

Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission
Meeting Minutes July 22, 2014

1. Call Meeting to Order/Roll Call

The Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission met in a special meeting on Tuesday, July 22, 2014, at the City Council Chambers, located at 707 W. Acequia St., Visalia, California. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Carla Calhoun at 5:30 pm.

Present: Carla Calhoun, Lesa Mann, Shann Blue, Jason Kent, and Peter Thomas

Absent: Ben Filiponi

Guests: Ryan Stillwater, David Castellon, Juan Guerrero, Bill Huott, Bob Ludekens, and Curt Salierno

Staff: Vince Elizondo, Jeannie Greenwood, Jeff Fultz, Jason Glick, and Brenda Miernik

- 2. Review and Approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting, June 17, 2014.** Commissioner Calhoun called for a motion to approve the June 17, 2014, minutes. Commissioner Mann moved to approve the minutes as presented and Commissioner Blue seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 4-0

- 3. Public Comment:** Mr. Bill Huott stated he was involved with a Dump on Us Day with the Visalia Rescue Mission on Saturday. He said approximately 10 couches and 15 mattresses were removed from neighborhoods and the dumping line was very large. He said the event was well attended and the area was much improved.

- 4. Annual Reports on Adult Sports Division and Fitness & Adult Programs.** Mr. Glick, Recreation Supervisor, began his reports with the Adult Sports Division Report. He said he is supported by Ramsey Ochoa, Recreation Coordinator, and seven hourly staff members.

Mr. Glick reported the following.

- Tennis Lessons – Lessons are sanctioned by the United States Tennis Association. In 2012 -2013 two hundred and forty one tennis lessons were taught, and in 2013-2014 one hundred and eighty one tennis lessons were taught. Lessons are held at Plaza Park in the fall, spring, and summer. A new youth tennis league will be offered for fall 2014. There is competition for tennis lessons from individuals, groups, and leagues.
- Provident Skate Park– The 3rd Annual Derrick Shaw Memorial was held with 20 participants. The department partnered with the Healthy Visalia event and it was very successful. Security cameras have been useful in the park to curb vandalism and graffiti.
- Adult Sports. Softball – In the spring there were 90 teams, in summer there were 112 teams, and in the fall there were 80 teams. In 2013 there were 295 teams registered in the Men’s Co-ed softball. In 2014 there were 282 registered.
- Basketball – Games are played at Anthony Community Center and two divisions were offered. In 2013 there were 64 teams and in 2014 there were 78 teams registered. Fall, spring, and summer leagues were held and a new winter league will be offered in 2015.
- Co-ed Volleyball - Games are played at Anthony Community Center and two divisions were offered. In 2013 there were 91 teams registered and in 2014 there were 93 teams registered.
- Co-ed Soccer – Games are played at Riverway Sports Park and at Jefferson Park. Fall, spring, and summer leagues were offered with three divisions. In 2013 there were 88 teams registered and in 2014 there were 78 teams registered. We will be offering a women’s 7 on 7 in the fall of 2015.

Mr. Glick stated he is also responsible for facility management. The facilities include the Mangano Soccer Complex, the C.R. Shannon Baseball Complex, Plaza Park, Whitendale Park, Whitendale Park, Jefferson Park, and Fairview Park. Currently the soccer fields are under maintenance until the third week of August. During this time the fields are aerated, seeded, and fertilized. The C.R. Shannon Complex is under maintenance from August to September.

- Plaza Park – This year there were 45 scheduled softball tournaments. There were 27 scheduled soccer rentals with Visalia Youth Soccer, Visalia Soccer League, and San Joaquin Valley Soccer League. Rental revenue for 2013 was \$19,500 and in 2014 it was \$17,600. The cause of the decrease in revenue is because a few months ago, two light poles fell down on the softball fields in a wind storm. This caused a field shutdown during the season in order to replace six light poles.
- Riverway Sports Park – The City received \$92,000 in total rental revenue - \$72,000 from soccer rentals, and \$20,000 from baseball rentals, up \$5,000 from 2013. There were no game rain-outs for two years in a row.

Mr. Elizondo informed the Commission that the maintenance budget for the Riverway Sports Park is half a million dollars. The income is \$92,000, and the remaining \$400,000 is funded by the General Fund.

Mr. Glick said the Riverway Sports Park fields are scheduled at full capacity for fall soccer. Ten fields will be in use Monday through Sunday.

- Contract Management – Mr. Glick manages the contracts for Visalia Youth Baseball, Visalia Little League National, and Cal Ripkin. He manages the contracts for San Joaquin Valley Soccer League, Visalia Soccer League, Odyssey South, American Youth Soccer League (AYSO), Visalia Galaxy, Visalia United, and Visalia Unified School District use.

Mr. Glick said the 2014-15 goals include the following.

- Programming Riverway Sports Park Phase III & Saputo Field.
- Increase the use of the soccer and baseball fields at Plaza and Riverway Sports Park.
- Maximize facility use at Riverway Sports Park in the fall and winter months and Plaza Park for soccer play.

Commissioner Mann noted that at the June meeting the quality of coaching was discussed. She said the fact that tennis lessons have decreased and leagues will be offered to offset the loss, she wonder if anyone is evaluating the lessons for teaching quality.

Mr. Glick replied that the programming utilized is sanctioned by the United States Tennis Association and the instructor has worked with the department for over 20 years. He said an added interest is a tournament that is held at the end of the class for all the participants. Mr. Glick said there is heavy competition for tennis in Visalia.

Commissioner Mann said consistency is one of the goals of the Commission and she is concerned about quality and consistent teaching and coaching skills.

Commissioner Kent asked if grass volleyball has ever been considered. He said Fresno City College puts on a tournament every year, almost every weekend. Tournament revenue supports their sports program.

Mr. Glick said that is an excellent suggestion. He said the National Parks and Recreation Association recommends programs such as corn hole, whiffle ball, and ultimate Frisbee leagues. He added that workshops are being planned.

Commissioner Blue asked how long the tennis lessons have been offered, and if the returning kids come back year after year. He said he thought this might be something worth tracking.

Mr. Glick replied beginning tennis has been offered for 20 years, and they are very reasonably priced. He said he is not sure what the percentage of children returning would be.

Commissioner Blue said Commissioner Mann had a point, that if the coaching is good, the child likes the sport, and he returns over the years, that would be a measure of coaching to some degree.

Ms. Greenwood said the tennis classes are an introduction to tennis and there are no advanced classes offered at this time. The department should offer classes to cultivate interest for growth. Skills are taught and then kids go elsewhere for the training they need.

Mr. Glick began the Fitness & Adult Programs Annual Report. He said program areas included special events, yoga classes, dance classes, aerobics and strength training classes, adult enrichment classes, and the Healthy Visalia Committee. He said his staff consists of Ramsey Ochoa, Coordinator, fitness and dance instructors, adult program instructors and independent contractors.

Mr. Glick said special events have decreased this year and he believes it is due to increased public interest in run events. Beginning the third week of September, ending in late November there are run events scheduled every weekend. He said five years ago, almost no runs were offered.

	<u>2012-13</u>	<u>2013-14</u>
Tule Fog Run	537	413
Spooky Sprint	216	156
Corporate Games	no event	15 teams
Healthy Visalia Festival	32 booths	10 booths

Corporate Games will begin on September 26 and end October 10. Mr. Glick said his personal goal was to have 18 teams this year.

Mr. Glick said Yoga classes continue to grow and the instructor is Dina Restivo.

	<u>2012-13</u>	<u>2013-14</u>
Evening Yoga	129	100
Morning Yoga	61	98
Gentle Yoga	66	92
Low Impact Yoga	139	166
Chair Yoga	no class	20
Advanced Yoga	no class	22
Power Yoga	no class	6

Mr. Glick noted that Ms. Restivo has received a Pilate’s certification and plans are to implement a Yogalates class, which is a combination of Yoga and Pilates moves.

Mr. Glick reported that dance classes have really begun to be popular. Line dancing is so popular that an intermediate class is now offered. The Senior Center holds a line dance class on Monday afternoons that has 40 participants.

	<u>2012-13</u>	<u>2013-14</u>
Line Dance	153	201
Intermediate Line Dance	no class	26
Wedding Dance	no class	10
Ball Room Dance	34	42
Salsa Dance	no class	28
Merengue Dance	no class	17
Belly Dance	91	37

Mr. Glick stated that over the years it has been difficult maintaining instructors for these classes. However, the instructors are currently stable and we are seeing a difference.

	<u>2012-13</u>	<u>2013-14</u>
Boot Camp	37	44
Low Impact Fitness	no class	35
Lunch Time Fit	no class	43
Core Challenge	no class	28
Balance & Coordination	no class	8
Couch to 5k	no class	35

New classes have been implemented this year. Mr. Glick said the current Spanish teacher is a former High School teacher and the class has gained stability. He said in the future, the Face Book class will include Twitter and Pinterest, the class will be 4 weeks, and each week will be themed.

	<u>2012-13</u>	<u>2013-14</u>
Conversational Spanish	50	28
Intermediate		
Conversational Spanish	42	11
How to Sell on EBay	51	39
Apple iPhones & U	no class	38
Face Book	30	12
The Art of Photography	24	17
Table Tennis	60	58
Pickle Ball	no class	23

Mr. Glick serves on the Healthy Visalia Committee, which meets weekly. Other member organizations include. Kaweah Delta Health Care District, Visalia Unified School District, Family Health Care Network, Tulare County Health & Human Services, College of the Sequoias, Tulare First 5, and Tulare County Office of Education. At the meetings everyone reports their activities and discusses possible new events.



Mr. Glick said the new event for this year is Just Walk with a Doc. This program offers free 30- to 45-minute doctor-led walks in parks, and participants can talk about whatever they want to with the doctor.

Mr. Glick said goals for 2014-15 include beginning a program to educate participants on the benefits of health and wellness, recruiting great instructors and teachers, research new and innovative classes, family programming, and expanding Corporate Games.

5. Proposal to Establish Children Only Areas in Designated City Parks Under the California Penal Code Section 653b(a).

Mr. Elizondo said the idea for a Children Only Playground began about 4 years ago, and was suggested by Mr. Ricardo Noguera, Economic Development Director for the City of Visalia. Mr. Noguera previously worked for the City of San Francisco and said there were several parks where this program had been implemented.



Mr. Elizondo stated this photograph symbolizes what the issues are in some City parks. He said the photo was taken in the three to twelve year old play area at the Lincoln Oval Park.

Mr. Elizondo said that when parents bring their children to a park and see this situation they might feel threatened and intimidated. He said this has fueled the idea of a children only play area.

Mr. Elizondo said that in researching the idea, many cities have adopted children only playgrounds using ordinances or the penal code to create them. The following signs have been utilized by the cities of San Francisco and Fairfield, California.



Mr. Elizondo stated the penal code interprets the law to mean a City can only place the signs at a play area; a specific area designated to children. He said adults do have the right to be in the other open space areas in the park.

Mr. Elizondo stated the area under consideration for this designation is the children's playground at Village Park, located at the Wittman Center. The park is only four tenths of an acre and has four sections, 1) the children's playground area, 2) basketball courts, 3) an open space area used for events and games, and 4) a picnic area. Surrounding the park are four non-profit businesses Proteus, the Boy Scouts building, CSET and the Visalia Police Precinct.

Mr. Elizondo said that Mr. Ludekens, a leader for the Boy Scouts of America, gathered a group of stake holders in the Community Campus area to discuss the challenges at Village Park. He said many ideas were presented at the meeting, one of which was to designate the park as children only. Mr. Elizondo said he spoke with Mr. Koontz, City attorney, but he did not ask specifically about the possibility of a "Children only park." Mr. Elizondo stated that it was Mr. Koontz's advice that the City use the California Penal Code as the basis to proceed with a children only playground. He added however, that if a group of 18 year old young men were playing basketball they would not belong there due to their age.

Mr. Elizondo said the staff recommends the Parks and Recreation Commission to accept the staff report; accept public testimony, and forward a recommendation to the City Council. Staff supports the concept of a Children's Park using the California Penal Code, Section 653, for designated City parks.

Chairperson Calhoun asked members of the audience to step to the podium with their comments.

Mr. Juan Guerrero, Director of Wittman Village Community Center, said he and others have been concerned about this park for many years. He said dysfunctional and intoxicated people hang out at the park. He stated there have been problems with drug addicts (methamphetamines and heroin) and gangs. He stated he supports the children only park concept.

Mr. Guerrero said in the month of June there were 151 kids at the center. During Summer Night Lights there were 210 kids. He said many of the people who are addicts and drinkers need help and he directs them to the Rescue Mission often, but he is concerned about the welfare of the children. Mr. Guerrero said bigger signage would help adults know the rules, and perhaps get the message.

Mr. Guerrero said he brought some signed petitions supporting the children only park and he would like to give them to the department. They were given to Ms. Miernik for the record.

Mr. Bob Ludekens said he has been involved with the Boy Scouts for many years and graduated from UCLA with a major in Recreation. He said he has hosted a few meetings regarding the issues at the Community Campus and he has served many years on the Gang Task Force.

Mr. Ludekens said the Campus was created for the youth of the City, and he supports the children only park. He said he would like to see a committee formed to create a plan for the area.

Mr. Curt Salierno said he works at the Visalia Rescue Mission, lives in the area, and he said he also supports the children only park and keeping the kids safe.

Mr. Ryan Stillwater said he is the Oval Venue Coordinator at the Visalia Rescue Mission, and as a parent, he supports the concept of a children only park. He said using Village Park as the pilot project is a good choice.

Mr. Stillwater said there is some confusion about the Shopping Cart Ordinance. Code Enforcement has been in the park removing shopping carts and placing items in the storage containers. When taking the items the Enforcement Officer uses the words “unattended personal items.” The Ordinance does not refer to items in this manner. He said he would appreciate continued dialog with Code Enforcement to ensure that everyone is on the same page.

Commissioner Peter Thomas stated that during the discussion of the report it was brought up that 18 year olds might play basketball at Village Park, see the signs, and thereby “get the message.” He asked exactly what that meant.

Mr. Elizondo stated this issue would arise if the complete park was designated as children only. He stated he is unclear if the City can actually do this and he will consult with the City attorney and report to the Commission.

Mr. Guerrero replied that his interest is in a children only park. He said when dealing with citizens causing problems, drinking, drugs, or gangs, he assertively lays claim to the park for the children and asks them to leave. He said if there are large signs that say Children Only Park, it will help deter problems and spread the message.

Commissioner Thomas asked if it would be possible to enlarge the signs.

Mr. Elizondo said it would be considered. He said signage is always an issue due to different languages, location, and how many.

Commissioner Kent asked Mr. Guerrero about the utilization of the basketball courts during his programming at the Witt man Center. He asked if the children’s area was fenced could anyone use the courts.

Mr. Guerrero replied that the courts are never used by his program participants, they use the inside courts at the center. The courts would be available for use by anyone.

Commissioner Mann asked how the Penal Code read related to the park situation.

Mr. Elizondo read from a summary of the California Penal Code: The California Penal Code allows you to erect signage restricting designated park areas to children accompanied by adults. Adults without children will not be allowed in certain park areas, typically in an area of the park with children’s play equipment.

Commissioner Mann asked Mr. Guerrero if the picnic benches would be in or out of the fenced area and would that be part of the children only section.

Mr. Guerrero stated that is a big problem area. This is where the drug addicts and drinkers hang out and he would want it to be fenced with the playground. He said if the courts were sectioned off for adults and the other areas were fenced for children only, it would be very workable.

Mr. Salierno disagreed. He said the homeless problem will not abate without designating it all as a children only park. He said if the courts were fenced it wouldn’t be a problem, but as it is now, it’s a problem.

Mr. Ludekens reiterated his opinion that a committee should be formed to develop a detailed plan for the children only play area.

Commissioner Calhoun suggested there could be legal issues that need to be considered.

Mr. Elizondo stated he would consult with the City attorney to see if it is possible to do what the Commission is considering. He will return next month with the information.

Commissioner Kent informed the Commission that he researched the internet for other cities that have done this. He said it was recently done in Columbia, South Carolina. He said he printed out a timeline of the process and there was very little opposition. The opposition came from the ACLU, who said, paraphrased, public parks are just that – places for the public. The ACLU did not file against Columbia but there might be more opposition in different areas.

Commissioner Calhoun called for a motion.

Commissioner Mann moved to approve the staff recommendation as presented, with the additional recommendation that City staff check with the City’s legal counsel about clarifying any remaining questions regarding the proposed children’s only area, and forward the recommendation to the City Council for approval.

MOTION

Motion passed 4-0

6. **Review of Parks & Recreation Commission Goals & Objectives.** Commissioner Calhoun said the goals and objectives in the packets have been updated since the last meeting. She said previously, there was more information regarding sustainability, collaboration, and advocacy in the goals, and she would like to reflect on this with her notes and make changes to the form. She asked the Commissioners if they had any suggestions or comments.

Hearing no comments, Commissioner Calhoun said she would send the revision via email to the Commissioners.

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

- **Upcoming Recreation Programs & Special Events.** Ms. Greenwood said summer programming continues with strong enrollments. Swim teams finished last weekend and the finals were held in Lindsay. Friday, August 1, will end the aquatics season with 888 swim lessons.
 - Fishing Derby – participants weighed in 93 catfish; and the event had 214 participants.
 - Movies in the Park – we continue to see 300 to 400 viewers each week.
 - Dive In Movies – the average participants is 160 each week.
 - Concerts in the Park – the second event was held at Soroptimist Park and over 100 attended.
 - Summer Nights Lights – 150 people attended last Friday evening.
 - Discount registration was held last Saturday for youth sports with over 175 registrations.
 - Summer Food Service Program – 150 meals per day at three sites: Manuel F. Hernandez Community Center, Anthony Community Center, and Whitendale Community Center.
 - Specialty Camps – 530 participants. This included Aquatics Adventure, basketball, Creative Minds Art, Culinary Kids, Dinosaur Diggers, Fashion, Golf, Lego, Jr. Police Academy, Fire, Princess, Science, volleyball, and Zookeeper Camps.
 - Kids Club Day Camp averaged 80 participants per day, up 25 from 2013.

Ms. Greenwood said the Fall/Winter brochure will hit the mail in early August. Concerts in the Park are held the second Saturdays of the month, and August 9th the concert will be at Lions Park. Ms. Greenwood said ***the 75th Anniversary Celebration will be held Saturday, November 1 at Plaza Park***, which will conclude with a movie in the park that evening. She also announced that the Coordinator recruitment opens tomorrow and closes August 22.

Commissioner Blue asked if the swim finals were held last week and if there were any statistics on how many Visalia kids went. He said there were 1,824 swimmers at the event.

Ms. Greenwood said she didn't have that information but she would follow-up on it.

Commissioner Mann said Mr. Ludekens wants programming for teens instituted and she asked what is currently available for teens.

Ms. Greenwood stated that teen programs are difficult because teens don't want to sign up and commit to attend. Drop-in programs are best for them. She also noted that she has not heard of any new programs that work with the age group. She said in her experience, working in other agencies, the most impact can be made when children are younger, 5 to 8 years old.

Commissioner Calhoun said that CSET has a Junior Leadership Program and a Tech Connect Program for rural areas that engage 15 to 20 kids in a 9 month program. They meet once or twice a week to do community service projects in their community, and it requires intensive staffing.

Ms. Greenwood said the department offers a Junior Leader/Junior Life Guard program that is for the tweens, 12 years and over. She said they are utilized in the swim programs and day camps.

Commissioner Mann asked for information on the Loop Bus.

Ms. Greenwood said the number of riders is up, almost 100 per day, but most riders are younger siblings or groups of younger kids. Riders are between the ages of 5 and 18 and parents must sign paperwork for them to participate. She said many children use the Loop Bus to walk to the Redwood High School pool for public swim.

Mr. Elizondo stated the Loop Bus is a program that was born about 5 years ago out of a Gang Task Force that included a number of different entities in the City. The Gang Task Force interviewed the youth service providers, i.e., Proteus, Girls & Boys Club, and YMCA, and asked what their biggest challenge was in providing their services. They agreed that it was transportation to get children to the centers without gang interference. Mr. Elizondo said the Loop Bus was presented to Council and they funded the bus, which makes a loop around the city taking riders from one center to another.

- **Upcoming Parks & Urban Forestry Projects, Programs & Special Events.**

- Playground Safety Material -Wood carpet replenishment is on-going to start in various park playgrounds.
- Installed a new variable frequency panel at Sunset Park for the well to allow us to utilize the irrigation to its fullest.
- The Park Supervisor Position will be advertised tomorrow and closes on 8/12.
- The pickle ball courts are still on hold at this time.
- The Riverway Sports Park has experienced some irrigation issues but is back on line. We will be aerating and fertilizing soon.

Commissioner Calhoun asked what the impact is of the watering restrictions on the turf or shrubs in the parks.

Mr. Fultz replied that the parks with older irrigation systems are showing stress. Loss of some trees and shrubs in the hotter climate is expected. Most of the parks are looking good despite the restrictions.

Commissioner Calhoun asked if the losses could be quantified. Mr. Fultz replied that less than 20 trees have been lost.

- **Director's Report on Administrative Items.** Ms. Tracy Robertshaw, after working with legal counsel for months, will be presenting two items at the next Council meeting. In past months, she presented them to the Commission and gained support of them. The first request will be to restrict hours in certain parks, and the second will be the length of time a person might be refused entry into a park after a citation – 3 months, 6 months, etc.

Mr. Elizondo said City staff will be going to Council soon to ask them to award a contract to a consultant to begin the design process for the Eastside Regional Park, which is 240 acres. He asked the Commissioners to think about this because Council will request a Commissioner to sit on a planning committee. He said he has no dates at this time, but the committee will meet on a week night once every 2-3 weeks for 5 months or so. He also said Ms. Greenwood is working with a Task Force to develop a new community center with a pool on the south side of town. He said the location will be near Perry Family Park, on Visalia Parkway. Mr. Elizondo said the Council will request a Commissioner for that project committee also.

8. Commissioner's Requests & Comments:

- **North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory Committee.** No report.
- **Senior Citizens Advisory Committee.** Commissioner Mann reported that the Seniors Open House is slated for September.

Ms. Greenwood reported that the Saturday Night Dance Program is doing well financially and they donated funds to the Foundation account. She also said the meal program is averaging 46-48 per day.

Commissioner Mann added that she was walking her dog, Patches, in Sunset Park this morning, and she realized how much parks really do make her life better. She said she believes in the mission of the Parks & Recreation Department.

- **Parks & Recreation Foundation.** *Vacant.* Ms. Greenwood stated this year's 4th of July Celebration show was lower in the sky compared to last year. She said the shells were smaller due to the fallout zone required for the larger shells, and it was a little problematic for staff members. Smoke, debris and a shell, fell into the stadium area where city staff was standing and it concerned her. She said this reinforces the Fire Department's opinion that the event needs to move to a larger site. She said the public enjoyed the show overall. She said she spoke to Carol Hays, the director of the Foundation, and she has one potential sponsor to take over the event but he has not confirmed yet. Ms. Greenwood said attendance was down but it was also a Friday night and very hot.

Mr. Elizondo clarified to the Commissioners that as liaisons to these committees they do not have to attend the meetings, they are welcome to, but if they can't its ok. They should connect with the secretaries of the committee to get the highlights of the meetings to report to the Commission.

Commissioner Kent said he would be happy to report the highlights of the Foundation to the Committee but he could not attend the meetings.

- **Waterways & Trails Committee Report.** No report.

9. Adjourn to the Regular Meeting, August 19, 2014, at the Council Chambers at 707 W. Acequia Street, at 5:30 pm.

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

MOTION

Motion passed 4-0

Brenda Miernik
Senior Administrative Assistant