

Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission
Meeting Minutes October 21, 2014

1. Call Meeting to Order/Roll Call

The Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission met in a regular meeting on Tuesday, October 21, 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, Ben Filiponi, and Jason Kent.

Absent: Peter Thomas

Staff: Vince Elizondo, Jeannie Greenwood, Jeff Fultz, Laurissa Gallardo, and Brenda Miernik

2. Review and Approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting, September 16, 2014. Commissioner Calhoun called for a motion to approve the September 16 meeting minutes. Commissioner Kent moved to approve the minutes as presented, and Commissioner Blue seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 5 -0

3. Public Comment: None.

4. Review of City's Oak Tree Report. Mr. Joel Hooyer, Parks and Urban Forestry Supervisor, said the department strives to educate residents about their legal and financial responsibilities with privately owned Valley Oak trees. He said residents need to know the procedures required by the Oak tree ordinance.

Mr. Hooyer provided the following information.

- At one time, Valley Oaks covered 400 square miles.
- Since 1992, Valley Oaks have been planted in an effort to sustain and maintain the Oak forest.
- In 1971, Visalia City Council adopted the first Oak Tree Preservation Ordinance in order to preserve the diminishing oaks from urbanization.
- The ordinance required a permit to remove a Valley Oak; and an "Intent to Prune Form" to trim a tree.

Mr. Hooyer explained the purpose of the ordinance is to preserve Valley Oak tree forest and to attain a healthy, vigorous, safe, and well managed community forest. The goal is to implement proper management of Oaks by identifying hazards and replanting as necessary.

Mr. Hooyer stated there are many misconceptions of the Oak tree ordinance including trimming and removal of private Valley Oak trees. He said privately owned trees should be pruned and structurally inspected every three years. "Intent to Prune" forms are approved except under the following circumstances: the tree service is uninsured, does not hold a valid license, or lacks proper pruning standards.

Mr. Hooyer said even healthy trees can fail and residents are legally responsible for Oak trees on their property. He said he advises residents to have their trees evaluated and inspected periodically and should prune to reduce canopy mass and dead weight.

Mr. Hooyer cited the following facts about City maintenance for Valley Oak trees.

- Approximately 1,600 City right-of-way Valley Oaks are maintained by the City of Visalia.
- This number includes trees in the medians and within the 10 foot right-of-way on main arterial streets.
- Some of the trees are City owned and some are privately owned.
- The privately owned trees are maintained by the City because they are in the City's right-of-way.
- City maintained trees are trimmed by West Coast Arborists.
- City trees are trimmed on a 4-6 year cycle to prevent potential failures.
- City Council continues to try and balance the issue with private owners and advisory groups by revising the ordinance periodically.
- The California Department of Forestry offers grants to assist with the inventory of 2,000 Valley Oak trees on private property.

Mr. Hooyer stated that there have been recent tree failures in Visalia, and the impact to property owners can be great. He encourages residents to be proactive in identifying any defects or problems with their trees and many tree services in Visalia are knowledgeable.

Mr. Hooyer noted some of the revisions to the ordinance from 2009 to 2013 include the following.

- 209 requests to remove Oak trees were granted.

- Eight (8) requests to remove Oak trees were denied.
- One (1) Valley Oak was removed illegally.
- 279 Intent to Prune requests were processed.
- Provisions allow removal of an Oak if the tree substantially interferes with the “economic enjoyment” of the property owner.



Mr. Hooyer said citizens have the right to hire their own certified arborist to provide an opinion or recommendation when there is a question of removal of a Valley Oak tree on private property.

He said the City has a Mitigation Policy in place for tree removal that includes specific in-kind mitigation to be allowed on City-owned property where appropriate, thereby property owners can avoid a large fee. When fees are levied against a property owner the fees are deposited into a Low Income Assistance Program to assist private

property owners to trim Valley Oaks on their property.

Mr. Hooyer said the City strives to educate citizens of their rights and responsibilities pertaining to the care and maintenance of Valley Oak trees. The City website provides the necessary forms and ordinance for easy access. The Urban Forestry Division provides information packets to citizens who request them. In addition, an article is submitted annually to the local paper to educate the public. Mr. Hooyer asked if there were any questions.

Mr. Elizondo informed the Commission that when a citizen purchases property that has Valley Oaks present, the buyer is given a brochure by the realtor that informs them of the City ordinance and the regulations.

Commissioner Calhoun asked if the Policy addresses someone who would allow an Oak tree to die, for instance if they stopped watering it. Mr. Hooyer said it would be addressed on a case-by-case basis and if it was discovered that the intent was to kill the Oak tree they could possibly be subject to mitigation fees.

Commissioner Kent asked if the City recommends tree services to citizens. Mr. Hooyer said the City cannot recommend services but they can provide a list of available tree services.

- 5. Annual Marketing Report.** Ms. Lambert, Recreation Supervisor, stated the marketing approach of the department is holistic, and all marketing plans and outreach are based on our place in the local economy and in the lives of our customers. She said there are four components of holistic marketing: 1) relationship marketing, 2) integrated marketing, 3) socially responsive marketing, and 4) internal marketing. She said the department’s philosophy is that by engaging the community allows for successful marketing management and will ultimately keep us connected to customers, build loyalty, create brand ambassadors, communicate value and create long-term growth.

Ms. Lambert stated the Live and Play brochure is the strongest marketing tool the department has. It is produced four times each year and 55,000 copies are distributed each season. The readership is at 212,500 copies and we produce a kid’s edition that is distributed to the school district.

Ms. Lambert said the second strongest tool the department uses is the website – www.liveandplayvisalia.com. Our newest addition is the Visalia Senior Center and Adult Information postings. We have 278 visitors each day through web searches. Throughout the year, a team comprised of multiple City of Visalia staff members have been working on the official City website. As part of that team, Parks & Recreation has had a voice in the new design and it will launch December 2014.

A key piece of the department website is the on-line registration feature. Any customer is able to set up a free on-line registration account after submitting their information via the web and staff members in the business office will set them up with a user name and login. Ms. Lambert provided this snapshot of the on-line registration growth.



08/09 FY – 2.5% Online revenue - \$28,685

13/14 FY – 16% On-line revenue - \$222,206

Ms. Lambert said social media continues to be a key part of our marketing approach, as we maintain Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and new for 2014, an Instagram account. With the exception of Facebook, each of our social media channels can be found under @VisaliaParks. Perpetuating our brand and making sites streamlined.

Ms. Lambert stated eBlasts are very useful to the department. They create consistent messaging and verifies with the customers that the e-mail is official department communication.

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

- **Upcoming Recreation Programs & Special Events.** Ms. Greenwood reported the following.
 - A Concert in the Park was held at Blain Park on October 11 was. It went well with about 100 participants, and Borrowed Time performed. The same day Parly went on an excursion and visited the Child Safety Event at Adventure Park and the Fire Department Open House. He also stopped by AYSO and handed out fliers for department events.
 - The 4th Annual Derrick Shaw Memorial Skate Competition was held Saturday, October 18th, with 21 competitors and over 100 spectators. The event took place at Providence Skate Park at Recreation Park.
 - A discount registration day was held at the Anthony Community Center for Youth Basketball on October 18, from to am to 12 pm.
 - The Spooky Sprint will be held this Saturday, October 25th, beginning at 7 am, at Cutler Park. Everyone is encouraged to come in his or her costumes and have fun. There will be a 5K run/walk. The same evening, we will host our first Soccer Saturday Night. This is a new event this year where we will show a live broadcast of the Liga MX – Queretaro versus Club America soccer match on our giant inflatable screen.
 - The 75th Celebration of Parks and Recreation will be held on November 1, at Plaza Park. A lot of time is being invested for this event and it is exciting.
 - City staff is currently working on their spring work plans for the spring brochure.
- **Upcoming Parks & Urban Forestry Projects, Programs & Special Events.**
 - The Pickle ball courts are about 90% complete; there are final inspections are required.
 - Signs announcing the new ordinance (hours change) for Oval, Seven Oaks, Provident Skate and Pappas Parks have been installed and are being monitored.
 - Playground safety material (wood mulch) has been installed in various parks.
 - Make a Difference Day is this coming Saturday, October 25th at 8:30 am. Park project includes Ruiz, John Combs, Pinkham, and Mill Creek Gardens Parks. Everyone is welcome to participate. Packwood Creek at McAuliff and Tulare is the main staging area where everyone will meet.
 - The painting at Riverway Sports Park is in its final stages. We have repainted the arbors and restrooms.
 - The Children Only park signs for Village Park have been ordered and they will be installed as soon as we receive them.
- **Director’s Report on Administrative Items.** Mr. Elizondo stated the General Plan has been adopted by City Council. He said the West Highway 198 Open Space area with a 200 foot setback along the freeway was discussed and adopted as a policy.

Mr. Elizondo reported that Commissioner Thomas is an intern for one of the legislators running for office right now and he is out campaigning tonight. The election is November 2, so he is very busy right now.

8. Commissioner’s Requests & Comments:

- **Community/Aquatic Center Ad Hoc Committee.** Commissioner Shann said the Committee met and Mr. Elizondo had some examples of types of aquatics centers and community centers, which were very helpful. He also provided some maps of the intended area. He said the members discussed parking and aspects of the project but they are just getting started.

Mr. Elizondo stated the next step would be to put out an RFP, Request for Proposal, from other cities and work on a draft proposal for our committee. Once the committee is happy with a draft it will go to consultants to start the process of selecting a consultant. He noted the importance of selecting a consultant is that even though this is just a small part of the process, it could mean continuing work for the chosen consultant through many phases of the project.

- **North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory Committee.** No report.
- **Senior Citizens Advisory Committee.** Commissioner Mann said the Committee has met twice since the last Parks & Recreation meeting. She said the lunch numbers are up and they have had some discussions regarding the sign for the Senior Center. It seems many people don’t know where the Center is.

Ms. Greenwood said they discussed priority projects and the funding for them. They are interested in doing a mural at the Senior Center. She said the Eagle Scouts have completed the planter project in front of the building. She said the various groups meeting at the Center are doing well. She said the meal counts are doing well; last February we began the meal catering contract and we were doing 35 meals per day. She said the meal count now is 50 per day, and climbing. She said the meals rotate and when something is found not to standards, they are changed. There will be a Halloween luncheon on Friday, October 31, as well as a Thanksgiving one also.

Commissioner Mann asked if seniors are recognized for outstanding service to the community. Ms. Greenwood said she will be recognizing Mr. Acevedo for his work and Senior Pride Bing for the tables they provided at the Senior Center.

Mr. Elizondo said Senior Center volunteers are recognized for their service annually.

Commissioner Mann asked if we had a new employee yet. Mr. Elizondo said the department has tentatively offered a position to a young man, highly referenced, for the Parks Maintenance Supervisor.

Ms. Greenwood stated she has tentatively offered the Recreation Coordinator position to Eric Ferreira. She said he graduated from Fresno State with a degree in Recreation, and he interned for the department five years ago. She said he should be on board by next month's Commission meeting.

- **Parks & Recreation Foundation.** Commissioner Kent reported that the Foundation had a booth at the Healthy Visalia Festival, and will have one at the 75th Celebration event. He said the Foundation is selling raffle tickets for \$5 each and prizes are a big screen TV, an Apple iPad mini, and dinner for two in Monterey, California. The drawing will be held December 3 at the Anthony Center. Mr. Kent said the Foundation is also having a membership drive and the cost is \$25.
- **Waterways & Trails Committee Report.** Commissioner Filiponi said the Committee is still working on some smaller projects. He said he has pictures of the new bike racks and bike walkers and he will email them to Ms. Miernik for distribution. He said it has been awhile since the Committee has met with City Council and Josh is creating the presentation for the meeting.
- **Public Arts Task Force Report.** Commissioner Mann says the Force has not met yet.

9. Adjourn to the Regular Meeting, November 18, 2014, at the Council Chambers at 707 W. Acequia Street, at 5:30 pm.

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

MOTION

Motion passed 5-0

Brenda Miernik,
Senior Administrative Assistant