



Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes

November 9, 2022, Minutes
The Centre at University Park

Attendance: Matt Buie, Lauren Eldridge (Virtual), Samuel Ellis (Virtual), Ben France (Virtual), Linda Smith, Cannon Fletcher

Absent: J.T. Ferstl, Ren Bressinck, Robyn Nosari, Ashely Martinez

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

LRPR Staff: City Attorney Beth Carpenter, Leland Couch, Angela Nelson, 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 Octobers' minutes.

Roll Call and Approval of Minutes: Eric Mayfield called the roll and Chairman Buie reported there were not enough members for a quorum. Only four members were present during the roll call. Official business will not be voted on during the meeting. Chairman Buie thanked everyone for coming, and stated for everyone who is virtual to mute themselves, but leave their cameras on in order to be counted as present for the meeting. To start with the approval of the meeting minutes, he stated that those were provided to the Commission via email. He asked for any questions, city attorney Beth Carpenter responded with a correction on page four of October minutes that Friends of the Park was going to be worked through the Parks Conservancy instead of the Parks Commission.

The October 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 asking Administration if there was a report. He then gave the floor to Deputy Director Angela Nelson.

Administration

Deputy Director of Administration, Angela Nelson, reported that the budget was the department main focus. The department is thinking of ways to conserve and be resourceful with their remaining funds. Currently, the department is on a temporary freeze on spending, which excludes essential needs. Angela informed the commission that this procedures is sometimes

done at the end of the year when allocated budget gets to a minimum and also prevent from budget getting in a negative.

Administration is also exploring working on a workshop ideas to encourage staff to reflect on this year past lessons and also teambuilding strategies.

Deputy Director Nelson also gave insight on where the department is at on filling the vacancy. Administration has filled the following position: Senior Parks Planner position with current employee (Ron Ross); Deputy Director of Operation position the employee will start this month; Administrative Assistant I (Eric Mayfield) who will assist Director Couch in the administration division. Deputy Director Nelson informed the commission that the administration was working diligently with Director Couch on filling all positions. They have a few more to fill but they are making strives to get those filled.

This conclude Administration. Director Couch thanked Nelson for her report.

Commissioner Ellis joined the meeting virtually. Chairman Buie thanked Commissioner Ellis for being present. However, Buie informed the committee that there were still not enough members to conduct official business by a vote. Therefore, he turned it back over to Director Couch.

Commissioner Fletcher asked a question, was the budget at calendar year? Director Couch replied by saying “yes, it’s a calendar year and the department will start new in January”

Commissioner L. Davis thanked Deputy Director Nelson for her report and the update on filling positions. She would like to see a report at the next month meeting on a number of vacant positions for the department.

Director Couch informed the staff to put in the notes to generate a full report for the next meeting of all the staff and the vacant positions as well as the position the department has filled over the year. Director Couch then turn it over to Recreation for their report.

Recreation

Deputy Director Shawanda Robinson started reports by mentioning that the community centers that consist of West Central, Dunbar, Stephens, and South West are currently registering for basketball program and they would be doing that until November 22, 2022. If anyone have a kid or know someone who would like to participate in the basketball program, please take them by one of the centers and get them registered.

Southwest Community Center will host Health & Holistic Wellness Expo on November 13, from 1-5 p.m. and the theme is “All things for a healthier, happier you.” First Tee Golf will have a Faded Rose Shoot Out with an 18-hole two man scramble golf tournament on November 20, 2022 and it starts at 9:00 with a \$100 entry fee per team. Jim Daily (JDFAC) will have a Triathlon (Swim, Bike, and Run) on November 12th at 8:00 a.m. and the cost is \$25. Therapeutic will host their 1st Young adult weekend camp overnight for ages 18-35 to experience indoor and outdoor activities at Camp Aldergate on November 11-12.

MacArthur Military Museum will show The Real M*A*S*H movie on November 15, 2022 starting at 6:30. Deputy Director Robinson invited the committee to go out to participate if they were not busy. The MacArthur Park Group found out this past week that a grant to the Trinity Foundation was approved for \$25,000. The funds will be used to pay equipment costs associated with the MacArthur Park Unlimited Playground.

Nelson 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

Director Couch stated that he will give a quick update for Operation before Mike give an update on the warming centers throughout Little Rock. Operation being working on a number of projects. One of the projects was the installation of the Daisy Bates sculpture in the sculpture garden in River Front Park and he recommend everyone to go check it out.

Another project is finishing up a new Garden Shield at Oak Forrest. Working with UALR and others to participate in some grants they received to help. The team are finishing that project this week.

Also, the team was notified from staff and citizens of the failure on Arkansas River Trail down in Murry Park on Rebsamen Park Road, the department is getting together with Maintenance and Operation staff to go and do a large effort on next week if the weather permits to make repairs to the Arkansas River Trail.

Another new project Community Garden in Dunbar Park we are installing a new entrance and new sculpture that we will be starting later this month. The Arkansas River Trail kind of put a delay on some of our effort. However, this will be our next big sculpture project we focus on.

Director Couch finished the updates with Operation. Couch ask Mike to give updates regarding the city warming centers.

Mike started his updates by letting the committee know he was working with the Office of Emergency Management and the “Band” which is a Homeless Outreach group. Last year we started offering overnight shelter for the Homeless when the temperature and the windshield reached a certain level or if there were rain or ice. We will be starting that process again. This year if we open up we will be at east little rock community center. The “Band” takes the lead on it and the Parks Department just provide the facility. The Band will staff the facility. There will be park staff available as well as the staff from the Office of Emergency Management, and Little Rock Police Department will all be on hand overnight to make sure everything goes well. This year they’re looking at maybe expanding the hours. Last year the hours were 7PM until 7AM.

Base on some of the things that the “Band” would like to do and some of the limitations we had last year that they were able to address. We’re looking at maybe staying open throughout the day if there is a precipitation, rain, ice, snow. If it’s cold without any precipitation then they can go to 7-7 and there will be other entities they could use. But if its rain or ice event then they are

looking to stay open in the community center throughout the day. With our programming and things if there was a snow and ice event then most likely we will be close so we won't be displacing any programs or anything. We will have more meetings coming forward to discuss this if there should be an event to occur.

Director Couch thanked Mike for his report. Couch gave the floor to JP, Parks Maintenance Manager.

Parks Maintenance

Parks Maintenance Manager, J.P. Rogers opened parks maintenance reports by stating they are in the process of getting ready for winter by winterizing restrooms and pavilions in the parks. Cleaning corners, picking up tree limbs and dead trees that they haven't been able to pay much attention to throughout the year. We had an equipment rodeo/training at Hymen on October 19th, we were able to bring individuals in from downtown and different community center and we demonstrated how our equipment ran and the importance of what we do. Let them go out and train them how to use each equipment.

Overall, Rogers says that the equipment rodeo was a nice event as well as teambuilding for the team. The crew had a chance to demonstrate what they do and take pride in their work. Most of the time people don't see the team because in the mornings we are in and out before they even know we were there.

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 also welcome Eric Mayfield for being on board.

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

Old Business

Chairman Buie opened up old business by mentioning last month the committee did welcome Commissioner Ben France. However, he is not present today we look forward to seeing him next month. We did cover off on subcommittee report last month and we will talk about them shortly. Buie asked if there were any questions regarding what we heard last month in reference to the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) and Parks Bond funding.

There were no questions from the committee.

Chairman Buie asked Director Couch were there any follow-up he would like to share. Couch did not have anything to share at the time.

Buie also gave report on hearing from Michael Harris, JDFAC supervisor last month and thank him for attending the meeting.

Chairman Buie then proceeds to New Business.

New Business

Sub-Committee Reports

Chairman Buie opens discussion with stating that he wanted to acknowledge that he did hear from Commissioner Martinez and Commissioner Bressink and neither had an update to provide for the committee at the time.

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 she wanted to make sure that all the commissioner had a copy of the Master Plan. She call the attention to a few pages of the comprehensive master plan as we start off into ARPR and bond and future funding. This was done by an outside group to compare Little Rock to other city of similar size. It was well done and design as a ten year plan to cover year 2020 through 2030 and by a strategic guidance. There are several pages that I would like to call your attention too. Page 5.28, talks about the future of golf, tennis, and pickle ball, Page 6.28 evaluate every park in the system of course this was a point in time evaluation and condition assessments but it also make recommendation on both maintenance and capital improvements needed at the facilities. It is a good way to get a history and some background on the parks we have and what they could be if developed to each of their fullest potential.

Mrs. L. Smith, also reference that she is an engineer and like to see things laid out for capital plan. Page 8.2 and 8.3 describe a ten (10) year capital plan with priority recommendation, I think as we start through new funding sources this is a great guidance document.

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

City Attorney Beth Carpenter informed Buie that another commissioner had join the meeting. Commissioner Ben France join the meeting virtually.

Buie thanked France for joining and informed Attorney Carpenter a total of six (6) commissioner where present. Attorney Carpenter replied “that would be a quorum.”

Chairman Buie asked Attorney Carpenter would it be appropriate at this point before we move on to new business to go back and have a vote on meeting minutes.

Attorney Carpenter said yes that is correct.

Chairman Buie asked Commissioner France if he had any questions or comments about the meeting minutes. Buie thanked him for his response. Buie said there were one amended that was brought up by Attorney Carpenter that the park conservancy should be commission and not conservancy which was on page four (4) of the October minutes the Friends of the Park should be worked through the Parks Conservancy and not Parks Commission.

Chairman ask was there a motion to approve the meeting minutes for October.

Commissioner L. Smith made the motion to approve the October minutes with the one corrections from Attorney Beth Carpenter.

Buie asked if there were a second. Commissioner Fletcher second the motion which made the minutes approved.

Buie did not believe there were any other items that would require a vote from looking at the agenda. Therefore, he proceed to continue with the current November agenda.

Commissioner L. Smith asked for the floor to make another comment regarding Master Plan. She informed the committee of two members who have relocated, Dustin Smith moving out of town and Abby moving out of the city limits. She invites any new commissioner who have interest in the sub-committee Master Plan to contact her and they can discuss what they do with the Master Plan group.

City Attorney Carpenter ask Buie for the floor, she started by saying what the bylaws says about the appointment of the committee, the bylaws says that the chair of commission should appoint chair of any permanent or temporary committee and then the chair should make their appointment within any thirty (30) days of passage. The official business of the parks commission will need to be discuss within this meeting.

Chairman Buie asked did he see any volunteers for the sub-committee Master Plan committee.

Commissioner Fletcher volunteer to be on the sub-committee master plan. Buie asked if anyone else would like to be apart and Ben France said add him to the sub-committee.

Buie thanked the two commissioner for volunteered to join the sub-committee.

City Attorney Carpenter asked Buie to go ahead and receive a motion to approve the two sub-committee members.

Buie called for a motion to approve the two commissioners to be a part of the master plan sub-committee with Commissioner L. Smith.

Commissioner L. Smith made the motion to approve the two members. Second by Commissioner Ellis. Motion passed with everyone in favor.

Chairman Buie moved to New Updates about ARPA and Bond funding and giving the floor to Director Couch.

Updates on Projects with ARPA and Bond Funding

- ARPA Funding

Director Couch started by mentioning that this was a quick promise to follow up on these ongoing funding areas and projects. With ARPR the funding is focus on community centers Ball fielder, West Central, and senior facilities. Currently, in the process of selecting engineering's and architects to fulfil the designed and needs for those facilities so we can get an understanding what cost are. At a certain point we can share some of that information. That could be going on throughout the remainder of this year as they finalize contracts.

- Bond Funding

Bond funding, that money will not be coming until next year. We are currently finalizing input that was received from citizens. The staff have generated a nice list of those as I'm reviewing those and putting in budget figures. It looks like we will be going back to the public beginning of next year to discuss some of those potential projects. That is the update regarding all of our funding packages.

- Zoning

The last item on the list is zoning, this is something new for the commission. This is something that the commission is responsible to be informed on. Mr. Couch is in the process of trying to rezone some city property from R2 to PR this presentation is for informational purposes only so you can understand where the department is headed.

Director Couch ask Terrance to switch the screen to the presentation map.

Couch started letting everyone know that the map was War Memorial Park. This is the section that is south of I-630 it is the area between 630 & 12th street along Jonesboro drive. The area in green is currently park lane and it has been park land and it is zone PR. The parcels to the left that are encompassing of the same size in space from 12th up to 630. Those parcels there were purchased some years back because of the sale of Way Winter Field. We took that money over there and we purchased some houses. Recently in the last couple years, we finished all the demolishing, and demolish all the houses. At this point it is my effort to change the zoning from R2 to PR. I wanted to present it to the commission today and ask if there are any feedback. I plan on doing some more of these in the future as I have gone back through the park properties there are some other little zoning here and there and if it is in our master plan we want to make sure its zone PR.

Director Couch thanked everyone for listening.

Chairman Buie asked if anyone have any questions to Director Couch regarding the zoning map.

Commissioner Eldridge said she was having using error with Webex but the audio version was great.

Commissioner Ellis said the map were small on the screen but he could view it.

Commissioner Fletcher asked where there already an estate plan for that area.

Director Couch replied to Fletcher saying there were some previous proposal submitted, however, there were an RFP submitted through parks for a small area of a 3 ½ acre area of that for potential development and that is ongoing. I can share more information regards to that. This is the process to get through the clarity of what is listed for parks.

Chairman Buie, asked where there any other question for Director Couch regarding ARPR bond or zoning.

There were no questions asked. Buie thanked Couch for his presentation and update.

Discussion December Meeting

Chairman Buie started by mentioning the upcoming meeting in December. It is currently on the calendar for December 14th. However, the parks staff have meeting conflicts on this day. Buie asked the commissioner to open their calendar to decide on a new date. Currently, the meeting is scheduled for December 14th, I think there may be two options with one being more preferable than the other. The first preferable option is moving the meeting from the 14th to December 21st which is one week later. Now, granted that is a few days before a major holiday but that is a possibility. The second possibility for changing the meeting date is to meet either on Tuesday, December 13th or Thursday, December 15th. I wanted to give those dates for the commissioner to decide.

Buie asked if everyone was able to meet on December 21st and asked if anyone was not able to meet on the 21st.

Fletcher asked what is the easy for the Leland and his staff. The 21st is it a lot of people out because the Holiday coming up.

Director Couch stated its potential that, we might have a little. Obviously the 14th doesn't work. If we want to continue with December meeting than moving it to the 21st will work better.

Buie asked the commissioners online if they had any difficulties making the 21st meeting.

Commissioner Eldridge, Commissioner Ellis and Commissioner France all agreed the 21st meeting date works best for them.

Buie asked for a motion to move the December meeting from the 14th to December 21st.

Commissioner L. Smith made the motion to move the meeting from December 14th to December 21st. Motion was second by Commissioner Eldridge with all in favor.

Buie announced the meeting will remain at the same location The Centre at University Park for those who are able to attend in person.

Chairman Buie started speaking of attendance and the importance of attending meetings. The rules and bylaws state that commissioners are required to be at all meetings. If a commissioner has missed more than 25% of all regular meeting in one calendar year or more than 3 consecutive regular schedule meeting according to the bylaws that member is automatic removed from the commission. The commission will take steps to certify with the city that we have an opening and to fill that opening as quickly as possible. We are going to do a better job in keeping attendance and I understand we all have very busy lives but please keep in mind the attendance policy.

Buie asked the Director Couch did the social outing happen.

Director Couch replied by saying we did have the social and he appreciated everyone who attended. It was a great visitation and everyone had an opportunity to have a more formal meet and greet and to discuss some things at large. He received some feedback that some individual wanted to do another one.

Buie thanked Couch for the update.

Buie moved to the next item on the agenda. Before the next item, City Attorney Beth give input on the bylaws regarding rescheduling meetings. The bylaws say to provide a five (5) day notice of the reschedule meeting to all commission members of the Parks Department and to the Little Rock public relation manager for FOIA notice.

City Attorney Beth spoke with Parks Director Couch regarding this information. I also quoted at least two hour notice for special meeting. However, that is a good guide to have. The bylaws of the Park Commission says provide five day notice (5) and I want to make that correction to Director Couch.

Couch asked is the correction that we put a notice out to the general public five (5) days before the 21st.

Attorney Beth confirmed yes

Couch replied we will just go ahead and put that notice out as soon as possible.

Chairman Buie clarify for the record that there will be a notice generated for everyone including the general public of the new meeting date in December.

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 December meeting.

Commissioner Eldridge would like to add Golf tournament to the December meeting to discuss new proposed dates and more sponsorship opportunity to the committee.

Buie thanked Eldridge and also confirm the item will be added to the December agenda. Buie said the Golf tournament is held annual and sponsored by the Parks Commission.

Board Liaison Feedback

No Board member were present to give any feedback.

Meeting Adjourned.