



Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes

November 8, 2023

Willie Hinton Resource Center

Attendance: Matt Buie, Lauren Eldridge, J.T. Ferstl, Cannon Fletcher, Linda Smith, Mike Bernardo, Ben France, Ron Bara, Summer Campbell

Absent: Director Andrea Lewis, Samuel Ellis

City Board of Director Liaison: Director Andrea Lewis, Director Capi Peck

LRPR Staff: Leland Couch, Angela Nelson, Susie Matheny, Justin Dorsey, J.P. Rogers, Briana Hatfield, City Attorney Beth Carpenter

Welcome, and Introductions: Chairman Buie called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone present. He began the meeting by introducing the newest member of the Commission: Chemia Woods who goes by Mia. Chairman Buie asked her to tell the commission a little bit about herself and why she wanted to be a part of the Parks Commission. Commissioner Woods responded that she was charged with attracting people to our great city and Parks and Recreation is one of the main things that people think about, especially out-of-state people from other southern states. She also mentioned that she is a big-time storyteller working in employer branding so she thinks that it goes hand and hand, and being a resident of Little Rock she would love to participate with this organization. Chairman Buie thanked her for being there and joining the commission. After the introduction Chairman Buie called for the roll call.

Roll Call and Approval of Minutes: Deputy Director Angela Nelson called the roll, and Chairman Buie reported that with having 6 of the 11 commissioners present, there was a quorum. Chairman Buie then asked for the October 8th minutes to be approved. Commissioner Eldridge moved to approve the minutes and Commissioner Bara seconded. The motion passed, and the minutes were approved.

Citizen Communication: John McClarty, citizen of Little Rock mentioned a note, that the Board's representation was not well attended. He felt that the members should be here in person and not by zoom, because it's a personal responsibility for them. He felt that if they are wanting to be a member of the commission then they should attend the meeting as he is, because he went to the Centre at University and was not informed that the meeting was going to be held at Willie Hinton. He sent an email to Director Peck from the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program about a plaque that was put up at the War Memorial Golf Course. He then mentioned he would let her speak to that because he doesn't want to get into something that should have been done a

long time ago. Other than that, he reiterated that the board of commission should be here in person and not by Zoom. He then thanked the Board.

Chairman Buie thanked him for his feedback and then asked Director Peck if there was anything she wanted to add. She responded that she could address Zoom attendance. She mentioned that Zoom meetings began to happen during the pandemic, but that she believes that after the first of the year they will be done with that and all attendance will be done in person. At least that was the plan right before City Manager Moore passed away. She went on to say that John was very involved with getting a plaque for War Memorial designating the historic significance, and has been working with the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program and he was hoping for there to be some sort of commemoration or dedication or ceremony recognizing his hard work and the designation. Most recently he has been talking to their coordinator Ashlie Sykes and he is in limbo waiting to see if the City was going to do something. The bottom line is they're willing to have some sort of press event, and Director Peck thinks that the City, more specifically the Parks department, should hold some sort of formal presentation with the press and a big media pushout so that we can dedicate this and acknowledge it.

Chairman Buie thanked Director Peck and then mentioned that he was going to change up the agenda just a bit to accommodate schedules. He mentioned that the commission was very fortunate to have the Chief of Little Rock Police, Heath Helton with them today. Chairman Buie acknowledged that the Chief's time was very valuable and that he has other things to attend to. To that end, the commission bypassed staff reports and old business so that the chief could give a report to the commission first.

Chief Helton mentioned that Commissioner Eldridge had reached out and let him know that the commission had identified some issues in the parks and wanted him to come speak on those. He mentioned that the only way to solve problems is if they all come together and start talking to figure out how we can come to solutions. He mentioned that they were like any other staff in the city and have challenges to getting people to join the ranks so they're figuring out how to adapt and overcome. He wanted to specifically talk about the issues occurring in the Parks and what they are seeing as well as what's going on.

"So just to give the Board a background where they're seeing a lot of our problems, there's actually about five or six parks that see the majority of our issues. Out of all the parks that we do have, there are some, and the majority issues are car break-ins. It's a very difficult challenge to rein those things in when you have a lot of folks that leave a lot of things in their cars and make it very easy for people to want to break into cars. Leland and he have had long conversations about issues regarding the parks and he's told him that they can put big flashing signs out there: "Don't leave valuables in your car, lock your doors" and inevitably they can still have people do that. So one thing they're trying to work through is adding some cameras, pushing the city Parks department, along with the city to add cameras to our parks. That would help out a lot. For those of you not aware, if you haven't seen the news over the last year, they have a real-time crime center now, which to leverage some of the staffing challenges that he has, he's usually trying to push technology to help address some of those issues.

The real-time crime center has been very successful utilizing or bringing in not only the stakeholders from within community, the business owners, private-public partnerships where it allows us to have access to cameras in real-time situations should we need it. And then allows also our members of the public to register their cameras and say, Hey, I have a camera. So if a crime occurs in that vicinity, we can reach out to them, ask them to look at their cameras and if they see something, send it to us so we can get our investigators rolling on it very quickly. So we've been very successful in that. We've realized that our parks lack in that camera footage. We have some parks that have cameras but not where we really need. So I met earlier this week with Susan Langley over at the city about cameras and how we're going to move forward and roughly Murray Park, Riverfront Park were two of the parks that we talked about.

I wanted to add on there, I said two Rivers Park is another one Big Dam Bridge and then Kanis Park is one that is starting to grow. Obviously pickle ball is rapidly become very popular and we get calls weekly at pickle ball courts when cars are getting broken into. So we feel like Kanis, especially after the basketball courts get redone and that park will become a very major attraction for our city. But we need to make sure we're doing everything we can to provide lighting cameras and things of that nature so those who take part and visit those parks feel safe and don't have to worry about cars getting broken into. So one of the things that we're seeing that's a challenge for us right now, the county jail is very full. They've got roughly about 400 inmates that are sitting over in the county jail waiting to move to the state facility.

They're in a holding pattern. So they're eating up beds that would commonly be used for some of our low level offenders or our habitual burglars, car breaking suspects and things of that nature that unfortunately now aren't getting locked up long term in the county jail. So if they're a nonviolent offense, majority of the time we arrest, we do a lot, we make a lot of arrests for these type of offenses, but unfortunately they get cited out of the jail. When they get cited out, they go right back to doing what they were doing. It isn't enough for them to get arrested anyway. They go back to doing it because it's way to make money. So that is a huge challenge for us. We just arrested the guy two days ago that has been responsible for over 30 car break-ins in the downtown area and up in the heights some of our parks, we finally got the jail to agree to hold him.

He has been a big crux in our side for a lot of car break-ins. So we're trying to build those relationships to get Sheriff Higgins and some of our other surrounding communities to hold those offenders for us that are our habitual problems. Unfortunately the judicial system, once we roll it into the courts and prosecutors, it's out of my lane and I know Mr. Elders can talk a lot about the frustration sometimes that goes on within the judicial system when we talk about these type of offenses and this is what causes frustration. I know Director Peck has probably reached out to me more times than I can count, but that's what we're here for. Whether we have these issues in the parks overall we're safe. We just have car break-ins, but our city is no different than Conway,

Benton, and Bryant and they're all plagued with these issues because you have groups that are what I call working the circuit.

So they'll hit Little Rock for a while, we'll turn up the heat, try to start to make a few arrests, they'll move to other cities, they'll go down to North Little Rock, they'll move to Conway, they'll go up to Searcy and then they'll work their way around to Benton, Bryant and then back into Little Rock. So that's kind of how it works. They'll even go as far as Texarkana to do things down there and it's an unfortunate time, but these are low-level offenses that unfortunately don't get locked up the way they probably should. So that's some of our challenges. I think educational campaigns telling people, look, try not to leave valuables in your car because what a lot of these offenders will do, they will sit in parking lots and they'll watch, this is what we see a lot down the Big Dam Bridge.

They'll pull up, they'll park and they'll watch and they'll see ladies get out of the car. When we know if a lady's driving, there's a person or something in that car when they get out, nobody goes to a trunk locking thing up. So they get out, take off on the run, they'll wait a while, then they'll go around and just pop windows or they're lifted door handles. People leave cars unlocked quite often and all they're doing is just scraping whatever they get and then they're gone and then if it's very profitable they will come back in a few weeks and do it again. So that is the big piece: trying to educate. We push a lot out on our social media platforms. We talk about it in our community meetings that we go to, but yet it still occurs. For a side note for you all the city of Little Rock, we lose roughly six guns per week in car break-ins in the city of Little Rock, you do the math, it's over 300 guns a year that now become crime guns in our city.

So there's a huge problem with people leaving guns in their cars. So if they're leaving guns, laptops, I was at a community meeting last night and the guy that one of the gentlemen that was there, he's like, well yeah, I'm a law student but I'll leave my laptop in the car all the time. I said, you're going to become a victim, you keep doing it. He's like, yeah, I go out two o'clock in the morning, I have to get my laptop. I was like, your car is going to get broke into, I'm just telling you right now. So it's just those things that we got to continue to do. And then the patrols, one thing I want to try to do, my vision is to try to get some parks units back together. When I first hired on the police department back in the early nineties, we had actual parks unit. A parks police unit and there were roughly five or six officers and that's all they did was patrol around all the parks throughout the city. But as we tried to move towards that, I tried to do a part-time unit, but as I started exploring that option, nobody wants to come work this type of work part-time when you have no benefits. So that's really a difficult challenge. So as I look to bring on more full-time, I'm getting my staffing back up, which I do believe by the end of next year I'll be close to where I need to be. Then I talked with Mayor yesterday about branching out and creating a parks unit to push back into the parks where they're solely focusing on those areas and then like I said, feedback from you all as a commission is great. Anytime that we have the opportunity to come and talk to you all or kind of fill you in with numbers.

I noticed Commissioner Eldridge was showing me numbers from nine years ago. I have six crime analysts in the police department. That's all they do is data. They push numbers left and right. I can give you up-to-date data very quickly for whatever the Commission needs or whatever you would like to look at, just let us know because our partnerships, I mean it's huge for us to be able to address issues. A lot of times I don't find out issues until they come later down the road. A lot of times they get told the directors first and then I get notified about it and I'm like, well it's the first I've heard of it. So any kind of communication is very beneficial to us so we can get ahead of things and start putting out fires because social media for all the great things that it does, it's the devil because of a lot of misinformation out there, nobody knows fact from fiction anymore because our society now is information starved and whatever they don't get in a timely fashion, they'll fill in the blank to help rationalize whatever they can to make them believe what's there.

So we're constantly chasing that 8-ball down the hill. So whenever there is an issue, let us know very quickly so we can get on top of it and get the right information out there to the Board of Directors, people on the Commission to help try to calm some of the issues because next door, which that thing is something else, it grow legs and the media trolls a lot of these things and the media sees it, excuse me, they will reach out to folks and then try to get a story and make something out of nothing. So we're constantly dealing with those types of issues, but anxious to hear if any questions or concerns that you all have.”

Chairman Buie thanked Chief Helton, and mentioned that if he was willing and able and had the resources and time to share that real-time information with the board they might get him connected with Mr. Perry who they've asked and are going to be expecting to hear from on a monthly basis just on kind of an update on that sort of thing. So there might be some information that could be shared. That would be fantastic.

Chairman Buie then asked Director Peck, if she had anything to add on.

Director Peck responded not really, except she did think that as a team, the parks can help push out this information on our social media platforms, how they should leave nothing in their car. She continued that she was a victim at Big Dam Bridge just several years ago. Five cars did it once. It was just so easy, so fast. But she thinks that would be helpful. She's a big fan of your report on cars that you all who used to leave on the cars. She mentioned that loved it because she was doing everything right, just reminding people. She remembered Chief Helton told her in the past, not everybody likes getting the report card basically. But she thinks we as the Parks Commission could work on pushing that information out. You would think that it would be just common knowledge to not do that, but people still do it all the time.

She mentioned that they had a really good presentation last night, the board meeting about the ambassador program that's starting today or tomorrow, downtown 8 to 10 individuals that will be doing a variety of things. She also mentioned maybe doing something like with the cadets or not necessarily uniform, full-time police officers to have a parks team. Something like the ambassadors or just a presence of somebody in the park looking at those parks that are probably the most vulnerable ones you just suggested. Have you thought about that?

Chief Helton mentioned that they try to think of a lot of different ideas. "One of the things that I've really tried to press the Leland on is locking up our parks. I mean at night Murray Park specifically on the weekends we get complaints about the drag racers, the burnouts and sliding that goes on when we go down there and run those out, they move all over town and it does create a huge strain on resources when we're doing that. We could just say we lock up the park. They would go away adding the speed bumps, those speed things inside of the parks and parking areas will cut down on folks doing the sliding and burnouts. Park Plaza, for example, was one of those places that they were really tearing up the parking lot, thousands and thousands of dollars worth of damage and they finally went out there and invested with the bumpers in there. So now they pretty much, and they're locking up their places. So the tedious deal is who locks it up and who has to go out there early in the morning. So nobody wants to commit to that part of the project, but that will solve a lot of issues. If you can secure your parks at night, that will help. I think having signage posted simply 'don't forget to lock your car' just psa type or 'this area is under video surveillance.' That sometimes helps solve a lot of problems.

Chairman Buie then asked the Commissioners if they had any other questions?

Director Peck mentioned one thing that Leland talked about in the budget workshop meeting last week about some things that would be helpful regarding cameras specifically and addressing how difficult it was with parks not being locked up, homeless individuals coming in and trashing the bathrooms. They were discussing one or two individuals being responsible for the bathrooms in all the parks. We want our parks to be open and welcoming but we don't want anyone to abuse the situation, and wanted to know if there might be someone other than LRPD that can help patrol the parks.

Chief Henton responded that there's always possibility for stuff like that. They've all put up overtime. He also mentioned that looking at what 2024 is coming into, a lot of things going on next year specifically with the eclipse that we're trying to, it's going to impact our parks quite a bit and how will we address those issues.

Chief Helton went on to say "we have very much increasingly homeless population that pretty much descended on our community. We get a lot of folks that are bussed in from other maybe communities around the country that are just showing up here. No ties to the city of Little Rock, state of Arkansas. They're let off. They have no money, no place to go. A lot of them have substance abuse, mental health issues and they're in our community and we're seeing them

overflow our parks. About three weeks ago we had a tent city that popped up behind the amphitheater down there. Really honestly, if you looked at the amphitheater, you would've never saw it. You would've had to walk back behind it to actually see, there was roughly about 10, 12 tents that have popped up back there and it had a little camp so we got it cleaned out, moved. But what you do, you move it, it just goes elsewhere and in our parks, our agents for those, we work very closely with our code enforcement and Chris Porter and his team, but for every one camp you take out four or five pop up somewhere else around the city. So it's a huge challenge. We met the other day with the mayor and the directors. They're working on a homeless initiative to try to address some of these. The tiny village off Roosevelt will help, but still there's our resources are stretched out to the max.

Chairman Buie mentioned that they had time for one more commissioner question if someone has another question.

Staff Reports: There were none, and so Chairman Buie thanked the chief for his time and then turned to Staff Reports, giving the floor to Deputy Director Angela Nelson.

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Administration

Deputy Director of Administration, Angela Nelson, informed the commission that normally Leland would have something to say. He was unable to be here today, but he just wanted to express he had a classification and compensation meeting that he needed to urgently attend today. So moving forward with resources as always, we're continuing to address administrative policies and procedures that's always ongoing. HR related issues right now we're finalizing and updating, requesting licenses that our staff may need for their positions such as CDLs, even a driver's license, CPR, ADA, that kind of thing and also training. Also we're focusing on our parks policy and procedure guideline manual. Basically that's just a policy book that has our expectations, responsibilities, how we operate and I try to use this help on top of that to review every two years. So that is in the works. Also, I have been focusing on updating our website guidelines for pavilion reservations, other areas that we're focusing on are our rentals, amenities, activities and just add photos and just be a little more descriptive so that it's appealing and user-friendly. We're continuing to try to fill our positions. Some of these still look familiar from our previous meeting. Of course we did fill our parks marketing and social media coordinator, museum program assistant and aquatic specialist. We was able to fill that through a promotion downtown landscape coordinator. Those two last ones were also a promotion, which once we do that of course then we're going to have additional vacancies. We're also continuing to re-advertise and interviewing. This list is pretty much similar as it was last month, although we do have a Leader and an Assistant Aquatic Specialist that is a new addition. Our goal is to improve our productivity and efficiency. We've noticed lately we have had a lot of computer issues and just malfunctions, equipment is old. We're trying to replace things we're working through that continue to monitoring our budget. PIT budget is going well. However, we did have to make a

tough decision this week to kind of decrease our spending in about five divisions. So we're just moving forward and just hoping to just keep progressing until the end of the year.

This concludes Deputy Director Nelson's report.

Chairman Buie thanked Deputy Director Nelson for her report and then called for questions. There were none, so Chairman Buie turned the floor over to Susie Matheny, who was filling in for Deputy Director Shawanda Craig.

Recreation

Ms. Matheny reported that all of the community centers are registering for their basketball program. They all have had events like the Light's On Program is a national program and they all had a program at their location and the kids did their performances and parents attended to see what the staff is doing with those youth. Then they also had Halloween programs with the Halloween programs. All of them were at their own site and they were well attended. With the youth volleyball Dunbar bragged and they won some divisions and Southwest, Stevens was one of the locations and they had youth, all of them had youth programs in the volleyball and some won and some didn't, but it was a well participated program. The basketball program sign up and the league will start in December with the first two weeks that school is going on and then they'll take a break for the holidays and they'll come back in January and they'll run the program probably through mid-February early March and then they'll be through with that program and other programs will start and progress from there.

They also had adult programs. The adult programs was at Southwest Community Center. There was an adult basketball program that recently ended, like I think this past Saturday they ended their program and Stephens had an adult program but it ended last month and it was a basketball program also. Southwest and West Central do have karate, aerobics, and etc. It's going well, well attended. It's not like a cut off. It's always you can come in and do what you need to do, just pay your daily fees and go and participate. Special events: Southwest have some really good special events. They are working with the ACT prep training and it's well attended. Those particular individuals get the preparation so they can take ACT tests and do well on them because if you know and keep up with some of the media, Arkansas is down nationwide on their ACT numbers, so this will help them at least try and get some youth to come up and be closer to the national average.

The Senior Programs still have individual events. Some of them have had showcasing. There are things that they're doing. One of the big showcases that I do know about was the Silver Fox Showcase and I'm not even sure if you want to put that in there or not, but the Silver Fox Showcase is a Senior Citizen Program that does a dance program and then they go out and they perform at other senior programs and then they do a big performance so that their family can come and watch them do their Silver Fox dances and they're called Silver Foxes because they're all over a certain age and their hair has begun to get a little silver.

The Centre at University Park, they're still having a lot of bookings per month. They had 30 internal city of Little Rock bookings, only two cancellations and one no-show. They do not have any revenue income, but they had a total of almost 1700 participants to come through the building, which is still a lot of people coming through a building that does not offer a lot of

programs at this time. Therapeutic did their karaoke costume for Halloween, they went to the fair and had a great time. They are going to have an upcoming Thanksgiving dinner where they have invited several individuals and what they do is a potluck if each one of the individuals bring their own specialty and it's a really good program and if you have never attended it, hey it's really a good program to attend and those are some special people that you would just fall in love with and just continue to be their friends, their forever friends. They'll never forget you.

MacArthur Park Museum had some events going on and they have upcoming events. They have been out to the community centers and schools doing their after school program. It's a reading program where they go and do reading and they do arts and crafts. They speak with the kids and it's really, really a good program. They've also had some on-site visitations, they had special events. They had an increase of thirty-seven percent over last year's attendance and that again speaks volumes because you never know what Little Rock has to offer and if you come and you go to these various locations, there's a lot of things for Little Rock that a lot of people does not see and does not know and it's just right there within our community, right off the interstate easy access and it sits right next to a beautiful building. If you've never been in a beautiful building, go in it and see what it is like.

They also had movies at Macarthur in 2023 they said they had approximately 450 people that has attended it and the movies are old movies that depict different things that goes on within military and different history events and I've attended at least one over the course of the time of them having it and they're normally really well attended. They actually hosted the 12th annual Arkansas Paranormal Expo on October 28th through the 29th and they raised over \$55,000 for the museum since 2011 with this program. And I think that is again speaking volumes of a building of that nature. And again, this year they said that 750 people attended the two-day event and just this year alone it was a profit for the Museum of \$6500. So you're talking about people that don't mind giving where it's needed to be given

In athletics: Interstate Park and Allsopp Park. The roads were closed at Interstate Park due to construction on the east side, but all of the soccer fields and rentals were still taking place because you could access it from the west side because I think they did the West side first and then they did the east side and I'm not sure if the east side is completed yet or not. She asked Deputy Director Dorsey if he knew if the East side is completed. ~~and~~ He responded that they're doing some final touch-ups on the side.

The summer playground program. Darryl Marble met with Mr. Williams with Little Rock School District to discuss different locations and they're not quite finalized yet. Usually the finalization of the summer playground program sites usually happen in February, March so that they can get the information out to everyone.

Registration is usually May 1st every year and that again is a program where they're well attended, good issues all the time, lots of kids, lots of fun, different games and activities. Crump Park, the last day for movies in the park was November 2nd and they still will be having football continuing in the park with practices in various locations. Rebsamen Tennis had their high school season with middle school and they say that season is over. They're getting ready for the STA sectionals, that's an adult tournament and they're an alternate site. The six-day high school tournament was held there.

The Volkl Demo Day Tennis Program was there. Luke Jensen, which was a former pro tennis and ESPN announcement commentator was there. All of this happened in the month of October. New assistant manager, Rebecca Boland has started and is doing great and they're in the process of replacing a few part-time, tennis aides and they're ahead because those people that was there are going to colleges is always good to see that even though they was here with us at one time, they're going on to better things. Jim Dailey Fitness and Aquatic Center celebrated Breast Cancer Awareness Care the week of October the 16th through the 20th and for the week they provided information on breast cancer awareness and did variety of activity games and refreshments for the members and guests and everyone enjoyed themselves. All of the other fitness classes are going well with their attendance.

The aquatic area, the aquatic classes are doing well with attendance and the outdoor pool closed on October 28th and I think it's not in here, but they just had the dog dip on this past Saturday and spoke with the supervisor there and he said that that went well. Also, Rebsamen golf, the 6th and the 7th, which was this past Monday and Tuesday, the pumps were fully repaired and they're going to return to utilizing well water for the irrigation of their greens. I think that's what that means. The 8th and 9th, which is today tomorrow they're going to host the ladies golf association club Championship and there should be 20 or 30 ladies competing in that championship. First Tee says that fall is in the air as they slowly wind down from the golf season, they're going to be getting ready for the twenty-fourth season. And with that they're going to be doing a lot of things to maintain the golf facility stays open to the public and they're going to re-sod some of the areas of the golf course which include tee boxes, bear patches in the fairways and behind the clubhouse.

So anything else that they have going on with outdoor recreation, with the weather getting like it is if you like outdoors, go outside and have some fun and you won't get hot.

That concluded Ms. Matheny's report. Chairman Buie passed the floor to Deputy Director Dorsey

Operations

Deputy Director Dorsey started his reports by referencing a couple months ago when he took a moment and bragged and said he was really proud that Operations had, every position that we had was either full or advertised and now you'll notice on hers that five of the seven positions that are advertising and reposting are all in Operations. So he mentioned that he'll never brag or say that he's almost fully staffed again, he's learned a lesson so that report you'll never hear him say.

So we're kind of going through that and trying to get, I appreciate the help but we're short staffed. But we're going through winterizing stuff. That's kind of just our big story of the fall. Pulling our RPZ's, doing a lot of flowerbed rehab, winterizing the restroom, that routine is the main thing.

Some big key points. Allsopp North Mountain bike trail that's out to bid with. Mentioned that at the last, the meeting on site with the contractors this morning. They were out on site when I came here, so I don't know how that went. I'll give a report when I get back. So hopefully they had some good contractors and that went really well. We'll get some good bids and should be able to

close the bids next week. I'm excited about that. As we said, Interstate roadway, they've completed the actual asphalt part of that project and now just final side dressing and some rock work on the side of that. We have a meeting we're trying to get scheduled for next week to do kind of final review punch list and trying to wrap that up to where we can do a final punch list to get that project behind us and closed out and that would be really nice to put that one behind us as well.

We've really been ramped up the last several weeks. Our design team and myself and the new construction manager Chad have been attending a lot of meetings with various firms on the community center projects, trying to get a little bit deeper into the scope and schematics and actually trying to move into the CD phase and get some construction drawings, getting those projects closer ready to have packages to bid and get numbers and processing that. So we're just really fine-tuning and getting those nailed down. So that's been pretty time-consuming in the last several weeks. We're getting that. The operations construction team, they put the Christmas tree up downtown if you walk by Main and Capitol and if you've seen that, it's a thirty-two foot tall, brand new Christmas Tree. It was a major, major project, had to rent a crane and I guess the first time you put anything like that up, it was literally in a million pieces.

It was on 18 wheeler and in eight pallets or crates. Every single light bulb. We got some help from the downtown partnership with the Ambassadors their first day got to help the light bulb crew screw every light bulb to every branch had to be bolted onto every frame before it could be assembled and put, it was amazing. We got some pictures of that. So some good stories that you see in the ambassadors. But the lighting ceremony, I don't have a time but it's November the 20th, I believe the Director knows the time, and I'm sure that can be passed along, but it's a really nice tree. It's nice to see that in that spot. So proud of the guys in that whole team that can do collaboration with the downtown partnership group. The last note that I will say is a typo on the report and that's just my apologies on that. The week that I was having last week because that's where I stopped and was trying to go get you an update and then apparently forgot what I was doing before I sent the report. We did have one successful bid on the Jim Dailey project and that was with Hyde Co. It was over budgeted at the time and so we were trying to figure out what to do on that. But I think that is progressing on as planned.

That is in review, and we are proceeding on with that project as planned, so I'm excited to move forward with that, so hopefully we will be able to get a contract approved maybe soon.

That concluded Deputy Director Dorsey's report. Chairman Buie thanked him for his report and turned the floor over to Safety Coordinator Courtney Perry.

Mr. Perry started his report by introducing himself, and then focused on the data that he brought to the commission. All this data is taken from the LRPD crime data portal. That's where all of it comes from. The highlights are on the parts from 2015 to 2023 that shows that we have breaking and entering. Flipping to the next page and checking out the pie chart breaking and entering as well as motor vehicle theft are the most prevalent. Sometimes just B & E's but at time it also involves lifting vehicles as well. So I put that information in there, take a look at that and the pie chart, pretty much you can see that when compared to breaking and entering as compared to motor vehicle theft, it's a pretty large spread for breaking and entering as we've got a real

problem with that. Almost 34 - 36% of B & E's. At the bottom there, attached, those were pretty much all the crimes that we've had in our parks, historically.

And if you go to the graph, the line is the motor vehicle thefts in 2022. So if you see that spike right there, fell off for 2023, I don't have all the data yet. The data is good up to the last three months, it's not here, but chances are it won't be quite as dramatic as it goes back in 2022.

What are we doing about it? That's important thing. We have been working with LRPD to install camera systems and a lot of the ideas that in the, I think it was a week or so ago, we actually had some perps break into one of our facilities and due to the cameras we have installed, we actually were able to track them down and was able to recover what they stole.

That concluded Mr. Perry's report. Chairman Buie thanked Mr. Perry and then called for questions for Ms. Matheny, Mr. Dorsey, and Mr. Perry.

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Old Business

Chairman Buie opened the old business. There was nothing to report for recreational resources for ADA today, we touched on that last month and we should be up to date there.

Upcoming events. Mr. Garrity was planning to be here today. He's not able to join us today, so we'll hear from him again soon.

We've obviously heard from Chief Helton, provided a lot of good information. Chairman Buie then asked the Commission for Agenda items for next meeting. There were no additions. He then asked to include subcommittee reports in the next agenda.

Master Plan and Commissioner Smith is not here.

Social Media and Commissioner France is not here.

Parks Conservancy update: we are looking to put together a plan. More information will be coming on this at the next meeting, but looking to set a schedule for having conservancy events at various parks next year throughout the year. Don't want to give out too much details just yet. It's still being made. Chairman Buie told Commissioner Eldridge that he needs to bring her up to speed as a liaison, but for everyone to look for more information about that soon. He then told Commissioner Woods that he knows he owes her some information about the conservancy as well and that he'll be sure to get that for her.

He then gave the floor to Director Peck for liaison feedback.

She mentioned that last night at the board meeting they approved phase one of the South Beach Trail, Metro Plan takes the lions share of this and then the county and city has the obligation of

coming up with \$5 million each but this will start at the Clinton Library, the east gate and go to 6th street with walking paths.

Other thing that I'm very excited about is that we have hired Brittany Nichols to come on as marketing and PR for parks. I've worked with her for a couple years. She was in the Sustainability Office of the city. She's very creative and great in graphics and I think we can get a lot of traction in being more present on social media. Got a lot of ideas I'm going to talk to her about, but we've got to start telling our story. We don't tell our story enough and I have some creative ideas about ways we can do that. So I'm super excited about that. And the other big thing that's happening on the city level, is we're in the middle of budget workshops. We have to pass a budget in the next several weeks. We've made a great presentation with lots and lots and lots of asks as every department did. But it'll be interesting to see on what we can afford to do without that sales tax that we decided not to go after. I believe it's best for us to do that in 2024, more pare down, but with an emphasis on quality of life issues like Parks.

Commissioner Eldridge proposed inviting Brittany to our next meeting. She wanted to say for the new business, maybe talking about social media because we did mention it so much with respect to the safety concerns and adding that to social media. But she think that what we just heard about in the Operations, the Halloween events being so well attended. Commissioner Eldridge boys are playing basketball at the boys club and that is huge. She thinks we're missing opportunities to highlight parks and everything the city does through all its services. So it'd be really interesting to have her come talk about her new role.

Director Peck agreed. And mentioned she did this for sustainability, is super creative and her husband now works for Parks as well.

Chairman Buie mentioned not just inviting her but also including her reports coming up in the future as well, get some updates.

Director Peck mentioned that she has a love-hate relationship with social media, even though she has to use it for her business, but she believes that Parks is missing some opportunities. Commissioner Eldridge agreed, and said that she pays attention whenever they post things and as an example she mentioned that she didn't know about the banana sculpture until she saw it on Instagram on the Parks account.

Director Peck then mentioned that as part of the Parks, commissioners could be featured one a month or what's your favorite park and why? Or each City Director who has multiple parks, their ward, can you start involving other people that have a lot of reach so they can tag and spread. I just think it's a huge opportunity. I'm sad for Sustainability, but I'm happy for Parks.

Chairman Buie then began addressing New Business.

New Business

There were no new agenda items for next meeting, so the same agenda will remain. He mentioned that the agenda for this month did not show the subcommittee reports and that needs to be updated for next month.

Chairman Buie mentioned one final housekeeping note for all of the Commissioners here and for

those who would be watching this on video. If you don't have a copy of the bylaws, please let one of us know. We will get you a copy of the bylaws. I do want to make sure this call out quickly.

Please be very cognizant of the attendance requirements. There are some rules and regulations in there that we do need to be following. So please do keep an eye on that as well. Next meeting is going to be Wednesday, December the 13th and we are slated to meet at The Centre at University Park. So we will go back to our regular meeting location at noon on Wednesday the 13th.

Thanks everybody for attending.

Meeting Adjourned.

Thank You.