



Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes

December 21, 2022, Minutes

The Centre at University Park

Attendance: Matt Buie, Lauren Eldridge (Virtual), Samuel Ellis (Virtual), Ben France, Linda Smith, Cannon Fletcher, Robyn Nosari, J.T. Ferstl

Absent: NONE

City Board of Director Liaison: Director Doris Wright, Director Capi Peck

LRPR Staff: City Attorney Beth Carpenter, Leland Couch, Justin Dorsey, Shawanda Robinson, J.P. Rogers, Eric Mayfield

Welcome and Introductions: Chairman Buie called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone present. Chairman Buie proceeded with the agenda to the roll call and approval of November' minutes.

Roll Call and Approval of Minutes: Eric Mayfield called the roll and Chairman Buie reported that all eight (8) members were present for a quorum. November meeting minutes with the one correction from Attorney Beth Carpenter were approved by a motion from Commissioner France and second by Commissioner L. Smith.

The November commission meeting minutes were approved.

Citizen Communication: Chairman Buie stated that there was no one present for citizen communication.

Chairman Buie then ask Director Couch for updates of any staff reports.

Staff Reports: Director Leland Couch started staff reports with introducing new employees to the Parks Department, Deputy Director of Operation Justin Dorsey, and Data/Special Project Coordinator Brianna Hatfield before he proceeded with Staff Reports. Director Couch also gave details about the department vacancies report that was presented to the commissioners via email and hard copy. Two reports were presented, January 2022 and December 2022.

Administration

Administration Division report were given to commissioner members via email and hard copy. Deputy Director Angela Nelson (FMLA)

Recreation

Deputy Director Shawanda Robinson started reports by mentioning that the Recreation division is trying to fill all their vacancies. Shawanda gave detail on the open positions, interviews, and where the division is at on filling all the vacancies. The following position has been filled from DD Shawanda report (Fitness Center Supervisor Assistant at JDFC, and Assistant Fitness Specialist at JDFC, Golf Position is in the exit review status after a candidate has been selected.) The community centers will be open during the Christmas Holidays. Community Center Staff has been prepared for inclement weather. The East Little Rock Community Center will be open for shelter starting Thursday, December 22nd at 3:00pm until Saturday, December 24th @ 3:00PM.

Aging and Acting Senior program is on Christmas Break and will return January 3, 2023. Therapeutic is on Christmas Break until January 6, 2023. MacArthur Military Museum recital has been reschedule to January 8, 2023.

DD Shawanda Robinson concluded her report by asking if anyone had any questions. There were no questions asked.

This concludes Recreation. Director Couch thanked Robinson for her report.

Operations

Deputy Director Dorsey started his report by introducing himself to the commission and others. He gave a brief background of his experience from state parks and different management position. DD Dorsey and team is working on Kanis Park around the basketball court area to bring that to completion. Western Hill playground area is almost complete once the pavilion and other items come in after first of the 2023 year.

DD Dorsey concluded his report by asking if anyone had any questions. There were no questions asked.

This concludes Operation. Director Couch thanked Dorsey for his report.

Commissioner Matt Buie thanked Justin Dorsey for being on board and informed him he look forward to future reports.

Parks Maintenance

Parks Maintenance Manager, J.P. Rogers opened parks maintenance reports by stating they are in the process of finishing up leaf season. The crew help the golf course to help cover greens for inclement weather. Next week they will return to help golf course remove the covers. The guys are doing everything to cover areas to prepare for the inclement weather.

This concludes Maintenance report.

Chairman Buie asked the commissioner if they had any questions about any of the staff reports. There were no questions asked. Buie thank each department for their report and paused to say Happy Birthday to Director Couch.

Commissioner Cannon Fletcher asked a questions “With the East Little Rock Center how many people can it hold?”

Director Couch answered by saying they have had that question in the past about the maximum number it can hold. He asked Deputy Director Robinson if she had the report.

DD Robinson said the numbers changed each night, however, Dunbar the facility held about 80 people last year. The center this year is anticipating about 30-50 people.

Director Couch stated he appreciated the questions from Commissioner Fletcher. He also informed the commissioner they have staff who stays there all night as well as police, emergency management and others. There have been a plan policy created for these events moving forward.

Commissioner Fletcher asked if VANS were getting the information out and any other communication for the community.

Director Couch replied and said yes, as well as the city send out their communication (press release). Per DD Robinson the press release is already posted.

Commissioner Fletcher asked a question “Who decided on the facility”

DD Robinson replied by sharing they did walkthroughs of each location and since ELR was the only center with minimum usage they decided to go with that center.

Commissioner Fletcher asked were there separate money set aside from the city to complete the project

Director Couch did reply there isn’t any substantial amount cost however, there is a little overtime cost but nothing significate.

Chairman Buie gave thanks to LRPR staff for their work and also to the LR Parks Commission for being 100% present.

With no further reports, Chairman Buie proceeded to move down the agenda to old business.

Old Business

Chairman Buie opened up old business by giving the mic to Director Couch.

Director is currently building projects for ARPR funding and Bond funding. The HVAC system went out at JDFC and indoor pool. The system was on the list for replacement, our goal was to use our ARPR funding and Bond funding to do the replacement. Thanks we have the funding from the city board so we can move forward with getting the business started.

Chairman Buie asked when the system will go in

Director Couch replied saying as soon as possible once they get approval from the board. General, I'm working on many different quotes for projects, as Justin get more involved he will be able to report out on project. I will be going back to the public in January to discuss different projects and the request from the community. We did get awarded a new outdoor rec grant \$180,000.00 for a new playground at Boyle Park and the city will match 250. Another grant our trail coordinator applied for a grant through trailblazer that will allow us to purchase bikes to put in our community centers. We hope we will be able to receive this grant also.

Chairman Buie asked there were any questions regarding any of the bond funding.

Chairman Buie then proceeds to New Business.

New Business

Chairman Buie open discussing with saying we are down to eight (8) commission, we have the ability to allow for eleven (11). After speaking with counsel we want to add three (3) new commissioner ASAP. For the ones who don't know already the requirements to get on the board is to submit the online application or send a paper copy to the city clerk office and the city clerk's office vets all application and appointment is made by the Board of Directors and the Mayor.

Chairman Buie asked commissioner to encourage family and friends who would like to serve to contact the city clerk's office.

Sub-Committee Reports

Chairman Buie opens discussion with stating that the previous social media & outreach chairperson had moved away and there was no report for this month. In the New Year there will be a new person to head that meeting.

Buie open for the floor to Commissioner L. Smith for her comments regarding the 2022 Master Plan.

- Master Plan

Commissioner L. Smith started by saying the committee did not meet as a group, there are four (4) people on the master plan. We have schedule a meeting before the next commission meeting. We have an agenda and also making sure there is public notice given. The main topics we want to focus on is with the master plan, how to do make sure that the master plan stays relevant and align as we look toward to new project that comes from ARPR and bond funding. I would encourage us as we try to identify new people and encourage people to apply. I would really hope we can have some diversity on the committee. At one point we were much more diverse but now we're not. However, that's all reflected who apply. Please encourage people to apply. There will be a more updated report when we meet in January.

Commissioner L. Smith concluded her Master Plan report

Chairman Buie thanked Commissioner L. Smith for her update regarding the Master Plan.

- Parks Conservancy

Chairman Buie provided a quick update for this committee. The Parks Conservancy Is working on the membership program and the friends program. It is expected to go live in January 2023. The January date is TBD, look for another update next month. Chairman Buie will provide updates how you can join the member program, become active, and do some fundraiser is what we are trying to accomplish.

Chairman Buie asked where there any questions regarding Parks Conservancy.

Commissioner Eldridge asked if we have looked at any friends of the parks programs within the neighboring states.

Chairman Buie replied saying yes absolutely that is very much consideration giving by the parks conservancy board. We're looking at membership programs not only in the state of Arkansas but also cities in the regions that is similar sizes to understand what is being offered and what is not being offered. We are taking a short term view on getting the program up and going. We will get it up and going and have some basic membership in the upcoming year, as the program grow we will see about expanding it in the next 3-5 years.

Chairman Buie moved to the next item under Sub-Report

January Meeting

Director Couch informed the committee there is a Director Retreat for all city Directors which will cause a meeting conflict with the Parks Commission meeting.

Chairman Buie asked if there were a motion on the floor to move the January meeting from January 11, 2023 to January 18, 2023.

Commissioner L. Smith made a motion to move the meeting from January 11th to January 18th.

Commissioner Fletcher second the motion.

City Attorney Beth Carpenter informed the commission of the new public relation manager Aaron Saddler to keep update of the change.

Chairman Buie called for a vote.

Motion passed 8-0

Chairman Buie moved to the next item under New Business

Golf Tournament

Commissioner Eldridge started by giving a new date for the golf tournament and encourage everyone to mark their calendar for May 19 2023. May 19th keeps it in the same month, kids will still be in school and other community members will still be in town. We're hoping more attendance with the new date. As we get closer we want to reach out to friends and family to sign up because it benefit summer kids program. With that said, Commissioner Eldridge working on

different level of sponsorship and what that level will mean for potential sponsors. The buy in for the sponsorship will be pretty low compared to other golf tournaments in the area and that will be consisted with our registration fee which is also low. We want people to come, we want people to be interest and tap into sponsors who may not have the opportunities to sponsor other programs. Hopefully this will be finalize by next month. Commissioner Eldridge will be asking other commissioner for help.

Chairman Buie thanked Commissioner Eldridge for the information and asked if any commissioner have any questions regarding the new date.

Commissioner Ben France asked does the sponsorship goes to the 501c3 or the city for a tax write off perspective.

Commissioner Eldridge replied within the last two years we have been trying to fondle that through the parks conservancy so that also incentive for sponsor to provide funding toward the tournament. Moving forward, we will come up with a better plan for anyone who want to donate or sponsor the tournament can do so with the tax deductible purpose.

Chairman Buie replied saying he agree, and great question Commissioner France. Lauren and I have had conversation regarding that being an option for tax deductibility.

Commissioner Fletcher asked what the targeted goal was last year.

Commissioner Eldridge said the year before they were able to raise ten to fifteen (10-15) thousand and last year it was close to five (5) thousand. A lot of last year had to do with team shortage. This past year we had to reduce it to one and I believe the date had something to do with it. By creating more incentive and making 501c3 option known to sponsors we can get more money on the front end.

Chairman Buie said there is an opportunity for us as a commissioner to help promote this by inviting our family, friends, colleagues, and others to help build out a team to participate. As we get closer to time, Lauren will be able to let us know what we can do to get more team.

Commissioner Eldridge want to get more help from Director Couch and Buie on who can set up an online for registration online and making payments online. It will help improve things by allowing people to do this online beforehand.

Commissioner J.T. Ferstl asked is this something that was approved earlier before I started

Chairman Buie replied saying golf tournament is a standing event that is sponsored by the commission, we has run each year.

Commissioner Eldridge said the good thing about the timing this year, is if we do launch "Friends of the Park" program ahead of time we can promote that as well with the tournament. In the past we haven't done great with highlighting other things that the parks is doing. Just a good event to try to figure out ways to celebrate all of different park programs during this event.

Chairman Buie did informed Commissioner Ferstl they will have the conversation regarding cost for the upcoming year.

Chairman Buie thanked Commissioner Eldridge for taking on the golf tournament event.

Discussion Items for Next Meeting

Chairman Buie started off by asking the commissioner if there were any agenda items that need to be added for the January meeting.

No commissioner had an item to add.

Director Couch did not have an item to add.

Buie confirmed that each item will stay on the agenda for next month for January as well exclude January meeting date.

Board Liaison Feedback

No Board member were present to give any feedback.

Meeting Adjourned.