

**Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission
Meeting Minutes March 12, 2013**

1. Call Meeting to Order/Roll Call

The Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission met in a regular meeting on Tuesday, March 12, 2013, at the City Council Chambers, Visalia, California. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Calhoun at 5:28 pm.

Present: Lesa Mann, Carla Calhoun, Robert Doi, Ben Filiponi, Dolores Taylor, and Shann Blue.

Guests: Pat Ruele.

Staff: Vince Elizondo, Jeannie Greenwood, Jim Bean, and Brenda Miernik.

Commissioner Filiponi informed the commission that he was “on-call” for Cal Water (his employer) this evening and might be required to leave early.

- 2. Review and Approve the Minutes of the Regular Meetings, January 15, and February 19, 2013.** Commissioner Calhoun called for a motion to approve the February minutes. Commissioner Mann said she had a question on the February 19 minutes, Item 10. She stated there was discussion on topics for the upcoming Joint Meeting with City Council and they were not listed in the minutes. She could not recall exactly what was said but Mr. Elizondo recalled his notes and read them aloud. Commissioner Mann moved to accept the February 19 minutes with Mr. Elizondo’s notes included. Commissioner Doi seconded.

MOTION

Motion passed 5-0

Commissioner Calhoun asked for a motion to approve the January 15 minutes. Commissioner Mann moved to accept the minutes as presented, and Commissioner Filiponi seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 5-0

- 3. Public Comment:** Mr. Bill Huott spoke to the Commission regarding the need for a park on the north side of the City. He presented maps and notes for the proposed Gamboa Park, previously given to the Commissioners. Mr. Huott said he attended a Council Retreat and the theme seemed to be “caring for the entire City”, and he stated he agreed.

Mr. Elizondo stated the meeting was actually called the Strategic Planning Session, and there were several topics related to Parks and Recreation. Discussion included the Oval Park renovation, the homeless community, the Riverway Sports Park Phases III and IV, the Eastside Regional Park, and various trail projects. He said City Council accepted information on the Houston School Park project.

Commissioner Mann asked Mr. Huott if any of the eight parks in the surrounding area can be walked within 10 minutes. Mr. Huott said it’s a 45 minute to an hour walk from Giddings and Houston to the proposed park area.

Commissioner Mann spoke of the 50 Parks Initiative (Los Angeles) Class at the CPRS conference. She said creative thinking has created 38 parks and they plan to create 59. The communities came together and with private donations and after streamlining the process, are well on their way. Neighborhood Stabilization funds were used to purchase old, neglected properties to create pocket parks.

- 4. Request by Visalia Optimist Club for a Fee Waiver for the Annual Fishing Derby to be held at Plaza Park on Saturday, May 11, 2013.** Ms. Greenwood stated the Visalia Optimist Club is planning its 35th Annual Youth Fishing Derby, May 11, at Plaza Park Pond. This is a free event providing fishing opportunities for children ages 14 and younger.

Ms. Greenwood said the Optimist Club began the fishing Derby upon the completion of the Plaza Pond 35 years ago. Wishing to provide an event for children, the Club initiated the Fishing Derby and provided a free soda, bag of chips, bait and bamboo fishing pole. The stocking of the pond and cost of bait is currently funded by City of Tulare and Cal Water. The Optimist’s coordinate the event and provides insurance and prizes.

Ms. Greenwood stated the Optimist Club is asking to have the \$130 rental fee waived. Each year, this event stocks the pond with over \$1,000 worth of catfish. After the fishing event, the community receives the benefit of a stocked pond.

Ms. Greenwood stated City staff recommends the Parks and Recreation Commission consider the request of a fee waiver from the Visalia Optimist Club for the purpose of their 35th Annual Fishing Derby and, if appropriate, forward the Commission’s recommendation to the Council. She said they further recommend that they authorize the Director of the Parks and Recreation Department to issue a permit for the Club granting overnight camping at Plaza Park in the pond area. In past years the Club has experienced theft of fish between stocking (Friday afternoon) and

the time of the event (Saturday Morning). City staff also recommends that the Optimist Club comply with all conditions and permits set forth by the City of Visalia Special Event Committee. The City will impose a cleaning/damage deposit of \$250.00, refundable based on the clean return of park properties after the event.

Commissioner Mann stated she is concerned that no one is present from the Optimist Club to hear her condition that no sugar-added drinks be offered to children. She prefers water to be served. She also said a healthy snack should be served such as pretzels, oranges, tangerines, etc.

Commissioner Calhoun said she would like to see two motions. The first motion will be to accept the staff report for a fee waiver with a provision that healthy snacks and no sugar-added drinks will be served. Commissioner Mann so moved and Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 5-0

Commissioner Calhoun said the second recommendation would be to approve the staff recommendation that the Optimist Club comply with all conditions and permits set forth by the City of Visalia Special Events Committee and approval of the overnight camping to protect the fish. Commissioner Filiponi so moved and Commissioner Mann seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 5-0

5. **Request by the Guild of St. Mortimer to Host the Tulare County Renaissance Festival at Plaza Park on April 20-21, 2013..** Ms. Greenwood stated the Guild of St. Mortimer has requested the use of Plaza Park for the 24th Annual Tulare County Renaissance Festival. She said the hours are from 10 am to 6 pm both days and they will utilize April 19 for a set up day and April 22 for breakdown and cleanup.

Ms. Greenwood said the event is rapidly becoming one of the largest events in the City of Visalia, drawing thousands of people throughout the Central Valley to Visalia. Over 1,000 performers, actors and vendors spend a significant amount of money in town and generate a lot of revenue for the City and its merchants. She said the event draws 6,000-7,000 people over two days and it is estimated that \$50-\$75 per person is generated in tourist revenues. In 2012 most area hotels neared 100% occupancy.

Ms. Greenwood said the Guild is requesting the following.

- Use of the turf area on Field 5 for parking,
- Permission for overnight tent camping in the grass area along Plaza Arena and overnight RV camping on the east side of Plaza Drive.

The Guild charges an admission fee of \$8 for adults and \$5 for seniors, military and children. According to event organizers, the festival operates on a budget of about \$42,-45,000 per year.

Ms. Greenwood said the rental fee is \$1,400 for the two day event and a cleaning and damage deposit of \$1,000. City staff provides a significant amount of resources to this event.

- Parks maintenance staff must mark all sprinkler heads and control boxes to avoid damages to the irrigation system.
- Staff meets with event organizer before and after the event
- Staff coordinates services - irrigation shutoff, mowing schedule, custodial services, and performs visits to the site during all stages to see how the event is going.

Ms. Greenwood said the City staff recommendation is that the Parks and Recreation Commission authorize the Director of Parks and Recreation to issue a permit to the Guild of St. Mortimer granting special permission to do the following:

- Allow animals in the park for the jousting exhibits with the following conditions. Horses must be fenced in a secure area while not performing and no other animals shall be permitted with authorization.
- Allow vehicles on the park. The Guild can drive in the park to load and unload. The Guild is asked to be more restricted when granting vehicle access in the park. No parking fees are permitted.
- Allow noise that exceeds 60 decibels. Black powder shots will be created that do exceed the allotted decibels but are of such short duration that it should not have an impact on park users.
- Allow glass containers. Some vendors do sell glass items and bottles, which were used during the renaissance period.
- Allow overnight parking and camping in the park. Some actors, exhibitors and vendors will stay on site either in tents or RV's. RV's will be restricted to the east side of Plaza Drive; no RV's shall be permitted inside the park.

In addition to above special permissions, City staff, in coordination with the City's Special Events Committee, will condition the applicant to provide the appropriate general liability insurance to include liquor liability; an ABC

license to sell alcohol; security guards as required; portable restrooms; additional portable trash receptacles and bins; health permits for food concessionaires; City business licenses for commercial vendors; and assembly permit; and other additional minor requirements.

Ms. Greenwood said the City reserves the right to cancel this event in the case of excessive rain before the event. The final decision to cancel the event will be determined by the Director of Parks and Recreation.

Mr. Pat Ruele said jousting has become a very popular event for the festival. He said it was moved into the arena, which is much safer venue.

Commissioner Mann asked if they were selling water at the event and what types of healthy food options can be found. Mr. Ruele said water would be sold by a non-profit organization, the Tulare Episcopal Church. He replied that a vendor came in who sells gluten free foods, crepes, coffee, Greek gyros sandwiches, and vegetarian foods like spinach and fresh mushrooms. Mr. Ruele also invited a Farmers Market group but they did not want to dress in the era of the Renaissance.

Commissioner Doi asked what the Guild did with the profits from the festival.

Mr. Ruele said a portion goes into a scholarship fund, however, the costs involved carries the festival into the next year. He said that all the workers are volunteers, a labor of love. He said the Visalia festival is the best in California. He said the cost to the vendors is based on the square footage of their booth.

Commissioner Calhoun called for a motion to accept the staff report and conditions as presented. Commissioner Mann so moved and Commissioner Doi seconded.

MOTION

Motion passed 5-0

- 6. **Annual Tree Planting and Maintenance Report.** Mr. David Pendergraft, Urban Forestry Supervisor, stated he manages the Landscape and Lighting districts, City right of ways, parks and riparian areas as well as the roadsides and medians in Visalia.

Mr. Elizondo stated that Mr. Pendergraft is the only certified tree Arborist on staff. He informed the Commission that they serve as the Tree Committee; if the City receives a dispute about a tree being removed they would appeal to the Tree Committee (i.e. the Commission). The fact that this hasn't taken place for some time is due to Mr. Bean and Mr. Pendergraft doing an excellent job in public relations while resolving issues.

Mr. Pendergraft said West Coast Arborists renewed a five-year contract with the City in 2011, and in July 2012 it was increased to include maintenance of City parks. The contract value is \$390,000 and includes Landscape and Lighting areas, riparian areas, medians, streets, and City parks. Other contracts include private contracts for Valley Oak trees, emergency callouts, resistograph testing and second opinions.

Mr. Pendergraft said that from 2008 to 2012, 3,102 trees have been planted with funding from Urban Tree Foundation (UTF) grants. Projects and volunteers for these trees have come with Make a Difference Day, Arbor Day and CHIP IN day. Brian Kempf (UTF) has partnered with the City and provides grant writing to fund many projects in the City. He works with Community Services & Employment Training (CSET) who provides youth workers to plant and irrigate the trees.

The City of Visalia has been a Tree City for 30 years. Tree City requirements include having a Tree Board, a community Tree Ordinance, a community Forestry Program with an annual budget of at least \$2 per capita, and an Arbor Day Observance and Proclamation.

Mr. Pendergraft reported that 41,833 trees were trimmed between 2008 and 2012. He said common tree issues are severe tree topping, trees planted under power lines, curb damage, and trees planted too close to a wall. He said 2,090 trees and stumps were removed and 1,509 were removed by contractors. Mr. Pendergraft also reported that there were 3,834 issues or complaints handled from 2008 to 2012.

<i>Trees Trimmed</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>
City Crews - Valley Oaks	480	449	786	802	232
City Crews - Trees (less Oaks)	1,927	1,797	2,226	2,064	760
Private Contractor's - Valley Oaks	66	965	1,124	594	738
Private Contractor's - Trees (less Oaks)	5,564	9,248	6,192	2,729	2,823
Private Contractor's (Intent to Prune)	43	47	57	56	64
Total Trees Trimmed	8,080	12,506	10,385	6,245	4,617

Mr. Pendergraft said the mitigation fund currently has a balance of \$24,247. The funds come from permit fees and monetary requirements for removing Valley Oak trees that are stipulated in the Valley Oak Ordinance. The fees pay for removing or trimming Valley Oak trees on private property for low income residents.

In the last 5 years, Mr. Pendergraft said tree related issues have been reduced. The last large storm was in December 2012 and very few tree failures were reported. He credited safe trimming standards and practices by contractors and City tree crews. A budget reduction of \$55k deferred maintenance the last two years for right of way Oak tree trimming.

7. **Review of California Parks and Recreation Society Conference, March 5-8, 2013.** Mr. Elizondo thanked Ms. Miernik for the logistics required for the conference to be successful for the Commission.

Commissioner Mann said she enjoyed her trip and she is convinced that parks are essential for our country. She felt the classes were better than in previous years, and generally better. She attended a class on worksite wellness and she brought back a questionnaire regarding worksites. She attended a class on marketing and thought the idea of a flat screen television on the wall advertising classes was a great idea. She brought back brochures from a brochure contest and had the winners so the department could glean ideas from them. Commissioner Mann said her favorite idea was a Senior Prom at the Senior Center. Cosmetology schools come in and do makeup and hair and then there is a fashion show, in preparation for the Prom. Commissioner Mann spoke to the creators of the lion at Lions Park and asked if the Kiwanis Club would be interested in having their logo at their park. Mr. Elizondo said it is a possibility. She also asked if City park workers were protected from the sun on their jobs. Mr. Bean said absolutely, the City provides hats, shade, breaks and water at all times.

Commissioner Calhoun asked if a report could be prepared on wellness safety on job sites. Mr. Elizondo replied that it would be done.

Commissioner Mann stated her dream is to have a south-side community center, 90% fitness based. Her most inspirational class was the re-designed Elm Park in Richmond California, called the Iron Triangle. She said Richmond is the poorest community in the Bay Area but the community came together and re-built the park. She also liked the 50 Parks Project in Los Angeles, which was incredible.

Commissioner Mann asked if the designer had been contracted for the Splash Pad at Recreation Park yet. Mr. Elizondo said the HLA Group had been contracted to choose the vendor for the design and they had chosen Vortex. Commissioner Mann stated she would like to participate with the design. Mr. Elizondo said that was certainly possible. He also stated Visalia's Environmental Committee desired that we use a percolation system (tank) for the water. Vortex specializes in percolation tanks. He said the water percolates back into the ground for reuse.

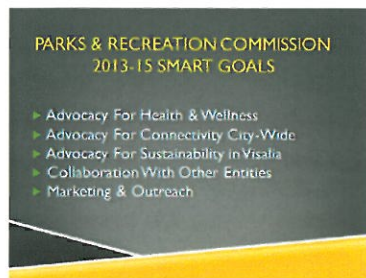
Commissioner Calhoun thanked the City for allowing the Commission to attend. She said she had some notes on several sessions that she would forward to Mr. Elizondo for sharing with staff. The first class she enjoyed was on Management and what is required of a good manager. She also attended a series of sustainability related workshops, which will help her on the sustainability goal, of which she is the champion this coming year. She said she would share her notes also. She said there was not one class that she felt was a waste of time.

Commissioner Calhoun said Commissioner Filiponi also attended but he had to leave early.

8. **Discussion of Topics for Joint Meeting with City Council on Tuesday, March 19, 2013.** Ms. Calhoun said the Joint Meeting with the Council is next week at the Convention Center.

Mr. Elizondo stated the Parks and Recreation Commission have the privilege of meeting with City Council annually. The City has approximately 19 committees and commissions but they only meet with the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Planning Commission. This is a great opportunity to inform them about who we are, what we are doing, and what is important to us. Mr. Elizondo stated that, historically, each manager will speak for 15 minutes regarding their division, and Mr. Melcher will be present to discuss the trails.

Mr. Elizondo stated he created a presentation to introduce the Commissioners and that each Commissioner would speak individually to the Council regarding each page of the PowerPoint. The 2013-15 goals will be presented as follows.



Mr. Elizondo stated the Council touched on Goal #2 at their annual retreat – Work toward the Goal of Developing a Southside Community Center. Items discussed were where it should be located, what it should look like and what should be designed into it. Commissioner Mann said it should be 90% about fitness and an aquatics center would be wonderful. Mr. Elizondo said this would be a great time to support the Council regarding a Master Plan.

Other topics open for discussion includes the following. These were brought up in the City Retreat.

- ✓ Oval Park and Service Center, what to do with them.
- ✓ Houston School and/or a new park in that area.
- ✓ Sports Park Phases III, IV, and V.
- ✓ Eastside Regional Park.
- ✓ Trail and General Plan updates

Commissioner Calhoun said she really wants an update on the General Plan regarding the Parks and Recreation element.

- ✓ Quality of life elements are built into our parks and we must budget the cost of upkeep and improvements.
- ✓ What is the Council's perception regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the department?

Mr. Elizondo stated Josh McDonald will prepare a General Plan update report for the meeting. He asked if there was anything else the Commissioners wanted to discuss.

It was decided that Commissioner Calhoun would introduce the Commissioners, Commissioner Mann would read the third slide, Commissioner Filiponi would read the SMART Goals, Commissioner Taylor will read Goal #1, Commissioner Doi will read Goal #2, and Commissioner Blue will read Goal #3. Mr. Elizondo said the City Clerk will have these details to the Commissioners by the Friday before the meeting.

9. Update on City Council Reports & City Staff Announcements:

- **Upcoming Recreation Programs & Special Events.** Ms. Greenwood reported the following.
 - The Senior Center Open House will be held tomorrow at the Senior Center, please join us for a barbeque, from 11 am to 1 pm. Ms. Greenwood said to call her if you want to come for lunch. The newly renovated patio will be dedicated.
 - Saturday, March 30, the Eggstravaganza will be held at Riverway Sports Park, from 10 am to 1 pm.
 - The Kids Club Day Camp will take place at the Anthony Center.
 - Two Specialty Camps taking place during spring break are a science camp and a clay camp at the Clay Café.
 - A Skate Park supervised skate has begun on Saturdays. Kids can skate but they must wear safety equipment.
 - Adult volleyball and adult basketball has 26 teams each.
 - Adult soccer has 39 teams and adult softball has 90 teams.
 - Spring registration began February 1 and we have had 872 registrations
 - Michelle Fitzgerald has been with the department for 7 years; her last day with the department will be next Thursday. Her husband has accepted a position in Florida and the department will hold a farewell party and the information will be emailed to you.
 - Ms. Greenwood stated that due to the Easter holiday and the large impact on our parks the department will be renting spots at Lions, Kiwanis and Perry Family Parks. The advertising is through Press Releases.
- **Upcoming Parks & Urban Forestry Projects, Programs & Special Events.** Mr. Bean, Parks & Urban Forestry Manager reported the following.
 - Arbor Day is April 27, and Earth Day is April 20.
 - Packwood Trail is going to be completed next month.
 - 148 to Cutler Park will also be completed next month.
 - The Neighborhood Church will be holding a Serve Visalia Day on April 7.
 - Seven playground shade structures are competed.
 - Shade structures will be installed at Constitution Park.

- **Director's Report on Administrative Items.** No report.

10. Commissioner's Requests & Comments:

- **Parks & Recreation Foundation Monthly Report.** Commissioner Taylor said she missed the last meeting. Mr. Elizondo stated the interim Fire Chief and Mr. Curtis Brown, Fire Marshall, were in attendance. They addressed the 4th of July Celebration being dangerous due to the small fire zone and the school buildings. They want relocation for 2014. He said the Foundation is very proud of the Garden Street Shade Structure Project and the Board is still working on this year's 4th of July Celebration and is seeking volunteers, donations and sponsors.
- **North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory Committee.** Commissioner Doi said he will be attending the meeting on Thursday. The last meeting he attended. Mr. Elizondo asked if he knew the date of the opening of the Oval Center. Mr. Doi replied no date has been given.
- **Senior Citizens Advisory Committee Update.** Commissioner Mann said they don't meet until the 20th.
- **Waterways & Trails Committee Report.** Commissioner Filiponi left the meeting early, as he is on-call for his employment (Cal Water).
- **Houston Elementary School Sub-Committee Report.** Commissioner Taylor said she missed the meeting but the school is supposed to open the gate. Commissioner Blue agreed the gate should be checked.

11. Adjourn to Joint Meeting with City Council, March 19, 2013, at the Convention Center, 303 E. Acequia St., 5:30 pm.

Commissioner Mann made a motion to adjourn and Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 4-0

Brenda Miernik
Senior Administrative Assistant