

Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission
Meeting Minutes
March 21, 2017

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

The Visalia Parks & Recreation Commission met in a regular meeting on Tuesday, March 21, 2017, Council Chambers. The meeting was called to order by Chair Carla Calhoun at 5:30 p.m.

Present: Carla Calhoun, Ben Filiponi, Shann Blue, Peter Thomas, Steve Woods and Rick Eastes

Absent: Justin Sweet

Staff: Jeannie Greenwood, Laurissa Roggenkamp, Jeff Fultz, and Susie Brown

- 2. Review and Approval Minutes** – The regular meeting minutes of February 21, 2017 were motioned for approval by Commissioner Blue and Commissioner Thomas seconded.

MOTION – Passed 5-0

- 3. PUBLIC COMMENT:** Chair Calhoun called for public comment and reminded the public their comments are limited to three minutes. None

- 4. Request by Citizens to Designate Village Park as a Children’s Only Park,** Ms. Jeannie Greenwood, Director, thanked the participants who attended last month and commended them on their efforts to make Village Park a better place for children and families. She provided a powerpoint presentation to review and comment on the requests from the prior month. Ms. Greenwood confirmed their request was for designating Village Park as a “Children’s Only Park”, adding a shade cover over the playground at Village Park, basketball courts to stay in place and adding a fence around the entire park. She provided an overview on the HRP Grant process and commented that CDBG funds could possibly fund part of the requests.

Director Greenwood shared the City’s efforts to secure HRP funds to develop Lot 4 in Community Campus with artificial turf and lighting. The proposed project also includes replacing turf at Village Park with artificial turf, adding a shade structure over the playground, and to resurface the existing basketball courts. The month of June, staff will hear what the funding amount will be, and then priorities can be set. The land has a designated for use for a Community Based Organization to develop and provide programs and services to neighborhood. There could be a process to change the use. It was reported the basketball courts are a great amenity as late teens and young adults use courts at night. Village Park currently has fencing on all sides of the park with access from Pearl Street.

Director Greenwood discussed a “**Children’s Only Park**” and reported that her research found no other such parks. Many cities, like Visalia, have used Penal Code 653.B to designate playgrounds as “Children Only” which is easier to justify because these areas are designed for children, this does not apply to other open park spaces. She reviewed examples of incidents in other communities where adults were cited for using parks due to the proximity of the playground and noted that the citations did not hold up in court. Director Greenwood stated that adults in general are not the problem that the problem lies with those who are breaking park rules and the law. Director Greenwood made suggestions to help including reporting illegal activity, scheduling programs and activities in the park and obtaining a permit for use during program times that would allow Wittman Center Staff to ask

people not associated with their program to leave during program/reserved times. Director Greenwood also encouraged the youth in attendance to join the Visalia Youth Committee to provide input on programs and issues facing the youth in our community.

Chair Calhoun – Called for Public Comment:

Speaker: Mr. Juan Guerrero, 2467 Road 140, employed at the Wittman Center since 2003. He reported being asked to clean-up the area once he got to the center. Proteus (Wittman Center) has been dealing with prostitutes, gang members, high poverty, alcohol and drug users since he started. He was told to take over the park, and they did that, took over, implemented programs and they cleaned up the park by calling VPD to report problems. He disagrees with the ‘adults not being the problem’ comment. VUSD moved the elementary school and created a vacuum in the area. More programs for elementary school age are needed. He has video of fights in the park. Mr. Guerrero was told by VPD to lock the fence, and it helped to lock the fence, but things still happen. There are cameras that are motion activated, but they are overworked, he had to get an additional server. He was in favor of removing basketball courts, was in favor of changing hours, but the children who use the park and community center don’t want that. He commented the vacant lot is important, a grass field to play sports, and we need to teach sports to youth, but also play against other neighborhood teams. He reported without activities the kids wander around, make beer runs, use drugs, use plastic guns to take bikes, they are mimicking adults. He has 88-100-120 kids and this doesn’t count afterschool numbers. He asked for a fence to take care of kids, 9’ fence and 10’ gate to finish fencing, and he asked to have a child accompany adults on playground. He commented on teaching a civic responsibility by following process.

Speakers: Ms. Remy Garza and Ms. Gizelle Pena – Both ladies commented they want a safe park, and would like to see no drugs and alcohol in the park. There are bad things like people partying and people doing drugs, and it is a gang zone, but there are a lot of homeless people in the area. Ms. Garza’s father plays cards in Oval Park and she sees bottles on the floor, and all of the hobos make them not to want to go to Oval Park. She doesn’t want her mom (pregnant) to go into the park. They have over 400 signatures for a children’s only park.

Speaker: Mr. Bob Ludekens – Road 140, commented on liking the presentation and likes the suggested opportunities for the Wittman Center. He commented that he will talk with youth and there is some work to be done regarding staff’s comments. He will meet and talk about fences, and the soccer field fences, as this will make the area different.

Chair Calhoun closed public comment.

Commissioner Woods – Commented on the importance of responsibility to the entire public, and the affects over time. He commented that adults tend to want to do the right thing in parks. There may be some adults who just stopped going to the park because of ongoing problems, but then to have that park deny them access by a change in rules and the end result is no access. Having the park closed or gated is an unwelcome message, and the illegal activities aren’t getting handled in a timely manner. Putting up a fence will not stop the behavior, and a fence could lead to lawsuits. He likes the suggestion of a use permit. He spoke to Mr. Guerrero, expressing the Commission is not asking you to chase people out, but to implement programs and use the park.

Commissioner Thomas – Commented on the 2016 Volunteer Park Ranger Program from last year’s

joint meeting with City Council and can that program move forward.

Director Greenwood – The program is definitely the right direction, we currently have a part time Ranger and one full time Ranger who works 16 hours on the weekends, but their focus is at larger, more active parks. The Volunteer Ranger Program can move forward once we have a full time Ranger to facilitate the program.

Director Greenwood provided praise for all the gathering of signatures, and suggested the youth group to go back to the people and ask for them to commit to come to the park and participate in activities.

Chair Calhoun – She asked how crime compares to other parks.

Mr. Fultz – He reported that it depends on park location and amenities close to the park, like convenience stores, and liquor stores tend to add problems. There are many parks that have the same issues, including the Sports Park. He reported that if it is late night and the Rangers see things they will stop. Some parks have more issues than others.

Chair Calhoun commented on it being a risky change and could lead to other parks asking for the same thing, and then we have people who stop going or no longer have access to the park.

Mr. Fultz commented on the Seven Oaks Park fence having only two sides because of other properties, real fresh/housing/railroad tracks, people who want in just cut the fences. We need to deal with people causing the problems.

Director Greenwood reported in the past 6-8 weeks there have been arrests of drug dealers around Village Park and the Oval Park area, the department's problem parks at this time include Lincoln Oval, Seven Oaks and Recreation parks.

Commissioner Woods commented that the juveniles need to see there are adults that care and want to work with them.

Commissioner Eastes liked the ideas of taking back the park by using them. He commented that perhaps "clubs" might work, and that adults can help organize the youth groups, and set a positive pattern.

Mr. Guerrero – We do have clubs, art club, baking club, sports clubs and they constantly using the park, and constantly talking to parents, met with VPD, Rawhide, and moms from the area are involved. They are involved in a community garden for adults and youth. He reported the permitting is a good idea.

Commissioner Thomas – He thanked the youth group for attending, and agreed there is a legal concern with banning adults from the park, and foreseeing it will be an issue, and maybe not a long-term solution. He suggested looking at other ways to improve the park and rid illegal activity.

Mr. Ludekins spoke and appreciated the comments and said there is a known reputation of the area. There are three major gangs centered in this area, and parents are not allowing kids to come to the park. Visalia Police Department has done a wonderful job cleaning up the area. He stated the gang issues are down 25% compared to 11 years ago. Neighbors are scared and nights are a problem, but also there is no school in that area.

Director Greenwood reported a few years ago the park ordinance was amended to allow the City to ban people, for up to 12 months, who are breaking the law in City Parks.

Commissioner Woods asked for Mr. Guerrero to thank the youth who were here for initiating conversation on this topic.

Commissioner Eastes inquired why the youth left the meeting, and expressed concern that the children

felt as though the adults are talking and they were not being heard.

Mr. Guerrero commented the youth had to catch a bus home. He further commented there were two people banned from the park last year, and he is actively working with VPD.

Recommendation – Chair Calhoun asked staff to consider working with youth to include the opportunities discussed including, facility use permit process, the Visalia Youth Commission, expanding the Ranger program, and any other ideas.

Commissioner Woods – Could business owners be provided outreach materials with ordinance information.

Chair Calhoun – Motion to deny the request, but continue the discussion and to work with the neighborhood and youth for safety. Commissioner Blue seconded.

MOTION – Passed

5. **Annual Recreation Foundation Report:** Ms. Carol Hoppert-Hayes, Executive Director, Visalia Parks & Recreation Foundation provided a powerpoint presentation. She reported it had been 18 months since the last presentation, and she thanked Mr. Steven Woods for his participation with the Foundation on behalf of the Commission. The Parks & Recreation Foundation recently had a planning meeting to set goals for 2017. Ms. Hoppert-Hayes provided information on the Foundation's mission, accomplishments from the last 18 months, provided a financial update and talked about the Foundation's goals for 2017. Commissioner Eastes requested clarification on some of the financial points. Director Greenwood commented that the Foundation is given a wish list from the Parks and Recreation Department each year which includes a wide range of project, equipment and program needs. The Foundation reviews the wish list and chooses projects that they would like to raise funds for, such as an archery fundraiser at Rosa's Restaurant on April 25th and at Blaze Pizza on May 25th with funds going towards the Archery Range project. There is a tentative date of Sept 23, 2017 for their 2nd Annual Fromage Frolic and the Foundation has some leads for securing a van for the department.

Chair Calhoun spoke to congratulate on the 8.5 years of service and the annual report.

Director Greenwood requested Item 7 be taken out of order.

6. **Food Truck Vendor Policy,** Mr. Andy Chamberlain, Senior Planner with the Community Development Department stated that historically catering trucks are on fixed routes, and others have temporary conditional use permits. There has been use at the Colonial Center (SW Corner of Demaree and Walnut) with agreements for a permit for six-month on site, then six-months off site. The questions stemming from presentations are whether food truck vending should be allowed in public right-of-ways. Should food trucks be allowed at parks? How would food trucks impact the brick and mortar establishments? Should food trucks be allowed at/by schools?

Chair Calhoun asked what is the difference between a food trucks vs. non-motorized vendors? And asked if this was an issue arising due to micro-brewery permits? Mr. Chamberlain commented that the City currently does not segregate food trucks by type, it is all considered vending. Vending is regulated by Tulare County Health Dept. This is separate from micro-breweries; the timing is just at the same time. He stated that microbreweries may ask for a food truck at a brewery location.

Commissioner Woods asked if there has been a small city comparison.

Mr. Chamberlain reported some cities are not regulated, some cities use a lottery system and some cities allow food trucks in specific areas only.

Commissioner Eastes reported on the controversy in southern CA area that brick and mortar businesses complain that food trucks have hurt businesses. He believes having food trucks at Plaza Park would be a good idea since there isn't a lot food business out there. Director Greenwood reported there is a vendor at Plaza Park, Moe's-to-Go, during softball games.

Chair Calhoun what is the process if someone reserves a park and wants to bring in a food truck? Director Greenwood stated that this is allowable with a permit and vendors must comply with certain requirements. There are no fees for the vendor currently and the vendor is only allowed to service the party that booked them, they are not open to the public. In addition, there are conditions about where to park, no dripping (grease) allowed, no hot coals left on-site, and restrictions for driving on the turf. She reported she has not been asked for an opinion on allowing mobile vendors in parks yet. She commented that the Northside concession stand at Riverway Sports Park has been considered as a potential lease for a food vendor. Director Greenwood stated that she is opposed to large vehicles and mobile vendors on streets adjacent to the parks as having the mobile vendor on the street may cause an unsafe condition. Commissioner Eastes – What are the regulations for the A&W truck? Director Greenwood reported their truck is usually attached to a special event. Another popular vendor that we see quite often is a shaved ice truck.

Commissioner Woods – Reported to like the conversation and likes the lottery idea, and feels that the city should embrace food trucks.

Commissioner Blue – What about Omaha Steak people selling out of vehicles?

Mr. Chamberlain – They should have a peddlers permit from the City, if not, the Police Department could be contacted to file a complaint. He is here to open the discussion and getting general input and feedback. A Council work session is the next step.

Commissioner Eastes stated some food trucks are popular and post on their website where they will be located.

Commissioner Filiponi – reported proximity to school should be considered when there isn't a close alternative.

Mr. Chamberlain stated they will talk to VUSD soon.

Chair Calhoun – All kids leaving at same time in cars could be an environmental issue.

Commissioner Woods stated the city (parks) should be compensated for use and trash.

Chair Calhoun thanked him for the presentation.

- 7. Optimist Club to Host Fishing Derby at Plaza Park Pond (Out of Order -after #5):** Ms. Laurissa Roggenkamp provided an oral report on the fee waiver request for the 39th Annual Event. This event benefits the community as they add \$1,000 of catfish to Plaza Park pond, which is available to the public after the event. The request includes permission for overnight camping by Boys Scouts. A \$250 damage deposit is recommended and will be refunded after the event if the park is left clean and without damage.

Mr. Jack Hayslet, Optimist Club is asking for approval of the permit and fee waiver. He reported the

event will be on Saturday, May 13th, 7:00 a.m.-Noon, but the Derby is 8:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m., and for children only, no adults are allowed to fish. Mr. Hayslet reported the fish company provides fish that range from half –pound to 6.5 lbs., and approximately 30-40% is fished out at the Derby.

MOTION – Passed 5-0, as recommended by Commissioner Woods and Commissioner Thomas seconded.

- 8. Annual Review and Approval of Fees/Charges.** Ms. Laurissa Roggenkamp provided a powerpoint presentation on the proposed fee schedule for FY 2017/18. The presentation reviewed the department’s Fee Philosophy and the method for setting fees for programs and classes. Ms. Roggenkamp also reviewed the amenity based fee schedules for park rentals, facility rentals and the list of fees for athletic facility rentals.

Chair Calhoun – Commented on remembering when a ‘Fee Philosophy’ was implemented, and this has served us well.

Commissioner Woods – Are we able to consider adding the food vendor trucks fees? Director Greenwood commented that those fees can be requested when it goes to City Council.

MOTION – Commissioner Woods motioned to accept the proposed recommendations with adding food vendor trucks when the time approaches. Commissioner Blue seconded.

Motion – Passed 5-0

Commissioner Eastes – Commented that the Special Use Fee seems low, and perhaps this could be a revenue generator.

Ms. Roggenkamp – Many organizers use the special event areas, such as Garden Street Plaza, for fundraising events. For many organizers having a space at a lower reservation price helps to get fundraising events started in order to become popular. When events start getting larger and more people start to attend the reservation rate does increase.

Commission Blue – Do you have comparisons of fees and charges from other agencies?

Mr. Roggenkamp – She cannot speak on other cities, the pyramid helps to determine fees.

Ms. Greenwood – She commented that when she started at Parks and Recreation the arbors were only two prices. The department implemented the amenity based fee structure and added a premium rate for areas in higher demand, this system has worked well. Community wide special events such as Movies in the Park and the Eggstravaganza are generally subsidized programs and user fees (if any) are very low to accommodate all members of the community.

- 9. Verbal Report on Arbor Day,** Mr. Jeff Fultz, Parks & Urban Forestry Manager, commented on the handout for Arbor Day, which will be held at the Packwood Trail (Caldwell to Mooney) and parking will be on Cameron. The Mayor will present the Arbor Day Proclamation, CalFire will present the Tree City USA Proclamation and the Cub Scouts will do the color guard and planting of trees and shrubs.
- 10. Review and Recommend to the City Council the Approval of a Mural at the Visalia Senior Center,** Ms. Greenwood provided an overview as this item is coming back to the Commission. She reported that the previous mural project was stalled as the artist who was going to paint the mural has relocated out of the area. The Leadership Visalia Class of 2017 is doing a senior garden project at the

Visalia Senior Center and asked to include a mural with their project. They are fundraising to pay for the mural. The mural application is complete, has been reviewed and approved by the Mural Committee and must now be recommended by the Parks and Recreation Commission prior to going to the City Council for final approval. Friday, April 28th, is scheduled for the garden project opening and dedication. Chair Calhoun asked for more diversity in people.

MOTION – Commissioner Blue motioned to accept the mural, and Commissioner Woods seconded., Motion passed 5-0

11. Joint Council Meeting Preparation, Director Jeannie Greenwood, provided a list of topics discussed by the Commission at the February meeting and included a couple of additional topics from Council members. The Commission engaged with staff in a discussion about maintaining parks and amenities. Staff informed the Commission on the processes for securing funds for Capital Improvement Projects and how Park Impact Fees are used. Director Greenwood also informed the Commission of Council remarks related to the South Side Community Center (SCC) and that this project may not be supported by at least two Council members. Commissioner Thomas asked if the SCC could be a priority. Commissioner Filiponi asked if the area is big enough for an Aquatic Center, Director Greenwood stated that the existing site could support a small, recreational aquatics facility but not a competitive pool. Commission Blue requested to add to agenda maintaining and upgrading existing facilities and infrastructure, being a proactive approach. He also requested the park ranger program, be a priority. Mr. Fultz commented that the City Council is aware of Park Ranger program, but what isn't included is the need for vehicles.

The Commission narrowed the agenda topics down to three items; maintaining parks and amenities, park projects including the need for the south-side community center and prioritizing projects and the Park Ranger Program.

Ms. Greenwood commented on having a future joint meeting with the Waterways and Trails Committee on trail way projects.

12. Appoint Commissioners to Work on Sub-Committee to Review Park Ordinance,

Director, Jeannie Greenwood asked for volunteers to sit on Sub-Committee. This Sub-Committee will work with City staff to update our existing park ordinance. She mentioned that the Waterways and Trails Committee is working on rules for trails.

Commissioner Woods volunteered. Commissioner Blue cannot meet during the day, but is also on the South-Side Community Center sub-committee. Commissioner Thomas can commit if they are evening meetings.

13. Update on City Council Reports and City Staff Announcements:

Upcoming Recreation Programs & Special Events – Ms. Laurissa Roggenkamp reported on the following:

- Calendar of events handout
- Spring Open House, at the Senior Center on April 5th

Upcoming Parks & Urban Forestry Projects, Programs & Special Events – Mr. Jeff Fultz reported on the following:

- Miki City still have monument to install, and signage is being made in house.

- Oval Park irrigation is complete.
- Rangers are active Friday-Sunday
- Adding a fido drinking fountain at the dog park.
- Installed three shade trees at Plaza Park, they are small.

Director's Report on Administrative Items: Ms. Jeannie Greenwood reported on the following:

- Pickleball court project was to be completed by March 10th however we have had constant problems with the contractor. Unfortunately they were not ready for Senior Games and the pickleball tournament had to take place on the tennis courts. Hopefully we'll be scheduling a grand opening soon.
- Senior Games has 420 participants, there are two out of state participants; we have a bowler who is 92 and a 90 year old golfer; the youngest participant is a 49 year old golfer; and 93 CA cities are represented in this year's event.
- Miki City Park Dedication / Earth Day will be Saturday, April 22
- Senior Center garden project will start soon
- We were able to secure funds at midyear to make the necessary irrigation modifications to be ready to use tertiary water later this summer.
- City Administration asked for Committee and Commission input regarding a recognition event on Friday, June 9th, Commissioner Woods cannot do June 9, but Friday nights are generally good. The Commission indicated that a Friday evening would be ok but this time in June may be difficult with graduation celebrations.

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

- Visalia Parks Foundation – Commissioner Woods mentioned that the Foundation submitted a proposal to host the fireworks event on July 4th. The City selected CASA to host this year's event.
- Waterways & Trails Committee – Vice Chair Filiponi reported there was an annual planning meeting.
- NVNAC – Commissioner Thomas reported the City Council extended NVNAC until 2018. It was reported that due to the district elections, the committee could be disbanded and, if Council members would like, an information committee could be created for each district. They reviewed January crime stats.

Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Blue at 9:10 p.m., Commissioner Woods seconded, and unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Susie Brown
Office Assistant