

**Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**December 16, 2014**

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

The Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission met in a regular meeting on Tuesday, December 16, 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 5:31 pm.

**Present:** Carla Calhoun, Lesa Mann, Shann Blue, Ben Filiponi, and Peter Thomas

**Absent:** Jason Kent

**Guests:** Gary Alvarez, President, Visalia Youth Softball Association

**Staff:** Vince Elizondo, Jeannie Greenwood, Jeff Fultz, Allison Lambert, and Brenda Miernik

- 2. Review and Approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting, November 18, 2014.** Commissioner Calhoun called for a motion to approve the November 18 meeting minutes. Commissioner Mann noted that Item 11 should read "Adjourn to the next regular meeting on December 16, 2014." Commissioner Mann moved to approve the minutes as amended, and Commissioner Filiponi seconded the motion.

**MOTION**

Motion passed 4 -0

- 3. Public Comment:** None.

- 4. Introduction of Tim Skobel, new Parks Maintenance Supervisor.** Mr. Jeff Fultz, Parks and Urban Forestry Manager, said he is pleased to present Mr. Tim Skobel, the new Parks Maintenance Supervisor. He comes from the Los Angeles area, and previously worked in Whittier for eleven years as a Senior Parks Maintenance Worker. He worked for the Long Beach Harbor Department as a Park Maintenance Supervisor. Mr. Skobel holds a Bachelor's Degree in Park Administration from Cal Poly, Pomona, and he is a Certified Arborist and holds a Pesticide Advisors License.

Commissioner Calhoun asked Mr. Skobel what he envisioned for the City of Visalia. Mr. Skobel stated he has a strong background in Park Maintenance, with 25 years of experience. He said he feels capable of completing the goals of the department and he is pleased to be here.

Commissioner Mann asked him if he has seen any innovations or new things that might be brought to Visalia. Mr. Skobel replied that he is learning about the Rain Master system and it is very similar to what he has worked with in the past. He noted the Oak Tree program in Visalia and that City staff really takes pride in the parks.

- 5. Organizational Update by Mr. Gary Alvarez, President, Visalia Youth Softball Association.** Ms. Jeannie Greenwood, Recreation Manager, said the department has several contracts with outside user groups to use City facilities. She said Visalia Youth Softball is one of them and they have utilized the Whitendale Park for over 30 years. She said Mr. Alvarez is going to present how the organization is operated, what their participation numbers are, and what their future needs are. As the City continues to seek new developments, i.e., the last phase of the River Way Sports Park and the Eastside Regional Park, which is entering a planning phase, it is good to know what the future needs are in the community.

Mr. Gary Alvarez, President of the Visalia Youth Softball Association (VYSA), said his goals are to make a difference in children's lives, and to foster development of amateur softball in the valley. He said VYSA has been around since 1976, a member of the Amateur Association since 1980, and has been recognized Central California as one of the top ten Associations for registrations for the last ten years.

Mr. Alvarez noted the following statistics.

- In 2014, VYSA had 374 kids registered. Once registration closed approximately 150 applicants were turned away due to lack of field space and coaching.
- In 2013 VYSA had 355 registrations and again, turned away applicants.
- In 2015, VYSA is anticipating over 400 applicants, and may have to turn away applicants.

Mr. Alvarez said that VYSA has players as young as 4 years old, and as old as 14 years. He said skills range from never having played before to A-ballplayers; he said VYSA provides training, guidance, and the assistance necessary to each team to insure that every player receives a fair and quality experience. He said many participants go on to play on Middle and High School teams.

Mr. Alvarez reported that the season runs from the first Saturday in March through the first weekend in May. VYSA hosts the "Best of the West" Tournament including 20 teams; 17 teams from Bakersfield, Lemoore, Fresno, Clovis and Hanford. He said at some point in time VYSA would like to have their own complex comparable to the CR Shannon Complex. He thanked the Commission for allowing him to speak to them regarding the needs of VYSA.

Mr. Elizondo asked what the percentage is between male and female players. Mr. Alvarez replied the players are all female.

Commissioner Calhoun asked if the final phase of Riverway Sports Park will include softball fields. Mr. Elizondo stated the plan will include four fields to be constructed and Council has already designated them for youth softball. However, funding is not available at this time.

Mr. Elizondo said VYSA now utilizes 4 softball fields at Whitendale Park and could potentially have 5 with the field located at the nearby school. Mr. Alvarez stated the field is not maintained well.

Mr. Elizondo asked how Riverway would help VYSA when there would still only be four fields available. Mr. Alvarez stated VYSA begins playing at 5:30 pm during the week and it gets dark quickly. Games have to be called because players can't see. Mr. Elizondo said that prior presidents of VYSA have stated that travel teams have become popular in recent years and participation has suffered because of it. He asked Mr. Alvarez what his opinion was. Mr. Alvarez stated that travel teams often come into play when a parent becomes disgruntled with events so they form a travel team. He said many times a child will go from one travel team to another costing their parents hundreds of dollars.

Mr. Alvarez stated that the board of VYSA is stable and striving for transparency in their business practices and parents are encouraged to attend board meetings.

**6. Review and Approve the Annual Plaza Raceway Schedule.** Ms. Greenwood, Recreation Manager, said that since 2001 Plaza Park Raceway has been leased to an outside vendor. The current agreement with Plaza Park Raceway, LLC began on January 1, 2012, and will be in effect for a three (3) year term, through December 2014, with the option of adding two (2) additional one (1) year terms.

Ms. Greenwood said last year the lease was sold by Scott Woodhouse to KE Productions and since that time the City has reviewed the background and qualifications of KE Promotions. The City has provided Mr. Kyle Evans, owner, with a notice to continue the racing season with a modified schedule, under the existing agreement with Plaza Park Raceway, LLC. She said per the terms of the agreement, Plaza Park Raceway has submitted their proposed 2015 racing season. The agreement allows for 28 racing events per year restricted to Fridays with the exception of up to three (3) Saturday evening races per year; there are no minimum races indicated in the contract.

 <b>2015 RACE SCHEDULE</b>						
SAT	7-Mar	PLAYDAY	SUPER 600	NON WING 600	REST 600	JUNIORS
FRI	27-Mar	POINTS RACE #1	SUPER 600	NON WING 600	REST 600	JUNIORS
FRI	10-Apr	POINTS RACE #2	SUPER 600	NON WING 600	REST 600	JUNIORS
FRI	1-May	POINTS RACE #3	SUPER 600	NON WING 600	REST 600	JUNIORS
FRI	15-May	POINTS RACE #4	SUPER 600	NON WING 600	REST 600	JUNIORS
FRI	19-Jun	POINTS RACE #5	SUPER 600	NON WING 600	REST 600	JUNIORS
FRI	3-Jul	BUDWEISER OUTLAW NATIONALS - POINTS RACE#6	SUPER 600	NON WING 600	REST 600	JUNIORS
SAT	4-Jul	BUDWEISER OUTLAW NATIONALS - POINTS RACE#7	SUPER 600	NON WING 600	REST 600	JUNIORS
FRI	7-Aug	POINTS RACE#8	SUPER 600	NON WING 600	REST 600	JUNIORS
FRI	21-Aug	POINTS RACE#9	SUPER 600	NON WING 600	REST 600	JUNIORS
FRI	28-Aug	POINTS RACE#10	SUPER 600	NON WING 600	REST 600	JUNIORS
FRI	4-Sep	GIANT CHEVROLET SUMMER CLASH - POINTS RACE #11	SUPER 600	NON WING 600	REST 600	JUNIORS
SAT	5-Sep	GIANT CHEVROLET SUMMER CLASH - POINTS RACE #12	SUPER 600	NON WING 600	REST 600	JUNIORS
FRI	25-Sep	SUPER 600 NATIONALS - POINTS RACE #13	SUPER 600	NON WING 600	REST 600	JUNIORS
SAT	26-Sep	SUPER 600 NATIONALS - POINTS RACE #14	SUPER 600	NON WING 600	REST 600	JUNIORS
FRI	27-Nov	TURKEY NIGHT	SUPER 600	NON WING 600	REST 600	JUNIORS
SAT	28-Nov	TURKEY NIGHT	SUPER 600	NON WING 600	REST 600	JUNIORS

KE Productions is proposing 16 racing events and one practice day for the next calendar year. Hours of use for race days are 5:30 p.m. until 11:00 p.m. Mr. Evans understands the City's concern for noise pollution and continues to work to have races end by 10:30 p.m.

Ms. Greenwood said KE Productions has paid all fees to date, most in advance. They have also done a significant amount of clean up, maintenance and improvements to the facility. She said City staff

recommends that the Commission approve the proposed 2015 Plaza Park Raceway schedule as submitted by KE Productions.

Mr. Mike Evans stated he has been a business owner for over 30 years and he likes to run race tracks as a hobby. He said he and his family have operated the Lemoore race track successfully for 6 years. He said it has been very pleasureable working with City staff and in his experience Plaza racetrack is the nicest track in California. He said many drivers come from across the United States and they talk about how nice the facility is. Mr. Evans said the family owns and operates several businesses and felt they might need some assistance. They contacted Brandon Morse and he will become a partner on race nights. At one time Mr. Morse ran the Plaza race track so he has the required experience.

Commissioner Mann said the contract allows for up to three Saturday evening races per year and there are 5 races listed. Mr. Morse said "play days" are practices and the Sept 25-26 is a Super 600 Nationals event that brings in many out of town drivers to compete. Commissioner Mann asked Ms. Greenwood if the contract needed changing. Ms. Greenwood said no, this can be handled by Commission approval.

Commissioner Calhoun asked if there were any conflicts with other events at the Park. Ms. Greenwood said the only conflict in the schedule is May 2 and 3, which will be the Renaissance Festival, but the groups are congenial and have worked together in previous years.

Commissioner Calhoun called for a motion. Commisioner Blue moved to approve the schedule as presented, and Commissioner Mann seconded the motion.

#### **MOTION**

Motion passed 4 -0

7. **Review and Approve the new Design Plan for Miki City Park.** Mr. Elizondo said the department, along with the Urban Tree Foundation, is moving forward with plans to construct Miki City Park and the adjacent Mill Creek. The project is possible due to a California State Proposition 84 grant application submitted to complete the projects. Mr. Elizondo stated that funding will come from the grant, \$499,000 and \$175,000 from Park Impact Fees for a grand total of \$674,000. He said the first phase will consist of renovating Mill Creek. The second phase will be creating the Park itself. Due to the State grant, there are limitations on the types of trees and plants that can be used.

Mr. Elizondo reported the following history of the project.

- The City has been exploring options related to recognizing our sister City in Japan – Miki City. Discussion took place over a four month period – June 2005 to September 2005. These discussions concluded with a formal recommendation by the Commission that the vacant parcel located at Mineral King and Stevenson would be the ideal location for a mini-park honoring our sister City.
- As part of the 2006-08 budget process, the Council authorized \$200,000 for design and construction costs related to the development of the vacant parcel.
- On December 18, 2006, Council approved the name of Miki City for the park and approved a contract with Paul Saito and Associates to design the park.
- The objective of this project was to create a beautiful Japanese themed mini-park as a tribute to our sister City, which will be a focal point in the downtown area and a convenient place for using the trail system to rest and enjoy the serenity of the garden.
- Due to tough budgetary times, the project was "frozen" as part of the 2008-10 budget, an action designed to save general fund monies.

Mr. Elizondo stated that City staff recommends that the Commission accept this staff report, accept public testimony, and provide direction and comments as appropriate related to the concept plan.

Tyson Carroll, Project Manager for the Urban Tree Foundation (UTF), informed the Commissioners that Mill Creek is considered a "water way of America" and therefore is protected. He said the renovation process will include members of Wildlife Fish and Game and the Army Corp of Engineers, and could involve 18 months of review. Mr. Carroll said the first grant application was denied and he was advised to include work on Mill Creek in the next application. He said the second application was funded.

Mr. Carroll said he researched how to combine both cultures of the United States and Japan to create a park to pay homage to the sisterhood of Miki City and Visalia. He said during his research he found a landscape architect in



Mr. Elizondo stated Mr. Carroll is working under very precise State guidelines to utilize the funding in the grant. When the park is complete and the grant closed the City can go in and add more amenities to give the Japanese feel to the park.

Commissioner Mann asked if all the trees were evergreen or if there were any that might lose their leaves and change color. Mr. Carroll replied that there are some of both. The plan was to add touches of interest throughout the year.

Commissioner Mann asked Mr. Carroll to describe the trees on Mineral King Avenue. Mr. Carroll said those trees will be Engelmann Oaks, a very rare Southern California native Oak tree that has just begun to be produced again. They are drought tolerant and more vertical than horizontal, which is why he chose them. There are about 40 of them planted along Plaza Drive, between Rigger Drive and Goshen. This tree will drop their leaves in the winter depending on the temperature.

Commissioner Calhoun asked and if it would look like a designed area. Mr. Carroll said it will look like a rock garden with plants around it.

Commissioner Mann asked if he had concerns about Redwood High School in the planning process. Mr. Carroll said that UTF has done trail projects with students before and there will always be a degree of vandalism in that area.

Mr. Elizondo informed the Commission that in the original plan there was nothing on the north side of the creek. He asked Mr. Carroll to explain what the plan is now.

Mr. Carroll said the plan will create a path of travel for the public and the previous City fire chief requested a buffer between the park and their facility.

Mr. Fultz, Urban Forestry Manager, stated that the traffic will come from Kaweah Delta Hospital staff who will add to the eyes-on aspect of the park.

Commissioner Calhoun called for a motion. Commissioner Mann moved to accept the plan as presented with the addition of an archway entrance, if possible. Commissioner Calhoun seconded the motion.

#### MOTION

Motion passed 4 -0

8. **Annual Park Maintenance Report.** Mr. Fultz said his full time staff consists of one Supervisor, 3 Senior Maintenance Technicians, 4 Senior Maintenance Workers, and one Park Ranger. Hourly staff consists of two Maintenance Technicians, five Maintenance Workers, and 1 Park Ranger. Currently the department maintains 269 acres of City park land.

Mr. Fultz reported the following top-dollar contracts that he manages.

- Able Industries – provides janitorial services - \$331,050
- West Coast Arborists – tree care - \$360,000
- Perfect Care Landscaping – provides mowing services - \$280,943
- All Seasons Pool – fountain maintenance - \$94,952

Mr. Fultz said the total cost of contract maintenance is \$1,066,945.

Currently the department has a full time and a seasonal Park Ranger. In fiscal year 2013-14, they spent 1,257 hours patrolling the parks, keeping them safe for public users.

Mr. Fultz said City crews completed numerous irrigation repairs throughout City parks due to breaks in lines, vandalism, renovations, and new construction. Most of which was repaired by City staff using 3,884 man hours. He said park employees work hard to keep parks looking trimmed, weed free, green, and mulched. Staff hours spent in fiscal year 2013-14 was 7,820.

Mr. Fultz said many types of repairs were completed by City staff including park equipment, playground equipment, barbecues, tables, and benches. A slide replacement was completed at Seven Oaks Park, bench repair at Whitendale Park, a horseshoe repair at Summers Park, and at Plaza Park a drain and sump pump for a drinking fountain was installed at Cody Kelly Dog Park. Seven Oaks Dog Park had a drain and sump for a hose bib.



Mr. Fultz stated signs have been posted at the Lincoln Oval Park, Seven Oaks Park, Pappas Park, and Provident Skate Parks, notifying the public that park hours had changed.

He also said Village Park was designated as a “Children Only” area and signs were posted there too.



Mr. Fultz reported the following tasks have been completed.

- Staff, working with a contractor, cleaned up the old Razzari Ford display lot that is now a city owned parking lot at Garden Street and Main. Repairs to the planters and concrete were completed.
- Constitution Park - a drinking fountain was relocated and the arbor was renovated.
- Riverway Sports Park – restrooms, concession stand and arbors were painted.
- Alejandro Ruiz and John Combs Parks – variable frequency drive controllers for well pumps were installed.
- A new Pickle Ball court was created at Recreation Park. It was funded by a Community Development Block Grant.

Mr. Fultz said many volunteer opportunities are available to the residents of Visalia and they include the following.

- Arbor Day – April 26, 2014. The community came together in conjunction with the City of Visalia to plant the Pinkham Park Basin Project located at Pinkham, between K Road and Caldwell.
- A monument was purchased and installed by the Lions Clubs of Visalia at Lions Park.
- Make A Difference Day – Project included planting of 231 trees and shrubs to the Packwood Riparian Trail. Twelve trees were planted at Ruiz Park. Fifteen trees were planted at Combs Park. Light poles were painted at Mill Creek Garden Park.



Mr. Fultz reported that 716 man-hours were spent on the Make a Difference Day projects, with over 142 volunteers.

Mr. Fultz stated that new and continued goals for 2014-15 are to work in conjunction with the community and police department to provide green, clean, and safe parks, to work with the Rotary Club to complete Rotary Park upgrades, to continue to work with

service groups on community projects, and to continue to work with designers and construction contractors to provide the best parks for the City of Visalia.

Mr. Fultz said the department will provide employee training in Maintenance Management, Turf and Irrigation Management, and Playground Inspection. He said staff will continue to detour vandalism and graffiti with quick response for repairs and clean up and using new technology or products to help eliminate unnecessary vandalism.

9. **Election of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson.** Commissioner Blue made a motion to table this item until Commissioner Kent was able to attend. Commissioner Mann seconded the motion.

#### MOTION

Motion passed 4 -0

#### 10. **Update on City Council Reports & City Staff Announcements.**

- **Upcoming Recreation Programs & Special Events.** Ms. Greenwood provided a flyer for the upcoming holiday events at the Visalia Senior Center.

She reported the following.

- Next Monday at 4 p.m. we will be hosting the annual Holiday party at Manual Hernandez Community Center.
- The Pickle Ball courts are open and the grand opening was last Saturday. The Pickle Ball organization attended.
- Saturday, December 20, is our Story Time with Santa event at the Rawhide Room, beginning at 11 a.m.
- The holiday Recital will be held on Thursday evening, December 16, which will showcase the wonderful dance and enrichment classes that have been held. Time is 5:30 to 6:30 pm at the Enchanted Playhouse Theater. The Kinder Care children will also participate.
- Friday is the Holiday Luncheon at the Senior Center, December 19, 2014. It is sold out at 150 tickets. It will begin at 11 a.m.
- A plaque was presented to Senior Pride Bing at the last Council meeting for their continued support to the Senior Center.
- The spring schedules are almost complete. The brochure goes to print in the middle of December.
- Over 700 participants have registered for basketball this season. This is a huge success.

Commissioner Calhoun expressed her appreciation for the work the staff does as they constantly move from one season to another.

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

- The light replacement project at Plaza Park is underway.
- At Blain Park another block wall will be added to the restroom area.
- The lighting and landscape position closed last Friday and we will be interviewing soon. We are hoping to have a person hired by mid-February.

- **Director's Report on Administrative Items.** Mr. Elizondo reminded the Commissioners that some time ago the North Visalia Advisory Committee (NVAC) presented recommendations for the Oval Park to City Council. The Council then asked the Commissioners to select five top priorities from the list. The top request from both the NVAC and the Commission was a new playground. However, Council was more concerned about security and requested more lighting and a security camera to be installed. The second priority from Council was to install a wrought iron fence, three foot high, around the whole eastern part to assist pedestrians crossing the road. This was the plan staff was following.

Mr. Elizondo stated that Mr. Ryan Stillwater, Visalia Rescue Mission coordinator, attended the Council meeting last night and asked the Council to reconsider the plan because things have improved in the park and the camera and security is not necessary. The Council could not act on the request because it was not an agenda item. However, they did take a vote to place it on the January agenda to readdress the needs at the Oval Park.

Mr. Elizondo also noted that the Eastside Regional Task Force has all 13 members now and will proceed in January.

**11. Commissioner's Requests & Comments:**

- **Community/Aquatic Center Ad Hoc Committee.** Commissioner Blue said no meeting has been held.
- **North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory Committee.** No report.
- **Senior Citizens Advisory Committee.** The seniors invited artists to come speak to them about a possible mural on the outside of the building on Fourth Street. Commissioner Mann said she is intrigued by the Trulli Building and would like to tour it. Commissioner Calhoun said she would like to see it also.
- **Parks & Recreation Foundation.** No report.
- **Waterways & Trails Committee Report.** Commissioner Filiponi said Mr. Hickey presented a report to City Council about the committee's annual accomplishments. He said trails were covered. He said the Bike Master Plan was updated. They are planning for their spring events.
- **Public Arts Task Force Report.** This group will begin in January.

**12. Adjourn to the Regular Meeting, January 20, 2015, at the Rawhide Hall of Fame, located at 300 W. Giddings Street, at 5:30 pm.**

Commissioner Blue moved to adjourn and Commissioner Filiponi seconded the motion.

**MOTION**

Motion passed 4-0

Brenda Miernik,  
Senior Administrative Assistant