

## **NORTH LITTLE ROCK PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING**

**August 16, 2010**

The North Little Rock Parks and Recreation Commission meeting was called to order by Ms. Vicki Stephens at 5:00 p.m., August 16, 2010, at the North Little Rock Community Center.

**Commission Members Present:** Tom Davis, Jeanne Hyde, Charles Jones, Chandra Martin, Vicki Stephens and Bruce Waller. Otistene Smith was sick and excused.

**Staff Members Present:** Bob Rhoads, Jan Eberle-Wilkins, Willie Elizandro, Tina Worrell and John Crow.

**Others Present:** Paula Jones, Alderwoman Beth White, Matt Grace, Logan Campbell and Shannon Harris.

**Second Quarter 2010 Financial Report:** Mr. Waller reported that the Hamburger Tax revenue has increased. He commended Bob Rhoads for the good financial management.

Mrs. Hyde made a motion, seconded by Mr. Jones, to accept the report. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

**Second Quarter 2010 Utility Cost Report:** Mr. Rhoads reported that utility usage overall is 5% under usage last year at this time.

**Minutes:** Ms. Stephens presented the June 21, 2010, Parks and Recreation Commission minutes, and the June 21, 2010 Parks and Recreation Commission Public Hearing minutes. There was no July 2010 commission meeting.

Mr. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mr. Waller, to accept the June 21, 2010, Parks and Recreation Commission minutes and public hearing minutes. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously. There was not meeting in July.

**Placement Approval of Memorial at the Burns Park Soccer Complex:** John Crow stated that the Arkansas Central Soccer Association wants to place a flat memorial plaque (no taller than 8" high) near soccer field #10 at the base of an existing tree. The plaque is in memory of Allen Illing who passed away while playing soccer on July 9, 2006.

Mr. Waller made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Hyde, to approve the placement and site of this plaque. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

**Police Athletic League at Vestal Park:** Mr. Rhoads stated that last fall the Police Athletic League had asked to use Vestal Park for a ball program, pending approval of a grant. They did not get the grant, but would like to enter into an agreement to use this location for their program anyway.

Matt Grace said the youth need this program and the Police Athletic League wants to make it happen.

Mr. Jones made a motion, seconded by Mr. Waller, to execute a contract with the Police Athletic League for use of the Vestal Sports Complex. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

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**Arkansas State Parks Grant:** Tina Worrell reported that one-half of an outdoor recreation grant was awarded, and the department is requesting to apply for a second one-half, so remaining projects can be done. A grant request for \$135,340 is needed to renovate the Sherman Park Recreation Center and grounds, to include installing new Americans with Disabilities Act accessible playground equipment, rebuilding and drainage of the multi-use athletic field, upgrading of the athletic lighting, and updating backstops and fencing. Also included in this grant request is the creation of an Americans with Disabilities Act accessible walkway for the stage on Funland Drive and an Americans with Disabilities Act accessible impact surfacing for a playground, both in Burns Park.

Federal dollars of \$67,670 would be matched with city funds, in-kind labor and materials. The request needs to be approved and forwarded to the Mayor and City Council for final disposition. Funding for the project will be \$58,530 from 2005's and 2010's Parks Capital Fund and \$9,140 from city labor and equipment.

To get all of the grant points available, the following would have to be included: Replacing a piece of obsolete playground equipment, replace impact surfacing underneath a piece of existing Americans with Disabilities Act playground equipment, make a facility Americans with Disabilities Act accessible or compliant through a walkway. The Americans with Disabilities Act impact surfacing will be done at Burns Park, as well as building an accessible walkway at the stage area. The obsolete playground equipment will be replaced at the Sherman Park Recreation Center grounds. In the 2009-2010 grant submitted last year, the walking area at Sherman Park was approved.

Mr. Waller made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Martin, to approve this grant request and forward to the City Council for their approval. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

**Grant with Arkansas State Game and Fish Commission for Fishing Docks:** Mr. Rhoads said that more fishing opportunities were one of the highest priorities requested in the needs assessment. In the 2010 Hamburger Capital Program, \$35,000 has been set aside for fishing docks. Additional funding is needed and grant opportunities for 50/50 matching grants are available through the Arkansas State Game and Fish Commission. A dock maintenance agreement with Arkansas Game and Fish will be needed in order to obtain the funds.

Willie Elizandro reported that he is working with the Arkansas State Game and Fish Commission on the design and maintenance agreement pertaining to fishing docks. Locations are Burns Park and at least one (1) and maybe two (2) at Campbell Lake Park.

Mr. Rhoads said there is enough money to build two (2) piers even though the contract calls for three (3) of them. He will get the Legal Department to look at the contract. He said wording would state that there would be up to three (3) fishing piers. A dock maintenance agreement is needed in order to obtain the funds. Staff is trying to proceed as rapidly as possible.

Mr. Waller made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Martin, to authorize Bob Rhoads to seek the Game and Fish grant, and work with the Legal Department to negotiate and execute the agreement with the Game and Fish Commission. After the agreement is finished, send it to the Mayor for his signature, then on to City Council. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

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**National Recreation and Parks Association Accreditation:** Mr. Rhoads stated that city and county Parks and Recreation Departments have the opportunity to become accredited through the National

Recreation and Parks Association Accreditation Commission. The advantage of accreditation is that by going through the process, the Parks and Recreation Department fully looks at the needs of the community and evaluates itself against national standards to determine overall program strengths and weaknesses. Staff has considered accreditation at various times over the years, but due to the limited resource of staff time and funding, staff has not attempted the endeavor. A comprehensive master plan has been done, and there are some elements that have to be done.

At this time, the only Parks and Recreation Department in the state to have this accreditation is Little Rock. Tina Worrell has the experience needed to apply for this accreditation. The commission has approved an Assistant Center Director position, and this position could be utilized one-half of the time to actively work on the accreditation. The Mayor has become aware of the accreditation program and wants the department to become an accredited agency. He has indicated a willingness to come up with the financing needed, especially for the comprehensive plan. This project may take as many as three (3) years.

Tina Worrell said there 36 required and set fundamentals, and all fundamentals have to be met 100%. This includes a city-wide master plan. If one (1) of these fundamentals is missed, the department would have failed, so there would be no sense in investing time and money if each fundamental is not going to be done.

Of the other accredited items, 85% of them must be met.

Mr. Rhoads said there are ten (10) basic areas that must be covered.

Alderwoman Beth White asked what would be the advantage to get this accreditation.

Mr. Rhoads said this accreditation will help the department focus on weaknesses, and would require the department to do more overall planning and programs. It is a self-evaluation and

compares the department to nationwide standards, which would make the city better. It does not allow the department to get more grant points.

Mrs. Worrell said the department will require that paperwork be ready when she needs information for grant proposals. If the department goes through the steps without applying for the accreditation, the department would be a much better agency for it, as it will show what is needed.

Mr. Rhoads said neighborhood parks need to be looked at as to what they need to offer. The required comprehensive plan cost is not in the current budget, which will cost \$165,000. Mr. Rhoads indicated to the Mayor that a comprehensive plan would get peoples hopes up on getting items funded. The Mayor said if there are some things that are worthy, he may possibly look at a 1% temporary sales tax.

Mrs. Hyde asked if the department would get a \$130,000 worth of benefits from this, or how long does it take to recover this cost.

Ms. Stephens asked if only the master plan should be done.

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**National Recreation and Parks Association Accreditation (continued):** Mr. Waller said what most organizations gain from this is the learning experience about themselves by participating in the process, even if the department does not go through with the accreditation. They always benefit internally from what they learn by undertaking this. That is a lot of money to spend. The Mayor's willingness to help seek funding for it is no guarantee that the funds are going to be provided.

Mr. Rhoads said this accreditation project would be spread out over three (3) years. Once the department decides to officially work to get the accreditation, a letter of intent with \$100 would be sent notifying them of the intent to pursue. The department would have two (2) years from the date of the letter to complete the accreditation. It would probably be better to meet with the Mayor about it later this year, and depending on what he says, wait until another public hearing is held next year. The master plan would cost approximately \$57,000, and marketing plan would cost approximately \$30,000 to \$50,000. A site plan for every location is not necessary. Other expenses would fund the site visit team, and the final application or evaluation fees. This would be spread out over three (3) years.

Mr. Waller said there needs to be a catalog of programs offered, and what the department owns. He suggested putting off the site plan and marketing plan until late 2011. The department could get a long way into this without spending the \$130,000. The department could then decide if it got their money's worth and stop there, or to continue on toward the accreditation.

Mr. Rhoads said the master plan comes first, then programming and facility needs. The marketing will help sell and develop those programs. He reported that he will be attending a

four (4) hour training class on accreditation at the National Recreation and Parks Association conference.

Ms. Stephens said this is a tool that Mr. Rhoads would like to have that would help him, the staff and operations of the parks and recreation programs. She asked if this could be started and evaluated.

Mr. Rhoads suggested that after he and Mrs. Worrell take the accreditation class, he talk with the Mayor again and bring back to the commission to explore.

Mr. Waller said that some work, such as a master plan, could be done without committing to the accreditation that would only cost maybe \$3,000 to \$4,000.

Mr. Davis asked about the Mayor's commitment to find money for this project.

Mr. Rhoads said the Mayor is interested in this project, and would work toward finding the money for it. The Mayor is hoping the Hamburger Tax would increase. The Hamburger Tax is 1% over revenue budget, which is good. One-percent (1%) increase has been projected for next year, and with that, the status quo can be done. There is a possibility that the after-school programs will increase, and more revenue would be needed.

Mrs. Hyde said she would like to see improvements without committing to the \$130,000.

Mr. Waller said taking the process step by step will allow the commission to stop or continue.  
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**National Recreation and Parks Association Accreditation (continued):** Mr. Rhoads reported that the Advertising and Promotion Department has worked with Parks and Recreation on some marketing and creating a logo. If the commission wants to approve the accreditation concept but not the money, he will explore that and come back later to the commission. He will report to the Mayor that commission concerns about spending a lot of money on something like this when there are other needs that should to be addressed.

Mr. Waller said he agrees with moving through the training and early self-assessment. The big-ticket items would have to be individually approved, and at any time the action can be stopped or continued.

Mrs. Martin asked Mr. Rhoads to go to the National Recreation and Park Association accreditation training, and return to the commission for further discussion.

Mrs. Hyde agreed.

Ms. Stephens asked that this item be brought back to the commission for discussion at the November regularly scheduled commission meeting. Mr. Rhoads agreed.

Mrs. Worrell said that the master plan is what the programs are built on.

Ms. Stephens said that Burns Park has a master plan, but no money to implement the things that are needed.

Mr. Rhoads asked Alderwoman Beth White to mention these commission comments to the Mayor. She agreed.

**Contract with Big River Construction, Inc:** Mr. Rhoads reported that there have been some issues with the first contractor that did the sub-structure at the Burns Park Baseball Complex, regarding compaction. Big River Construction, Inc. was hired in July of 2008 to do the grubbing, rough grading, and soil compactions at the new Burns Park Baseball Complex. There have been compaction problems, causing structural damage to the dugouts and backstops. Due to the compaction not meeting specifications, ballfield light pole foundations also have had to be significantly redesigned, which will add cost to the construction. Also, additional soil testing cost and architectural and engineer fees have been encumbered. The original contract was for \$535,950 and with change orders, totaled \$580,817.

The City's Legal Department is involved. City Attorney, Jason Carter, has asked Mr. Rhoads to take this item to the commission and have them (the commission) charge Mr. Rhoads with asking Big River Construction, Inc., to fix these problems and give them a timeframe to get everything done. If Big River Construction, Inc. does not repair the problem, the contract will be cancelled.

Mr. Waller asked Mr. Rhoads if the company has a performance bond.

Mr. Rhoads said yes, and this process is part of getting there. The bond company has been contacted, and Big River Construction, Inc., have been contacted twice.

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**National Recreation and Parks Association Accreditation (continued):** Mr. Rhoads needs authorization from the commission to contact Big River Construction, Inc. himself. Architect Gary Clements has already sent them a letter.

Mrs. Hyde asked if soil samples were provided every step of the way as they were supposed to be.

Big River Construction, Inc. was supposed to hire the Geo-Tech. Compaction under structures was supposed to be 95%. Compaction on ballfields was supposed to be 85% on common areas. The definition of structures should be sidewalks, backstops and dugouts. Compaction under the building sites were done correctly. Big River Construction, Inc. did not provide the reports to Clements, and Clements did not follow up with them.

Mr. Rhoads said action is needed from the commission to authorize himself to work with the Legal Department on this issue. The fields need to be opened by next year. If Big River Construction, Inc. does not fix the problems, the department is in a better position to fix the problems themselves to get the fields open next year, and get reimbursement from Big River Construction, Inc. Right now, the backstops and dugouts cannot be fixed due to contract issues.

Mr. Waller made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Hyde, that the Parks and Recreation Commission authorize Mr. Rhoads to notify Big River Construction, Inc., telling them the problems that need to be fixed, and to get them fixed at their (Big River Construction, Inc.) cost. This will include additional issues it has caused. If Big River Construction, Inc. declines, Mr. Rhoads is immediately authorized, with the Legal Department's assistance, to formally terminate the contract with Big River Construction, Inc., and formally proceed with the remaining legal issues. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

**Public Hearing Summary for 2011:** Mr. Rhoads submitted a list of all items mentioned at 2010 public hearings. The Sherman Park grant request would be a priority. Fishing piers are being addressed because they go along with the master plan. Money is not budgeted for the Burns Park baseball field, but it is a priority because it needs to be finished. Other items are good things that need to be done, such as Crestview and Lorene Joshua parks, and the recreation centers, but some items are being addressed to a degree. They will be looked at in the future. There is no new money available in 2010 or 2011 to address these.

Mr. Rhoads said he will take the commission's priorities and put them in a five-year plan with a higher priority.

Mr. Waller asked Mr. Rhoads and Willie Elizandro to go through this list and address those that are maintenance items. They agreed.

Mr. Rhoads stated that mirrors requested at the North Little Rock Community Center are in the budget for 2010 under the Hamburger Tax. Some maintenance items are being addressed. Keeping the North Little Rock Community Center open Friday evenings for fitness is being done. These longer hours had been implemented earlier in the year, but there was not much participation at that time. Since the longer hours have been implemented again, the new hours are working out well.

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**Public Hearing Summary for 2011 (continued):** Mr. Rhoads reported that the Cricket group wanted their own field and lines marked for their games. Benches that have been requested can be replaced at any time. There is grant money available for trails.

Mr. Waller stated that there had been a request for a large aquatic center at Indian Hills.

Mr. Rhoads said there are other needs other than a new pool at Indian Hills.

Alderwoman Linda Robinson would like a quarter-mile walking trail at Conley Park. This is a leased park from Arkansas Power and Light that has expired. The department is trying to get a new lease with Arkansas Power and Light, and it must be for a minimum of 15-years in order to apply for grants. The quarter-mile track is going to be hard to fit on this land.

Mr. Rhoads reported that School Park users would like to have a walking track, but this would require a contract with the school. Lorene Joshua users would also like to have a walking trail.

Mrs. Martin asked what was going on at School Park.

Mr. Rhoads said the Rose City Neighborhood Association has gone to Community Development to get funding for bringing water to the park, in order to water trees.

Mr. Elizandro said the Rose City Neighborhood Association is trying to get a 501C3 status.

Ms. Stephens asked Mr. Rhoads to list what the department can do out of the maintenance budget for these items. Mr. Rhoads agreed.

Mr. Rhoads said that some of the maintenance and lack of cleanliness issues mentioned by patrons about the North Little Rock Community Center were not visible to him the night after the 2010 public hearing. There is a red stain in the bottom of the showers, and appears it may be residue coming from possibly the water. It is clean, but stained. The man that spoke about it at the public hearing had already mentioned it to the Fitness Director, and this staff had been working on the problem before it was brought to the public hearing.

Mr. Rhoads stated that a lady came to the public hearing reporting that her 12-year-old daughter saw a man in the ladies restroom. Witnesses said the man was in the hall, and not the ladies restroom. This issue was not told to the staff until a week later.

Mrs. Worrell said measures have been taken to make the area more secure.

Mr. Rhoads asked the commission members to submit their list of priorities to him so he can finish the Capital Improvement Plan for 2011-2015.

Mr. Jones made a motion, seconded by Mr. Waller, to accept and approve this public hearing report and forward to the City Council. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Rhoads said there was an article in the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, which stated that the pools at Sherman Park and North Heights Recreation Centers were dirty. This was not the case, and they were actually clean. Pool stains had been painted over at Sherman Park, and the pools are tested daily.

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**Public Hearing Summary for 2011 (continued):** Mrs. Hyde asked if the tennis center's roof was in the list of priorities to be repaired.

Mr. Rhoads said it was on the list to be taken care of, and in the current bond to be finished. Bids were received last week and he is responding to the bid numbers.

**Capital Improvement Plan for 2011-2015:** Mr. Rhoads said the Capital Improvement Plan for 2011 through 2015 will be held until the September commission meeting.

**Operation Budget for 2011:** Mr. Rhoads reported that Hamburger Tax revenues this year are increasing by 2% above budget. A 1% increase was added to the proposed 2011 operation budget. Changing of the Center Director's position to Assistant Center Director has already been approved by the commission. The custodian at North Heights Recreation Center retired, and a janitorial service has been hired. This custodian position will be deleted and by adding an additional parttime Recreation Aide position, money will be saved. There are currently 100 to 150 youth in the After-School Program at the North Heights Recreation Center, and 50 to 75 youth each at Glenview and Sherman Park Recreation Centers. He is asking for four (4) additional Intermittent Recreation/Program Aides.

Mr. Rhoads reported that there looks like there will be a participation increase in the After-School Program due to the public schools encouraging students to attend this program at the recreation centers. Cost for a recreation center membership card that includes this After-School Program is \$15.00 per year.

Mrs. Worrell stated that school students are not allowed to stay around school property after school hours. The Fire Marshall will look at the recreation centers on September 17, 2010, and see how many people can be in the building at one time.

Ms. Stephens said this recommended program is going to cost the department, and she is concerned that all the children will not be able to participate in the program because there will not be room or staff for them. She feels that an additional charge may be needed. She said those that are there now deserve to remain in the program.

Mrs. Worrell said that the staff cannot accommodate 250 youth in the building. The North Little Rock School District did not talk with the recreation division prior to notifying the parents of this program.

Mrs. Martin said that if Mrs. Worrell meets with the North Little Rock school staff about this, she would like to go. Mrs. Worrell agreed to let her know.

Mr. Jones said he would call the public school office tomorrow and talk with them about it.

Mr. Jones said that if a child is not meeting standards, the district is obligated to pay vendors to help.

Ms. Stephens asked why Parks and Recreation cannot be paid.

Mr. Jones said he would look at this.

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**Operation Budget for 2011 (continued):** Mr. Rhoads said there are good programs at the recreation centers.

Mrs. Worrell said there are now 125 members at Sherman Park and more are arriving. She has not heard about the Glenview Recreation Center status. There is a one (1) to 25 ratio at the recreation centers, and one (1) to five (5) ratio in the educational programs.

Mr. Rhoads stated that the projected budget decreased the Boys and Girls Club agreement from the original \$45,000 to \$35,000. The First Tee agreement was decreased to \$5,000. Advertising and Promotion is asking for an additional \$70,000. Out of the three (3) penny tax, one penny is designated to Parks and Recreation. Advertising and Promotion is supposed to get the other two- penny tax money. However, currently Advertising and Promotion is getting 6% on one penny, and \$80,000 on the other penny. The remainder of these two pennies is going to Parks and Recreation. Advertising and Promotion will be going to the Mayor and City Council for this request.

Mr. Rhoads reported that three (3) of the Intermittent Laborer positions will be filled at park maintenance, and two (2) of the Intermittent Labor positions at the golf course, in 2011. All parttime and fulltime positions year-round can now be filled.

Mr. Waller made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Hyde, to approve the 2011 budget as presented, and submit to the Mayor and City Council. All voted aye and motion passed unanimously.

**Director Reports:** The Sherman Park Recreation Center had some electrical issues, but they appear to have been repaired.

Ms. Stephens said she appreciated the director reports, and the staff.

**Calendar of Events:** Ms. Stephens stated that the next commission agenda deadline is Tuesday, September 7, 2010, at 2:00 p.m. Any items need to be called in by that date and time to the Parks and Recreation Administration Office.

The next regularly scheduled commission meeting is Monday, September 20, 2010, at 5:00 p.m., in the North Little Rock Community Center.

**Adjournment:** Ms. Stephens made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Hyde, to adjourn at 6:22 p.m. All voted aye, and the motion passed unanimously.

**Public Comments:** Ms. Stephens opened the meeting for public comments, but there were none.

Submitted by,

Jan Eberle-Wilkins for Otistene Smith  
Secretary