

MINUTES

On February 14th, 2024 the Parks and Recreation Board met at 01:00 p.m. at the Parks and Recreation Board Room located at 509 S. Johnson Street Amarillo, TX, 79107 for a Regular Meeting.

VOTING MEMBERS	PRESENT	NO. MEETINGS HELD SINCE APPOINTMENT	NO. OF MEETINGS ATTENDED
Mr. Howard Smith	Yes	3	3
Mr. Ronnie Walker	Yes	2	1
Mr. Robert Altman	Yes	48	45
Ms. Tiffany Podzemny	Yes	40	38
Mr. Rodney Hill	Yes	2	2
Mr. Thomas Riney	Yes	2	2
Mr. Ronny Head	Yes	2	2
Mr. Shelby Massey	Yes	20	19
Mrs. Skylar Gallop	No	9	7
Mr. Josh Craft	Yes	5	4
Mr. Hobert Brown	Yes	2	2

STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:

MICHAEL KASHUBA	DIRECTOR OF PARKS AND RECREATION
BECKI DRYER	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF PARKS AND RECREATION
JAMES STOW	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF PARKS AND RECREATION
GEORGE PRIOLO	GENERAL MANAGER OF GOLF OPERATIONS
AUSTIN FARLEY	AQUATICS SUPERVISOR
CINDY PEREZ	BEAUTIFICATION AND PUBLIC ARTS COORDINATOR
SARA BARTEL	MARKETING COORDINATOR
ERIC ANDERSEN	CAPITAL PROJECTS MANAGER
MEGAN SMITH	OFFICE MANAGER
SAMANTHA THOMPSON	RECORDING SECRETARY

- ITEM 1

Call to Order

Chairman, Ms. Tiffany Podzemny, established a quorum and called the regular scheduled meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to order at 01:02 p.m.
- ITEM 2

Public Comments

Mr. Gualtiere requested to include a discussion about the pool hours of operation on the agenda for the next meeting. Mr. Gualtiere expressed concern about limited pool hours despite significant taxpayer investment in facilities. He proposed keeping pools open on weekends from the start of the school year until Labor Day to better serve taxpayers. Additionally, Mr. Gualtiere acknowledged recent improvements in park maintenance, particularly with contracted services at Medi Park and Sam Houston Park, and thanked the board for their leadership. Mr. Gualtiere emphasized the importance of serving taxpayers and expressed interest in ongoing dialogue regarding pool improvements.
- ITEM 3

Discuss and Consider Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Bob Altman, said motion seconded by Mr. Thomas Riney, voting aye were 10 members, voting no were none, carried to approve meeting minutes from January 10th, 2024, incorporating requested revisions.
- ITEM 4

Staff Member Introduction
- ITEM 5

Present, Discuss, and Consider Board Recommendations on the Operations of Southwest Pool

- Mr. Michael Kashuba initiated discussions on the Southwest pool, as requested by the council during budget discussions in August. The focus was on pool hours of operation and the aging infrastructure. The board examined a graph displaying attendance patterns and revenue generation across all three pools: Thompson, Southwest, and Southeast. Discussion also touched on factors affecting attendance, such as weather and day of the week, as well as revenue breakdowns by location and payment method. Recent adjustments to general admission fees, including the introduction of a flat \$5 entry fee, were highlighted. Anticipated revenue increases due to fee adjustments were noted. The board was provided with comprehensive data to inform their recommendation to the council regarding the future of Southwest pool operations and infrastructure.

- Ms. Becki Dryer provided an update to the board regarding the operations of Southwest pool, specifically addressing staffing challenges and operational hours for the previous year. Initially, due to a shortage of lifeguards, the pool operated solely on weekends from May 30 to July 11, from 12:00 PM to 6:00 PM. Subsequently, following the recruitment of additional lifeguards, operational hours were extended to include Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM and 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM, in addition to regular weekend hours. The pool generated approximately \$13,000 in revenue, with staffing costs totaling \$36,059. Concerns were raised regarding incidents of break-ins and vandalism, leading to estimated repair costs of nearly \$50,000. Furthermore, the discussion underscored the aging infrastructure of Southwest pool, which parallels that of Southeast, with both constructed in the late 1960s to early 1970s. Structural assessments were proposed to evaluate the condition of the pools, with potential replastering and infrastructure upgrades considered to prolong their lifespan.
- Mr. Josh Craft inquired about asset management and future planning for the newly constructed Thompson pool, expressing concerns about aging infrastructure. Mr. Michael Kashuba expanded on the challenges arising from limited funding, emphasizing the necessity of a consistent funding source to address the backlog of repairs. Structural assessments were proposed to evaluate the condition of the pools, with considerations for potential replastering and infrastructure upgrades. Mr. James Stow highlighted examples of routine maintenance conducted by Park Maintenance, emphasizing the importance of transitioning from a reactive to proactive maintenance approach. Mr. Kashuba provided an example of replacing one pump station annually at the golf courses to restore their functionality, followed by developing a plan to replace a pump every 10-20 years. The discussion also explored lease options for pool operations and potential staffing solutions. Concerns were raised regarding the significant costs associated with repairing damages and staffing, juxtaposed with the revenue generated.
- Mr. Michael Kashuba presented a map illustrating the city's public pools, focusing on the challenges encountered by Southwest Pool due to competition and limited amenities. He highlighted nearby facilities such as Amarillo Town Club and Verdure, which offer more amenities compared to Southwest Pool, which is perceived as having minimal offerings. Reference was made to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, which underscores the high participation rates of pools despite their costly operation. The plan stresses the need to maximize revenues and manage assets strategically. Concerns were raised about the maintenance burden of maintaining 16 splash pads and 4 pools with a small staff, prompting discussion about potentially scaling down splash pads. It was noted that removing splash pads from areas like North Heights and East Ridge could adversely impact communities lacking transportation to access regional splash pads. Mr. Kashuba emphasized the need for a dialogue regarding the city's role in service provision versus private businesses and considerations related to competition and quality of life.
- The board extensively deliberated on the upcoming recruitment process for seasonal positions, with a particular focus on lifeguards, detailing the strategies employed to attract potential candidates, such as outreach to local high schools and early posting of job vacancies. The discussion underscored the challenges posed by competing with other employers offering higher wages, especially for college students. The board acknowledged the provision of lifeguard training by the city and explored ways to enhance the efficiency of the hiring process, including the transition to online applications to expedite recruitment. Moreover, concerns were raised regarding the imperative need for additional lifeguards to fully staff the pools, with last year's staffing levels being insufficient to meet operational demands effectively. The board deliberated on potential solutions to address this issue, including adjustments to wages and alternative operating models for Southwest Pool to optimize its operational efficiency and increase its attractiveness to potential lifeguards. Mr. Gualtiere commented the importance of presenting detailed financial projections to the city council to advocate for additional funding to meet staffing requirements effectively. He suggested the compilation of a comprehensive spreadsheet outlining the financial implications of wage adjustments and staffing needs, with the possibility of reallocating funds from other budgetary allocations if necessary. Mr. Gualtiere emphasized that Southwest Pool should not be closed this season since it's already been included in the budget.
- Ms. Becki Dryer presented options to the board aimed at attracting more visitors and gauging interest in Southwest Pool. With last season's attendance averaging only 10 to 25 visitors per day, the current staffing costs are not justified. One proposal suggested was the implementation of a low-cost amenity, such as an AquaTrack. Incorporating this distinctive feature has the potential to distinguish Southwest Pool from others in the area and possibly boost attendance, including private pool party rentals. The AquaTrack is estimated to be relatively inexpensive, with a cost of approximately \$15,000. Mr. Shelby Massey inquired whether the size of the AquaTrack could accommodate Southeast Pool as well, in the event of Southwest Pool's closure, to ensure we retain the asset. Mr. Michael Kashuba stated that the AquaTrack would fit at Southeast Pool.
- Ms. Tiffany Podzemny raised a question about the possibility of reallocating funding from Southwest Pool to Southeast Pool if the former were to be closed. In response, Mr. Michael

Kashuba noted that any surplus budget would necessitate a discussion with the City Manager and City Council. The discussion then shifted to strategic planning for asset replacement, with a focus on Southwest Pool. Various options were explored, including the consideration of cost-effective amenities like an AquaTrack to enhance visitor attraction and generate additional revenue from private pool party rentals. The board stressed the importance of maintaining fiscal responsibility while ensuring a high quality of life for citizens. Concerns were expressed regarding the low attendance at the pool and the need for consistent operational management.

- Mr. Shelby Massey made a motion to maintain the operation of Southwest Pool and investigate potential measures such as implementing the AquaTrack and enhancing marketing efforts for Southwest Pool. Seconded by Mr. Ronny Head, the motion received unanimous support from the 10 members present.

ITEM 6

Discussion and Tour of Parks Facilities:

- **Martin Road Complex** – Mr. Michael Kashuba outlined the significant improvements made at Martin Road, emphasizing the completion of the drainage utility project and the development of the fishing amenity. The fishing area, collaboratively designed with input from Texas Parks & Wildlife, incorporates various tiers and depths to support fish spawning and habitat regeneration, with plans underway for stocking the lake and implementing catch-and-release rules. The park, which utilizes well water, also has potential for additional amenities such as ADA accessible fishing piers and kayak launches. Furthermore, the park's athletic fields have been tailored to accommodate youth and women's leagues, with recent changes in layout and facilities contributing to its appeal. Mr. Kashuba also provided insight into the park's layout, including the addition of a new parking lot, and upgraded lighting for the softball complex. Notably, the fishing amenity is situated near the skate park, with minimal concerns reported regarding graffiti or vandalism in the area. Divided into two sections—Martin Road South, housing the softball complex and fishing area, and Martin Road North, also known as Gene Howe—the park is officially recognized as two separate entities, despite appearing as one cohesive space.
- While driving past **Thompson Park** and **Ross Rogers Golf Course**, Michael Kashuba informed the board that several roads have been removed from the park area to streamline access points and facilitate easier patrolling by the Amarillo Police Department (APD). This adjustment aims to create more defined routes for APD and enhance safety measures. Additionally, renovations are planned for amenities like the disc golf course in Thompson Park. Furthermore, Ross Rogers boasts highly rated public golf courses in the state, consistently ranking among the top ten in economic and mid-price categories, according to assessments by publications such as the Dallas Morning News and Texas Monthly.
- While driving past **Bones Hooks Park**, Mr. Michael Kashuba informed the board that it boasts a splash pad which was formerly a pool but now functions as the only recirculating system in the area. The park serves as a venue for various community events and has introduced adjustments to special event fees, with a focus on providing benefits to nonprofit organizations. In partnership with the city council, a pilot program has been initiated to exempt fees for three endorsed special events organized by recognized neighborhood groups and nonprofits. This initiative seeks to enhance community understanding of park usage regulations and permit procedures while extending support to local organizations.
- **Charles E Warford Activity Center**- During the tour of the Warford Activity Center, Mr. Michael Kashuba highlighted its transformation from the old North YMCA into a versatile city facility. The center now offers a range of spaces, including a game room, fitness and dance studio, pool, commercial kitchen, gym, and a senior services area. The once underutilized game room has become a popular rental venue for events like birthday parties. The fitness and dance studio, featuring hardwood floors and mirrored walls, hosts fitness classes and event rentals, such as baby showers. The commercial kitchen serves meals for seniors and is available for rent for family reunions and other gatherings. The gym accommodates various activities, from pickleball to events like Breakfast with Santa. Notably, the senior services area, repurposed from an after-school program space, has been well received by seniors. These renovations and upgrades were made possible through staff efforts, including volunteer labor and donations. Additionally, the closure of the town club has led to increased participation in lap swimming at the center. With roll-up doors providing versatility, the area can be rented for activities like barbecues and pool rentals, making it an ideal venue for entertainment and seamlessly connecting with the surrounding area.
- **Thompson Memorial Park**: Thompson Park is highlighted as one of the most utilized parks, especially during special events like Easter, where a significant amount of trash is collected afterward. Interestingly, a stolen car was recently discovered submerged in the park's lake. The issue of park maintenance extends to drainage concerns and the need for dredging the lakes. Damage to park turf due to unauthorized driving is a common problem, prompting consideration of various solutions. Plans include the addition of an inclusive playground and amenities like fishing piers. The park's popularity for disc golf has led to partnerships to enhance

its facilities. Additionally, the discussion covers leasing city property for revenue generation and ongoing efforts to improve park safety through enhanced lighting systems and surveillance.

- **Sam Houston Park:** Sam Houston Park hosts various community events, including Starlight Theater, making lighting essential for safety and aesthetics. Estimates are being obtained for concrete repairs due to tree-induced sidewalk heaving. Musco, a national company, is working on the lighting installation, including an area light in the middle of the park for special events. Forestry contractors are also active, prioritizing the removal of dead trees. Starlight Theater concerts, which are well-loved by the community, incur minimal costs as bands typically perform for \$200 per two-hour concert. The program aims to attract sponsors to expand its offerings.
- While driving past **9th Street Trails**, Mr. Michael Kashuba informed the board that the city is waiting for final approval from Texas Parks and Wildlife for a parking lot project near Medi Park, aimed at serving the trails. The parking lot will alleviate issues of improper parking, allowing easier access to the trails. Additionally, Texas Parks and Wildlife recently conducted a tagging project for a subspecies of Canadian geese called the cackling geese, in partnership with the city, showcasing the growing collaboration between the two entities. The city aims to further develop this relationship to secure grants for various projects, reducing reliance on the general fund and taxpayer money.
- **Medical Center Park** - The south lake area of Medi Park is being considered for various improvements, including the installation of an accessible dock. The park also features a splash pad and playground, which are highly utilized during the summer months. The Botanical Gardens and are leased property from the city. Plans for future developments include potentially extending trails and enhancing lighting around the lakes. The area is also used for fishing camps and is a popular walking destination. Additionally, there are considerations for converting certain areas into wildlife habitats to reduce maintenance costs. Long-term plans include addressing concrete repair needs, which could amount to significant costs.
- **Puckett School Park** - Mr. Michael Kashuba informed the board that the city has been in conversations with Amarillo ISD for over three years regarding the maintenance of school parks. In the past, the arrangement typically involved developers allocating land for elementary schools along with adjacent park spaces. However, it has been discovered that many parks were never officially transferred to the city, leaving questions about responsibility and funding. As Mr. Kashuba highlighted, the city currently allocates approximately half a million dollars annually to maintain these parks. Negotiations with the school district have been ongoing to resolve these issues. It's worth noting that the financial constraints faced by both the city and the school district complicate the situation. Without recent park bonds to address aging infrastructure, finding a solution that serves the community while managing limited resources remains a significant challenge. Mr. Kashuba emphasized the need to balance community service with fiscal responsibility during these discussions.
- **John Stiff Memorial Park** - Mr. Michael Kashuba provided a detailed overview of John Stiff Park, focusing on various areas and recent developments within the park. The discussion included considerations for potential revenue generation and leasing of city properties within the park, particularly in the McDonald Lake area. Mr. Kashuba mentioned recent maintenance efforts, such as repairing the lake's intake and addressing issues related to the skate park area. Regarding wildlife management, he shared insights into efforts to relocate prairie dogs and highlighted their role in mitigating wildfire risks. Additionally, updates on recent infrastructure improvements, including lighting upgrades at sports complexes and the tennis center, were provided. Maintenance challenges related to the skate park area and concerns about parking lot damage were discussed, leading to plans for fencing off certain areas to prevent unauthorized activities. Future enhancements to the dog park and potential solutions to irrigation system issues were also addressed. Kashuba emphasized the importance of partnerships with youth sports organizations and outlined the city's role in providing and maintaining sports fields for these groups. Furthermore, security measures, including the installation of cameras and license plate readers, were highlighted as part of efforts to address safety concerns within the park.

ITEM 7

Discuss Items for Future Agendas:

- Standards of Care
- 5th of July Event at JSM
- Newsletter Suggestions

ITEM 8

Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 4:14 P.M. This meeting was recorded, and all comments are on file with the City Parks and Recreation Department.

ATTEST:



Ms. Samantha Thompson, Board Secretary



Ms. Tiffany Podzemny, Board Chair

Ms. Samantha Thompson, Board Secretary

Mr. Robert Altman, Board Vice Chair