

Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission
Meeting Minutes
October 18, 2016

1. Call Meeting to Order/Roll Call

The Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission met in a regular meeting on Tuesday, October 18, 2016, at the Council Chambers located at 707 Acequia Street, Visalia, California. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Carla Calhoun at 5:35 p.m.

Present: Carla Calhoun, Shann Blue, Ben Filiponi, Peter Thomas, Steve Woods, and Rick Eastes

Absent: Justin Sweet

Staff: Jeannie Greenwood, Jeff Fultz, Laurissa Roggenkamp, Eric Ferreira, Maggie Kalar and Susie Brown

2. Review and Approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting, September 20, 2016. Commissioner Filiponi moved to approve the minutes as presented, Commissioner Thomas seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 3-2 (new member abstained, and an absence)

Chair Calhoun welcomed new Commissioners, Woods and Eastes.

3. Public Comment or Written Communication.

At this time, those in the audience are encouraged to address the Commission on any item not already included on tonight's agenda. The Commission cannot legally act on a matter that is not on the agenda. However, the Commission can investigate an issue and respond within a reasonable period. Speakers will be limited to a 5 minute presentation unless granted additional time by the Commission Chairperson.

There was no public comment

4. Request to Reduce Hours at Village Park.

Director Greenwood provided a briefing on the City Council action of 2014, to reduce hours in other parks (Oval, Pappas, Seven Oaks and Provident Skate Park) and how the number and type of calls for service were used to justify the recommendation for the reduction of hours at certain parks. She reported that reducing hours at Community Campus was discussed when the original amendment was made, however as it is in a landscape and lighting district, City staff did not include this park when they recommended the original ordinance exemption to reduce the hours at certain parks. At the September, 2016 Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting, reducing hours at Community Campus was discussed and the Commission voted to make a recommendation to the City Council to reduce the hours at Community Campus. During the September meeting, Mr. Juan Guerrero, Director of the Wittman Community Center and employee of Proteus, requested that the Commission also recommend reducing hours at Village Park. As this park was not included in the original request and could not be voted on at the September meeting, the Commission asked that it be brought back for consideration at the October meeting which is what the Commission is being asked to consider tonight.

Director Greenwood stated that she has mixed feelings about reducing the hours at Village Park. If the hours are reduced at the neighboring Community Campus and not at Village Park, it is likely that the people who stay in the park after dark will simply walk over to Village Park to hang out until the park closes at 10 p.m. On the other side, Village Park houses programs and activities that often go past 6pm, the reduction in hours would prohibit the use of the park by the participants who participate in programs and activities at the facility after 6pm. In addition, Village Park is one of the few parks in the community with an outdoor lighted basketball court. It is the understanding of City staff, based on prior conversations with Wittman Center staff, that the basketball courts are often used by young adult men. Director Greenwood stated that

she would not support closing Village Park early because of this park feature and because we need to continue to encourage the good users in our parks rather than closing them as a solution to the bad element that we are dealing with. Director Greenwood reminded the Commission that a change in the Ordinance is a tool that can be used to keep people out of the park after dark but it needs consistent enforcement to be effective.

In addition, the Wittman Center/Proteus and the Boy Scouts have asked the City to consider expanding Village Park by converting a vacant lot in Community Campus into more park space. She questions if this is in the best interest as we are now considering reducing hours at both neighboring parks. Ms. Greenwood mentioned that whereas all property owners in Community Campus submitted a letter of support for reducing the hours at Community Campus, Proteus is the only one asking to reduce the hours at Village Park. Ms. Greenwood reported that she has received a request from Mr. Juan Guerrero to table this item until November so he could be in attendance.

Chair Calhoun called for public comment:

Mr. Bob Ludekins, Boy Scouts of America, started off by thanking Director Greenwood for all the work she has done as this is a City park. He reported the Wittman Center is used year round and the facility usually closes early evening. Last week was a bad week at Wittman for Mr. Guerrero, one night a Mt. Whitney boy was beat-up, and another day a man had been distributing drugs in park. He had spent four days dealing with these problems, and was viewing videos with Visalia Police Department. They would really like one of the basketball courts to be moved by the Rescue Mission, as it is their program participants who are using the basketball courts in the evenings. He suggested removing one court and adding another playground for older children. The people who hangout in the park at night are affecting the children. He expressed that Mr. Guerrero is frustrated with the on-going problems.

Director Greenwood – Is the gate between Village Park and Community Campus locked, and have cameras installed at the Wittman Center been effective?

Mr. Luedikins – Yes, the gate is locked, but they can come in to Village Park by going around, he hasn't seen cameras. He reported hiring the A&W Rootbeer Truck to serve floats to the neighborhood kids two nights this past summer and they served approximately 400 drinks per night! He stated there are good kids and young people who are using the park. He stated there are basketball hoops inside the center for kids, but they want to develop more programs instead of using the basketball courts.

Commissioner Woods – Asked what types of other activities or programs are outside?

Mr. Luedikins reported there is a playground with the requirement that an adult must be accompanied by a child to be in the gated playground, and there is a sign posted. He commented that he and Mr. Guerrero would like a play area for larger children. He reported the problems are ongoing, but they seem to be worse during summer months.

Commissioner Woods – Is there a desire to build this where the basketball courts are?

Mr. Luedikins – Yes.

Commissioner Blue – Are the recommended changes to the hours at Community Campus in effect? He asked if they could wait to see if changes work before committing to Ordinance change.

Director Greenwood – No, the recommendation hasn't moved forward because of this discussion, if the Commission were to recommend to reduce the hours at Village Park both items would go to the Council at the same time. The process would involve two public hearings at Council meetings and then a 30 day period before the ordinance would go into effect.

Mr. Luedikins stated at the Scout's office one night he counted 44 people at Civic Park after an Advisory meeting, and students are gone during school days by 4:30 p.m.

Commissioner Woods – stated he would like to talk to center folks regarding the plan for improvements, perhaps expanding a fence, especially if there are students there until 8:00 p.m. He asked if the basketball courts could be fenced.

Mr. Fultz stated that travel to basketball courts is through the park. There is a parking lot but it is Wittman's.

Mr. Luedikins asked if (we) could ask for lighting at Proteus.

Chair Calhoun – stated there have been many ideas mentioned the past few years, and a plan much like Oval Park could work. She commented that reducing hours and changing an Ordinance is a reactionary response that won't take care of the problems. She would like to see a more comprehensive plan, perhaps getting neighborhood residents involved. She is leaning toward no reduced hours, there should be a more comprehensive approach.

Commissioner Woods – Commented on delaying a decision for now.

Commissioner Eastes – Asked if this area is not completely closed or fenced.

Mr. Fultz replied the back fence is 6', and there is a 3-4' fence in front of park.

Director Greenwood stated there are fences along three sides of the park, and it has only been the past few years the gate has been locked. She would not like to see fenced parks in Visalia; parks should be open and accessible to the public.

Mr. Fultz commented this is a general fund park, and there are no current funds for park upgrades, but maybe we could look for grant funds.

Chair Calhoun called for a motion to accept the staff recommendation not to reduce the hours at Village Park.

Commissioner Blue motioned to accept staff recommendations with the possibility of a follow-up discussion with a neighborhood group in the future. Second by Commissioner Thomas

MOTION

Motion passed 5-0

5. Annual Marketing Report

Maggie Kalar, Recreation Supervisor provided a presentation on the department's annual marketing program and answered questions.

Commissioner Blue – Can the public pay online for class registration?

Ms. Kalar replied yes, or they can walk-in to the business office.

Commissioner Eastes asked what was the thought behind the large increase in Instagram contacts?

Ms. Kalar replied this is a picture related application, and there are some unique ways to gain support by hashtags, and pseudo celebrities. It is a different ways to connect but is also popular with a large group of people 14-25.

Chair Calhoun stated she appreciates the ‘thank you’ for liking us.

Ms. Kalar replied that they try to respond with thanks often, and this will help retain customers.

Commissioner Thomas commented on last years’ ice skate rink and how many friends would share on Facebook.

Ms. Kalar reported there was a wedding engagement on the ice rink last year that “blew-up” the web.

Commissioner Filiponi commented there use to be a departmental policy that limited the amount of posts, but now there are more posts and responses.

Ms. Kalar stated she does try to post daily.

6. Corporate Games Re-Cap

Eric Ferreira, Recreation Supervisor, provided a briefing on the Annual Corporate Games. He also presented several pictures of the winners from all games. (these are on our website.) He reported this was the largest year since the program’s inception in 2008. He mentioned being mindful next year when scheduling more physical events on Friday or Saturday to allow more recuperation time for players, although he received no complaints.

Commissioner Woods stated he would compete next year.

Commissioner Eastes asked about table tennis next year. Mr. Ferreira explained this one is difficult for teams and the department looks for events that involve several employees rather than a few.

Commissioner Filiponi asked about considering that if there more teams, would they split the number of employees into smaller groups/division. The department has had many discussions on splitting to two divisions, large and small businesses. We will continue to evaluate.

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

Upcoming Recreation Programs & Special Events.

Laurissa Roggenkamp, Recreation Manager passed out an event calendar through mid-November and reported on the following:

- Pickleball Tournament starts on Friday, at Plaza Park, and next year this event will be coordinated Freddy Arias.
- There are many Senior Center events, Costume contest and Veterans Day luncheon, the City will be closed on Nov 11. Commissioner Woods stated he would be in attendance.
- Last City Council meeting she introduced Colleen Moreno
- The new Winter guide will not be mailed but will be available online and in select locations throughout town. Nov 20th is the anticipated delivery date, and a Kids Guide will be delivered to the school district.

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

Jeff Fultz, Parks & Urban Forestry Manager, reported on the following:

- Make-a-Difference Day (MADD) – invites everyone to come out. The City’s website has all the info, contact by phone and/or use the chip-in link online to register.
- The Notice of Completion on Oval Playground was approved last night at City Council.

Commissioner Eastes asked for a quick brief on MADD. Mr. Fultz expanded on projects and locations and commented there would be no trees planted this year, but many shrubs will be planted.

Director’s Report on Administrative Items.

Jeannie Greenwood, Parks & Recreation Director reported on the following:

- Village Park and Community Campus are like Oval Park with same issues and concerns. Village Park and Oval Park actually compete for limited CDBG funds both with advocates for continued improvements. The North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NVNAC) continues to advocate for additional funds to continue improvements at the Oval. The City has made several improvements over recent years at the Oval including adding additional security lighting and the infrastructure for security cameras which are set to be installed soon. In addition, security fencing was placed along the north side of the park to re-direct pedestrian traffic to the new lighted crosswalk. Cal Trans completed the street improvements around the Oval and the City, with a Grant from First 5 Tulare County installed a new Tot Lot Playground. The NVNAC is now asking that the City fund the sidewalk loop around the park. This competes with improvements for Village Park and other CDBG eligible parks.
- Project to renovate tennis courts at Plaza Park into pickleball courts is in design stage, staff comments have gone back to the designer for implementation. Pickleball Visalia is collecting money from prior pledges to contribute to the project.
- We are proud to announce that the new ring structure and lights for the Oval Park Christmas Tree will be installed soon. Thanks to PAL for securing a \$20,000 donation to completely cover the costs of this project
- North Visalia has requested more park signage in English and Spanish.
- Miki Park – The lamps are coming from Japan and are delayed. The pergola is being reworked and is also delayed. Urban Tree is working with CSET on the irrigation installation and planting.
- Softball fields at Riverway Sports Park – Steve Canada with HLA has scheduled a meeting for October 26th to discuss design for this new phase. There will be several meetings with staff as well as potential users of the facility to discuss programming and storage needs.
- There are current negotiations with Verizon for a new cell tower at Riverway. Although AT&T’s tower hasn’t been built yet, they continue to pay the \$1,200 monthly rental fee.
- The Stacio property along the north side of Riverway is under construction. The clean-up found nothing but soil remediation and abatement is underway. The houses have lead and asbestos and once those are clean, police and fire will train to eliminate all three house structures. The garage will remain to be used for storage by the department.
- The Annual CPRS Conference will be held February 2017. Please let Susie know if you are interested in attending in February 2017.

Commissioner’s Requests & Comments:

- **Parks & Recreation Foundation Report.** Director Greenwood reported on the Fromage Frolic on October 29th. Commissioner Woods volunteered to represent at the Foundation meetings.
- **Waterways & Trails Committee Report.** Commissioner Filiponi reported that Mr. Vaughn Melcher will retire from the City, his last day will be January 3rd, and has been active on this committee. Three new members were voted in.

- **North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory Committee Report.** Commissioner Thomas was out of town during last meeting, and has nothing to report.

Chair Calhoun – asked for members that cannot attend meetings, to get agendas and minutes from those meetings for reporting to this Commission.

8. Adjourn to the Regular Meeting, Tuesday, November 15, 2016, at the Council Chambers, 707 W. Acequia, at 5:30 p.m.

Motion to adjourn, Commissioner Filiponi, Second Blue, unanimous.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.