

Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission
Meeting Minutes
February 17, 2015

1. Call Meeting to Order/Roll Call

The Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission met in a regular meeting on Tuesday, February 17, 2015, at the Tulare County Library, Visalia Branch, 2nd floor, located at 200 W. Oak Street, Visalia, California. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Carla Calhoun at 5:35 pm.

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

Absent: Jason Kent

Guest: George Shelton

Staff: Jeannie Greenwood, Jeff Fultz, and Brenda Miernik

2. Review and Approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting, January 20, 2015. Commissioner Calhoun called for a motion to approve the January 20, 2015, meeting minutes. Commissioner Mann moved to approve the minutes as presented, and Commissioner Filiponi seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 4 -0

3. Public Comment: None.

4. Review of Potential Candidates for Commission. Commissioner Calhoun stated there were three applicants scheduled for this evening but Ms. Ingvarsdson called to rescind her application. She welcomed Mr. Shelton and asked Ms. Miernik if Mr. Sweet had called to cancel. Ms. Miernik replied that Mr. Sweet did not call and cancel.

Commissioner Calhoun asked Mr. Shelton if he was still serving on the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). Mr. Shelton said he had been but he termed out, at six years. He said he previously assisted the department in 2007 by serving on the Aquatic Ad Hoc Committee.

Commissioner Calhoun asked Mr. Shelton if he was still a Master Gardener and he replied yes. He said he was Chair of the Master Gardeners event at the Visalia Home Show a few weeks ago and he has been very active with the group for years.

Commissioner Calhoun asked Mr. Shelton if any of the activities he is involved with would hinder his participation in Commission responsibilities. He said he had submitted an application to the Commission in previous years but at that point he was very busy and did not pursue the Commission. Now, he said he is willing to participate fully with the Commission if he is selected.

Commissioner Calhoun asked what attracted him to the Parks and Recreation Commission. He said he had been interested in parks since his children were involved with childhood sports. He said he felt parks were very important to the community.

Commissioner Mann informed Mr. Shelton that Commissioners are also involved with other committees during the month. She asked if his schedule would allow for this responsibility. He said during his tenure with the CAC he had similar responsibilities and he would be available for the commitment.

Commissioner Mann asked if he resided in Visalia or if he took extended vacations to other areas. Mr. Shelton replied that he does own a vacation home but he does reside in Visalia. He said if he is chosen to be on the Commission he would make a commitment to attend the meetings and fulfill his responsibilities.

Commissioner Calhoun asked what he did professionally before he retired. He said he was a welder/pipefitter by trade and a project manager in the construction industry.

Commissioner Mann stated she feels that Mr. Shelton comes to the Commission with lots of wonderful experience and moved to select him as an alternate for the Commission. Commissioner Blue seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 4 -0

5. Annual Report on Senior Programs. Ms. Greenwood, Recreation Manager, stated she has had direct oversight of the Senior Center for about a year and a half now. She said at one time, before the recession, the department had a full time coordinator, and eight years ago Terry Romero presided over Senior Center operations, full time.

Ms. Greenwood said that currently the staff consists of AAnn Baker, an hourly Recreation Assistant at the Senior Center, one hourly Office Assistant, two hourly Program Assistants, volunteers, and hourly Building Attendants.

She said volunteers are critical to the operation of the Center. She said Ralph, the volunteer who managed the dining room for the Center, relocated out-of-state, and the Center is rebuilding the volunteer base. Ms. Greenwood said the Senior Center is the only facility that utilizes Building Attendants daily because there is constant set up and tear downs for the classes and programs.

Ms. Greenwood stated the hours of operation at the Center are Monday through Friday, 10 am to 4 pm, but the building actually operates from 10 am to 10 pm, seven days a week. The building consists of the business office, dining room, craft room, activity room, a media lounge, and the patio.

Senior Meals~ Ms. Greenwood said senior meals are served daily from 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm and the cost is \$3.50 for seniors and \$4.50 for non-seniors. Elaine Dakessian, a new vendor, began service in February, 2014. Previously the meals were \$3.00 and \$4.00, respectively. 11,015 meals have been served in 2014.

Meal History~

2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
11,015	9,075	9,081	9,022	10,337	20,078

*The department stopped serving Meals on Wheels in 2011

Ms. Greenwood said that in 2014, Royal Dining was the contractor serving the Center and they informed the department they could not keep their kitchen open over the summer, and they closed. Kaweah Delta Hospital assisted us during that time, and in the fall the contract for Royal Dining expired. The decision was made to request bids for meal service. An agreement was made with Ms. Dakessian, a local caterer, who said she would provide meals for the Center at a set cost and in return she would use the kitchen for her private catering business. Having Ms. Dakessian on-site allows our clients to give direct feedback and provides another level of accountability for the cook. We are now in our second year of service with her.

Ms. Greenwood stated there are additional costs with the meals that the City is not recovering, which might be adjusted with the next budget cycle. She also noted that the holiday meals would be adjusted for the extra costs incurred for special menus items.

Commissioner Blue asked if the department had influence over what is served at the facility. Ms. Greenwood replied yes. She explained that the City had been receiving a grant from the government but due to the restrictions, it was decided not to re-apply for it. The City strives to serve a nutritious lunch for seniors and the department can allow cookies instead of fruit occasionally.

Ms. Greenwood stated that programs and classes are offered at the Center daily from 10 am to 4 pm, and they are coordinated by staff and volunteers. There are no paid instructors and this year's attendance is 3,469 participants. Classes include knitting and sewing, drop-in Ping Pong, free Friday movies, board games, Poker, a writers group, Wii games, weekly senior seminars, a walking club, and the Volunteer Bureau.

Mr. Shelton asked how the department recruited volunteers. Ms. Greenwood said mostly by word-of-mouth. She said the Times Delta came to the Center today and did an interview with Frank, who is going to manage the dining room, and they are going to tie the piece into the Volunteer Bureau.

Ms. Greenwood said that fee-based classes are offered at the Senior Center also. They include water color painting, oil painting, tole painting, ceramics, crochet, drawing and color therapy, hiking, tap dance, computer/laptop classes, Word and Excel classes, Tai Chi, line dancing, self-defense classes and bocce ball. Participation in 2014 was 1,427 and revenue was \$31,790. In 2013 participation was 590 and revenue was \$17,872.

Ms. Greenwood said the Senior Center hosts special events throughout the year. They are the Fall Open House (evening), Spring Open House with a barbeque luncheon, Thanksgiving and Christmas luncheons, as well as monthly themed luncheons.

Non-city programs at the Senior Center include the Visalia Gadabouts, Senior Pride Bingo, Saturday Night Dance, Square Dancing, Flu Shots, and HICAP (1-on-1 counseling).

Ms. Greenwood said new facility improvements include new tables, a planter box was installed as an Eagle Scout Project, a new garbage disposal was installed, and the addition of artwork throughout the Center.

The Senior Advisory Committee meets monthly, on the third Wednesday of every month, and they provide feedback on programs and operations. This committee also works closely with the Facility Review Committee.

Ms. Greenwood stated the goals for the Senior Center include the following:

- Recruit quality staff and instructors
- Expand program menu
- Increase participation numbers
- Increase meal participation
- Continue to provide quality services
- Continue to make improvements – murals
- Attracting and retaining “younger seniors”

Commissioner Blue asked the median age of the participants, and Ms. Greenwood replied that the average senior is in their mid-70s.

Commissioner Mann asked if any of the volunteers could be possible teachers for programs. Ms. Greenwood said absolutely, she actively seeks out people with special skills or talents to be teachers. Commissioner Mann also asked if there was a core group of seniors that just hang out at the Center. Ms. Greenwood said there are some that will come because they are involved with a program, and there are some that regularly just come to hang out.

Mr. Shelton asked if the Center was funded by county or City funded. Ms. Greenwood said it is funded by the City General Fund.

Commissioner Thomas asked if it was possible for a group of younger volunteers to come and do a project with the seniors. Ms. Greenwood said absolutely; many projects have been done that way, i.e. painting has been accomplished that way.

Commissioner Calhoun asked about the writers group and who facilitates it. Ms. Greenwood said it is a group that gets together on their own. She said they sometimes have 13-14 people in their group.

Commissioner Mann suggested having a person designated as a greeter to sit with new visitors to make them feel welcome. Ms. Greenwood said they have a volunteer, Claudia, who comes every day and she is very good at welcoming people.

Mr. Shelton suggested going to High Schools to recruit kids who need to have volunteer efforts for their college applications. Ms. Greenwood said that staff is currently working in that direction. She said there will be a Job Fair at the Anthony Center this month. She said students volunteer at many of the City’s special events.

- 6. Discussion of Topics for the Joint Meeting with City Council Tuesday, March 17, 2015.** Commissioner Calhoun said she is a member of the Eastside Regional Park Task Force and she said discussion had taken place at the last meeting about preparing a presentation for City Council on March 17. Ms. Greenwood said the Task Force just held two public meetings and there are two more scheduled. She said they may not want to present until the meetings are completed.

Topics suggested for the meeting are as follows.

- ✓ Conference topics and insights. Aging populations. Senior games.
- ✓ Vaughn Melcher with a Trails Update.
- ✓ The value of the Parks & Recreation to the City of Visalia. Why parks? Link sent to Vince & Brenda.
- ✓ Southside Community Center/Aquatic facility. Council support?.
- ✓ Final Phase IV of the Riverway Sports Park – Public Works projects that need to be completed. On-going design work now in progress. Youth softball, storm line to the area and Mooney Blvd.
- ✓ Big picture update – growth in recreation programs, park growth, status on projects, more staffing, new website.

Mr. Shelton said Kay Hutmacher, of Sierra Designs, was the guest speaker for the Master Gardeners last month and he asked her about new parks projected for Visalia. She said she didn’t know of any. He said he particularly asked about any pocket park projects for the north side of town. He suggested this might be a topic for this discussion.

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

- **Upcoming Recreation Programs & Special Events.** Ms. Greenwood reported the following.
 - You are invited to attend the CPRS 2015 Awards Banquet to be held on Friday night, February 27, at the CRU Club at Chukchansi Park in Fresno. It will begin at 6 pm with a no host bar, dinner and a program. Please let us know if you want to go. We submitted two competitive awards - #1 Outstanding Program Award for the 75th Anniversary Celebration and #2 Outstanding Facility for the new Pickle Ball Courts. The non-competitive awards submitted were #1 for Mr. Bill Huott for his service to the City and #2 for Community Service to the Tulare-Kings Counties Master Gardeners. Details on the competitive awards will follow.
 - The new brochure is out and the phones are ringing.
 - The new mobile app is live now-Visalia Parks. It features parks and trails with directions. The Live and Play brochure is on it too. Comments and suggestions are welcome.

- The Youth baseball sign ups deadline was last Friday, 259 participants, which is a drop from last year. Older children are going to Cal Ripken.
- Youth volley ball is at 305 participants. We were at 350 last year and we will reach that with late registrations.
- Swim team registrations start on April 6.
- Whitendale Community Center received a fresh coat of paint on the interior.
- Father/Daughter Dance tickets are selling. We have sold 350 and we cut it off at 500. Dates are March 6 & 7. Feel free to stop by.
- Liveandplayvisalia.com (new website) is doing well. We are the second most visited page on the City's site.
- This winter softball leagues are beginning to play and we have 48 teams.
- The winter basketball league capped at 30 teams.
- Soccer is at 32 teams.
- Adult volley ball has 20 adult leagues.
- Cal Ripken will begin games February 28.
- The department is hosting a Job Fair on February 26, from 4 to 6 pm, at the Anthony Community Center. We will be accepting applications for 16 hourly positions.
- Spurs, Skirts and Squares is a new program for families to learn to square dance. It begins March 20.

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

Mr. Fultz, Parks and Urban Forestry Manager have left to attend the balance of the City Council meeting being held in the Council Chambers.

- **Director's Report on Administrative Items.** Mr. Elizondo is not present due to the City Council meeting being held in the Council Chambers.

8. Commissioner's Requests & Comments:

- **Community/Aquatic Center Ad Hoc Committee.** Mr. Blue said the committee met last week and discussed bringing on new people to the committee. Councilman Collins suggested community leaders who have swimming experience and would have knowledgeable comments. He said a representative from Aquatic Designs presented some ideas for the aquatic facility. He said phases for the project including funding sources were discussed, along with revenue generating topics. He said he spoke with Councilman Collins after the meeting and he brought up a City Bond initiative for part of the financing.
- **Senior Citizens Advisory Committee.** Commissioner Mann said she will attend the meeting tomorrow.
- **Parks & Recreation Foundation.** Ms. Greenwood said the Foundation is reviewing their goals for 2015.
- **Waterways & Trails Committee Report.** Commissioner Filiponi said Council voted 3-2 to allow the North Visalia Advisory Committee to continue as a committee, even though the City is currently dividing the city into districts. Mr. Vaughn Melcher gave a Trails update regarding the Greenway Trail. Mr. Hickey spoke on the feedback he received on his report to Council. Council took issue with maintenance and solutions. He said Council approved two projects for the Committee, i.e. housing clean-up and a trail connectivity project. He said they will be meeting next month to set their goals for this year.
- **North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory Committee.** Commissioner Thomas said he spoke with Mr. Bill Huott who explained the vote by Council regarding the committee. He also shared some important statistics about the area.

Commissioner Thomas noted that he was at the Riverway Sports Park on the weekend and he noted some graffiti on one of the restroom structures. He asked how the department handles graffiti at the park.

Mr. Fultz stated staff goes out with spray paint and covers it up or the graffiti crew will take care of it. Certain times of the year community volunteers will assist to remove it. Mr. Fultz said individuals should call the Graffiti Hotline, which is 713-4451.

- **Public Arts Task Force Report.** Commissioner Mann said she has not yet been contacted about an upcoming meeting.
- **Eastside Regional Task Force Report:** Commissioner Calhoun reported the first community Workshop was held February 11 at Café 210, with a very good turnout. She said some of the comments were difficult to listen to due to negativity from the neighbors in the subdivisions. She said they did not want to discuss amenities, because they do not want the park at all. She said they are worried about the type of visitors the park will draw. She stated this park project has been on-the-books since 1991, before the subdivisions were built. She said Southern California Edison is planning to install new power lines in the area and the City is designing a trail in

conjunction to the project. The subdivision residents are not in support of this plan either. Commissioner Calhoun said there were other people at the workshop who shared ideas: dog parks, pickle ball courts, youth-senior active and passive items. She said she wasn't able to attend the meeting on February 12 at Whitendale Community Center.

Ms. Greenwood said she attended the second workshop and a few residents attended who were opposed to placing adult softball fields in the area, but the park itself wasn't an issue. She said it went well.

Commissioner Calhoun said the next meeting will be the Design Charrette, Thursday, March 26th at the Visalia Convention Center. She said it will be a hands-on meeting where amenities will actually be placed by attendees. She said the next meeting will be held on June 18 at the Convention Center and Park Master Plan Alternatives will be discussed.

9. Adjourn to the Joint Meeting, March 17, 2015, at the Visalia Convention Center, located at 303 E. Acequia Street. Sandwiches will be served at 5:00 pm, meeting to begin at 5:30 pm.

Commissioner Mann moved to adjourn and Commissioner Filiponi seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 4-0

Brenda Miernik,
Senior Administrative Assistant