

**Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission  
Meeting Minutes June 18, 2013**

**1. Call Meeting to Order/Roll Call**

The Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission met in a regular meeting on Tuesday, June 18, 2013, at the City Council Chambers, Visalia, California. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Calhoun at 5:31 pm.

**Present:** Carla Calhoun, Robert Doi, Ben Filiponi, Dolores Taylor, and Shann Blue

**Absent:** Lesa Mann

**Guests:** Rick Hernandez (Chairperson of the NVNAC), Michael Kreps (Vice Chairperson of the NVNAC), and Nick Anthony (VRM)

**Staff:** Vince Elizondo, Jeannie Greenwood, Jim Bean, Tracy Robertshaw, Officer Steve Phillips, and Brenda Miernik

**2. Review and Approve the Minutes of the Regular Meetings, May 21, 2013.** Commissioner Calhoun called for a motion to approve the May 21 minutes. Commissioner Filiponi moved to approve the minutes as presented and Commissioner Doi seconded the motion.

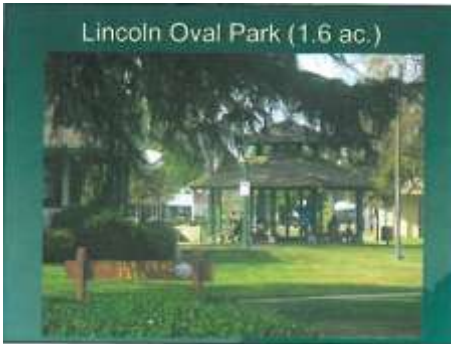
**MOTION**

Motion passed 4-0

**3. Public Comment:** Mr. Nick Anthony, of the Visalia Rescue Mission (VRM), said it is a pleasure to work with the NVNAC and Officer Phillips. He said VRM's purpose in the park is to assist people to reclaim their lives through Jesus Christ. An example is Leonard Cruz, who lived in the park with his grocery carts but now has a place to live, away from the park. Mr. Anthony says VRM wants to help the City reclaim the park for residents. He said they want to sponsor family oriented events to draw folks to the park. He said the homeless are guided to the Mission for help and assistance.

Mr. Bill Huott said he has been on the NVNAC off and on for many years. He feels the cost of the improvements will outweigh the costs of not taking action. He thanked the Visalia Rescue Mission for their efforts.

**4. Proposal by the North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NVNAC) to City Council Five Improvements to Oval Park.** Mr. Elizondo presented some preliminary information regarding Oval Park for the benefit of the new Commissioners and the audience.



*History:*

- *The Oval Park is the oldest park in Visalia, established in 1875, and consists of 1.6 acres.*
- *Originally named Oak Park until 1897.*
- *Site of the original Visalia High School.*
- *Lincoln Oval School was established in 1917.*
- *Old school demolished in 1922.*
- *Lincoln Oval Park was then established.*
- *In 1922, six memorial trees were planted and named after five local citizens and Abraham Lincoln.*
- *Lincoln Park Service Center which was operated by Pat Fingers for many years. It is currently operated by the Visalia Rescue Mission.*

- *Pat Fingers provided the playground and it is the only playground in Visalia that does not comply with state law. The department is awaiting plans from the City before commencing replacement or repairs.*
- *The restrooms were built about 15 years ago and both the NVNAC and the Parks and Recreation Commission are on record to eliminate it due to issues surrounding it.*

*Common Park Problems:*

- *Illegal consumption of alcohol,*
- *Loitering,*
- *Illegal use of drugs and transactions,*
- *Graffiti,*
- *Prostitution,*
- *Homeless population, after park hours.*
- *Visalia Police Department*
- *Community Development Department*

*Stakeholders:*

- *Public Works (Streets & Sidewalks)*
- *Parks & Recreation Department*
- *Cal Trans – Highway 63 (Dinuba Blvd)*



- Owners and tenants of local area merchants
- Owners and tenants of local area residential properties

Mr. Elizondo stated that on April 28, 2008, a Public Forum was held in the park. This was a tremendous community outreach effort. A Public Survey was distributed and a summary of community comments was created. Suggested improvements included improving the interior security lighting, add security fencing around the park, renovate the playground, replace or eliminating the restroom and shelter, replacing picnic benches, redesigning the entire park or eliminating the park and utilize the space for another public use.

Mr. Elizondo stated that from this forum short-term goals were established.

- Increase police security & enforcement
- Improve neighborhood lighting,
- Cal Trans Grant Traffic Study,
- Rental of Oval Service Center,
- Establish park Special Events,
- Improve sidewalks & landscaping,
- Engage local area merchants,
- Engage local residential Property owners,
- Engage local residents.



Mr. Elizondo stated the costs to re-design Oval Park would include schematic designs, public meetings, adoption of final plans, construction documents and bids, project inspections and management. He said preliminary designs would cost between \$30,000 to 50,000, and *currently there is no City funds budgeted for the project*. He said comparative costs for park renovation are as follows. Mill Creek Garden Park - \$340k, Recreation Park Playground - \$560k, Restrooms - \$100k to 250k, playgrounds - \$50k to \$250k, shelters – \$50k to \$250k, and fencing - \$30k to \$90k.

Mr. Elizondo noted that there have been many actions in the past related to the park.

6/2008: Joint Commission meeting with NVNAC.

8/2008: City Council approved TPG for traffic study and needs assessment. Numerous workshops and meetings were held. The study cost was \$135,000, provided through a state grant.

5/2009: Council receives report on two alternative plans for Oval Park.

2/2011: Council approved lease agreement with Visalia Rescue Mission.

*In March, 2011, the agreement was executed, and in April , 2011, VRM held a Grand Opening event.*

Lieutenant Steve Phillips stated he is the District One Area Commander for the north side of Visalia and the staff representative for the NVNAC. He said after many conversations with Rick Hernandez and Michael Kreps, they have come to agree on five areas of improvements for the Oval Park. He asked Mr. Elizondo how many other parks were outdated and in need of renovation. Mr. Elizondo replied the Oval Park is the only park that is not up to state standards; all other parks in the City have received new play equipment and are inspected regularly.

Mr. Hernandez listed the five improvements recommended by the NVNAC as follows.

1. New playground equipment.
2. Meandering sidewalk around the exterior of the park.
3. Removal of restrooms located in the center of the park.
4. Improved lighting and security (including security cameras).
5. Expansion of the amphitheater, including shade and electrical outlets for future performances.

Mr. Kreps, architect, explained the map he drew and the improvements. He said he indicated the existing amenities on his drawing. The drawing works with what currently exists. Once the restroom is eliminated, visitors will use the restroom in the Community Center. He said the amphitheater has many shortcomings, i.e. the stage isn't large enough, and it needs more shade and lighting.

Commissioner Calhoun asked if any cost estimates were drawn up for the suggested improvements. Mr. Kreps replied not to-date. He said the parties involved tried to narrow it down due to costs.

Commissioner Taylor suggested that the playground, and the park itself, be fenced in order to keep children safe. She also asked about basketball courts in the park. Mr. Hernandez said, in the final discussion, it was decided that the park, being right next to Highway 63, was not a safe place for them. If a ball was to go into traffic it would be chaotic. He said the Wittman Center is nearby and has basketball courts.

Commissioner Calhoun asked if the local area merchants had been involved in the discussions. Officer Phillips said they were not, as he did not feel it was critical to their businesses and the design was not changing traffic or the park in any major way.

Commissioner Calhoun asked Officer Phillips what action he was asking the Commission to take on this topic. He replied he and the NVNAC desired to know if the Commission would lend their support to these improvements so that when it is presented to the City Council they can say it was presented to the Commission and approved. Commissioner Calhoun asked if City staff could present a cost estimate report on the improvements. Mr. Elizondo stated staff would provide the report to the Commission at the August meeting. It was the consensus of the Commissioners to support the improvements, with a cost report, for the Lincoln Oval Park.

Mr. Elizondo said he was impressed with the presentation by the NVNAC because it dealt with working what is currently in the park instead of tearing things out and starting over. He encouraged fencing around the proposed sidewalk and landscaping in the park because it would guide pedestrians to the crosswalk. He said, in a previous discussion, it had been suggested to pass an ordinance stating that in order to be in the fenced playground, a citizen had to have a child in attendance.

Mr. Elizondo stated it would behoove the NVNAC to have a meeting with the area merchants and residents to keep them apprised of the proposed changes and accept public testimony.

- 5. Proposal by Neighborhood Preservation to Amend Visalia Municipal Code 12.32.150, to Prohibit Shopping Carts in City Parks.** Ms. Robertshaw stated the Neighborhood Preservation Code Enforcement Division and the Visalia Police Department have received numerous complaints regarding the blighted appearance of many City parks and trails. Specifically, personal items in shopping carts. Police and Code Enforcement personnel have asked park users to improve the appearance of the parks by not bringing large piles of items into the parks. However, without rules prohibiting the behavior, attempts have proven futile.

Ms. Robertshaw said staff is proposing an amendment to a current ordinance that will prohibit wheeled devices in City parks and trails, i.e., shopping carts and baby strollers. Many homeless citizens carry their personal belongings in shopping carts and other wheeled devices because they have nowhere to store these items. In order to offset this hardship, staff is working with the VRM to develop a storage program that would provide it. Ms. Robertshaw said she and Officer Phillips have studied other cities that provide this service for the homeless and it is successful. She said a draft of the ordinance is as follows.

**12.32.245 Prohibition of Carts in Park Facilities**

*Within the boundaries of all City parks and trail ways, no person shall use a shopping cart, basket that is mounted on wheels or a similar device that is primarily used for the purpose of transporting goods of any kind. The only exception shall be carts utilized for recreational equipment, wheeled ice chests that are being used for food product, and vendors with valid City issued permits as indicated in Section 12.32.230.*

Commissioner Blue asked what the consequences were if they did not comply with the new rule. Ms. Robertshaw stated that citizens could be cited if they do not comply with the ordinance. Commissioner Calhoun asked how the storage facility would work. Ms. Robertshaw said the homeless person would be given an identification card and a container. They would be allowed in the storage unit in the morning and again at night, and every visit would be supervised.

Commissioner Calhoun asked if the religious component of the VRM would be a requirement of this program. Officer Phillips said the VRM assured him it would not.

Ms. Robertshaw said many of the homeless in the Oval Park are not VRM clients. She said they are there because the City has allowed them to be for so many years, and they gravitate to it.

Ms. Robertshaw said many communities in California are implementing this type of program. She noted Oakland, Los Angeles, Costa Mesa, San Diego, and St. Petersburg, Florida, to name a few.

Mr. Elizondo said the Commission could make a motion to support the program in order for the ordinance to proceed to City Council.

Commissioner Calhoun called for a motion. Commissioner Taylor moved to accept the program as presented and Commissioner Doi seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 4-0

- 6. Discussion of Potential Voting Commission Member Due to Commissioner Taylor's Resignation.** Commissioner Calhoun thanked Ms. Taylor for her service to the City of Visalia. Ms. Taylor said she is resigning due to becoming an employee of the City of Visalia, Finance Department. She stated she has enjoyed herself and wishes her time could have been longer.

Mr. Elizondo stated Commissioner Blue, first alternate, will fulfill her term as a voting member of the Parks and Recreation Commission. He asked the Commissioners if they wanted to pursue new alternates. The Commissioners, by consensus, decided to continue advertising for commission applicants.

## 7. Update on City Council Reports & City Staff Announcements:

### • **Upcoming Recreation Programs & Special Events.** Ms. Greenwood reported the following.

- The summer programs have 208 adults registered in various classes.
- Swimming programs have 205 registered.
- Tiny tots has 86 participants.
- Senior Programs have 102 participants.
- Fire Camp sold out at 62 registrants and with a huge wait list.
- Lego camp sold out and a second session has been added.
- Volleyball camp has 68 registrants.
- Princess Camp has 27 registrants.
- Teen Idol auditions take place this Friday and the following Friday.
- Movies in the Park begin this Friday night at Riverway Sports Park.
- Summer Night Lights will be held at Manual Hernandez Community Center on Friday nights.

Ms. Greenwood stated currently the department has a total of 1,844 participants in summer programs; and revenue is over \$100,000.

Commissioner Filiponi asked if the new Recreation Manager had been selected, and Ms. Greenwood replied that the Recreation Supervisor position has been filled by Larisa Guilaro. She will start on July 1, and she will be managing Youth Sports and Aquatics Division.

### • **Upcoming Parks & Urban Forestry Projects, Programs & Special Events.** Mr. Bean, Parks & Urban Forestry Manager reported the following.

- The annual soccer field maintenance has begun at the Riverway Sports Park. The orange fences went up June 1 and will come down August 20.
- Riverway Sports Park Phase III is on schedule; a lot of concrete is being poured, tables going in, and a lot of work is happening at the amphitheater.
- Constitution Park shade structure – installed and complete.
- The designer has been chosen and will take 30 days or less, and then the project will go out to bid.
- The cell tower project is moving forward. We are working with the designer now.
- A sand filter was installed at Stonebrook Park.
- Asphalt trails on Mill Creek and Pappas Park have been capped due to erosion.
- Oval Park restrooms will take about 60 days to remove. Asbestos was found in the restroom.

Mr. Bean announced that David Pendergraft, City Arborist, will retire on July 12 with 31 years of service. He said a flyer will come out shortly as an invitation.

### • **Director's Report on Administrative Items.** Mr. Elizondo said City Council approved, as recommended by the Commission, the former BMX area to be renamed the Saputo Sports Field. Saputo made a \$20,000 dash donation for naming rights. He also said the architect has finished the construction documents for the Saputo Fields, and the City is negotiating the contract to add the Sports Fields to the Phase III Riverway Sports Park purchase order. This will save a lot of time for the construction.

Mr. Elizondo stated City Council approved the Fees and Charges Report that the Commission recommended last month, and they approved the cell tower lease agreement.

Ms. Jeannie Greenwood stated the Council approved the Rotary Foundation \$100,000 donation to the Recreation Park Splash Pad, the first of two payments to total \$200,000.

## 8. Commissioner's Requests & Comments:

- **North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory Committee.** Mr. Doi said he attended the meeting last week at the Oval Center and the Committee is creating a brochure of information about the Committee.
- **Parks & Recreation Foundation Monthly Report.** Commissioner Taylor said the main topic for the Foundation right now is the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Volunteers are desperately needed. Please help if you can.

Ms. Taylor said next Tuesday, 10 am in the morning, there will be a dedication at the Garden Street Plaza and the Foundation will honor the donors for their assistance. She said Channel 30 will be there.

Mr. Elizondo said a new volunteer will be needed to cover the Foundation meetings in the future.

- **Waterways & Trails Committee Report.** Commissioner Filiponi said May's bike to work week was successful. He also said they are accepting nominations for membership and they approved one new member this month.
- **Pillars of Fame Sub-Committee:** Commissioner Blue said he could not attend the meeting. Mr. Bean said the meeting was held, Commissioners Mann and Bill attended. He said the policy and nomination form were reviewed, with changes made to the policy. The policy now reads "Graduated from a Visalia High School **or completed ten years of education in the Visalia Unified School District.**" The committee proposed a change to read as follows: "*Completed ten years of education.*"

As a side note, Commissioner Blue stated he was at La Joya Middle School to pick up his son from football practice when he noticed an SUV parked on the grass at Combs Park. Commissioner Blue was wondering if this was a problem. Mr. Elizondo stated the problem is that one person sees another doing it and they think it is appropriate to park on the grass. He asked Commissioner Blue to turn vehicle information over to the Department and Mr. Glick can research the vehicle information.

- **Senior Citizens Advisory Committee Update.** Commissioner Calhoun said Commissioner Mann has been excuse for the meeting and she asked Ms. Greenwood to report for her. Ms. Greenwood said the seniors had funding to paint the main room and discussion ensued on what color it should be. They are also working with the Advisory Committee to establish a policy related to commercial organizations who want to come into the facility to present products and services to the seniors. The policy will include posting material in the lobby. She said they also discussed ways to increase attendance at the senior lunches.

9. **Adjourn to Regular Meeting, July 16, 2013, at the Council Chambers at 707 W. Acequia Street, 5:30 pm.** Commissioner Filiponi made a motion to adjourn and Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion.

**MOTION**

Motion passed 4-0

Brenda Miernik  
Senior Administrative Assistant