



## Advisory Board Minutes June 10, 2008

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

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**STAFF PRESENT:** Mark Hecker, Roger Steinbrock, Mitch Young and Laurel Kupka

**GUESTS:**

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- I. Meeting called to order by Chair Bruce Muzzy.
- II. Approval of the April 8 minutes on a motion by Bracciano, second by Barth.
- III. Loos asked how often the department drags the baseball and softball practice fields. He said he has noticed at least one that appears to be in bad shape. Hecker said staff normally drag the fields once per week. The recent wet weather has affected the conditions, and some of the fields have problems with draining or are worse than others in terms of ruts and grass in the infield. The department tries to keep them in good condition but practice fields are lower on the priority list than park maintenance and the facilities where games are played.

Dobbs again brought up a suggestion she made during the park tour in May. People have mentioned that they would like to have trash cans throughout the disc golf course in Centennial Park because some individuals drop plastic bottles and other trash while they are playing.

Muzzy mentioned he was surprised to learn on the bus tour that Parks and Recreation mows the city's street islands. Hecker said the department has always maintained those areas. He said he normally contracts that work out so that staff can work elsewhere, but the money comes out of the department budget.

Bracciano said he had heard the Fourth of July fireworks display may be moved to Sesquicentennial Park this year. Hecker said the Fire Department is in favor of it because such large crowds have attended the past few years. He also said the department would be able to shoot off bigger shells and put on a better show at the Point.

- IV. Hecker asked whether the board members could attend a meeting with the Planning Board at 7:30 a.m. on August 13 in the City Commission Room. Dobbs, Muzzy, Loos and Bracciano all said they could attend. Barth said she would double-check her schedule and let Hecker know.
- V. Hecker said Parks and Recreation has begun working with the city and the county on plans to extend 31st St. from Haskell to O'Connell Rd. The department has reviewed

several different street alignment plans and favors an alignment that does not run too close to the Mary's Lake dam and that preserves the wildlife corridor. He said some of the land along the extension may become park land. Hecker said an environmentally conscious engineer has been working on the plans and a landscape architect has been on board from the beginning to handle trails and aesthetics.

- VI. Hecker said department received a \$500,000 grant for the Burroughs Creek Trail, and the city needs to provide \$350,000 to match it. Hecker said public support would assist in ensuring city funding.
- VII. Hecker said the department's 2009 budget is still being reviewed and has remained mostly in tact. The only change so far has been moving equipment from the department's general fund to the city's equipment reserve. Now the department will have to request money from the fund instead of just issuing a purchase order.

Muzzy said he has noticed the department's budget has been cut every year since he has been on the board. Hecker said this is due to increases in the cost of living (utilities, gas, etc.). He said Parks and Recreation has not been hit as hard as some of the city's other departments. Dobbs asked if there were any upcoming budget hearings the board could attend. Hecker said he would check on the dates and notify the board.

- VIII. Mitch Young, Park District 3 and Cemeteries supervisor, gave a presentation on Park District 3 and the responsibilities of his staff. Park District 3 includes land in North and East Lawrence. Young oversees three cemeteries that encompass 79 acres and 13 parks encompassing 127 acres, as well as several ball fields. The district also includes a mountainbike trail in Riverfront Park maintained primarily by the Lawrence Mountainbike Club. Several part-time staff are hired in the summer to assist with mowing and spraying, and the district has one part-time administrative support position.

Park District 3 generates revenue through sales and the opening and closing of graves. Staff performed more than 200 burials per year over the past few years, a number significantly higher than any of the other two cemeteries in Lawrence. More than 2,000 cars visited the cemeteries over Memorial Day weekend 2008. The eternal flame that burns in Oak Hill Cemetery, originally installed in the 1970s, was recently replaced with a new one that burns about 1/3 as much gas.

Young said the City Commission asked the department to research green burials. As a result, a wooded area in the northwest corner of Oak Hill Cemetery has been designated as a green burial area. In order to perform green burials, the department will have to meet the three criteria of the Green Burial Council, a national organization: no concrete, no steel and no embalming. Young said Parks and Recreation has added no maintenance of the burial site and no traditional markers as additional criteria. Green burials will be the same price as regular burials. Modern machinery will be used to dig the grave sites but people may hand-shovel them closed if they choose. The plan will come in front of the commission in the next month or so.

Bracciano asked about the homeless situation and Young said camps have been set up in Riverfront and Burcham Parks. He said the department has a 24-hour notification policy that it, along with the police, tries to enforce when possible.

- IX. a. Hecker reported golf revenue in May was higher than it has been in the past two years and revenue projections for the year continue to increase. Loos inquired about how marshalls control the pace of play on the course, and Steinbrock said they try to

move the slower players along but Eagle Bend is a public course that must accommodate all levels.

Hecker also reported that revenue from the Recreation Instruction side of the department is doing well and exceeding projections from month-to-month, and the maintenance side is in summer mode now that all parks and facilities are open and running. Bracciano wondered whether the summer playground program is experiencing competition from the Boys and Girls Club. Steinbrock said enrollment at some of the locations is down. Program fees were raised this year, but people were given monthly and bi-weekly payment options for the first time. He said the department offers several other camps in the nature and recreation instruction divisions in addition to the summer playgrounds that may be causing lower enrollments in the playground program than in past summers.

b. Steinbrock reported the Marketing Division is updating the department's park and path map. He is reviewing the first proof right now. Staff will also begin working on the 2009 Winter/Spring Activity Guide soon.

X. a. The Bill Self golf tournament will be held Friday, June 13. Steinbrock said around 100 golfers are registered so far. Proceeds will benefit the Wee Folks Scholarship Fund.

b. Adjournment 1 p.m. Next meeting July 8.