

**Parks & Recreation Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
November 17, 2015**

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

The Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission met in a regular meeting on Tuesday, November 17, 2015, at the Council Chambers located at 707 W. Acequia, Visalia, California. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Carla Calhoun at 5:30 pm.

**Present:** Carla Calhoun, Ben Filiponi, Shann Blue, Peter Thomas, Justin Sweet, and George Shelton

**Absent:** Jason Kent

**Staff:** Vince Elizondo, Jeannie Greenwood, Jeff Fultz, Tim Skobel, Laurissa Roggenkamp, and Brenda Miernik

**2. Review and Approve the Minutes of the Regular Meetings, September 15, and October 20, 2015.**

Commissioner Calhoun called for a motion. Commissioner Filiponi made a motion to approve the September and October 2015 minutes as presented. Commissioner Blue seconded the motion.

**MOTION**

Motion passed 4-0

**3. Public Comment:** None.

**4. Review of Annual Facilities & Park Reservations Report.** Ms. Greenwood said she and Ms. Roggenkamp would present this report together. She said that facility management includes park reservations, facility reservations, contract management, and facility improvements. Facility management resources include two full-time staff members, two hourly assistants, two Building Attendant II's, and 8 building attendants.

Ms. Greenwood reported that the department has 37 picnic areas available for rental throughout 16 parks. Amenities include covered arbors, restrooms, BBQs, play areas, horseshoe pits, tennis courts, athletic fields, walking trails and more. She reported the following annual comparison.

<u>Bookings</u>	<u>Total Revenue</u>
2015 YTD – 1,021	\$83,289
2014 – 1,112	\$75,446
2013 – 1,007	\$69,249

Ms. Greenwood said the department is now reserving areas without restrooms with additional charges to bring in services (restrooms). She said these areas include Perry Park with 5 rentals, which totaled \$666, Riverway #4 with 60 rentals, which totaled \$6,355, and Garden Street Plaza with 53 bookings, which totaled \$3,950. The grand total of all rentals was \$10,971.

Ms. Roggenkamp said the following facilities are available for rental: the Anthony Community Center, the Whitendale Community Center, the Manuel F. Hernandez Community Center, the Visalia Senior Center, the Rawhide room, and the Trulli Building. She said the facilities are utilized for department classes and programs, parties, faith based functions, meetings, and more. She provided the following comparisons.

<u>Bookings</u>	<u>Total Revenue</u>
2015 YTD – 3,101	\$50,695
2014 – 3,534	\$64,887
2013 – 3,321	\$79,022

Ms. Roggenkamp said that according to this comparison the department is experiencing a decrease in revenue because the department is growing and offering more programs, therefore, there is less facility time to rent out. An example of this is Youth Basketball. In the last three years, this program has expanded by 29% participation.

Ms. Roggenkamp said the department has had some facility improvement projects that include the following:

- Anthony Community Center - new lines were painted for basketball and volleyball. New banners were purchased.
- Manuel F. Hernandez Community Center – new coolers were purchased for the gym.
- Senior Center – new plumbing and floor tiles were replaced, new urinals were installed in the men's restroom, new electrical outlets installed, and new TV's were purchased and installed and donated by Senior Pride Bingo.

- Whitendale Community Center – new interior paint. She said inside the courtyard new gates have been installed with push bars to provide escape in emergency situations, which is a great selling point on rentals. Baby stations were also installed.

Ms. Greenwood noted that the City has facilities that are leased to outside organizations, such as Proteus, that require facility inspections. The City has two leases with Tulare County Office of Education for childcare operations at Manuel R. Hernandez and Fairview Community Centers. The City also has a contract with the Visalia Rescue Mission at the Lincoln Oval Park Service Center to provide referrals for services to the public. Family Focus has been awarded a contract with the state to provide childcare to low income families at Whitendale Park.

Commissioner Filiponi said he visited the Oval Service Center twice and it was not open. He asked if they kept only certain hours. Ms. Greenwood said the Rescue Mission offers very few services to the community and the contract with them expires in 2016. The City is reviewing its options at this time.

Commissioner Calhoun said she noticed that religious services are held at some of the community centers and she asked if the courts are available for public use during those times. Ms. Roggenkamp said the Anthony Center gym is open during services, but is utilized by a City pickleball program. The game room at Manuel F. Hernandez Center is also used by a religious community but the gym is separate from the room.

5. **Annual Review of Parks Maintenance Report.** Mr. Skobel, Parks Supervisor, said his staff consists of three senior maintenance technicians, four senior maintenance workers, and one park ranger. His hourly staff includes two maintenance technicians, five maintenance workers, and one park ranger. He said the department maintains 269 acres of City parks.

Mr. Skobel said he manages maintenance contracts with Able Industries (janitorial services) that total \$331,000, West Coast Arborists (tree maintenance) that totals \$360,000, Perfect Care Landscape (mowing) for a total of \$256,000, and California Pools (fountain maintenance) for a total of \$90,000. The contracts total \$1,036,000, which is the equivalent of 17.2 full time park maintenance employees based on the full cost of an entry level park worker.

Mr. Skobel stated the City has two park rangers. In fiscal year 2015, Homero Alcazar (full time) and Brian Vierra (hourly) spent 1,200 hours patrolling the parks.

Mr. Skobel reported that his staff completed the following projects:

- Crews completed numerous irrigation repairs throughout City parks due to breaks in irrigation lines, vandalism, renovations, and new construction. Man hours used in 2015 were 3,981.
- New Pickleball courts were installed at Recreation Park that included restoration of irrigation valves, lateral lines, and sprinklers.
- Irrigation repair was completed at the Whitendale Park softball infield.
- General planting of trees, shrubs, spreading mulch, applying herbicide for weed control, trimming shrubs and inspecting playground equipment are completed each day throughout City parks.
- Staff repair or replace damaged park features such as fountains, tables, and benches. Skate stops are installed to prevent skateboarding on amenities. Drinking fountains have been internally converted to standard thread sizes in order to make future repairs less expensive.
- Riverway Sports Park – repairs have been made on the rubber matting at the splash pad.
- Lion’s Park received a new park bench, and new benches were installed at Recreation Park at the pickleball courts.
- New park signs were installed at Rotary Park, Riverway Sports Park, and the Visalia Community Campus, District 1.

Mr. Skobel reported the following projects were completed by City contractors:

- Fairview Park received a slide replacement and similar replacements were made at Plaza and Stonebrook Parks.
- New pickleball lines were painted on the tennis courts at Plaza Park and a new gate was installed for easier access. A new outfield fence was installed at ball field 1 and 2. New plumbing and a spout were also added at the park, which will provide recycled water for irrigation and the filling pond in January , 2016.
- The drought problems caused tree issues in 2014-2015. The drought caused the loss of Valley Oaks and Redwoods at Pappas Memorial Park, Recreation Park, and Riverway Sports Park.

Mr. Skobel said his future goals for the department include working in conjunction with the community and police department to provide green, clean, and safe parks. He said he will continue working with the Rotary Club to complete upgrades to Rotary Park. The department will continue to work with service groups on community projects and work with designers and construction contractors to provide the best parks for the City of Visalia. Employees will continue to receive training in Maintenance Management, turf and irrigation management, and playground inspection. He said the department will continue to detour vandalism and graffiti with quick response for repairs and use new technology to help eliminate vandalism.

Mr. Skobel announced that the department has four employees with the following years of service: Scott Pyle, Senior Park Maintenance Technician, with 10 years of service; Alonso Ramirez, Senior Park Maintenance Worker, with 10 years of service; Robert Martinez, Senior Park Maintenance Worker, with 10 years of service; and Cameron Haynes, Senior Park Maintenance Worker, with 15 years of service.

Commissioner Shelton asked if some of the man hours used in 2015 would be better served by the use of a contractor. Mr. Skobel replied that the department has good employees who complete their tasks in a timely fashion and sometimes, when contractors are used, the department loses control over workmanship. He said department employees take pride in their work and it shows in how well the parks look. Mr. Fultz added that he believes utilizing City staff results in better quality and more consistent care of City parks.

Commissioner Calhoun asked if the 269 acres maintained include all the parks in the City. Mr. Fultz said there are 13 pocket parks in the Landscape & Lighting areas and they are maintained by a contractor. The Sports Park Phase V will add another 20 acres, with more parks being planned in the future.

Commissioner Calhoun suggested adding a public education component to the department goals. She said that due to the watering restrictions citizens might not have lawns to play on at their homes but the City has many lovely parks and open spaces to play on and the public needs to learn to utilize these community assets.

Mr. Elizondo said the department has received many phone calls from citizens noting the City's water use in parks. He said many more hours have been spent making repairs to irrigation components this year than in past years due to the drought. The department has been under pressure to make sure the irrigation is efficient and working properly.

Mr. Skobel stated the biggest asset to parks are trees, and they are being carefully watched for distress related to the drought. He said the trees that have been lost have been removed as quickly as possible. Commissioner Calhoun stated she was glad to hear that trees are important to the City.

**6. Report on Make a Difference Day, October 24, 2015.** Mr. Fultz said Lisendra Pond was probably the biggest project undertaken on Make a Difference Day. Other projects included Packwood Ditch and Trail, Rotary Park, Riverbend Park, Constitution Park, Soroptimist Park, Tiffany Ranch Pocket Park, and Riverway Sports Park.

Mr. Fultz reported that volunteers included groups and services from College of the Sequoias, Neighborhood Church, Visalia Rotary Club, City Council Members, Park and Recreation Commissioners, Urban Tree Foundation, Soroptimist Club, City staff and other community members. He said 83 volunteers provided 300 hours on the projects. He said work accomplished included the following: removal of turf from drought affected areas, installation of decomposed granite paths, drought tolerant planting, wood mulch added to particular areas, installation of drip irrigation to replace over head sprinklers, removal of grass that was blocking irrigation causing wasted water, painting cable fence posts, and planting roses.

Mr. Elizondo stated this program speaks to the education of the public on the care and needs of park management, and has been supported by the City for many years. Commissioner Calhoun said she worked at Constitution Park and she connected a volunteer to the Parks and Recreation Foundation in order for the volunteer to make a donation for park maintenance.

**7. Senior Games Report.** Ms. Greenwood said Senior Games began on October 21 and continued through the 25<sup>th</sup>. The games consisted of nine events including archery, softball, table tennis, 5k and 10k road races, bowling, pickleball, horseshoes, tennis and golf. There were 11 age divisions for individual sports and 6 for team sports; the only team sport offered was softball. Three teams played and their ages were 60, 65 and 70. The 70 years old team won.

Ms. Greenwood stated lots of planning took place to have a successful event. Thirty individuals volunteered for the following categories: Sports Commissioners (9), Social Chair, Volunteer Coordinator, Opening Ceremonies Chair, Hospitality Chair, Sponsorships, marketing, awards, registration, and many volunteers. The committee began meeting in June, and a total of eight meetings were held. Staff members served in the following capacities:

Games Director – Jeannie, Games Coordinator – Arianna, Athletic Chairman – Jason and Ramsey, Registration – Leshia, Marketing/Sponsorships – Allison, Opening Ceremonies – Laurissa, Volunteers – Ramon, and logistical Support – Freddy and Eric.

Ms. Greenwood said the Opening Ceremony took place on Wednesday, October 21, with packet pick-up, a vendor fair, and a torch run by the athletes. Dinner was served afterward and was well attended.

Thursday, Day 2, consisted of men's tennis, bowling, table tennis, horseshoes, and softball. Ms. Greenwood said that during the events there was a lot of camaraderie and competition among family members.

Friday, Day 3, consisted of women's tennis, softball, women's pickleball, and table tennis.

Ms. Greenwood stated that on Friday night a social was held at Garden Street Plaza. The Lions Club adopted the event, with Sandy O'Neal spearheading the logistics. Sandy did a wonderful job and had about 30 Lions members assisting her. Borrowed Time, a band previously utilized by the department, was hired for the evening and a great time was had by all.

Saturday, Day 4, consisted of archery, the road races, golf, and men's pickleball.

Sunday, Day 5, consisted of golf and mixed pickleball.

Ms. Greenwood said an intensive marketing plan was created for this event. The department established a membership with the California Senior Games organization. Print media was instituted with the Visalia Times Delta, Valley Voice, Fresno Bee, and the Good Life publications. Small ad packages were purchased from 2-3 radio stations and Univision and Community Calendars were engaged. A website was created just for the Senior Games and social media was used to create interest – Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. A direct marketing campaign was instituted for special interest groups.

Ms. Greenwood reported that a survey was conducted with Survey Monkey and 100 responses were received. Results showed that over 50% of the interest in the games was generated by word of mouth and by the print media.

Ms. Greenwood said that Kaweah Delta Health Care District was the presenting sponsor, seconded by Humana. Other sponsors were Rotary, Jostens, Visalia Vascular, the Times Delta, Raymond James, CalWater, Tucoemas Credit Union, the City of Visalia, American Ambulance, and the Visalia Lions Club. She said over \$20,000 was garnered for the Senior Games.

Over 230 athletes participated in the Games with 271 event registrations. Pickleball was the most popular game followed by table tennis and the 5k and 10k race. She said 162 people attended the Friday night social and 99 participated in the Opening Ceremony. Ms. Greenwood reported that there were representatives from over 50 California cities at the Games, and two from out-of-state. From the region, Bakersfield to Fresno, there were 198 participants, and from Visalia there were 83 participants. Ms. Greenwood stated the message is clear that this event will be even more successful in the future.

Financially, the cost of the event was \$30,000 and revenue was \$29,000. Direct cost expenses, such as full time staff support, was costly. Examples of the expenditures were medals, equipment, and advertising, along with start-up costs – the purchase of 12 pickleball nets. The department also purchased merchandise to sell. She said the event came close to breaking even, minus the staffing costs.

Ms. Greenwood said that a wrap-up meeting was held with the planning committee and staff, and they agreed that the event was hurt by being held one week after the Huntsman World Games in Utah. The Visalia Senior Games team sporting events did not have the participation it would have had because those teams were traveling to Utah. The planning committee felt that if the Games were moved to the spring there would also be more participation. She said feed-back showed that participants would like to play on weekends so it was discussed to play games over two consecutive weekends in the future. Other events were suggested – track & field, men's and women's soccer, and women's volleyball. It was suggested that the event be held in the spring of 2016. Ms. Greenwood said the event requires a lot of staffing and lots of resources and the department really needs planning time for the next event. Other topics of discussion were sanctioning events and adding exhibition sports to involve more locals.

Ms. Greenwood said the current plan is to hold the Senior Games again in 2017, and prior to the event, in 2016, host a pickleball tournament which will get Visalia on the pickleball circuit.

Commissioner Calhoun said she is very impressed for a first effort.

Mr. Elizondo said Councilman Gubler was very supportive for Visalia to host the Senior Games. However, the department is a little guarded about the growth potential and the costs related to it, and the time it takes to gain sponsorships.

**8. Update on City Council Reports & City Staff Announcements.**

- **Upcoming Recreation Programs & Special Events.** Ms. Greenwood said the Senior Center Thanksgiving lunch will be held November 25<sup>th</sup> at 11:15 am. December 18<sup>th</sup> is the Annual Christmas luncheon.
- Basketball sign-ups are taking place now. On discount day over 300 registered.
- Staff is working on their spring work plans, which will lead into the brochure planning.

**9. Upcoming Parks & Urban Forestry Projects, Programs & Special Events.** Mr. Fultz reported the following:

- Work is continuing on the Lincoln Oval Park playground. The equipment has been delivered to the yard and the installation bidding process will begin in the next week or so. The bidding has closed on the wrought iron fencing to go around the equipment and that will go to council for approval. The department is working on the camera and lighting upgrades at this time.
- Ruiz Park is getting new benches and tables.
- Miki City Park plans are progressing with the Urban Tree Foundation.
- The department is continuing the lighting project at Plaza Park. The old telephone pole lights are being replaced and some soil testing is taking place.

Commissioner Thomas asked about the Santa Fe Trail, and Mr. Elizondo suggested inviting Vaughn Melcher to a meeting and Commissioner Calhoun concurred.

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

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

- **Community/Aquatic Center Ad Hoc Committee.** Commissioner Blue said the Committee is in a holding pattern currently. Ms. Greenwood said the RFP has been submitted to Purchasing and is ready to go out for bid. Once the dead-line has been reached the committee will meet to review the information received.
- **Senior Citizens Advisory Committee.** Commissioner Shelton said there was not meeting last month but there is one tomorrow and he will attend.

Commissioner Shelton asked if it is too cost prohibitive to put the ponding basin in before the El Nino happens. Mr. Elizondo responded that it is too costly. However, there is tremendous City Council pressure on Public Works to find places to store water should it rain a lot. He said there is a pit on the property where the Swap Meet is held that could be used, and other areas are being investigated for storage. Commissioner Filiponi said some water areas have head gates that are used to slow water down and help with percolation. He noticed that someone has been cleaning them out for water storage.

- **Parks & Recreation Foundation.** No report.
- **Waterways & Trails Committee Report.** Commissioner Filiponi said Vaughn gave an update last month on trails and he attends most meetings. TCAG is assisting with resources on the Bike Master Plan and printing of the Bike Map. They are going to do the maps bilingual.
- **North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory Committee.** Commissioner Thomas said the residents had questions on the Santa Fe Trail. He said they discussed the homeless encampments located there. He said the members would like to know the exact timeline for the fencing project at Oval Park. Mr. Fultz said once it begins it should be finished by mid-January. Commissioner Thomas asked about the Service Center at Oval Park and noted that the Committee had heard there were going to be changes in leadership. Mr. Elizondo said that many years ago the City entered into an agreement with the Visalia Rescue Mission who was to provide services and programs to the community in that area. Mr. Olmos, City Manager, recently met with the new director of the VRM, and the result was that ways would be sought to have the building open more often and possibly shared by different organizations.

**12. Adjourn to the Regular Meeting, December 15, 2015, at the Council Chambers located at 707 W. Acequia Street, Visalia, CA.**

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

**MOTION**

Motion passed 4-0

Brenda Miernik,  
Senior Administrative Assistant