



Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes

February 12, 2025
The Centre at University Park

Attendance: Ben France, Cannon Fletcher, Quinten Whiteside, Chemia Woods

Absent: James Ferstl, Samuel Ellis, Mike Bernardo, Ron Bara, Summer Campbell, Quincy Grant, City Director-Capi Peck,

City Board of Director Liaison: City Director-Andrea Lewis

LRPR/LRCAO Staff: Parks Director-Leland Couch, Deputy Director Administration Resources-Angela Nelson, Deputy Director Recreation-Shawanda Craig, Deputy City Attorney-Simone Blagg, Courtney Perry-Safety and Training Coordinator, Karen Sykes-Volunteer Coordinator, Administrative Assistant to the Parks Director-Mahoganey Burkhalter, Kyndall Richardson-Secretary, Savanah Wells-Secretary

Welcome: Chairman France welcomed everyone. Meeting called to order at 12:01 pm.

Roll Call: Roll call completed. Four (4) Commissioners out of Eleven (11) Commissioners in attendance. Quorum was not established.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman France asked and was advised by Deputy City Attorney Simone Blagg that due to a quorum not being established that this meeting can only be an Informational meeting and there would be no voting today.

Citizen Communication: No Citizen Communication.

Staff Reports/Director's Presentation/Events:

Director's Presentation:

Director Couch presented on the following:

- BOD Agenda Items & Upcoming Items from Parks
 - ❖ War Memorial Playground, using Bond funds for repair and upgrades for Parks in general and making repairs to the War Memorial Playground.
 - ❖ Architectural engineering design request for the Cromwell firm to work on Reservoir Park.
 - ❖ Applied for a CPRG Grant through Metroplan to improve the environment. Working to repair tree canopy's damaged during the tornados at both Murray and War Memorial. Working with Grants department to secure funding.



- ❖ I-30 Crossing Project- Will have the consultant group–Sasaki present their masterplan to the commission once completed. Working with State to get a Raise Grant for project.
- ❖ LR Marathon – March 1st, 2025.

Questions from the Director's Report.

- Chairman France asked about Reservoir Park and FEMA funds. Director Couch advised that some FEMA and Insurance funds were received and spoke on the repairs that have been completed. Advised that these items were taken to and approved by the BOD, but the funding was lost. Parks is in the process of appealing this decision.
- Commissioner Fletcher asked about the Grant for the I30 Crossing Project. Director Couch advised that they met with the First Gentleman, Brian Sanders and his team. They're interested in partnering and helping with funding. Advised that the green space is owned by ARDOT. The plans for the park have not been finalized and permits and easements will be needed before anything is able to be built there. There will be public meetings and a presentation to the commission before plans are confirmed.
- Director Couch advised that the 2025 Budget is completed and the book is being finalized. Will share when it becomes available.
- Commission Fletcher asked about the selection process for City Bids and if the lowest bid is always selected. Director Couch discussed the process.
- Commissioner Whiteside asked a question about Federal funding and if we were waiting on funds. Director Couch discussed what funding options were being used and some challenges that the Parks dept has faced.

Staff Reports:

- Karen Sykes – Presented an Invitation to Impact the Rock which is the City's Beautification Day. The event date is April 26, 2025 – Saturday at 9am.
 - ❖ There will be a project in every ward to attend.
 - ❖ Will have Speakers
 - ❖ Lunch will be served at 11:30am
 - ❖ There are three (3) for Parks
 - Fouche Creek in Benny Craig Park. Cleaning the waterway via Canoes and Kayaks
 - Rock Creek Trail – Picking up Litter
 - Reservoir Park – Tree planting (1st Post tornado event)



- ❖ Projects in each Ward
 - Ward 1 - Downtown LR Streets
 - Ward 2 - Benny Craig Park
 - Ward 3 - Little Rock Zoo
 - Ward 4 - Reservoir Park
 - Ward 5 - Rock Creek
 - Ward 6 - Kanis Road
 - Ward 7 - The Animal Village

Presentation:

- No Presentation

Unfinished Business:

- Subcommittee Reports
 - ❖ Parks Conservancy Subcommittee – Chair - Sam Ellis wasn't present and there was no update provided at this time. Director Couch said that the Parks Conservancy Commission wants to work with the Parks Commission. Chairman France is on the subcommittee and advised that he would attend the next Parks Conservancy Meeting. Next Mtg March 5, 2025. 11:30 am
 - ❖ Masterplan Subcommittee – Chair - JT Ferstl wasn't present and no update was provided at this time. Director Couch advised that the subcommittee has been meeting and is reviewing the Strategic Plan for updates.
 - ❖ Marketing Subcommittee – Chair - Quinten Whiteside asked for an update on where the Parks dept was in the process of filling the Media & Marketing Coordinator position and filling the Social Media role. Director Couch advised that a new person is starting soon as the new Project Data and Marketing Coordinator. He also discussed the other position, which is the Social Media Coordinator position would be posted once the Parks and Marketing Coordinator position had been filled first. Director Couch asked Deputy Director to look into this.
- Extending Parks Commission Meeting Time and Moving Location
 - ❖ Discussed need to relocate meetings due to the facility closing
 - ❖ Presented relocation options.
 - ❖ Per Director Couch, suggestion is to move to City Hall due to the technology needs.
 - ❖ Chairman France made suggestion to move meeting to 11:45 am to be voted on at the next meeting.

New Business:

- Quarterly Site Visits at the Center/Parks visit dates for Parks Commission
 - ❖ Chairman France suggested doing tours.



- ❖ City Attorney Blagg advised that if it's a meeting it has to be recorded. However, if it's not a meeting and no business is discussed, then it doesn't have to be recorded.
- Finalize details for Parks Commission – BOD Presentation (Summer Playground Program, Sales Tax Efforts, Kanis Park Improvement, any extra ideas that haven sent in)
 - ❖ Chairman France will put together a draft and asked for input.
 - ❖ Commissioner Fletcher previously sent out an email with suggestions.
 - ❖ Discussed an interest in acquiring more reporting data.

Agenda items for next meeting:

- Vote on Dates for the Quarterly Site Visits
- Present a Draft Presentation for the BOD
- Discuss the Subcommittees
- Vote on Applications for Commission Vacancies
- Discuss/Vote on Extending Meeting Time
- Discuss Commission Absenteeism/Commission Removal

Board – liaison Feedback

- City Director - Andrea Lewis – Is pleased with the Progress of Kanis Park, Kiwanis Park, & Boyle Park

Meeting Adjourned at 12:53 pm