

Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission
Meeting Minutes February 18, 2014

1. Call Meeting to Order/Roll Call

The Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission met in a regular meeting on Tuesday, February 18, 2014, at the Tulare County Library, Visalia Branch, located at 200 W. Oak Street, Visalia, California. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Calhoun at 5:32 pm.

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

Staff: Jim Bean, Jeannie Greenwood, Jim Bean, Jeff Fultz, and Brenda Miernik

2. Review and Approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting, January 21, 2014. Commissioner Calhoun called for a motion to approve the January 21, 2014 minutes. Commissioner Ben Filiponi moved to approve the minutes as presented and Commissioner Blue seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 3-0

3. Public Comment: None.

4. Request by the Guild of St. Mortimer to Host the Tulare County Renaissance Faire at Plaza Park on May 3-4, 2014. Ms. Greenwood stated the Guild is requesting to use Plaza Park for their 25th Annual Renaissance Faire. This will be the 15th year at Plaza Park. Faire hours will be 10 am to 6 pm on both days. Thursday will be used as a day to layout the site, mark booth locations, put up perimeter fencing and begin delivering supplies and equipment to the site. Friday will be set-up day and Monday will be the break-down and clean-up day. She said the park will be closed to the public beginning Thursday, May 1 and will re-open to the public on Monday morning May 5.

Ms. Greenwood said this event draws between 5,000 and 6,500 people to the park over two days. The Guild states that, based on information from other faire coordinators and guilds, it is estimated that approximately \$50-\$75 per person is generated in tourist revenues to the host city. Using these figures, between 125,000-\$250,000 will be spent in the community during these two days.

Ms. Greenwood said that City staff will be imposing a rental fee of \$1,400 (\$700 per day) for the two days of the event and are requiring a cleaning and damage deposit of \$1,000. The City provides a significant amount of resources to this event. Maintenance staff must mark all sprinkler heads and control boxes so that vendors do not damage irrigation equipment. City staff also meets with the event organizer to perform a walk-through before and after the event. Staff coordinates services such as irrigation shut-off, mowing schedule, custodial services, and performs unannounced visits to the event.

Ms. Greenwood stated the only difference this year than the last 3 years is the Guild will not be using the Plaza Raceway for the jousting event. The department will be working with the organizers with the logistics to bring the event into the park. There are large horses and barriers involved and there is concern for public safety. Ms. Greenwood said she was informed by the Guild that the Raceway was not available this year.

City staff recommends that the Parks and Recreation Commission authorize the Director of Parks and Recreation to issue a permit to the Guild of Saint Mortimer granting special permission to do the following:

- Allow animals in the park,
- Allow vehicles on the park,
- Allow noise that exceeds 60 decibels,
- Allow glass containers, and
- Allow overnight parking and camping in the park.

Ms. Greenwood said that in addition to the above special permissions, City staff, in coordination with the City's Special Events Committee, will condition the applicant to provide the appropriate general liability insurance to include liquor liability, an ABC license to sell alcohol, security guards as required by the Visalia Police Department, portable restrooms, additional licenses for commercial vendors, and assembly permit, and other additional minor requirements. She said the City also reserves the right to cancel this event in the case of excessive rain before the event. The City has a vested interest in protecting the park turf from damage and protecting the public interest from injuries related to excessive moisture on the park grounds. The final decision to cancel the event will be determined by the Director of Parks and Recreation.

Commissioner Blue asked if this is the usual time for this event and Ms. Greenwood said it is usually held in April, but due to the Easter holiday they are scheduling it later. Commissioner Calhoun asked if this event has ever caused much damage to the park. Ms. Greenwood and Mr. Fultz confirmed that only minimal damage has ever been

reported after the event and the Guild has been a good user of the park. Ms. Greenwood informed the Commission that the dog park is always open during the event but, as a good neighbor the department posts information regarding the Renaissance Faire.

Commissioner Calhoun called for a motion to approve the request for the Renaissance Faire at Plaza Park on May 3-4, 2014, at Plaza Park. Commissioner Blue moved to approve the event as presented, and Commissioner Filiponi seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 3-0

5. **Request by Sierra K9 for a Fee Waiver for the use of Plaza Park and Plaza Raceway for the 28th Annual Sierra K9 Trials on April 25-26, 2014, and Request from Plaza Park Raceway, LLC, to add Sierra K9 Trials to their Schedule for 2014.** Ms. Greenwood said that Sierra K9 is a non-profit 501c3 organization comprised of K9 programs from Tulare County, including the City of Visalia. This organization has held an annual K9 competition for 27 years, 16 years at Plaza Park. She said the two day event includes closed competitions on Friday, followed by a “welcome” barbeque dinner for the officers/handlers and their K9 partners. Saturday is an open competition where members of the community can watch the event free of charge.

Ms. Greenwood stated that, as in past years, Sierra K9 is requesting a fee waiver for the use of Plaza Park Arbor #1 for Friday evening, April 25, 2014. This is a value of \$130. In addition, Sierra K9 will utilize Plaza Raceway for the Saturday competition (April 26, 2014) and is requesting that the City waive the \$400 per day fee charged to the Lessee of the raceway for this use. She said that should the City not waive the contract fee for Plaza Park Raceway, LLC, the \$400 fee will be passed along to Sierra K9.

Ms. Greenwood stated that Plaza Raceway is a favored venue for this event because it allows for better spectator seating and provides a nice barrier between the dogs and spectators allowing for a safer event. She said City staff recommends that the Commission consider Sierra K9’s request for a fee waiver in the amount of \$530 for their annual K9 event scheduled in Plaza Park on April 25-26 and provide a recommendation for Council approval. Staff also recommends the Commission approve the addition of this date to the previously approved Plaza Raceway schedule.

Commissioner Calhoun called for a motion to approve the waiver and the request for the use of Plaza Park for the Sierra K9 Trials on April 25-26, 2014, and the request for Plaza Park Raceway to add the Sierra K9 Trials to their 2014 schedule. Commissioner Filiponi moved to approve the event as presented, and Commissioner Blue seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 3-0

6. **Request by Visalia Youth Softball Association to host the “Best of the West” Youth Softball Tournament at Whitendale Park on June 6-8, 2014.** Ms. Greenwood said the Visalia Youth Softball Association (VYSA) has requested the use of the Whitendale Softball Fields for the “Best of the West” youth softball tournament scheduled for Friday- Sunday, June 6-8, 2014. Throughout the years this tournament has alternated between other cities within the Central Valley. She said the tournament has three divisions: 8 and under, 10 and under, and 12 and under. It is anticipated that there will be at least six teams per division from across the valley. She said tournament play will take place on Friday between 5 pm and 7 pm and on Saturday, and Sunday between 8 am and 7 pm.

Ms. Greenwood said that Mr. Gary Alvarez, President of the VYSA board, contacted staff to schedule the tournament and to request that the organization be allowed to enclose the softball complex with temporary fencing in order to charge for admission. Mr. Alvarez said that all the years he has been involved with VYSA he has noticed that when they travel to other cities for tournaments, spectators are charged an entrance fee and the fees are used to support the host team.

Ms. Greenwood stated VYSA’s request includes utilizing softball fields 1-4 at Whitendale Park. Boundaries will be created with temporary fencing placed along the west and south sides of the park in conjunction with the permanent fencing on the north and east sides of the field. She called attention to the map in the Commission packets. She noted the access points located at the north end of the park leading into the neighborhood, which would be closed for the event. There will be two entrances where spectator fees will be collected on the south side of park where spectators will enter from the parking lots.

Ms. Greenwood said the impact on the park from parking and restrooms by the attendees will be significant. For this reason, the Parks and Recreation Department is proposing that all rental arbors at Whitendale Park be secured and paid for by VYSA for Saturday and Sunday, a total of \$406. She also stated that the City just renewed a five year

contract with VYSA allowing them access to the Whitendale softball complex between the months of March – May. During the months that VYSA is utilizing the softball complex, the City does not rent the arbors at the park due to limited parking. This is a significant loss of revenue to the City; however, it is the best solution to alleviate traffic congestion in this neighborhood park. Due to the fact that this tournament is being held outside the perimeters of the contract, the department will be unable to rent the park spaces to the public and would like to recover this lost revenue.

Ms. Greenwood said City staff is recommending that the Parks and Recreation Commission authorize the Director of Parks and Recreation to issue a permit to VYSA granting permission for use of Whitendale Park for the “Best of the West” youth softball tournament on Friday, June 6, through Sunday, June 8, 2014, with the following conditions.

- Payment – Arbor rental of \$406.
- Security Deposit - \$500, which will be refunded following the event if the facility is left clean without damage.
- Portable Restrooms – organizer is responsible for providing adequate restrooms to support the event.
- Refuse/Recycling – organizer is responsible for providing adequate services for trash and removal, including recycling.
- Health Department Permit – food vendors shall have individual permits.
- Insurance – organizer is responsible for obtaining insurance certificate naming City of Visalia as additionally insured, listing the date and location of the event.
- Fencing – temporary fencing will be placed no earlier than 8 am on Friday, June 6 and removed no later than 5 pm on Monday, June 9. Fencing will be free standing.
- Other conditions may apply as deemed by the City.

Ms. Greenwood said the City also reserves the right to cancel this event in the case of excessive rain before the event. The City has a vested interest in protecting the park turf from damage and protecting the public interest from injuries related to excessive moisture on the park grounds. The final decision to cancel the event will be determined by the Director of Parks and Recreation.

Commissioner Blue asked what the difference would be if the hourly field rate was charged. Ms. Greenwood said it would be much more since the rate is \$13 per hour per field, which would add up quickly with 4 fields used. She clarified that the required free-standing fencing would be placed by a contractor and VYSA would bear the cost.

Commissioner Calhoun called for a motion to approve the request for the use of Whitendale Park by VYSA for the “Best of the West” softball tournament on Friday through Sunday, June 6 through 8, 2014. Commissioner Blue moved to approve the event as presented, and Commissioner Filiponi seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 4-0

7. **Update on the Visalia Rescue Mission’s Programs and Services as Requested by the Parks & Recreation Commission on January 21, 2014.** Ms. Greenwood stated that at the January 21, 2014, Commission meeting the Commissioners requested an update on programs and services, including a schedule of events, for the Lincoln Oval Center operated by the Visalia Rescue Mission (VRM). Staff invited Mr. Ryan Stillwater, staff member of the VRM who is responsible for programs, to attend the February 18 meeting to provide the requested information.

Mr. Stillwater said that August 22, 2013, was his first day on the job at the Visalia Rescue Mission (VRM). He said he has made the acquaintance of the Oval neighborhood and property owners, as well as attending the City Council meeting where Parks & Recreation presented the proposal to contract with VRM for services.

Mr. Stillwater presented the new logo for the Oval programs – Times are Changing, and the website. He said the website is addressing the neighborhood by using a webpage, nextdoor.com, to use the power of technology to build stronger and safer neighborhoods.

Mr. Stillwater stated VRM is planning several community events such as a Christmas Tree Lighting, Movie Nights, Motorcycle Shows, Farmers Markets, Lantern parade, and a Blood Drive. He said the Oval office in the Service Center is available for meetings, workshops, board meetings, and language and reading classes and tutoring.

Mr. Stillwater announced a concert by Peter Frampton and Guy Buddy to be held at Oval Park, Friday, August 29th, 2014. He said it takes people using the park to build and create the value that is then reflected back into the neighborhood.

Mr. Stillwater stated there are many resources for the VRM’s commitment to Visalia, including case studies made by the American Planning Association on How Cities Use Parks. The study includes information on community

revitalization, economic development, helping children learn, improving public health, creating safer neighborhoods, promoting tourism, arts and cultural programs, and community engagement.

Commissioner Calhoun commended VRM on their goals. She asked what plans are in place for the local neighborhood that supports VRM's goal to provide health, education, and services to the community.

Mr. Stillwater replied that his strategy, at this point, is to change the demographics of the Oval by scheduling events at the Service Center such as meetings and a Blood Drive. He said the room will be free to encourage usage and he has met with First Assembly of God Church for possible meetings.

Commissioner Calhoun asked whom she should contact for a tour of the facilities at the Oval. Mr. Stillwater said the contact information is available on the website, ovalpark.org.

8. Annual Review of the City's Park Ranger Program. Mr. Fultz, Park Maintenance Supervisor, reported that in March 2007, the City initiated a City-wide Park Ranger Program. Currently, the City's full-time Ranger, Homero Alcazar, works a 40-hour week. Twenty-four hours are spent in Park Maintenance during the course of the week, Wednesday through Friday, and sixteen hours are spent as the Park Ranger enforcing law and order during the weekends and some holidays. His hours are 7 am to 4 pm.

Mr. Fultz stated that in 2011, the department added a second part-time Ranger position. Brian Viera typically works weekends and/or holidays with a maximum of 600 hours per season. His shift begins at 11 am until 8 pm, which extends the hours of coverage during the weekends and has been very beneficial to park users.

Mr. Fultz said Park Rangers have the authority to issue citations for specific violations, but is not armed. In addition to law enforcement activities, Rangers perform many types of maintenance and construction tasks, as well as public relations duties. He said Rangers spend the majority of their time in the large four parks: Blain, Plaza, Whitendale, and Riverway Sports Parks due to reservations and heavy use. Both Rangers work weekends during the active warm-season months – March through October.

Mr. Fultz stated this outline reflects the types of issues Rangers face in the City park system. The reporting period is March 2013 through November 2013.

CITATION – NOTICE TO APPEAR: (167)

- Illegal parking (153)
- Illegal vehicle on park (10)
- Non-permitted commercial activity (4)

WRITTEN WARNINGS – NOTICE OF VIOLATION: (2)

- Non-permitted commercial activity (1)
- Non-permitted bounce house activity (1)

VERBAL WARNINGS: (626)

- Illegal use of alcohol (143)
- Dogs off leash (136)
- Illegal parking (60)
- Smoking near playground (45)
- Hazardous games and or activities (42)
- Illegal vehicle on park (34)
- Reservation conflicts (19)
- Non-permitted commercial activity (16)
- Child in dog park (6)
- Damage/litter at arbors (5)
- Electricity issues (4)
- Damage/litter at park (2)
- Non-permitted bounce house activity (2)
- Illegal amplified sound (1)
- Water fountain maintenance (1)
- Other misc. incidents reported by Rangers (110)
 - Homeless related issues – including: overnight camps, sleeping under arbors, abandoned carts, activity in restrooms (drugs, bathing, and sexual activity in restrooms) (104)
 - Horses in park (3)
 - Lost child (2)
 - Bees in restroom (1)

ASSISTANCE RENDERED BY RANGERS FROM VISALIA POLICE: (13)

- Illegal parking (4)
- Hazardous games/activity/injury (3)
- Illegal use of alcohol (1)
- Other misc. issues (5)
 - Homeless encampments (4)
 - Dead body in restroom (1)

ASSISTANCE RENDERED BY RANGER FROM ANIMAL CONTROL: (2)

SPCA officers continue to assist us in our parks with various issues.

- Dead animal in park (2)

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES RENEDED BY RANGER: (0)

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

Historically, the Park Ranger will spend an average of sixteen hours of his time enforcing park rules. The remaining time is spent in park maintenance and construction. With the addition of an Hourly Park Ranger there is now an average of 32 hours spent enforcing park rules during the busy weekends.

Mr. Fultz said that the following outlines some of the benefits of the Park Ranger program since its inception:

- 1) Reduction in vandalism, which has led to the savings of material and labor.
- 2) Reduction in loitering and violators of park rules. The families are returning to our parks and feeling safer about the park atmosphere.
- 3) 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.
- 4) Enhanced the relationship between Visalia Police Department, park users, and the Parks & Recreation divisions.
- 5) 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 park maintenance staff.

Mr. Fultz said the future needs of the program include continued training on citation writing and procedures. This will be facilitated by the City of Visalia's Code Enforcement Department in the spring of 2014. Training will continue on procedures of PC 832 – Laws of Arrest, as well as CPR and First Aid.

Mr. Fultz stated the number of incidents for 2013 was lower, as a whole, than the previous year. This can be attributed to public awareness, the addition of the second ranger, and assistance from Code Enforcement and the Visalia Police Department. However, if you notice in the five year comparison, both 2012 and 2013 had a much higher increase of incidents than those in prior years; this is also associated to the additional coverage by the Hourly Park Ranger, and that we are out in the parks for longer hours and can cover more areas during the season.

Commissioner Mann asked if fines are involved with the citations. Mr. Fultz said getting park visitor's information is difficult to get. If the violation involves an arbor rental the office would have their information, but otherwise, no. Mr. Fultz said if it involves the dog park the Ranger would call the SPCA and they can fine them; or if it involves a bounce house operator in violation, they can be warned or cited and fined. Mr. Fultz informed the Commissioners that the fines range from \$100, \$300, and \$500, and can result in suspension of rights to be in the park at all.

Commissioner Mann asked if the rangers spoke Spanish, and Mr. Fultz replied they do not.

Mr. Elizondo stated that Mr. Homero is an excellent Ranger and is solution oriented. He has made a huge difference in park relations and visitors following the rules. He is also a catalyst to get police officers into City parks.

9. **Parks & Recreation Commission Annual Report.** Mr. Elizondo stated that Commissioner Calhoun submitted a draft of the Annual Report for Commission review. Commissioner Calhoun said she focused on how much the Parks and Recreation Department has been able to accomplish in a one year time-period. She included park and trails amenities, and recreational programs. She said she would be happy to include events that Commissioners actually attended. Commissioner Filiponi said he and his daughter attended the Father/Daughter dance and his wife and their son attended the Mother/Son campout; he also was the team captain for Cal Water in the Corporate Games. Commissioner Mann said she attended the Teen Idol event. Commissioner Calhoun also remembered playing kickball at the Games.

Commissioner Mann made a motion to accept the Annual Report as presented adding the items discussed, and to give Chairperson Calhoun discretionary authority to present a final copy to the Parks and Recreation Department for distribution to Council. Commissioner Blue seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 4-0

Mr. Elizondo said the staff report would be forwarded to City Council prior to the Joint Meeting on March 18.

- 10. Review Topics for the Joint Meeting with City Council on Tuesday, March 18, 2014, at the Visalia Convention Center.** Mr. Elizondo said that usually a series of topics are chosen that are relevant to the Commissioners and the department. He said the meeting will be about one and one half hours in length and, very importantly, this is a budget year. He said in April and May the Council deliberates the requests and allocations for the next two years. He reminded the Commissioners that the department has lost many employees through attrition and retirements in past years. He said Recreation is requesting to replace 2 full time coordinators and Parks is requesting to replace 5 full time employees. He noted that these are not new positions; they are positions that were lost in previous years.

Commissioner Mann remarked that replacing employees should be number one on the Commission's agenda.

Commissioner Calhoun asked about the status of the General Plan.

Mr. Elizondo reported the General Plan is undergoing an Environmental Review, which is normally a 6 to 9 month process. Once completed, it will be released to the public for comments, probably in March or April 2014. He said meetings will be held to receive feedback from the public for compilation.

Mr. Elizondo said projects will be discussed at the joint meeting also. He said these projects have already been discussed to some degree: Eastside Regional Park, Southside Community Center, a municipal pool, and parkland for future growth.

Mr. Elizondo said the Council is discussing the drought that is currently on-going in our area. He said Mr. Bean is at a Council meeting now answering questions regarding irrigation of City parks. Council is concerned that if they ask residents to cut back on watering their lawns the same should occur in the park system. However, the department has been aware of the on-going drought for many years and has installed master controllers, water stations, smart sprinkler heads, conserving by cutting back on watering days, reducing turf where possible, and planting drought-tolerant landscaping. He said this discussion will also impact the water features in City parks. He said this could be a topic at the joint meeting and he wanted the Commissioners to be aware of it.

Commissioner Blue asked if staff has put together an analysis of the cost of maintaining grass in the parks versus regenerating the grass if the water was turned off in the parks. Mr. Elizondo said City staff has not been asked to prepare this report yet but would be if it came to cutting water in the parks.

Mr. Elizondo said Mr. Melcher might be asked to give a trails update. He also informed the Commissioners that Mr. Doi has resigned his position in order to travel.

- 11. Review of Potential Candidates for Commission.** Mr. Elizondo stated that there are three potential candidates for Commission and they will be interviewed at the April meeting.

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

- **Upcoming Recreation Programs & Special Events.** Ms. Greenwood reported the following.
 - Staff is working on their summer schedules and 2-year budgets.
 - Father/Daughter Dance tickets are on sale now for Friday, March 7, and Saturday, March 8. The theme this year is "Sail Away to Paradise."
 - The Mother /Son camp out will be held in April.
 - The new caterer has started at the Senior Center and week three has begun. The meals are wonderful and everyone is enjoying the new routine. In January the average attendance was 33 meals per day and in week three we are averaging 44 meals per day. New tables and chairs to be delivered tomorrow, donated by Senior Pride Bingo.
 - Youth sports have some awards ceremonies coming up Friday night.
 - Swimming starts in April.

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

- The Notice of Completion for Riverway Sports Park Phases III and IV was approved at tonight's Council meeting.
- New contracts were awarded tonight for Landscape and Lighting.
- Arbor Day will be held on Saturday, April 26. The location is going to be a Pinkham Ponding Basin, north of Caldwell. Mr. Bean said he will bring maps of the site to the April meeting.
- Earth Day will be held at St. Johns' Riverwalk on Saturday, May 3.
- Phase I of Packwood Trail, along Walnut, has been completed. Phase II is coming up and there are 26 trees being removed just east of Pinkham that will be replaced by a smaller species. New irrigation will be installed also.
- The pickle ball court project was awarded at the last Council meeting, and will begin the next 2/3 weeks.

Commissioner Calhoun asked about the Santa Fe Trail. Mr. Bean replied that the Santa Fe Trail is complete and the maintenance period has ended. Once the contractor completes the punch list the City will have control of it and signs will be installed. Commissioner Calhoun asked if Tulare County has done any work on their portion of the Trail. Mr. Bean did not know.

- **Director's Report on Administrative Items.** Mr. Elizondo said the Splash Pad is scheduled to go to Council on March 3 and it is very controversial, due to the drought discussions taking place. He also said there is potential for an RV park located near the golf course, south of the clubhouse.

13. Commissioner's Requests & Comments:

- **North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory Committee.** Mr. Elizondo said he has received emails from Bill Huott requesting a Commissioner to attend the meetings of this committee.
- **Parks & Recreation Foundation.** Mr. Elizondo stated the Foundation is moving the celebration from the 4th to the 3rd. He said it is not much of a money-maker and it is time consuming. He said the event is much more suited to a service organization.
- **Waterways & Trails Committee Report.** Mr. Filiponi said he did not attend the meeting. A meeting was held at Café 225 for goal-setting.

14. Adjourn to Joint Meeting, March 18, 2014, at the Visalia Convention Center, 303 E. Acequia Street, 5:30 pm.

Commissioner Mann made a motion to adjourn and Commissioner Filiponi seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 4-0

Brenda Miernik
Senior Administrative Assistant