

Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission
Meeting Minutes
July 19, 2016

1. Call Meeting to Order/Roll Call

The Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission met in a regular meeting on Tuesday, July 19, 2016, at the City Council Chambers, located at 707 W Acequia Street, Visalia, California. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Calhoun at 5:30 pm.

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

Absent: Jason Kent and Justin Sweet

Guests: Pickleball Visalia and Tennis Players

Staff: Jeannie Greenwood, Jeff Fultz and Brenda Miernik

- 2. Review and Approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting, June 21, 2016.** Commissioner Calhoun called for a motion to approve the June 21, 2016, meeting minutes. Commissioner Blue moved to approve the minutes as presented, and Commissioner Thomas seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 4 -0

- 3. Public Comment:** Mr. Bill Huott said he wished to thank the City and Commissioners for the improvements at Lincoln Oval Park. He said the dedication and grand opening of the playground was fantastic. He asked that the City continue the work with a walking path, a new park sign and the possibility of a pickleball court.

- 4. Consider Request from Pickleball Visalia to Re-purpose Two Tennis Courts at Plaza Park for Pickleball Use.** Ms. Greenwood provided the following information. In May, 2015, City staff forwarded a request from Pickleball Visalia to the Parks and Recreation Commission asking to add permanent painted pickleball lines to tennis courts seven and eight at the Plaza Park Tennis Complex. The Commission heard from pickleball players supporting the lines and tennis players who were opposed to the lines. The Commission did not make a decision that evening but asked staff to bring the item back the following month (June) with more information. At the June 16, 2015 Commission meeting Staff provided a report with responses to key points made by both pickleball and tennis advocates. Staff recommended four options.

- Option A: Pickleball Visalia's request to paint eight pickleball courts on two tennis courts. This would add two pickleball courts to each half court of tennis and require eight temporary nets.
- Option B: Four pickleball courts painted on two tennis courts. This would require the purchase of four temporary nets.
- Option C: One pickleball court painted on one tennis court. The existing tennis net would be used.
- Option D: No pickleball court lines on the tennis courts.

City staff recommended Option B, however, the Parks and Recreation Commission approved Option A, painting eight pickleball courts on two tennis courts. Since the courts have been painted the pickleball courts have been heavily used by Pickleball Visalia, Recreation Department programs and as the site of the Senior Games pickleball tournaments.

At the May 17, 2016, Commission meeting Mary Jo Estes and Johanna Coyne addressed the Commission during public comment to request additional facilities for pickleball play.

- Pickleball Visalia (PV) has 277 registered members and they have outgrown the current facilities at Recreation Park.
- PV requested additional lighting at Recreation Park to facilitate longer play.
- PV requested the renovation of two tennis courts (7 & 8) at the Plaza Park Tennis Complex into eight permanent pickleball courts.
- Netting was requested on the south end of the courts to prevent softballs from entering the courts.
- Other requests included re-surfacing the courts and adding additional sidewalk.

City staff met with PV to better understand the scope of the project and to gather cost estimates. A complete list of all improvements was created, and upon review, the project was estimated at \$90,464.

The task before the commission today is to consider the best use of the courts. Tennis is the primary function of the two courts in question. Pickleball lines were painted on the courts in 2015 to allow shared use with pickleball players. Other issues to consider:

- Current and future needs to tennis courts? Are the courts being used? How often?
- Lessons and Leagues equal fewer courts for public use, if two courts are taken away for pickleball courts will be cut down to 3-4 courts for public use during program times.
- The city would lose 25% of the tennis courts at the only City owned and operated tennis facility (Mt. Whitney courts).
- Pickleball only: Pickleball would gain eight permanent pickleball courts to allow for large group play and tournaments, eliminate running into tennis poles while playing pickleball.
- Mixed Use: The courts will be left as they are and will accommodate tennis and pickleball play (net required for pickleball).

The Parks and Recreation Commission and the department, needs to define a philosophy regarding competitive play versus recreational play. The Pro to competitive play is the ability to host large tournaments, which brings revenue into the City. The Con to competitive play is that it displaces local uses and staff time to facilitate the tournaments. The Pro to recreation play is the courts are available for local users and the Con is it generates minimal revenue to the City.

Ms. Greenwood said the funding of this project would be determined by Council, not the commission. The Capital Improvement process operates as follows: items that are a liability come first, items that affect public safety are second, and recreation is very low on the list for funding. Some projects that need funding for the Parks and Recreation Department are: the Southside Community Center, the Lincoln Oval Park improvements, replacing light poles at Plaza Park Softball Complex, replacing flooring at facilities, Riverway Sports Park Phase V, the Eastside Regional Park, a community aquatics facility, wheelchair accessible playgrounds, repairs to Riverway Sports Park splash pad.

Ms. Greenwood suggested the following options.

- Option 1: Approve the request from PV to recommend to the Council the re-purposing of Plaza Park tennis courts 7 & 8 to pickleball courts and ask Council to appropriate funds to renovate the courts accordingly.
- Option 2: Approve the request from PV to recommend to the Council the re-purposing of Plaza Park tennis courts 7 & 8 to pickleball courts and remove existing tennis poles and nets only.
- Option 3: Deny the request from PV to recommend to the Council the re-purposing of Plaza Park tennis courts 7 & 8 to pickleball courts and leave as they are today, tennis courts with the ability to play pickleball with a net.

Ms. Greenwood asked if there questions, otherwise please accept public comment and discussion.

Commissioner Thomas asked about the netting at Plaza Park. Ms. Greenwood said a pole would have to be added because the distance between the existing poles will not support the amount of netting necessary. It has been suggested to add lights to the pole to increase the visibility in the area.

Commissioner Filiponi asked how much revenue is generated by tennis and pickleball. Ms. Roggenkamp stated there is a lot of use with few rentals.

Commissioner Calhoun opened the floor for public comment and she asked everyone to please state his or her name clearly.

Cheryl Waymack: She serves as the Ambassador for the USAPA Pickleball Association for the Central Valley. She said it is a volunteer position and she is responsible to promote pickleball, to support the USAPA in the Central Valley, abide by the official rules, assist at clinics and tournaments, and seek opportunities to grow the sport in this area. She provided folders for the Commissioners review, which included pickleball facts and information on how the sport has grown in popularity. The City of Visalia's Senior Games pickleball was a huge success, drawing approximately 150 people. The tournament the City sponsored drew approximately 125 people, and Plaza Park was the perfect venue. Plaza Park has been targeted for sanctioned USAPA pro tour pickleball tournaments, but that would require eight dedicated courts. This is what PV is requesting. This is an exciting possibility for Visalia.

Commissioner Filiponi asked if dedicated means permanent netting. Ms. Waymack replied that is correct.

Martin Herrera: The courts at Mt. Whitney High are locked due to vandalism. He said when the courts are open there are people lined up to play. He said he thought PV has a large number of participants and it seems they have

more power than tennis players do. He stated that 6 courts for a city as large as Visalia doesn't seem like enough. He is saddened that these two courts will be taken away for pickleball use.

Dan Fox: He said he has been a tennis instructor for the City of Visalia for years. He stated there are about 220 kids who pay \$50 each for lessons. He said he is the original pickleball coach and he runs the tennis and pickleball games for the Corporate Games. He advocated for shared use of the tennis courts last year but PV is seeking priority use. He believes shared use is good, and whoever gets to the courts first, plays first. He said the City created two courts at Recreation Park and he feels this is adequate. He agrees that the netting needs repair, but as a compromise pads could be wrapped around the posts to keep folks from getting hurt.

Jane Presnell: She said she once served the City of Visalia as a commissioner, and she has never seen such enthusiasm for a sport. She plays pickleball and she enjoys the comradery and exercise. The growth of pickleball is amazing.

Ken Pickerell: He pointed out that the courts at Recreation Park are inadequate for the amount of people that want to play. He supports the additional courts at Plaza Park.

Grace Jepson: She said she is a diabetic and her doctors tell her to exercise and watch her diet. She plays pickleball as her form of exercise. She said time is money, the longer the city waits, the more costly the project becomes.

Doug Hoffer: He said he was not able to get more tennis players to the meeting. He said he is discouraged that the Recreation Department is considering taking tennis courts away. He said new tennis courts have not been built in this city for 45 years. He said there are more pickleball courts in Visalia and it is not right for one sport to encroach upon another. He said that according to the United States Tennis Association 80% of tennis games are played on public park courts and Visalia only has eight, six if you take action on this request. This is the only complex in the city and it is not enough to hold leagues, tournaments, or programs. He runs youth tennis programs at Mt. Whitney and Redwood High Schools because we need more courts; and we have to pay for them because they are locked to the public. We don't use the public park courts because we want to leave them for the public in order to encourage them to play tennis. He said he was the City of Visalia's director of tennis for 15 years before Dan Fox took over. Pickleball is not the fastest growing sport in America, though it is growing in Visalia. City Council needs to be told to find the funding to build dedicated courts for Pickleball. He said he spends about 12 hours per week at Plaza Park teaching tennis and running tennis programs. He said he is there in the morning, afternoon, and evenings. He said he has watched both groups play. Pickleball players come in groups of 24 and play in the morning and evenings. Tennis players come in smaller groups of 2 to 10 and play morning, afternoons and evenings, every day of the week and weekends. Tennis needs more courts, not less. He said he thinks the City of Visalia has done a disservice to the tennis players in Visalia.

Christine Evans: She said it is true that pickleball is not played during the day because it is too hot. Most of the players are seniors. She said if the two courts are not made permanent it is not going to get rid of us, we will still use the courts. She said pickleball is played every day.

Sandy Waymack: She said several times it has been said that Pickleball Visalia is an organization and the only thing that brings us together is we get together several times a week to play. It is good for everyone and it is fun. A Facebook page was created and that is how we converse. We are just Visalia citizens that love pickleball.

Sheree Provancha: Counter points to what has been said this evening. Visalia has eight tennis courts for 130,000 residents and there are only two pickleball courts for those same people; and there are 270 active pickleball players. Plaza Park was identified as a general purpose park and high schools are used for children's programs. The majority of the public wants to use Plaza Park for pickleball. It seems the agreement with Mt Whitney High School has failed the department by not having their courts open and accessible for public play and this should be addressed by City Council. Fence versus net: it is better to run into a fence than to flip over a net. She noted that she is a disabled veteran and pickleball is the activity that allows me to stay active close to my previous level. This game keeps us moving given the opportunity, with the City's help, we can turn this into a money making proposition.

Michael Oshemon: Michael said he is a tennis player and has had a hip replacement. He said it is not right to cannibalize one sport over another. He proposed expanding pickleball in Recreation Park and possibly downtown. He said the Sports Park would be a good place, possibly where the BMX area was. He is not in support of permanent changes to Plaza Park.

Glen Dembrough: In a perfect world it would be great to have \$150,000, create dedicated pickleball courts, and put a shade over it; but we don't live in that world. To convert two courts to pickleball courts is a short-term fix because they will want more. The reason pickleball is getting so popular is because baby boomers are getting older and

tennis is becoming more difficult. Next month Enjoy Magazine is doing an article on pickleball and more people will be looking into the sport. The City of Visalia will find 200,000 to do this. If changing two tennis courts into eight pickleball courts is best use, do so. The City needs to find the money for more courts.

Doug Hoffer: PV is not getting any more courts.

Commissioner Calhoun asked if there were any more comments, hearing none she closed the public comment portion of the meeting and called for commission questions and comments.

Commissioner Thomas: This is a great problem to have, and he is slightly biased because he played tennis at Redwood High School years ago. He asked what the cost was to paint the lines on the court. Ms. Greenwood replied \$1,300. Ms. Waymack noted that PV paid half the cost of painting the lines on those courts. She reiterated that the USAPA requires permanent dedicated courts for sanctioned tournaments.

Commissioner Blue: Commissioner Blue asked if that when pickleball players are not playing are those courts used for tennis. Audience reply: Yes, they are. One gentleman said he was there and when he asked the pickleball players to move to one court they graciously agreed to do so. Commissioner Blue asked Ms. Greenwood if it is possible expansion for pickleball at Recreation Park, is there enough room. Ms. Greenwood said there is room but the courts are not lighted and lights are a significant cost to the City. She asked how important sanctioned tournaments are to the City. If that is the case we will require eight dedicated courts for those tournaments in the future. However, if we want to have courts for residents to play on and socialize, we don't need eight courts. The department, working with the commission, needs to define what the City goal is. Commissioner Blue also asked if it would be possible to communicate with the Visalia Unified School District (VUSD) to have their courts available for residents to play on. Ms. Greenwood said the challenge with VUSD is that they have the right to protect their amenities from vandalism and graffiti by locking their premises. Commissioner Blue asked if there are any plans for pickleball in the Olympics. Sandy Waymack said the first US Pickleball Open was held in Florida last summer, so there is hope.

Doug Hoffer: High School courts, although they are a nice alternative, 8 months out of the year they have practice sessions every day after school, the exception would be on weekends. Ms. Greenwood said College of the Sequoias also has courts but they are easily accessible.

Commissioner Filiponi: He said the room could be filled with every sport with the complaint they don't have enough space; his own children experience it in their particular sports. He said he is against removing amenities and restrooms from parks because they won't be replaced. The synergy for pickleball is great and you need to keep the ball rolling and advocate for new facilities.

Commissioner Calhoun said it is great to see so many people excited about their physical fitness. She does not wish to sacrifice tennis for pickleball. She said the commission has discussed many times the lack of sports facilities in the Visalia area. She said it has been a goal of the commission to serve the greatest number of people, while ensuring the greatest amount of diversity in the types of activities available to our resident. The commission also strives to serve all socio-economic groups within our community with the City's park and recreation programs.

Commissioner Calhoun repeated the options provided by City staff:

- Option A: Pickleball Visalia's request to paint eight pickleball courts on two tennis courts. This would add two pickleball courts to each half court of tennis and require eight temporary nets. Commissioner Calhoun said the danger here is that funding would be pulled from sources that the commission has already approved.
- Option B: Four pickleball courts painted on two tennis courts. This would require the purchase of four temporary nets. This would limit the two courts to only pickleball play.
- Option C: One pickleball court painted on one tennis court. The existing tennis net would be used.
- Option D: No pickleball court lines on the tennis courts.

Commissioner Filiponi suggested adding to Option D, the greater need of safety for both sports: to do the safety net and sidewalk improvements.

Commissioner Blue asked if it would be possible to engineer temporary tennis poles for their net so that in case of a tournament they can be removed and capped and the pickleball nets are there would that suffice for the sanctioned games? Ms. Waymack said she did not know. Mr. Hoffer said he thinks where the pickleball nets are now, if there was a latch for the nets, it would cause the ball would slide and hinder play.

Commissioner Calhoun asked if tennis tournaments are held in Visalia. Ms. Greenwood said she has been on staff for ten years; there have been no sanctioned tennis tournaments held at Plaza Park. Commissioner Calhoun asked if repurposing the tennis courts would impede the City's programming. Ms. Greenwood replied it would not, what it would do is eliminate the amount of courts available for public use. Commissioner Calhoun asked if there is room for courts at Recreation Park. Mr. Fultz said there would be room but not for six courts. Lighting would cost \$113,000. Commissioner Calhoun asked what projects that have been approved would be impacted if the Commission recommended approval of this project to Council. Ms. Greenwood said she met with the City Manager and the Finance Director and the projects that would be impacted was the Blain Park lighting project (\$12,000) and the City parking lot maintenance and repair (\$55,000). City parking lots have been deferred for many years. She said City Council would make that decision.

Commissioner Calhoun said the commission has goals indirectly related to sports, but whether we should support the movement of projects for the soul purpose of tournaments has not been discussed in the past. That discussion will take place at a future Parks & Recreation meeting.

Commissioner Blue asked what the timeline is for the options that have been discussed. Mr. Fultz said the project could take up to six months or more but currently there is no funding.

Commissioner Filiponi made a motion to deny the request by Pickleball Visalia to re-purpose two tennis courts at Plaza Park for pickleball use and to recommend to Council the safety net improvements to the south end of the facility; to also direct staff to research possible sites for new tennis and pickleball facilities in the City of Visalia, including Recreation and Plaza Parks, for the August meeting. Commissioner Blue seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 4-0

5. **Discuss Date for Joint Meeting with the North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory Committee.** Commissioner Calhoun tabled this item until after the committee's next meeting, which is the second Thursday in August. She asked commissioners to think about topics for that meeting.
6. **Update on City Council Reports & City Staff Announcements.**
 - **Upcoming Recreation Programs & Special Events.** Ms. Roggenkamp reported the following:
 - New staff members: three new coordinators will be coming on board – Ben Marquez – aquatics and youth sports, Arianna Ornelas – intern and key member of Senior Games, and Holly Ellis – youth enrichment program. The interview panelists were from Fresno State, City of Tulare, and City of Porterville. They were very impressed with them.
 - The catfish derby was held at Plaza Park last Saturday. There 244 participants.
 - Camp Kaboom participation is steady, at about 80 per day; and the drop-in, free program is averaging 85 per day.
 - Teen Idol auditions have been held and the department has 10 finalists. A photo shoot was held and there will be a full page advertisement in the upcoming fall brochure. The event will be held September 24 at the LJ Williams Theater.
 - The new brochure will be out this week.
 - Last week finals were held for our swim teams and 162 swimmers qualified for the finals.
 - Fall registration is underway and we have added another ASA site at Whitendale Community Center to service families at Mountain View School.
 - This Friday we will be hosting out last Friday Night Lights program at Manuel Hernandez Community Center.
 - **Upcoming Parks & Urban Forestry Projects, Programs & Special Events.** Mr. Fultz reported the following:
 - The Oval Park Dedication and Playground Opening were held July 16. The camera project could be completed in 90 days.
 - The Riverway Sports Park soccer field renovation is still in progress. Soccer will begin in August.
 - The new well in Fairview Park is up and running again.
 - The Westcoast Arborists contract was approved last night at City Council.
 - The turf renovation at Riverway Sports Park Baseball Complex is scheduled for July 25.
 - A meeting regarding Miki Park was held last week and construction will begin July 25.
 - Blain Park will be receiving new LED lighting near the walking path.
 - Plaza Park Common is a \$224,000 project to repair the edging of the pond.
 - Riverway Sports Park splash pad needs renovation including replacing ½ inch drains with 2" drains. The water cannot shoot up if the drains are plugged.
 - The department will receive \$50,000 per year for the next few years to maintain asphalt trails.

- **Director's Report on Administrative Items.** Ms. Greenwood said she is still working on the Christmas tree lighting with the Parks & Recreation Foundation, PAL Program, and the Rescue Mission. Miki City Park project has begun. The Oval Playground Opening and Dedication was on Saturday and she thanked Commissioner Calhoun for her participation. Steve Canada, Principle of the HLA Group, is the design consultant for the Riverway Sports Park Phase V, and he will be presenting his plan soon. The department is still working on the Verizon cell tower for the Sports Park. AT&T is paying \$1,200 per month and in the future the commission might decide to designate a purpose for those funds. It's unfortunate that Pickleball Visalia was not vocal and active when Saputo Field was being discussed because it would have been a perfect place for the courts. The Stasio property, across from the sports park, continues to have issues, and at this time they are going through a public input process. There are no funds to clean the properties west of Stasio and there is no master plan either. There is a trail plan that comes into the Stasio property. Transients have entered the property and caused damage. Plans to demo the homes have been discussed.

Commissioner Filiponi said St John's has a 100 foot setback, which is very tight and he wondered what streets had planned for the road. Ms. Greenwood said there has been a lot of discussion on what to do with that and one suggestion was to make it a right turn only or a cul-de-sac. She said she received a phone call from one of the neighbors near the baseball complex about coaches hitting balls into the streets and into their yards so she went out there and the traffic flies by. The City Manager has decided to wait on the Southside Community Center until the sales tax measure is voted on in November. City Council has discussed the measure for some time now and the August 1st meeting will be when the final decision will be made to move forward with the half cent sales tax. She said last night they discussed the spending plan that came from the three committees and 2% would be set aside for youth programs. For the Parks & Recreation Departments would affect us in the following areas:

1 Recreation Coordinators, 2 maintenance workers, \$50,000 for tree trimming, park maintenance and an urban forestry worker. Senior Games is in planning stage and Corporate Games team recruitment is underway. Pickleball Visalia and the department are working on the Central Valley Pickleball Tournament in October.

The department has also participated in the Active Transportation Plan, which will take the place of the Bike, Waterways and Trails plan. This will be the mechanism to find funding for projects. Two meetings have been held and TK (formerly QuadKnopf) is the consultant and they are compiling information from the last meeting. TK will bring this to commission later.

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

- **Community/Aquatic Center Ad Hoc Committee.** Commissioner Blue stated this is on hold at this time.
- **Senior Citizens Advisory Committee.** *No Commission Representative Assigned.*
- **Parks & Recreation Foundation.** They discussed the coordination of the Oval Playground Dedication and Opening and their Grilled Cheese event in October.
- **Waterways & Trails Committee Report.** The committee did not have a quorum at the last meeting and a candidate for the committee attended. Term extensions were completed for two standing members and the committee accepted two new members; who are excited to be active. Mr. Fontes created a list of events for so that the committee could attend and have a booth.
- **North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory Committee.** Commissioner Thomas said he was out of town and would get the minutes tomorrow.

8. **Adjourn to the Regular Meeting, August 16, 2016, at the Council Chambers, located at 707 N. Acequia Street, at 5:30 p.m.**

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

MOTION

Motion passed 4-0

Brenda Miernik,
Senior Administrative Assistant