

Parks & Recreation Commission
Meeting Minutes
December 15, 2015

1. Call Meeting to Order/Roll Call

The Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission met in a regular meeting on Tuesday, December 15, 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, Jason Kent and George Shelton

Absent: Peter Thomas and Justin Sweet

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

2. Review and Approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting, November 17, 2015. Commissioner Calhoun called for a motion to approve the minutes of the November 17, 2015 regular meeting. Commissioner Blue made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, and Commissioner Filiponi seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 4-0

3. Public Comment: None.

4. Review and Approve the Annual Plaza Raceway Schedule. Ms. Greenwood said the City of Visalia has been leasing Plaza Park Raceway to an outside vendor since 2001. The current lease agreement for the park began on January 1, 2012, and was for a three year term, valid through December 2014. The agreement also allowed for two additional one-year extensions. She said the schedule presented tonight, if approved, would be the final year of the existing agreement. She said Mr. Mike Evans is here representing his son, Kyle Evans, and Brandon Morse, Operations, can answer any questions you may have.

Ms. Greenwood said the current vendor, Mr. Kyle Evans, KE Promotions, took over operation of Plaza Park Raceway in March, 2014, and has been the operator for the last two racing seasons.

Ms. Greenwood stated that per the terms of the agreement, Plaza Park Raceway has submitted their proposed schedule for the 2016 season to be reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Commission. The agreement allows for "28 (racing) events per year, restricted to Fridays, with the exception of up to three Saturday evening races per year." The contract does not specify a minimum number of races.

Ms. Greenwood said the proposed schedule, included in the Commissioner's packet, includes 22 racing events, four of which occur on Saturdays, and one practice day for the next calendar year. As approved by the Commission last year, Mr. Evans is asking for an exception to the contract to host an additional weekend event in 2016. She said that per the contract, the hours of use are from 5:30 pm until 11:00 pm, and Mr. Evans understands the City's concern for noise pollution and continues to work to have races end by 10:30 pm.

Ms. Greenwood said she is pleased to report that KE Promotions has paid all fees to-date, most in advance. They have also continued to make improvements to the facility and keep it clean and free of clutter. She said the City has received no complaints from citizens related to noise at the track.

Ms. Greenwood said City staff recommends that the Commission approve the proposed 2016 Plaza Park Raceway schedule as submitted by KE Promotions, which includes a fourth Saturday event. Department staff has checked the schedule for Plaza Park and finds no conflicts.

Ms. Greenwood stated that City staff also recommends that the Parks and Recreation Commission discuss the future of the facility and direct staff to either release a Request for Proposal to continue leasing the facility for racing purposes, or to provide more information to the Parks and Recreation Commission related to other potential uses of the facility.

Mr. Brandon Morse said he has been involved in the race track since 1996. He said racing began at Plaza Park in 1984, when the Plaza Raceway Association was established. He said 2015 has been the best year yet. He said California Speed Week was completely sold out, four races, with three classes. He said the Budweiser Outlaw Nationals were held on July 4 and it was a good event. However, public participation was disappointing.

Mr. Morse stated that there is a problem with the schedule as presented. He said it came to his attention today that the Lemoore racetrack scheduled a race on May 20, which usually takes place on Memorial Day. He asked to cancel the race scheduled in Visalia on May 20, and reschedule it for Memorial Day. He said that would make five Saturday races but he will change the Saturday play day scheduled for 3/19/16 to Friday, 3/18.

Mr. Morse said the VIP booths did not pass a safety inspection and they could not be used. He said a racetrack up North wanted them and they picked them up. He said there were other minor issues that were easily solved. He asked if the commissioners had any questions.

Commissioner Calhoun asked how many spectators attend per race and how many drivers participate. Mr. Morse replied it varies between 750 and 1200 attendees. He said weather and other athletic events are variables to attendance. He said on a normal race night he would have 65 to 80 drivers entered, but larger events, with larger purses run close to 100 entries. He said each driver usually brings 2 pit workers with him.

Commissioner Calhoun asked what impact the races have on Visalia's businesses. Mr. Morse said quite a few drivers come from the Bay area and local hotels, offering racing discounts fill up fast.

Commissioner Kent asked Mr. Morse what his goals are in the next five years. Mr. Morse said there is limited room for physical growth at the present location. He said the car count and membership has grown every year. He noted that in 2007, when the recession hit, the car count went down slightly, but overall it was still popular and it is growing today.

Commissioner Calhoun asked Ms. Greenwood to speak to the Memorial Day change and any conflicts she might be aware of.

Ms. Greenwood said she would have to confirm with the park schedule regarding any conflicts. She said typically, Memorial Day is not a heavily used weekend for parks. Mr. Fultz agreed that parks are usually quiet at that time.

Commissioner Calhoun asked staff if they had received any requests for other uses for the facility. Ms. Greenwood said the Guild of Saint Mortimer uses it for their jousting events and the Police Department has used it for the K-9 Trials. She said when a Special Event request comes and the track is a suitable fit, the event coordinator is referred to the Raceway Association and they work together as to dates and availability and a fee is paid to the City. Ms. Greenwood said she is not aware of any requests to change the use of the facility.

Mr. Elizondo asked Mr. Morse if he saw any competition from other vendors for the facility use; and what his assessment of the future for racing is. He said that over the years inquiries have surfaced from the public to the City, but mostly it has not been an issue. Mr. Morse clarified if he was asking if someone else was interested in running the race track. Mr. Elizondo replied yes, that would be the purpose of the Request for Proposal (RFP).

Mr. Morse said he is not aware of anyone in the community that wants to become a new vendor for the racetrack.

Commissioner Calhoun suggested two votes be taken: 1) she moved to accept the schedule as presented with the proposed change, contingent that staff verifies the Memorial Day race will not be in conflict with any existing programming. Commissioner Filiponi seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 4-0

2) Commissioner Blue moved to accept the recommendation that City staff release an RFP to continue leasing the facility as a racing venue. Commissioner Kent seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 4-0

5. **Senior Center Fee Waiver Requests.** Ms. Greenwood stated that for the past nine years, City staff has been working with the Senior Advisory Committee to better understand the services and needs of non-City programs offered at the Visalia Senior Center. She said a process for designating free and/or reduced fees at the facility was established several years ago, and continues to be implemented annually. In October of each year, organizations wishing to utilize the Senior Center must submit a Facility Use Application requesting dates and times for the upcoming year. Once the applications are received, City staff meets with the organizations and the Senior Advisory Committee members to review each request. At this meeting, program organizers provide information on the status of their organization and provide additional information as requested. At the completion of the meeting, a recommendation is created for submittal to the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Ms. Greenwood stated the criteria for fee waiver consideration is as follows:

- The program must meet the needs of Visalia Seniors.
- It must be affordable and within the means of seniors.
- If fees are charged, where are they applied and for what purpose? Is the organization a non-profit?
- The facility request must meet the needs of the program.
- The City must not incur additional expenses from the program.
- The program must be fair and consistent.

Ms. Greenwood said that four applications were received for 2016, and based on the above criteria, the Senior Advisory Committee submits the following recommendations for free and/or reduced fees.

1. **Visalia Gadabouts – the recommendation is to continue the waiver of fees in the amount of \$1,584 for 2016.**

This is a travel club who meet one Saturday per month to provide trip information. The organization does not collect fees at their meetings, and the service is consistent with the City's mission to provide programs and services to seniors. The direct cost to the City for staffing this program is projected to be \$285.

2. **Senior Pride Bingo – the recommendation is to continue the waiver of fees in the amount of \$34,548 for 2016.**

Senior Pride is a 501(c)(3) that raises funds for the purpose of helping seniors. Bingo is offered three times each week. Saturday bingo is the main source of revenue which enables them to provide funds that assist seniors and senior serving organizations. Senior Pride has been a contributor to the Visalia Senior Center over the years funding projects such as the recent purchase of tables and chairs in the amount of \$28,000, remodeling the kitchen and adding ADA equipment to the restroom. They also purchased an ice machine, and have made several purchases of equipment. The direct cost to the City for staffing this program is projected to be \$3,895.

3. **Saturday Night Dance – the recommendation is to reduce fees from \$100 per night to \$50 per night, a waiver in the amount of \$13,119 for 2016.**

In 2010, this program went from a City program to an event organized by senior volunteers. By separating from the City, the program was able to operate at a lower cost, mainly due to City staff costs. When the volunteer group assumed the operation of this program, it was with the understanding that the City would not incur costs in the operation of the program and that they would pay the costs associated with the facility use. The agreed upon rental rate is \$100 per night which was meant to cover the cost of a facility attendant and electricity. Dance participation has declined and the organizers are asking the City to reduce the rental rate for the facility. At the Senior Advisory Committee meeting, Mr. Boyer, representing the Saturday Night Dance group, asked that the rental fee be reduced from \$100 per night to \$25 per night.

After considerable discussion, the recommendation from the Advisory Committee is that the Saturday Night Dance group return to the \$8 admission charge that has been collected for the past two years (recently reduced to \$7) and to reduce the rental rate to \$50 per night. It is also the recommendation of the Committee that the fee waiver for this group be re-evaluated in six months and, if participant numbers increase and the program has additional funds, to change the rate at a later date. The direct cost to the City for staffing this program is projected to be \$3,634.

4. **Senior Squares – the recommendation is to continue waiver of fees in the amount of \$4,400 for 2016.**

Senior Squares is a square dance club that meets on Friday afternoons at the Visalia Senior Center. This group has up to 16 dancers and, although attendance fluctuates, the group has been attending on a regular basis in 2015. As this program takes place during normal operating hours, there is no direct cost to the City for staffing this program.

Ms. Greenwood stated that conditions of use include: provide insurance, participate in the Senior Advisory Committee, to notify the Senior Advisory Committee of any change in financial status, that the program be the best use of the facility, each program will submit an informational page to the Senior Advisory Committee, and the group must reapply annually by submitting a use application by October 15. She stated that if, in the opinion of the Committee, an organization or group has profited from its use of this City facility, the Committee may recommend that the organization pay full facility rental fees (for those on a fee reduction), pay a modified fee (for those currently on a fee waiver), or make a contribution (monetary or in-kind) to the Senior Center.

Ms. Greenwood said City staff recommends that the Parks & Recreation Commission approve the recommendations provided by the Senior Citizens Advisory Committee.

Commissioner Calhoun asked how many participants the Saturday Night Dance group has. Ms. Greenwood said 40 to 45 people.

Commissioner Shelton noted that the group does not have non-profit status, and he feels the group should be approved for the waiver.

Commissioner Calhoun said the City needs to be consistent in how they apply fee reductions and waivers.

Ms. Greenwood stated that 9 years ago the Visalia Gadabouts, Senior Pride Bingo, and the Senior Squares attended a City Council meeting and their issue was that they had existed for years without being charged rent. Council's response was to waive the fees for these groups. Ms. Greenwood said that from that point forward the department has been very consistent applying fees to new users.

Commissioner Calhoun reiterated that City staff recommends that the Parks and Recreation Commission approve the recommendations of the Senior Advisory Committee. She stated this is the format that the commission has followed in previous years.

Mr. Elizondo reminded the Commission that this recommendation will go to City Council and they may or may not agree. He said in past years, there were nine or ten groups asking for fee waivers and as the new fees came into play they relocated.

Commissioner Calhoun asked if the department advertised the listed groups in the department brochure. Ms. Greenwood replied yes, at no charge. Commissioner Calhoun noted that this is an added benefit along with listing them on the department's website.

Commissioner Calhoun said she has given much thought about the process the department goes through to make recommendations to Council. Respecting the work that has been done by the Senior Advisory Committee is necessary in making those recommendations. She said she does not like to override their recommendations.

Commissioner Kent stated he would like to see more thought put into the decision before the vote takes place.

Ms. Greenwood said the recommendation was made by reviewing income versus expense. The group pays a band \$400 per night along with the expense of coffee and snacks. She said Mr. Boyer made the suggestion that if the rent was changed to \$25 it would be their break-even point. The Senior Advisory Committee thought if they changed the admission fee back to \$8 then the \$50 would be comfortable and sustainable.

Commissioner Calhoun called for a motion. Commissioner Blue moved to accept the staff recommendations as presented for the Visalia Gadabouts, Senior Pride Bingo, and the Senior Squares.

Mr. Elizondo pointed out that if no action is taken on the Saturday Night Dance request they would essentially pay more per night than they do now. Ms. Greenwood stated that they would pay the full rental rate of \$225 per night.

Commissioner Filiponi made a motion to amend the current motion to include approving the Saturday Night Dance waiver as requested. Commissioner Blue seconded the amended motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 4-0

6. **Election of Chairperson and Co-Chairperson and Submission of Annual Report.** Commissioner Calhoun asked if anyone was interested in being Chairperson. Commissioner Blue motioned that he would like to see the Chair and Co-Chair remain as it is currently. Commissioner Kent seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 4-0

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

- **Upcoming Recreation Programs & Special Events.** Ms. Greenwood said the Senior Center would be hosting their traditional holiday luncheon this Friday, beginning at 11:00 am.
- Next Tuesday the Manual Hernandez Center will be hosting their children's holiday party between 2 and 4 pm.
- Youth basketball registration just closed a few weeks ago and the department experienced a growth in registrations. There will be over 825 children in this year's league.
- The Enchanted Ice Garden will be moving into the Garden Street Plaza on Sunday at noon. There will be photos with Santa (Chad from Momentum Broadcasting on-air), and the department is seeking another celebrity Santa at this time. Sunday will be open-skate. The ice rink program is scheduled to run for 15 days. Mornings are available for private rentals and early afternoons will be open skate time. Special events, such as the Frozen nights will include visits from Anna and Elsa, princesses from the movie Frozen; and the movie will be shown. Family night will include the movie A Christmas Story. Star Wars night will include an animated movie and some local characters will come, dressed as Star Wars characters. And, of course, photo ops will be included. New Years Eve will be a teen party for 13 to 17-year olds, running from 8 to 10 pm. This is very exciting and it will be a busy 15 days.

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

- The Lincoln Oval Park playground equipment is in the yard and Engineering has approved the plans. It will probably be installed by the end of January. Bids have gone out for the cameras, fencing and lighting, and the department is ready to move forward with the installation.
- Rotary Park has been completed. The DG path is installed and it looks great.
- Mr. Fultz announced that the City now owns the two houses at Riverway Sports Park and they are currently being evaluated for their best use. The Stascio house is ready for clean-up to begin.
- Ruiz Park has received new benches and tables by the playground.

- The department has received 50% plans for electrical changes for the lighting project at Plaza Park. Due to new electrical codes this project has had added expenses. Commissioner Calhoun asked what a 50% plan is. Mr. Fultz replied it means that if added items are requested this is the time to do it. Once the plans are at 100% it is ready for installation.
- 9. Director’s Report on Administrative Items.** Mr. Elizondo thanked the Commissioners for the wonderful years of working with them. He congratulated Ms. Greenwood as the new Director, and he noted that she will need the support of the Commission this next year with projects that are coming. He said Parks and Recreation items should be ready for the January Strategic Planning Council event, and Ms. Greenwood will be submitting her budget in January-February. He invited everyone to his retirement party at the Rawhide on Tuesday, January 29. Commissioner Calhoun expressed the Commissions thanks for his work and he is leaving the City much better than when he arrived.
- 10. Commissioner’s Requests & Comments:**
- **Community/Aquatic Center Ad Hoc Committee.** Commissioner Blue said the Committee has been in a holding pattern for about two months.
 - **Senior Citizens Advisory Committee.** No further report.
 - **Parks & Recreation Foundation.** Commissioner Kent said he wasn’t able to contact Ms. Hays before the meeting to get new information. Mr. Fultz said the main discussion was on the Oval Park Playground project and Rotary Park. Mr. Elizondo reported they are presenting him with a tree in his honor as a retirement gift.
 - **Waterways & Trails Committee Report.** Commissioner Filiponi attended the meeting but they did not have a quorum.
 - **North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory Committee.** No report.
- 11. Adjourn to the Regular Meeting, January 19, 2016, at the Anthony Community Center located at 345 N. Jacob Street, Visalia, CA.**
- Commissioner Kent moved to adjourn and Commissioner Filiponi seconded the motion.

MOTION

Motion passed 4-0

Brenda Miernik,
Senior Administrative Assistant