

**BRANSON PARKS AND RECREATION**

**REGULAR MEETING**

June 16, 2020  
5:15pm  
Branson RecPlex

**CALL TO ORDER**

**ROLL CALL**

Board Members Present: Candy Sullinger, Bob Simmons, Jamie Whiteis, Andrew Brown, Scott Wuest, Scott McCaulley

Board Members Absent: Garrett Vanderpool, Julie Wolfe, Clark Harris, David Parish

Staff Present: Cindy Shook, Parks & Recreation Director  
Jason Reinsch, Assistant Director  
Marsha Fulton, Office Specialist

**REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS**

**1. Approve Minutes**

May 19, 2020 Regular Meeting

**MOTION:**

Motion made by Scott McCaulley and seconded by Andrew Brown to approve the May 19, 2020 minutes as presented. Motion unanimously carried.

**2. Presentation of Financial Report**

Cindy presented the financial report reminding the Board that the financials were greatly impacted by COVID 19 and that the department was just starting to open back up slowly. Cindy pointed out that the campground was an area that was greatly impacted, noting that revenue was down nearly \$147,000 over last year in the months of March, April and May. Cindy also pointed out that youth baseball was a positive note on the report, based on the fact that it originally looked like the program might be cancelled for the season.

Jason added that Recreation Specialist Josh Aubin had worked hard contacting all previous teams and coaches, working with them to make the season possible. He stated that Josh’s flexibility had been key to the ability to move forward with a full season in a shortened window of time.

Cindy went on to detail how all areas of the department had adjusted staffing and scheduling to make it possible for all full time staff to stay on through the COVID shut down. She mentioned that all staff had

done a great job of being willing to make necessary adjustments during this difficult time. Cindy stated that the Parks Department maintenance crew had taken over the mowing from the city's mowing contract to reduce expenses, and had even temporarily moved three janitorial staff members to mowing crews to assist with the new workload.

Jamie asked if they were anticipating the June tournaments moving forward as scheduled, and if so, were the team numbers significantly impacted.

Cindy stated that the basketball tournaments were slated to return the week of June 22<sup>nd</sup> and that baseball and softball tournaments had begun a few weeks ago. Cindy shared that at this point, we are seeing more local teams participating in the tournaments than in past years. Jason added that about 85% of the teams were within 2 hours of Branson.

Cindy stated that the NIT Softball Tournament slated June 18-21 had 47 teams, down from 95 in 2019, and over 100 teams in previous years. Cindy noted that they had instituted many modifications for baseball and softball including not charging gate and extensive signage encouraging hand washing, social distancing, etc.

Jamie asked if the high water and threat of flooding in May had impacted the campground.

Cindy confirmed that it had impacted the campground occupancy, specifically over Memorial Day weekend.

### **3. Presentation of Campground Occupancy Information**

Jason directed the Board's attention to the occupancy spreadsheet that was included with the Park Board agenda. Jason stated that while it had been pretty rough recently due to COVID, the year had started out extremely strong in January and February, even outpacing the 2019 numbers. Jason went on to say that they were currently seeing 72% to 82% occupancy for the last few weeks, which was not far off from typical occupancy during the late spring and early summer. Jason added that camping was an activity that really did lend itself well to social distancing, as most people came in fully self-contained units and the sites were spread out.

Scott M. stated that based on the rebounding numbers, they could still see a good trend for the rest of the year.

Cindy added that the campground was doing very well compared to what they had originally projected immediately following the COVID outbreak. Cindy went on to say that while the shower house at the campground had been closed, they had recently reopened it, but most people have preferred to use their own RV.

Bob added that there was no way that anyone could have known or predicted the extent of the COVID issue, and he was impressed with how everyone had worked like family and that attitude had saved a lot of jobs.

Scott M. agreed, adding that it caused some groups and organizations to re-invent themselves and find new ways to be successful in a changing landscape.

#### **4. Update on the Statue of Programs**

Cindy stated that it had taken a great deal of thought, time and effort to develop modifications across the board to move forward with the current programs. She went on to state that Josh Aubin had been incredibly flexible with all the baseball and softball teams including adding an additional league at the last minute, providing additional practice space and creative scheduling. Cindy also noted that they had cancelled the traditional weekly day camps, but were offering “One Day Fun Days” every Wednesday with small group activities and limited occupancy.

Jason mentioned that the camp counselor staff had been doing a good job of encouraging social distancing by teaching the kids to put out their arms and make sure they couldn’t touch anyone around them.

Cindy wrapped up the agenda item by adding they were offering programs such as tennis with Luke Bowling, pickleball with Autumn Price, and parking lot bingo with Traci Burrow, all of which would lend themselves to social distancing.

#### **5. Update on Aquatic Center Operation Plans**

Cindy stated that the AquaPlex had been one of the biggest challenges as far as determining when to open, what it should look like and what modifications or changes were needed to provide a safe experience for guests. Cindy added that they had decided to open the pool Tuesday through Sunday for two sessions a day. Session one would be available from 11:00am – 2:00pm, and Session two would be available from 3:00pm – 6:00pm. The decision was made for both sessions to have a maximum capacity of 150 guests. All pool session tickets are contactless through our online software. Cindy stated that overall it had been being pretty well received.

Andrew stated that he had noticed two things when he was at the pool. First, he wondered since the maximum limit was lower if they would be able to put up a lap lane? Second, he wondered if the people leaving the first session should be allowed to buy tickets for the second session. He thought that if guests were limited to 1 session each day, it may allow more people to get to enjoy the pool.

Cindy responded that unfortunately, some of the options at the pool this year that serve smaller groups of users, like lap swimming as well as Toddler Time, have not been offered as the priority has been to serve the largest group attending open swim. She stated that it may be possible to increase the maximum number of people allowed on the pool deck depending on what the Governor announces in his next phase.

Jason then added that people were being very proactive about buying their pool tickets in advance, stating that there had been several sessions that were sold out prior to the pool opening.

Scott M. inquired as to what the maximum capacity of the pool was during a regular season.

Cindy stated the maximum capacity of the pool was over 600.

Andrew stated that he was surprised how much more extra space there was by limiting the number of tickets. He also added that he was disappointed when he saw people just laying out and not actually swimming, because he felt that they were taking away a swimming spot from someone.

Scott M. added that things everywhere had changed and that you really did have to plan ahead for activities. He stated that the days of just dropping in were done and everyone was adjusting to the new norm.

Jamie stated that many of the stores at Tanger had changed their occupancy that day based on new occupancy guidelines.

Bob stated that the county would be receiving funds through the CARES Act that some of those funds could be available for items that were legitimate needs for the department.

Cindy agreed, saying that the department had sent over a spreadsheet with some items on it but that they could always follow up with additional ideas.

Scott W. mentioned that he didn't know what the restrictions were, but he wondered if a trash truck could be on the list due to the fact that the quantity of trash had gone up and he felt it could be justified as a health and sanitation issue.

Cindy stated she had not considered that initially, but they could definitely reach out to the Finance Department and find out. Cindy added that Marsha had suggested hands free toilets, soap dispensers and hand dryers at the campground and other locations that did not currently have them.

Jamie also suggested looking into trash compactors as a way to reduce the amount of trash being dumped and the frequency of pick-ups.

## **6. Update on Capital Budget Requests**

Cindy opened the item by explaining that several of the items that had been approved as part of the 2020 Capital Budget would not be completed this year, and had to be re-prioritized due to all the changes caused by COVID.

Cindy stated that one of the newly requested projects, a porous pavement walking path at Eiserman Park, would be a cooperative project between the City of Branson, DNR and Missouri State as part of a water shed demonstration grant.

Jason stated that the \$100,000.00 project would cost the City only \$25,000.00. He then stated that they were originally hoping to replace the trash truck with a flatbed truck and dump trailer that would assist on additional projects like trail maintenance, but due to a significant increase in the volume of trash, they felt it prudent to move forward with requesting a new trash truck. To assist with the other areas, they had also requested a hydraulic dump trailer.

Bob questioned what the long term impact on trash volume would be if the Recycling Center didn't reopen, explaining that nothing was decided but that there would be discussions as to what to do in regards to the recycling center.

Scott M. stated that it would be interesting to see the revenue versus benefit of the Recycling Center and increased trash and how the trickle down affect would be on other areas and departments.

Cindy then pointed out that in 2022 the department was requesting new pool grates, stating they were still using the original grates from when the pool was built and they were becoming brittle due to exposure. Cindy went on to explain that it may be possible to purchase them out of the internal service fund. She noted that because 2019 had been a good year financially for the department, it had allowed the Finance Department to put \$100,000.00 into the Park's internal service fund for future projects.

Cindy also stated that they were looking at athletic field lighting improvements in 2022. She explained that the bulbs had been replaced in 2016 but that with all athletic field lighting you being to see a significant reduction in foot candles after 3-4 years.

Jason added that by doing them together, it would allow all the athletic fields to be on one line for future replacements as well.

<b>ADJOURN</b>
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Motion by board member Scott McCaulley, seconded by board member Jamie Whiteis, and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 6:38 pm.