



Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes

February 8, 2023 - Minutes

The Centre at University Park

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

Absent: Director Capi Peck

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

LRPR Staff: City Attorney Beth Carpenter, Leland Couch, Angela Nelson, Shawanda Robinson, J.P. Rogers, Briana Hatfield

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 February's minutes.

Roll Call and Approval of Minutes: Eric Mayfield called the roll and Chairman Buie reported a quorum was six (6) members - in attendance. Chairman Buie thanked everyone for coming, and expressed gratitude that everyone was present and had their cameras on if they were virtual. Chairman Buie asked for amendments and edits to the January meeting minutes. Since there were none, Buie called for the approval of the January minutes.

Chairman Buie then went on to recognize and welcome the newest city board liaison—Director Lewis. He welcomed her to the Parks and Recreation Commission. He asked if she would like to say a few words, and then went on to inform her of the usual order of proceedings, informing her of the section where the commission likes to get Board Liaison feedback where they would hear her also.

Director Lewis thanked everyone for welcoming her to the commission and that she appreciated the opportunity to work on the commission. She also mentioned that she looked forward to working with them all. Chairman Buie then thanked her and made mention of the fact that they had come by and introduced themselves. He also mentioned that if someone had not gotten the chance to meet her they should do so after the meeting.

Citizen Communication: Chairman Buie called for citizen communication, and with no response, stated that there was no citizen communication today.

Chairman Buie then called for any staff reports.

Staff Reports: Director Leland Couch asked Deputy Director Angela Nelson to begin staff reports with Resource Administration.

Administration

Deputy Director of Administration, Angela Nelson, reported that Resources Division had a few advertisements in their tennis, golf, and recreation areas.

She also had approvals to revamp positions. Administration is in the process of reviewing and revamping more jobs to make duties more accommodating for our programs. There are also maintenance reviews to update for their maintenance division and horticultural division. Trying to assign workers to assist with the trails and to complete vacancies in the horticultural division. These positions are slated to post next week.

Little Rocks Park and Recreation is seeking interested members this year for two of the main organizations that are integral to the Department: the National Parks and Recreation Association, and the Arkansas Parks and Recreation Association.

The Summer Playground Program is right around the corner. This program starts in March and goes through October. Little Rock Parks and Recreation expects to bring on 100-150 additional employees to assist. We have received our request for approval, and plan on having a team meeting this week to collaborate on ideas.

For accreditation, our data specialist Briana Hatfield is focusing on accreditation assignments. The standards consist of 10 various sections, and Ms. Hatfield will be assigning management to sections to help us move forward in that direction.

This concludes her summary for Resources.

Chairman Buie welcomed back Deputy Director Angela Nelson and mentioned that he was glad she was feeling better.

Director Leland mentioned that he would be moving on to Recreation, but also asked Director Smith to check her audio due to echo.

Chairman Buie asked to bear with Commission due to echo and feedback issues. Resolved, the commission moved forward with Recreation.

Recreation

Deputy Director Shawanda Robinson addressed the commission and thanked Deputy Director Nelson for addressing many of the things she had on her agenda today, such as positions as well as the Summer Playground Program. She added that the Summer Playground Program will begin registration May 1st at midnight. The program will go from June 12th to July 20th.

The children will have at least seven weeks of fun and activities so if you know of anyone who needs their Playground Program this summer, tell them to check with Parks and Recreation. Deputy Director Robinson urges them to sign their kids up so they can experience all the fun things they have to offer.

The MacArthur Military Museum has launched their 2023 Movie at MacArthur film program starting on January 17th. They will have various movies going on the third Tuesday night of each month at 6:00 pm.

Additionally, Deputy Director Robinson wanted to discuss the shelter. There was inclement weather for the past couple of weeks. Little Rock Parks and Recreation set up a shelter at Dunbar Community Center. The shelter ran from January 31st to February 2nd, and they had about 100 people needing shelter. It was a great task, and she thanked all of the staff who supported, helped and worked the shelter. Deputy Director Robinson suggested visiting the shelter because it's an eye opener to the number of people in Little Rock that need help. She asked to keep them in hearts and minds.

Next, she had Jim Dailey Community Center. She mentioned that the Aquatic Center at Jim Dailey has been closed due to major renovations that Little Rock Parks and Recreation are undertaking. All of the regular programs and activities are still going on and membership is still increasing. Recreation is trying to do different things for their aquatic program classes. Recreation has a series called "Moving Water to Land" and it will be a few of the classes that will be held in other areas of the facility during this time.

This concludes Recreation.

Deputy Director Robinson then gave the floor to questions. Commissioner Fletcher asked whether the Recreation Department reached out to the schools to let them know about the summer program and what that looked like.

Deputy Director Robinson answered that they do reach out to the schools and that it is also on Little Rock Park and Recreation's website. They are able to sign up through the Active system and its \$100 per kid.

Commissioner France asked if the Recreation Department does anything for spring break.

Deputy Director Robinson answered that they do. The community centers are open during Spring Break and the kids are there. The fee is \$3 to attend and they go every day. Some people pay a monthly fee and are thus their children are also able to attend. They do have activities and programs. They go on outings during that time, and are open all day. From 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Commissioner France asked if the Recreation Department reaches out to the schools about that as well. Deputy Director Robinson responded yes. She went on to say that a lot of the kids that go to the community centers are with the Little Rock School District already. So they participate in the after-school program.

Commissioner France mentioned that he would love to do a branded "staycation" for Spring Break and visiting different areas of Little Rock. Deputy Director mentioned that she would like to talk to Commissioner France about that.

Commissioner Smith asked if there was a projected completion date for the Aquatic Center repairs. Deputy Director Robinson answered that they do not have a projected completion date at this time, but as soon as they get that information she will pass it on the Commission.

Director Couch mentioned that the renovations were started because they had a major failure with the HVAC system at the beginning of this year. The time frame is based on how quickly they can design a new system. It will take some time to get that done. They are using this opportunity to work through renovation and make the facility new in terms of the aquatic center, and are going to do some major overhaul maintenance to the other aspects of the indoor pool.

Commissioner Ferstl expressed interest in the National Parks and Recreation Association and Arkansas Parks and Recreation Association. He wanted to know if they wanted people to be a part of that. Deputy Director Nelson clarified that the opportunity was for staff to see if they were interested in either or both of those organizations. Commissioner Ferstl wanted to know if they were looking for commissioners, and Deputy Director Nelson said no.

Deputy Director Robinson stated that there is a conference every year and that they send staff to them.

Chairman Buie mentioned that everyone had great questions. He made one final note for Director Robinson. He wanted to reiterate that ever year the golf tournament does raise money that goes to support programs in the Recreation division. He then called on Commissioner Lauren Eldridge to verify that they raised \$1500-\$2000 and Commissioner Eldridge confirmed that was a good ballpark estimate. He mentioned that there is a philanthropic component to the golf tournament. He said she would be proud that the money raised does go to Recreation programs and Deputy Director Robinson agreed.

Director Couch handed the floor over to Operations Deputy Director Justin Dorsey.

Operations

Deputy Director Dorsey started his reports by hitting a few highlights and leave some time for questions.

Operations has been really busy, especially dealing with the weather the past few weeks. They had their first Operations Impact, where they were able to pull the entire operations crew, something they want to do each month to really make an impact in a different park each month. They plan to pull employees from all the different operations—forestry, landscape and pull that together in an impactful way. Also, they got in some safety training and a staff meeting. They were able to do that at the North maintenance shop in Rebsamen. That facility had not been used previously and they are now able to staff it. With that being said, February is MacArthur and it will be later in the month because they are catching up on other projects. March's focus will be on Boyle Park. He then mentioned that Director Couch would talk more about that.

Western Hills was delayed a bit by the rain, but sidewalks are well under way. They are also right at the end of the tunnel on having the playground and pavilion completed also.

The last thing he wanted to mention was the banana sculpture. It was installed this past week and Emergency Management Assistant Mike Garrity was able to get pictures and video of it to put on social media. In total, they are well over three thousand comments and shares and one hundred and eighty-one thousand impressions. It has made a big impact and is not even done yet. They still have some dirt and stone work to go. Be sure to check it out.

Chairman Buie and Deputy Director Dorsey then opened the floor to questions.

Commissioner Fletcher asked about GIS work on the trails, and wanted to know if the department historically worked with East Initiative on that. He explained that they do school programs and GI Spatial is a big focus in the schools.

Parks Maintenance Manager J.P. Rogers answered that the person in charge of that started about a year ago, and is in the process of starting that endeavor. He has been building them and when

he is done he will start branching out and outreach. He hasn't gotten to the schools yet but he is working with Central Arkansas Trails Alliance (CATA), Bicycle Advocacy of Central Arkansas (BACA), and several other trails organizations. They do not have prior GIS information to currently assess what they have, so the person in charge of that is building it.

Commissioner Fletcher went on to say that the children in the East Initiative program look for projects to use what they are learning, and he mentioned that he would connect the two.

Chairman Buie asked for any other questions, and with none asked, mentioned to Director Couch that the banana made quite the social media stir, and Director Couch mentioned that it was intentional. They didn't know it would be a stir, but mentioned that any social media presence is good. They are happy when receiving 50 likes on posting a pavilion and pointed everyone in the direction of Mike Garrity if anyone had any more questions. Director Couch was surprised and pleased that a simple banana statue brought a gain of followers on the Facebook page—up to almost nine thousand. It showcases the importance of doing this and how in the future posting more improvement or additions to projects will gain more followers. Director Couch then asked Parks Maintenance Manager Rogers if he had anything on maintenance, and then stated that will be the last report for staff reports.

Parks Maintenance

Parks Maintenance Manager J.P. Rogers opened park maintenance reports stating that they dodged a bullet on the ice storm. Only had a lot of little cleanups, and nothing major. They are still working on prepping for spring and hopefully will be hitting the ground running when the grass starts growing.

Chairman Buie and Parks Maintenance Manager Rogers opened the floor to questions. With no questions and no further reports, Chairman Buie shifted the agenda to old business.

Old Business

Chairman Buie opened the old business addressing the golf tournament. He turned the floor over to Commissioner Eldridge for her report.

Commissioner Eldridge touched on the list of sponsors and flyers she was asked to send out after last month's meeting. She sent them out today, along with the last 2 year's flyers to give the commission the simplicity of it. She is still working on this year's flyer, because she wants to add the right information to it, especially the prompt for registration online as well as offering an early bird registration fee. She also included the list of sponsors that range from vendors to the city to small businesses. Commissioner Eldridge's goal is to have an online payment option so that can be added to the flyer and unleash the event in some way, form or fashion so that people get the word around and out that there is an early bird registration this year. Hopefully that will garner some early signups. Trying to get the ball rolling a lot earlier to see if they can make some magic happen, especially knowing this is going towards activities this summer for children. Wanted to know if they could mention the Summer Playground programs for sponsors to cling onto.

They have their alcohol and food vendors lined up. It is now a matter of finalizing the marketing aspect and pushing it out. Would love help when that happens. She thinks it will be ready at next

month's meeting to roll out. She knows that people usually sign up closer to the event so that they can see what the weather will be like, but she is hopeful that the early bird option will garner some early activity.

Chairman Buie thanked Commissioner Eldridge for her report. He mentioned that in a past conversation that Mr. Garrity is somebody who could probably help with the website. He suggested that Commissioner Eldridge could ask him some questions now or touch base later. She said that she will get with him when she finds a time to contact him.

He called for any questions for Commissioner Eldridge regarding the golf tournament and thanked her for the job she was doing.

Commissioner France asked if the sponsorship prices were going to be \$250 and \$500 like they were last year. She said no. She has lined up Domestic to be a sponsor and would love their feedback either now or privately. She is thinking this year that \$500 will be the bottom sponsorship tier this year, which will allow a company or business to add a team if they want because that is still \$100 over the registration fee. She was thinking of adding two other levels: \$1000, and \$1500 sponsorship level, but it might be easier to stick with two, and for the higher level sponsorship offer electronic in-cart ads for thirty days and for the \$500 level do signs on the golf course. She thinks for the benefit it provides for the kids in the city, she really doesn't think that's a whole lot to be asking, especially if you can get the ask in early. The fact they can also register a team with that sponsorship is also a decent benefit.

Chairman Buie thanked her for that, and then asked her to remind the commission of the date one more time.

Commissioner Eldridge said the date is May 19th.

Commissioner France mentioned that at some point he would like to discuss how they are supposed to contact sponsors so that they aren't making duplicate queries.

Commissioner Eldridge said that she plans to send around a basic campaign email with what they are asking for, who it benefitted, and how they can be helpful whether through donations or prizes etc. She will locate those emails and send them around.

Chairman Buie thanked her for that, and moved on to next agenda section: New Business.

New Business

Chairman Buie begins the next topic: sub-committee reports.

First up is Social Media and Outreach, with Commissioner France who volunteered to head up that committee.

Commissioner France mentioned that he came in person so he wouldn't mess up the online interaction. He mentioned that he and Mike Garrity need to get together and discuss. He mentioned doing a monthly newsletter with information and updates and sending out emails. Garrity mentioned that they have an emailing list, and different sub departments in Parks and Recreation may have separate lists, and they can compile those to send out information to.

Next up was the Master Plan Committee, with Commissioner Linda Smith. Commissioner Smith stated that Master Plan Committee did not meet in the last month, so there were no updates.

The next subcommittee is Parks Conservancy, with Commissioner Lauren Eldridge. Chairman Buie mentioned that he asked Commissioner Eldridge to head that committee. Commissioner Eldridge said that today is the day of the launch of Friends of the Park, where you and your closest friends and acquaintances can go to cityparksconservancy.org and sign up to be a Friend of the Park. You can do so for \$5 a month. To be a member you do a monthly recurring fee. It gets you certain benefits that are expected to grow, but include admittance to events that the Parks Conservancy holds and probably some sort of insight of what may be going on with that group as time goes on. There will probably be some more information coming out soon but for now it is important to know that it is live on the site, and that you can sign up to a member. She and Chairman Buie encourages the other commissioners to join and share the group with friends and family.

Director Couch understands that this is a soft roll-out and wants to talk to the Conservancy to get more information that they can put out on social media so that it can be broadcast and they can push it.

Chairman Buie then gave the floor to Director Leland Couch for park highlights, with discussion around Boyle Park.

Updates on Projects

Chairman Buie moved on to the next agenda item for Director Leland Couch, who would give information about Boyle Park.

Director Couch and Data Specialist Briana Hatfield presented information on Boyle Park. Director Couch mentioned that as part of the Master Plan committee they wanted to give a quick report on Boyle. He includes and references slides on the Park as well. Boyle Park is one of the older parks in Ward 6 that has some Grade CCC error structures. The next slide is part of the conceptual plan that Director Couch has been working on for years that shows the general boundaries of the park. This is off of Boyle Park road on the southern end of the park is 36th street and above it is 12th street and Rebsamen Tennis facility. This is on Rock Creek that goes through the park.

The yellow lines are mountain biking trails that were built by volunteers and are some of their oldest mountain bike trails. Some of the orange lines there are some of the paved systems. Originally there were three playgrounds and three pavilions as different structures in the park. Boyle is currently down to two playgrounds. Director Couch wanted to give a brief overview of what the park assets were generally saying. They have made some improvements to pavilion 1, it was an ADA conservancy type grant fund that they worked on to improve some of the accessibility and the flag stoning to make it nice again.

Some of the exciting things that he wanted to share today—with the next couple of slides giving a quick view of a mountain bike trail improvement plan. Three years ago Little Rock Parks and Recreation applied for an RTP grant through the federal government, which is a Recreational Trails Program grant. They received funding of almost two hundred thousand dollars. They are working to get this underway. They have bid the project and it consists roughly of about 2 new miles of trail. Another thing that is really exciting is that it will have thirteen new skill features. This is features that kids and individuals can come out and ride mountain bikes on and try out their skills. As many of you probably know, they did build a very successful River Mountain

biking facility. It is more intermediate—advanced so this area is planned to be more beginner type to grow you into that. This system was actually supposed to come online before River Mountain but had to be re-bid a couple of times, and now it is in the City Attorney's office waiting to finalize a contract. Once that contract is finished the contractor is waiting to start the project.

A couple other slides show maps of the plans as a broad overview. Another project Director Couch wanted to touch on was the new playground. The other playgrounds in Boyle Park—there were originally three. One was removed many years ago. The second one, by pavilion #2 needs to be removed, and the third by pavilion #3, which is the larger one, is outdated as well and is falling apart. They are working on replacing that. They applied for an outdoor rec grant, received roughly about two hundred thousand dollars. A Rec grant limit is about two hundred fifty thousand dollars. It is a 50/50 grant, so you match that with your program's two hundred fifty thousand, and you have a chance to get a half a million dollars for a project.

Director Couch is going to try and work to add more to that and make this playground a destination playground. He has started working with a vendor and the concepts shown on the slides are the original concepts to completely replace what they have there now either later this year or first of next year.

The goal for Boyle is new trail systems and a new playground to really make Boyle a special place.

This concludes Director Couch's presentation.

Chairman Buie opened the floor to questions for Director Couch.

Commissioner Smith mentioned that this presentation came out of a Master Plan committee meeting that was held at the beginning of the year. They asked for more in-depth review to really look at some of the parks and understand what was happening with the plans that had been many years in the making to get here. She looked back at the Master Plan report and it talks about many of these plans for Boyle Park. She is glad to see these moving along and glad to see this on the agenda, and hopes to continue this update and a focus on each of the parks.

Commissioner Ellis asked if there was a way to show traffic that the park has brought in the last few years and the upcoming years. That way they can see how often the park was used and the growth the park has brought in as well.

Director Couch responded that currently the quick answer is no. The more solid answer is that for trail systems alone, they are investing in trail counters and they can put trail counters on a trail, and if someone crosses the laser beam it would keep track. They have been able to achieve that at the River Mountain asset and they want to do the same thing for Boyle. They are in the process of purchasing more trail counters because they are trying to keep counting where they are at River Mountain. They want a long span of time to do that. It is hard to keep track for playground usage. He mentioned that for playgrounds they can physically go out and count for a few days, but there is currently no way for the staff to completely keep track of those numbers. Another example would be the pickle ball courts at Kanis. Director Couch drives by there all the time and there are 50 cars there, he knows there are a lot of high attendance there. But they don't have really good trackers. They have discussed putting trackers at vehicle entry points and doorways of the community centers. At the community centers they track attendance by people

at the front door keeping track manually. Director Couch would like to get to a more digital system for this however. He wanted to mention that the Tri-Creek Greenway which is a big vision he has to connect War Memorial and Hyndman Park, part of another whole project, is about to come into bid to go to construction. It will actually connect to Boyle Park in the first phase of it. There is currently a couple of nice paved trails in Boyle, and when this is connected on the south edge by 36 you will be able to ride, walk, or run all the way down to highway 5, and it will connect many more thousands of acres park land. They look forward to improving the trail system in Boyle more to meet the Tri-Creek standard.

Deputy Director Robinson mentioned that she used to live in that area and it is a very heavily used park. She does know that the pavilions they have there can hold from 50 to 100 people and they are booked almost every weekend during the summer so that's another way they can track attendance. It is very heavily used.

Commissioner Fletcher asked which playground was this going to be? Is this the basketball courts or which part is this?

Director Couch stated that originally there were three pavilions and there was a playground next to each pavilion and they were small playgrounds. This is going to replace where the hand is on the map, next to pavilion 3. It is the bigger playground of all three and the concept is that since Little Rock Parks and Recreation is currently limited on funding and cannot afford to build a multitude of playgrounds, the concept for Boyle is, if we are going to build a playground, let's build a really nice large destination large playground. If you're using Boyle Park you can go to that playground, but the days of having multiple playgrounds in one park is really a different story today.

Commissioner Fletcher asked if it's more like MacArthur when you redid that?

Director Couch agreed.

Commissioner Fletcher clarified that everything is sort of in one spot instead of spread out?

Director Couch agreed and explained that the concept, getting even more into that would be: pavilion 1 and 2 would be more focused on the fishing, trail access, the woodland access, the big fireplace and grilling and all that, where pavilion 3 will be right on the edge of the playground and really more specialized for the playground. So when you call in to reserve a pavilion, which one you get will be based on what you are wanting to do. Another concept, depending on how big this playground actually becomes, is maybe adding a fourth pavilion. This would be better for reservations, assets, rentals, all kinds of things. That has been a consideration as well.

Director Couch mentioned that it all comes back to budget though.

Chairman Buie thanked Director Couch for the update and then asked if he wanted to make a special statement on the upcoming social event.

Director Couch agreed and referenced the agenda, stating that there was an event on it that mentioned kayaking. He went on to explain that he has been pushing social events, and that this is a social event for the commission but it's all on their own. He is unsure about how many would want to go kayaking but they are going to find a day to go down to a local water body down in Little Rock and do some kayaking and will invite everybody to come. He plans to have another event/gathering that won't be so focused on that type of activity. If anybody has any

ideas for social activities, always bring them to the Little Rock Parks and Recreation's attention. He believes that it's a good opportunity to get together outside of this as well.

Chairman Buie thanked Director Couch and mentioned that he was sure there would be more information to follow so everyone should watch their inboxes for details on dates and time.

That was all for Director Couch's Park update.

Chairman Buie then moved on to the next agenda item: Data Specialist Briana Hatfield's presentation.

Data Specialist Presentation

Director Couch introduced Briana Hatfield as the new data and special projects coordinator. Mentioned that this was an important role and he was excited that they were able to find and hire her. She is going to keep track of all the data. He referenced Deputy Director Robinson's mentioning of pavilion rentals as attendance trackers, and mentioned that we will be able to keep track of that. He mentioned that every time he sees her he gives her a new assignment, collecting inventory and the like. He mentioned that she will be giving a brief introductory report.

Chairman Buie welcomed Data Specialist Hatfield and gave her the floor.

Data Specialist Hatfield mentioned that her hiring was part of the Transformative Initiative Director Couch was implementing and that she filled part three of that Initiative. She also mentioned that she graduated from Harding University with a Bachelor's of Science in Public Administration, and a Bachelor's of Art in both Spanish and Leadership & Ministry. She then went on to graduate from Oklahoma State University with a Master's of Art in Political Science and is currently in school for her doctorate.

She covered Parks and Recreation vacancies, Pavilion earnings, Asset Inventory Booklets, and Accreditation. Regarding vacancies from January 2022, to 2023 Parks and Recreation started out with about 29 vacancies and as of last month they filled seven and are working diligently to fill the remainder.

Regarding pavilion earnings, that goes on with what Deputy Director Robinson and Director Couch said, tracking. Regarding Boyle Park they garnered a little over \$3,000. The sum is based on how many times it is rented and the price per rental. Using that information you can find out how many people have frequented that park. She believed that Boyle is currently \$65 per rental. She mentioned that in 2021 Parks and Recreation earned about \$32,000 with the rentals. Last year that number jumped to \$65,000. People are utilizing the pavilions, they are a great source of income, and people are enjoying these areas. For 2023, they are projecting at least \$16000 in rentals as of February.

Regarding the Asset Inventory Booklet, as Director Couch mentioned, it is basically going to be a representation and detailed program of what assets we have, so that we can use booklet in order to determine what we will need in the future.

As far as accreditation, they are working on that process.

Data Specialist Hatfield then opened the floor to questions.

Chairman Buie thanked her for the report, and then asked what an asset is defined as. Data Specialist Hatfield answered that they are looking at everything in the parks, and deferred to Director Couch for clarification.

Director Couch mentioned that he is asked to indicate how many assets they have. In the past he would just send those numbers to the director. Now, as the director, he is asking questions about why certain things are not on the list. Now he is wanting a real big picture on the inventory. Another thing is defining what an asset is. In the past, definitions and actual assets were vague and broad “using two general purpose fields and turning them into soccer fields temporarily.” So that there are no misunderstandings, Director Couch is asking for explicit and clearly defined assets so that the parks can be assessed and improved upon as necessary.

Chairman Buie asked if there were any other questions. There were none. He then moved onto the next agenda item—New Business.

Discussion Items for Next Meeting

Chairman Buie asked if there was anything that needed to be added to next month’s agenda. There was nothing. Chairman Buie moved onto the next item—Board Liaison feedback.

Board Liaison Feedback

Chairman Buie asked Director Lewis if she had any feedback or Park-related thoughts, wisdom, or counsel she would like to share.

Director Lewis mentioned that she was really pleased with everything she heard and that she and Deputy Director Dorsey had just left Boyle Park a few minutes ago and hearing the updates on the playground made her happy.

With Ben’s comments on social media, she totally agrees and looks forward to seeing more outreach in that aspect because that’s just the way of the world now.

She has a son that goes to Stephens afterschool care and he participates in the Summer Playground program as well. She mentioned that citizens have asked about Kiwanis Park being reopened so she wanted to know what could be done to start that conversation.

Director Couch mentioned that Kiwanis Park came up quite a bit in the public input sessions that they held for bond funding. During the session at West Central many people spoke out about Kiwanis Park and their needs. It is on the list to utilize bond funding to go out there. In the department’s view Kiwanis Park is not closed, but he believes that Director Lewis is more so talking about the parking lot and gate and he would love to talk with her more about it.

They did remove an old playground out there, and playground and basketball improvements are on the list out there. The neighborhood has a big long list and they won’t be able to meet all those needs but it is a park that will get some love in the future here.

Chairman Buie thanked her for coming and expressed his happiness at her being there.

He once again mentioned the social kayaking event, and then gave the floor to Director Couch about a special call meeting.

Director Couch mentioned that it was brought to his attention that there needed to be a special call meeting to discuss different things for the city for some park land assets. He mentioned to keep an eye on their email so they can be aware when it will occur.

City attorney Beth Carpenter mentioned that, according to the bylaws special meetings may be called by the chair upon ten days written notice of the time, date, location and purpose of the meeting to all commission members, the parks department, and to the Little Rock public relations manager for purpose of Freedom of Information Act notice. Just provide ten days' notice.

Director Couch and Chairman Buie mentioned it will be sometime this month so everyone needs to watch their inbox and attend.

Mentioned watching inbox for special meeting, social event and also to go be a Friend to the Park by signing up through the Conservancy Project.

Director Couch wanted Mike Garrity to make an additional announcement regarding Marathon, since it will be happening before the next meeting.

Garrity stated that they are 23 days away from Marathon weekend and are expecting about 9000 people to come in to participate. There will be a kid's race, a 5k, and 10k. A half-marathon and a marathon. There will also be a Health and Fitness Expo Friday and Saturday March 3rd and 4th. The kids race, the 5k and the 10k on the 4th, and the half-marathon and marathon on the 5th.

Commissioner Smith is pleased they are using local water instead of bottled.

Garrity responded that they have a water vendor that's been with the race for the first twenty years that sold, so they're no longer part of the race. So Central Arkansas Water partnered with them. So instead of taking 300 or so 5-gallon water jugs onto the course they have located faucets they are hooking the hoses up to for unlimited Central Arkansas water.

Commissioner Eldridge asked if Director Couch was running. He mentioned that he ran in the kid's race with his daughter, and they plan to do it again this year.

This conclude the Wednesday February 8, 2023 Park Commission Meeting.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, March 8, 2023, at The Centre at University Park at 12:00 p.m. Buie encouraged all who could attend the following events in person.

Chairman Buie thanked everyone for their reports.

Meeting Adjourned.