



Independence Park Commission Minutes

March 6, 2025 4:30 PM

George Owens Nature Park DeWitt Center - 1601 S. Speck Rd., Independence, MO 64057

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Kyser called the meeting to order at 4:31 pm.

Commissioners Present: Kevin Baird, Kay Douglas, Jana Evans, Cody Steger, Chair Diane Kyser

Elected Officials Present: Councilmember Jennie Vaught

Staff Present: Morris Heide, Frank Buhro, Rosie Carlson, Cheryl DeHaan, Mike Hicks, Jennifer Kim, Candi Laster, Jeff Umbreit, Tabitha Williams

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Meeting - November 7, 2024

Commissioner Steger motioned. Commissioner Douglas seconded. Minutes unanimously approved as presented.

STAFF REPORTS

1. Budget

Parks, Recreation & Tourism Director Morris Heide presented financial reports for the second quarter showing several orgs are under budget. Revenues were flat and expenditures are on track. Discussion followed about utility costs at Sermon Center and the future of Adventure Oasis Water Park.

2. Parks, Facilities & Grounds

Assistant Director Mike Hicks reported that crews winterized all the restrooms in the parks, then began trimming and removing dead or damaged trees, and then performed CDL training and snow plow training for new employees during the second quarter. Discussion followed about mowing contracts.

3. Recreation Services

Frank Buhro, Assistant Director of Recreation Services explained the core programming areas for the division. He stated that staff is analyzing future needs and working to improve promotions of activities and events.

Recreation Services Supervisor III Jeff Umbreit gave a presentation of recent programs and events at George Owens

Nature Park and special events held over the holidays. He also highlighted some upcoming regular and new programs planned in 2025.

4. Promotions

Community Relations Coordinator Candi Laster reported that all five of the PRT Facebook pages showed increases in followers during the quarter. The Hallmark movie production posts were the most popular. Staff is working to increase collaboration with other departments on social media.

A new PRT Instagram page has been secured and is expected to go live in the next few weeks. More PRT videos are being added to the City's YouTube channel.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Tourism Recommendation

Director Heide reported that the City Council approved the formation of a Convention and Visitors Bureau and currently its board of directors is being created. It is anticipated that the department name will change from Parks, Recreation and Tourism to Parks and Recreation on July first with the beginning of the new fiscal year. The department will retain oversight of the historic sites, National Frontier Trails Museum and MO Model Railroad Museum.

2. General Obligation Bond

Director Heide stated that Question #3 on the April 8th ballot would provide additional funding for the historic sites and improvements at the Independence Athletic Complex. Discussion followed about all three questions on the ballot and how the City is disseminating information about the general obligation bond issue.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Director Heide informed the commissioners that staff has hired a consultant to complete a new Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The consultants will be analyzing all park sites, recreation facilities, historic sites, programming, staffing and operations. Pros Consulting has been gathering information and interviewing city leadership and key community stakeholders. Focus groups are being scheduled for late March.

ADJOURNMENT - NEXT MEETING IS THURSDAY, MAY 1, 2025

Meeting Schedule - 4:30 PM on the first Thursday of September, November, February and May
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.

Commissioner Steger motioned to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 5:17 pm.