



Advisory Board Minutes April 8, 2008

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Bruce Muzzy, Vice Chair Kevin Loos, Kelly Barth and Jana Dobbs

MEMBERS ABSENT: Tom Bracciano

STAFF PRESENT: Ernie Shaw, Mark Hecker, Roger Steinbrock and Laurel Kupka

GUESTS:

- I. Meeting called to order by Chair Bruce Muzzy.
- II. Approval of the March 11 minutes on a motion by Barth, second by Dobbs.
- III. Loos asked how often the department re-gravels the levy trail. He said he runs on it and some stretches are in bad shape due to rutting from bikes, especially near Johnny's Tavern. Hecker said crews try to repair spots and also periodically drag the trail.
- IV. Hecker showed the board a map of Quarry Park. He said he thinks the basic concept for the development of the area is good, but is unsure what will happen. If the plan is approved, not much will change with the park – it will still be hard to access. He said a stone building on the west side could be historical, in which case the department would take it over. This would create a lot of added maintenance costs. Dobbs said she noticed the development during a planning commission meeting and thinks the development may have some obstacles to overcome for approval. Hecker said the department will remain involved in the planning process.
- V. Shaw shared his correspondence with Lynne Zollner from the HRC. She looked into Muzzy's proposal to move Founder's Rock and does not recommend proceeding at this time because its current location has historical significance and people and school groups travel to Robinson Park just to see it. Shaw added that although the park is hard to get to, there would be nothing of interest in the park if the boulder were to be moved to a new location. Muzzy suggested the board wait and keep the issue on the back burner, as there could be a good reason to move the boulder in the future if something happens that affects the park. The board agreed.
- VI. Shaw reported the 2009 budget process is well underway. Preliminary documents are due April 11. He said it's very difficult to work on the budget when the department is in need of more support, but is instead being asked to cut the general fund, which includes maintenance, utility costs and staff salaries, by 6 percent. The recreation division is doing very well and surpassing revenue projections, but it is supported by the money in the general fund. As more people use the facilities, facilities become dirtier and increase the amount of maintenance repairs. Hecker said the general fund is not being adjusted to compensate for the cost of living increase and rising fixed

costs that cannot be controlled.

Hecker said cutting staff is the only way the department will be able to operate within the general fund unless a new source of revenue can be found. He said some full-time staff will be cut and those who remain will have to take on more duties. Shaw said the department has always operated with two separate budgets and the recreation side doesn't account for the maintenance side. In places like Johnson County, classes are more expensive but the higher fees cover the cost of maintenance and other overhead costs. He said that in Lawrence, people don't want to pay extra. He also added that when times get hard, the city has to take on even more programs. The department is currently looking at taking over Hoopsters Basketball and G-Force competitive cheerleading and power tumbling because the businesses are ceasing operation and the department doesn't want to turn children away. These programs will be profitable, but will also create more maintenance expense.

Both Barth and Muzzy asked if the board should write a letter of concern to commissioners. Hecker said the best thing to do would be to stay involved in the budget process. Shaw said the budget will be presented to the commission in May, and it will be about two months before it is finalized.

VII. Staff Reports

- a. Shaw reported the recreation division is still doing well on revenue and is ahead of where it was this time last year because more classes are being offered and some fees have been increased. He said that even though weather is still a problem, Eagle Bend generated more revenue last month through the sale of annual passes.
- b. Steinbrock showed the board the new Summer/Fall 2008 Activities Guide, which was just delivered and will be included with the April 13 issue of the Lawrence Journal-World. There are 26 additional pages in this issue because it now includes all classes offered May through December.
- c. Hecker said Downtown has been the department's biggest project. He reported cleanup after the NCAA tournament went well. About 100 staff from Parks and Recreation and Public Works helped out. A few trees were lost but no major damage was done. He said flower planting has been delayed due to the tournament, but will be done soon. The department is continuing to install tree grates Downtown, and park shelters will open April 15.

VIII. Miscellaneous

- a. Steinbrock passed around a brochure he created for the Bill Self golf tournament benefiting the Wee Folks Scholarship Fund. He said the department is currently recruiting sponsors and has sent out several mailings. A basketball autographed by several members of the 1988 championship team will be offered at this year's auction, and he is hoping to have another signed by the members of this year's championship team.
- b. Shaw reported that several of the department's contracts end this year, including its beverage contract with Pepsi and golf cart contract. He said staff are working on RFPs for the next 4-5 years. Pepsi contributed \$18,000 to the department's scholarship fund for children and special populations individuals as part of its last contract. The department is also deciding whether to contract gas or electric golf carts. Hecker said electric carts will be cheaper in the long-run, although a lot of

changes will have to be made to the garage they're housed in. Shaw said one vender is offering some electric carts to try in addition to gas carts.

- c. Hecker said he was contacted by Dick Stunts about Alvamar Lake. He would like to turn the lake and surrounding land over to the city. Hecker said Stunts told him he spoke with the city manager, who was not receptive of the idea, but they are setting up a meeting. Hecker said there are likely some problems with the lake, which is why Stunts no longer wants the land.
- d. Barth inquired about plans for the Carnegie Building. Hecker said the Heritage Group received a grant and will start proceeding with plans again. The Heritage Group will take some space for offices, and Parks and Recreation should have the rest of the facility. He said he doubts the building will be operational and available for use by the department in 2009. He said it will be a great community building but is not the type of facility the department is in need of at the present time.
- e. Loos asked what type of role the department plays when outdoor concerts are planned downtown, like the upcoming Wilko concert. Shaw said the department's role is small and staff will probably just bring bleachers and trash cans to the area and clean up afterward. Hecker said the department does not receive any revenue from these types of events; it all goes to the promoter.
- f. Adjournment 1:05 p.m. Next meeting May 13, 2008. Meet at the Parks and Recreation Administrative Office to pick up box lunches and board bus. Barth said she would like to go out to Quarry Park and Dobbs would like to go by East Lawrence Recreation Center.