one hourly Program Assistant, Volunteers and hourly Building Attendants.

Mr. Sanchez said there are many services provided by the Senior Center such as information and referral services, a computer lab, nutritious daily lunches, and programs that allow our clients a place to socialize, exercise and learn.

Mr. Sanchez said senior meals are served daily from 12 to 12:30 daily. The cost is \$3.50 per meal, \$4.50 for non-seniors. He said 9,081 meals were served in 2012.

Senior programs and classes that are free of charge are as follows.

- Movement activities like beginning and intermediate line dancing and tennis table
- Knitting and sewing
- Senior Seminars
- Pinochle, Poker, Scrabble, the Writer's Group, and Friday movies

Mr. Sanchez said the Senior Center also offers activities and classes are available for a nominal fee. These include ceramics, tole painting, water color, oil painting, 50+ Rocks and adult classes.

Mr. Sanchez said the adult classes include the 50+ Rocks Series – 50+ Rocks Functional Movement, 50+ Rocks Hiking, and 50+ Rocks Nature Trekkers. He said the fitness classes consisted of Belly Dancing, Yoga classes, pickleball, bocce ball, line and ballroom dancing, and Trails for Tails. He said for those wanting to learn a new skill there is Conversational Spanish, Facebook, Photo Editing, Selling on E-Bay, and Troubleshooting Your Computer.

Mr. Sanchez said there are many non-City sponsored programs also. These include the following.

- ✓ Gadabouts and Senior Pride Bingo
- ✓ AAA Bridge Club and Friday Bridge Club
- ✓ Contract Bridge Club and Saturday Night Dance
- ✓ Square Dancing and AARP Driver Safety Classes

Mr. Sanchez reported that the Senior Advisory Committee (meetings held every third Wednesday of each month) is doing a great job of fostering communications between City staff and Senior Center participants; and the Facility Review Subcommittee reviews requests for facility use at the Senior Center, specifically those groups and organizations who wish to utilize the center for reduced or waived fees. He said the subcommittee makes recommendations on fee reductions or waivers and forwards them to the Parks and Recreation Commission for approval.

Mr. Sanchez said many improvements have been made at the Senior Center and include the following.

- Senior Pride Bingo donated 210 chairs.
- Prestige Assisted Living donated the lobby improvements.
- Partnering together Visalia Bridge, local churches as part of Serve Visalia, and the Visalia Parks and Recreation Foundation painted the activity room.
- The Parks and Recreation Foundation donated the Blinds for the activity room.
- Provost & Pritchard, and a donation by Edna Fox painted the craft room.
- The Parks and Recreation Department completed the following: leveled mounds, removed a tree, modified the irrigation system to allow for synthetic turf, landscaping, added iron fencing and provided a picnic table, benches and patio furniture.

Mr. Sanchez stated some goals for the future are expand the senior meals menu and increase participation, recruit quality staff and instructors, increase participation numbers, continue to provide quality services and to improve the Senior Center.

Commissioner Calhoun asked what the median age is of the meal participants and if there is a target age. Mr. Sanchez said the meal participants are 70 and over. Ms. Greenwood said the classes target the younger seniors 50 plus.

Ms. Greenwood gave some background for the new commissioners. She said that in 2009 the department reviewed budgetary savings and at that time we had 3 three quarter time staff members who did meal prep on site. She said the meals were sold at \$3.50/\$4.50 and the actual expense of the meal was \$10. She said the department researched outsourcing the meals. Ms. Greenwood said the Council asked the department to seek savings department wide and outsourcing the meals was a large cost savings. She said Royal Dining is the vendor at this time and they strive to make their meals satisfying and nutritious.

9. Annual Review of City's Park Ranger Program. Mr. Jim Bean, Parks and Urban Forestry Manager, said in March 2007, the City initiated a City-wide Park Ranger Program in the City of Visalia. The full-time Ranger works a

regular 40 hour week, twenty-four of those hours spent in Park Maintenance. The other sixteen hours are spent as Park Ranger enforcing laws and order during the weekends and/or some holidays. The full-time Ranger shift begins at 7:00am and ends at 4:00pm.

Mr. Bean said that in 2011, Parks was able to add a second hourly Ranger position. This position would work 1000 hours annually and would typically work weekends and/or holidays. The hourly Ranger would begin the shift at 11 am and end at 8 pm. This has been very beneficial to park users.

Mr. Bean outlined reflecting the types of issues the Rangers face in the City park system.

Citation – Notice to Appear	70
Written Warnings Notice of Violation	10
Verbal Warnings	793
Park Maintenance Issues Report by Rangers	74
Assistance Rendered by Rangers From Visalia Police	44
Assistance Rendered by Ranger from Animal Control	4
Emergency Medical Services Rendered by Ranger	2

Mr. Bean noted that all Park employees enforce municipal codes during their day-to-day maintenance issues, but the visibility of the Park Rangers has been an asset in the consistent enforcement in parks during both weekdays and weekends. In addition, he said the Rangers have been effective at the Riverway Sports Park in attending to the water feature in the afternoon, arbor issues and weekend events.

Mr. Bean outlined some of the benefits of the Park Ranger program since its inception.

- A. A reduction in vandalism, which has led to savings in material and labor.
- B. A reduction in loitering and violators of park rules. The families are returning to our parks and feeling safer about the park atmosphere.
- C. Increased satisfaction to our arbor renters. The presence of the Ranger has been an asset when dealing with rental issues, bounce houses, and alcohol consumption.
- D. Enhanced the relationship between Visalia Police Department, park users, and the Parks & Recreation divisions.
- E. The Park Rangers number one goal is to educate the public of park rules to help facilitate a better relationship between the public, recreation staff and maintenance staff.

Mr. Bean said goals for the Park Ranger Program include attending annual training on citation writing and procedures, which will be held by City of Visalia's Code Enforcement Department in the spring of 2013; hourly training PC 832 – Laws of Arrest, and expanding the program.

10. Discussion of Topics for Joint Meeting with City Council, Tuesday, March 19, 2013. Chairperson Calhoun asked the commissioners what topics they felt were important to present to the Council. The following are ideas from the commissioners.

- General Plan Summary, Parks and Recreation element
- Waterways and Trails
- Quality Recreation Programs
- Quality of Life in Recreation Programming and Parks is not inexpensive but necessary for a healthy Visalia
- Recreation Park Splash Pad
- Former BMX area at Riverway Sports Park
- Goals and Objectives
- Conference Information
- East Civic Center Park
- Houston Elementary School and possible park
- Riverway Sports Park parking and new project with 7-acres in center of park

11. Update on City Council Reports & City Staff Announcements:

- **Upcoming Recreation Programs & Special Events.** Ms. Greenwood reported the following.
 - The Father Daughter Dance was held on February 22, and was as successful as ever.
 - The spring brochure is out and registrations are coming in.
 - The Manuel Hernandez Community Center doors project will begin soon.
 - Senior Center Open House will be held on March 13 with a Barbeque, please join us. The newly renovated patio will be dedicated.
 - March 30 the Eggstravaganza will be held at Riverway Sports Park.
- **Upcoming Parks & Urban Forestry Projects, Programs & Special Events.** Mr. Bean, Parks & Urban Forestry Manager reported the following.
 - Arbor Day is April 27 and Earth Day is April 20.

- The Garden Street Plaza Shade Structure Project is on schedule.
- **Director's Report on Administrative Items.** Mr. Elizondo stated the in-field lights have been installed at the Rawhide Stadium and Phase III of the Riverway Sports Park will go out to bid this coming Friday.

12. Commissioner's Requests & Comments:

- **Parks & Recreation Foundation Monthly Report.** Commissioner Taylor said the Foundation is considering a Poker Tournament as a fundraiser for the Foundation. The Board is still working on the 4th of July Celebration and is seeking volunteers, donations and sponsors.
- **North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory Committee.** Commissioner Doi said he did not attend the meeting but they are currently electing new officers.
- **Senior Citizens Advisory Committee Update.** Commissioner Mann remarked on the changes at the Senior Center. She suggested a letter be sent to Mr. Bill Dillberg due to his help with funding many of the changes.
- **Waterways & Trails Committee Report.** Commissioner Filiponi said he was not available for the meeting but the Committee is working on their goals.
- **Houston Elementary School Sub-Committee Report.** Commissioner Taylor said a meeting was held with the school district. More details to follow.

13. Adjourn to Special Meeting March 1, 2013, at 345 N. Jacob Street, Anthony Community Center, Room A at noon, lunch will be provided. Commissioner Filiponi made a motion to adjourn and Commissioner Mann seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 5-0

Brenda Miernik
Senior Administrative Assistant