



Independence Park Commission Minutes

November 7, 2024 4:30 PM

Palmer Center - 218-A N. Pleasant St.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Kyser called the meeting to order at 4:33 PM.

Commissioners present: Chairman Kyser, Kay Douglas, Jana Evans, Paula Martin, Cody Steger, Dennis Tharp

Parks, Recreation & Tourism staff present: Morris Heide, Frank Buhro, Mike Hicks, Jennifer Kim, Candi Laster, Rosie Carlson, Cheryl DeHaan, Jeff Umbreit, Tabitha Williams

Communications staff present: Rebecca Gannon

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. September 5, 2024 Meeting

Commissioner Douglas motioned. Minutes unanimously approved as presented.

STAFF REPORTS

1. Budget

Parks, Recreation & Tourism Director Morris Heide presented financial reports for the first quarter showing 26% of budgeted funds have been expended. Discussion followed about property tax levy funds from the county.

2. Parks, Facilities and Grounds

Assistant Director Mike Hicks reported that crews repaired vandalism in numerous parks and repainted all the restrooms in the parks. Discussion followed about vandalism & homeless in the parks, lack of police presence, selling underutilized park properties and possibly closing restrooms permanently.

3. Recreation Services

Assistant Director Frank Buhro referenced the written report, stated that staff is emphasizing programming and increased promotions, and explained the need for volunteers with upcoming events.

Discussion followed about promoting programs through public schools with an activity guide, and collaborating with partner groups for various activities.

Recreation Services Supervisor Rosie Carlson highlighted the Best Little Arts & Crafts show at Sermon Center and the theatre performances in November.

Recreation Services Supervisor Cheryl DeHaan gave a presentation covering the senior lunch program, Commodity Supplemental Food Program through Harvesters, upcoming Thanksgiving & Christmas luncheons, upcoming senior programs, new pickleball options and the remaining day trips this year.

Discussion followed about cost of trips, attendance, and destination selection, and the Palmer Post newsletter.

4. Promotions

Public Information Officer Rebecca Gannon reported on the performance of the department's six Facebook pages, highlighted the top performing posts, stated there were no YouTube videos this quarter because staff is focusing more on reels instead as people want short videos. Ms. Gannon noted the recent news story on Channel 41 about Sermon Center and the future of the theatre groups.

Discussion followed about adding a TikTok account, traditional printed promotional materials, the declining use of email, ideas for targeting younger generations, and sending information to students in public schools.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Adventure Oasis - End of Year Report

Assistant Director Buhro reported that even with Adventure Oasis open to non-residents, attendance remained flat, likely due to the new water park in Blue Springs. Revenues were down and maintenance costs are too high to continue operations next year. Discussion followed about selling or reuse of the property.

2. Community Center Feasibility Study

Pros Consulting presented the results of the community center feasibility study to the City Council on October 28. The report explained the need for a new community center to replace Sermon Center and Palmer Center. Based on survey results, it should include aquatics, three gymnasiums, meeting space, and senior programming. PROS also presented a pro forma & business plan.

PGAV Architects presented renderings of a potential new community center designed to fit the selected site.

Discussion followed about a community center or rec plex, and using the Adventure Oasis location for a rec plex.

3. General Obligation Bond

Director Heide reported that the General Obligation Bond Committee recommended to the City

Manager not to include a community center as part of the GO Bond package. Commissioner Evans is a member of the GO Bond Committee and stated the committee was not clear about a community center or a sports tourism rec complex, and they felt it was more important to centralize police operations in a new justice center. The City Manager will make his recommendation to the City Council next week.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Tourism Recommendation - Nov. 12 City Council Study Session

Director Heide reported that the City Manager will make his recommendation to the City Council on November 12 regarding possible changes to the oversight and management of the Tourism Division.

Discussion followed about the ownership of Chrysler Stadium and the current lease to the Independence School District.

ADJOURNMENT - NEXT MEETING 4:30 PM THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2025

Meeting Schedule - 4:30 pm on the first Thursday of February, May, August, and November

Commissioner Tharp moved to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 5:49 pm.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This commission is to act in an advisory capacity to the City Council relating to public education, use and knowledge regarding Parks and Recreation programs, will consider recommendations from the Tree Commission, will solicit and suggest disbursement of funds donated from private sources and will review the status of the projects funded by the Parks Improvement Sales Tax. They are to make a report to the City Council at least twice a year. They are to meet at least quarterly.