



MINUTES

PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, August 2, 2005
6:00 p.m.
Memorial Park Senior Center
1800 Byron Street

Members Present

Bernie Sargent, Chairman
Yolanda Cordova
Cherilyn Dorsey
Alma Wilson
Daniel Delahaye
Julio Norman
Kelly Duke
Salvador Quintanilla
Henry Stokes
Alice Davis
Olga Holguin
Alejandro Sanchez
Walt Phillips
Julio Norman
Daniel Delahaye

Members Absent

Eileen Karlruher
Jose L. Gutierrez
Robert Gonzales
Charlotte Johnson

Staff Present

Dr. Norman C. Merrifield
Linda Martin
Lucy Martinez
Joe Rodriguez
Pete Dunavant

Others Present:

Juan Contreras, P+3

1. **Meeting called to order** by Chairman, Bernie Sargent at 6:05 p.m.
2. **Motion to approve minutes of July 5, 2005; Motion made by Alejandro Sanchez, seconded by Henry Stokes; all in favor; motion passed unanimously.**
3. **Petitions & Communications from the Public Sector:**
 - a) Park Board Member, Walt Phillips request an item be placed on the next Park Board Agenda having the Parks Walk for Health done with the Veteran's Parade November 11, 2005.
 - b) Ms. Alva La Rue, a concerned citizen, would like to see more benches around the Tom Lea Park. Being a elderly, she and others in her age group need more benches when walking around the park.
 - c) Bernie Sargent, Chairman of the Park Board announced the hiring of Berry Russell the new Assistant Director for Parks and Recreation department. Mr. Russell will begin his position around the middle of August.

4. **Discussion and Action on creating a disability Hall of Fame at the Multi Purpose Center:** Eric Reed, Chairman of the Accessibility Advisory Committee and also Advocacy Coordinator for Volar, the center for independent living stated that his organization would like to see the Multi-Purpose Center become a disability Hall of Fame. This would be in recognition of individuals who have made major contributions for the advancement of people with disabilities in the City of El Paso. Originally the Multi-Purpose Center was the center for people with disabilities established by the Parks and Recreation Department. Also, this year is the 25th Anniversary of the disability movement in the State of Texas. In March of 2006 a time capsule will be placed where the plaque is with items from all over the state of Texas. Volar would like to work with Parks and Recreation and the Mayor's Advisory Committee to come up with a criteria needed for individuals to be nominated to be placed in the Hall of Fame. Mr. Reed would like for the Park's advisory board to agree to the concept of the Hall of Fame at the Multi-Purpose Center. As per Mr. Reed, when details are organized a formal presentation will be made before the Parks Advisory Board. **Motion made to approve by Henry Stokes; seconded by Kelly Duke; all in favor; motion passed unanimously.**
5. **Information and Discussion on Status of QOL Projects managed by P+3:** Juan Contreras, Program Manager of P+3 stated that the design work has been completed for the Westside Community Park and Recreation Center. Bids should be received by September. This park has the capability to add an additional two softball fields an additional T-ball field and a swimming pool. A bridge could be build to cross the main grade and an additional soccer field could be built. BOAC agenda for this week shows that \$147,635 .59 being allocated to the Zoo from the Park Contingency fund due to the fact that the Zoo proposition funded both the Hilos De Plata Senior Center and Delta Center. The money was originally from the Zoo fund.
6. **Update on Attracting Sporting Events to El Paso By Brian Kennedy of the El Paso Sports Commission:** Speaker not available. **Item Tabled.**
7. **Discussion and Action on Placing Ice Cream Vending Machines at Recreation Centers:** Dr. Norman Merrifield, Director of Parks and Recreation Department stated that the purchasing director communicated that only request for proposals from vendors is all that was needed to establish ice cream vending machines at the recreation centers. If Joe Rodriguez, Recreation Services Manager and the staff determine that they wanted to pursue it will brought back to the Park Board next month with recommendations. The solicitation can be informal. **No Action taken on this item at this time. Item postponed until September Park Board Meeting.**
8. **Discussion and Action on The Miracle League Proposal for Ponder Park:** Sandy Sparks Oliver, Executive Director for the Miracle League in El Paso stated that Miracle League National Association's goal is to have their kids outside playing baseball. The league works with challenged children with different disabilities. There are children in wheelchairs as well as other disabilities and no child is turned away. Ponder Park is being requested because it is centrally located with the bus depot right across the street for children that have difficulty getting to the field to play, the area is beautiful and Park's representatives have agreed the Miracle League can use Ponder Park. Miracle League is asking the Park Board to allow the use of this park exclusively at no charge and in

exchange the League will renovate the field. All the grass will be removed and be replaced with specially designed seamless rubber surface. The entire field will have this rubber surface. Lighting will be installed, new fencing, redesigned dugouts to be totally accessible to the handicapped including new handicapped accessible restrooms which will include a private family room, and a concession stand. The field will be designed with a custom made canopy that will stretch from the dugout to over the homeplate area. The target date is 2007 to finish the field and ready for play 2008. Public organizations and the community will help build this field at a price of \$300,000 to \$400,000. The Miracle League will be applying for grants as well as aggressively doing fundraisers. Money will be placed in an account earmarked through the Parks Foundation. There are 150 children playing in the second season. The El Paso Miracle League is the first league in the United States that is playing baseball now without a specially designed field. The League needs the Park Board's approval to do this. This Park will be open for public use but priority use would be the Miracle League's. **Motion to approve the Miracle League Proposal for Ponder Park; motion made by Julio Norman; seconded by Henry Stokes; all in favor; motion passes unanimously.**

9. **Information and Discussion on 2006 Proposed Budget:** Dr. Norman Merrifield, Parks and Recreation Director stated that the Parks system is composed of 175 public parks, 2,100 acres of park land, 1000 of which is turf, and 450 acres of natural areas. The Department has 14 community centers, 10 senior centers, 14 aquatic centers, and hundreds of outdoor facilities such as skate parks, basketball/tennis courts, park pavilions, and even 1 dog park. There is a full time staff of 349 and over 400 part time employees. The course services are 1) park maintenance management 2) facilities management and 3) leisure services management. Auxillary services include sports and aquatic leagues as well as the city wide festivals and special events. Auxillary services are being funded by fees and charges. Sports and Aquatics are at a minimal level. Community centers and senior centers annual attendance is 336,732. Sports and athletics not including spectators and family members are about 40,483. Parks is working on an infusion of capital money for general upkeep in approximately 3 to 5 million dollars every year. This money is to repair roofs, furnices or whatever breaks down. Bylaws are being worked on. The naming policy will be in the Master Plan. Dr. Bader of the Texas A&M Extension service is working on the turf management study and plan and Parks is also partnering with El Paso Utility Department who are allowing Parks \$300,000 to look at Park's process and ways to improve. Every Park will be studied as to the best ways to water each park. Natural scaping will be looked at and different methods to balance the natural green with desert plants. More training and development will be done with the five land managers. A new system will be brought to Parks next year called the "Vermont System" to allow the public to reserve a park shelter, pavilion or community center room at your home and will include a sports league. The Vermont System will also have a tree inventory. Challenges and issues are turf and irrigation system, opening of the Northeast Sports Complex (40-50 acres), 66 acres of new park land, and helping the Foundation as next years goals. The new Park's Assistant Director will bring in continuity and a certain level of expertise and will allow the Director to concentrate in the planning and work with City hall to bring the revenue up. Budget highlights and emphasis will be on land management and sports. The youth outreach program will be re-organized to reach more youth. Hours are being established to use full time staff and part-time employees and will save \$100,000 by the end of fall. Budget being recommended by Parks to include user fees is showing an increase of 4.9% increase or \$17, 375,908.00. The revenue for the user

fees shows it continuing to go up. El Paso Water Utilities grant is \$300,000. Financial challenges for 2007 are having to pay for beautiful facilities such as Westside Community Center, Westside Recreation Center and Westside Park. The Master Plan should be impressive enough for the people in Austin to decide what funds are out there to help us.

10. Meeting adjourned by Chairman Bernie Sargent at 7:45 pm