

BRANSON ADVISORY PARK BOARD

REGULAR MEETING

July 21, 2020

5:15pm

Branson RecPlex

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

Board Members Present: Candy Sullinger, Andrew Brown, Clark Harrison, Scott Wuest, Scott

McCaulley, David Parrish, Mica Farley, Julie Wolfe

Board Members Absent: Jamie Whiteis, Jennifer Holder

Staff Present: Cindy Shook, Parks & Recreation Director
Jason Reinsch, Assistant Director
Amy Jackson, Landscape Specialist

Guest: Cindy Garner

REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

1. Approve Minutes

June 16, 2020 Regular Meeting

MOTION:

Motion made by Scott McCaulley and seconded by Andrew Brown to approve the June 16, 2020 minutes as presented. Motion unanimously carried.

2. Tree City USA Presentation

Cindy Garner, Community Forester with the Missouri Department of Conversation, presented the Tree City USA award to the City of Branson. Cindy explained that the National Arbor Day Foundation oversees the Tree City USA Program nationally and the Department of Conversation oversees it for the state and she oversees it for the southwest Missouri region. She shared with the board that Branson is the second longest running Tree City USA designation in her division. Cindy then explained that in order to receive the distinction the city must do the following:

- 1. Tree Board or Department to manage the trees on public properties.
- 2. Must have an ordinance recognizing the importance of trees.
- 3. A community forestry program with an annual budget of at least \$2.00 per capita (based on the last

census)

4. Must have an Arbor Day Event. This was waived this year.

Cindy indicated that out of over a thousand cities in the state, only 110 participate in the Tree City USA program, and Branson has been a Tree City USA designee since 1995.

Landscape Specialist, Amy Jackson, added that Cindy Garner had been a mentor to her and thanked her for all her work, noting that Cindy is retiring soon. Amy shared that our total community forestry expenditures were \$39,098 for 2019, including 125 trees pruned, six trees planted for memorials, seventy trees removed for a variety of reasons, 316 volunteer hours.

3. Review of Financial Report

Cindy Shook presented the financial report, highlighting the impact that COVID 19 has had, noting that concession revenue is down more than \$40,000. Cindy stated that she was hopeful that some areas are starting to come back. Cindy reminded the board that the City of Branson has recently started requiring masks to be worn inside city buildings, and she felt like that had been a positive thing for the RecPlex. Cindy stated that tournaments are continuing to come back and that was reflected in the financials.

Cindy stated that while some programs have been canceled, notably Day Camp and swim team, other programs have been modified to continue operating. She stated that youth baseball got off to a late start, but they were able to retain about 60% of the teams compared to last year. Modifications were made to mitigate the size of crowds and to allow for social distancing.

Jason discussed the pool and while revenues are down, expenses and revenues are tracking as planned, and she hoped that trend would continue.

Mica noted an increase in revenue in tennis and asked what had changed. Jason stated that pickleball is also included in the tennis cost center and that we had seen a big increase in that area.

Scott McCaulley stated it he felt like the report still reflected a pretty good balance of revenue of expenses and that he was impressed that we were able to keep things running as smoothly as possible.

Julie Wolfe added that it's been a hard year for everyone and we will survive, adding that the Park's Department had done a great job.

4. Budget Update

Cindy gave the board an update on the budget, stating that she is scheduled for a budget meeting with the Finance Director and City Administrator in the next two weeks. She indicated that during the COVID shut down, an updated budget was prepared to revise expenditures and revenues based on limited programs. Cindy stated that she wasn't sure how the budget would be impacted long term, but they would be getting direction and she fully expected to continue to operate in a lean way. Cindy then went on to discuss the capital budget review and the scoring process related to priority based budgeting. Lastly, Cindy reported that a plan had been developed that would phase in fee increases over the next

few years that would offset mandated minimum wage increases to \$12.00 in 2023. Cindy indicated that she will be bringing those fees in the board in the next couple of months.

5. Program Update

Jason followed up with the board on current programming, starting with baseball and softball. Jason stated that they were starting to wrap up the youth baseball and softball league, ending about four weeks later than usual. Jason stated that a great deal of thought, time and effort went into developing modifications for safety practices. Jason added that new Recreation Specialist, 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 reminded the board that they had decided not to offer the summer day camp due to COVID issues, but they had been able to offer one day fun day camps every Wednesday with small group activities and limited occupancy.

Jason stated that the traditional swim team was not offered this summer, rather a smaller swim training program was offered in its place, led by Branson Waves Swim Team coach Logan Taylor.

Jason concluded by commenting that although it has been difficult, the department was pleased that they were still able to offer programs for the public to enjoy. Lastly, Jason stated that Cindy's leadership throughout the whole process had been extremely crucial and her decisiveness in making decisions had been critical and he was happy to have been a part of it.

6. Upcoming Programs & Events

Cindy shared plans that the park staff had been working on that address an uncertain future as related to COVID. She added that they are basically developing a plan A, B and C, depending on the changing circumstances. All programs will have modifications and will be designed to minimize crowds. The soccer program will be spread out to multiple locations. The biggest changes will be seen in youth basketball, where the girls and boys seasons will be divided. Games will be spaced out to mitigate crowds in the gym on Saturdays. Detailed plans are being developed to improve their virtual programming if fall sports cannot be offered. Cindy then asked the board their observations and perceptions.

Scott McCaulley stated it sounded like the department already had a good handle on things. Scott added that while not all the effects of this were known, it sounded like the park staff was working hard to anticipate future challenges.

Clark Harris agreed that Cindy and Jason had really "taken the bull by the horns" and gotten ahead of the game. Clark went on to say compliment the city administration and city staff, who were all trying to do the right thing, and concluded by saying that the planning had been really good.

Mica Farley added that as a parent she really appreciated how baseball and softball was handled. She stated that for her kids, having something that was a little normal was great. Mica went on to say she loved the idea of the modifications for basketball, and concluded by saying that her family appreciated the occupancy limits and other pool modifications this summer.

David Parrish stated that while his kids had not been participating in sports this summer, they had been curious to see how things developed. He stated he was happy to see how the department was proactively planning and it was nice to see there was a lot of thought being put into decisions.

Scott Wuest stated that he echoed the sentiments of the board and was very supportive of the changes and appreciates the hard work that is being done. He went on to ask about the CARES Act that was discussed at the last park board meeting and if there was an update.

Cindy stated she had received a call from Finance Director Jamie Rouch, who stated that a comprehensive list had been submitted to the county. The list includes reimbursement for safety supplies that had been purchased, as well as future consideration of purchases for equipment to assist with sanitizing efforts. Cindy added that it was her understanding that the County Commissioners will be deciding on the distributions of the funds.

Scott Wuest then went on to report that he was recently walking at Stockstill Park and found that water faucets that were all dysfunctional, ultimately finding water at the tennis courts.

Scott McCaulley added that he and his wife were recently at Roark Creek and it was pretty busy. He added that he was a regular walker at Stockstill Park and that there hadn't been a day that the park and the creek hasn't been packed, except for bad weather.

7. Member's Reports

Andrew Brown shared that he had been at the pool lately and he had wondered if they had received any blow back from the recent releases that there had been exposures at the RecPlex.

Cindy responded that she had indeed been contacted by Taney County Health Department, through contact tracing, that there had been two separate points of contact. She indicated that information is included in the Taney Country Health Department news releases, and that she was not aware of any calls or inquires.

Andrew asked if they had thought about, for the basketball tournaments, doing temperature checks, or would that be too intrusive. Cindy responded that she had instituted temperature checks for basketball tournaments since the first event in late June. Andrew then stated that he had seen some negative comments on Branson Buzz Facebook.

Julie Wolfe shared that she had taken her grandsons to the pool and she thought the three hour limits on the session were great. She stated that she had talked with another parent and they too had been very happy with the time slots and that it made it easier to get kids out and on to other things without an argument. Julie stated that people will always complain but there are a lot of good things that people don't say and she wanted to thank Cindy and Jason for all the hard work.

Scott McCaulley added that he had seen new doggie waste stations on the trails and he thought that they were very well placed and very helpful. He also noted that Cox Hospital had closed the big parking lot because as they are using it to conduct testing, so the public cannot park there currently to access the Stockstill trail.

Cindy thanked Scott for the heads up because she was not aware that they had closed that parking lot. Jason added the pet waste stations were a recent Eagle Scout project.

Clark Harris added that people were using the dog waste stations for trash as well and recently when he was out it was overflowing, so they may want to have a schedule to empty them.

Clark then went on to talk about the recent retirement of Matt Felice from the Engineering Department and how instrumental Matt had been when it came to the city's trail system. Clark also shared with the board some trail updates and butterfly garden updates. Clark concluded by thanking Jason and Cindy for all their hard work.

Cindy stated when Matt announced his retirement she picked his brain because he had been with the city a long time and was a wealth of information. She also added that she hoped that there would be some additions to the trail system, that were approved as part of the capital budget, but are not being funded at this point due to COVID.

Mica Farley shared while Cindy had mentioned her "little" kids, that in fact her youngest would be entering kindergarten this year. Mica stated that she is currently pursuing her master's degree in public health with a concentration on community health education. Mica stated with her education direction, coupled with where she was in life, makes her view point maybe a little different than when she previously served on the park board. Mica concluded by stating that she was happy and excited to be back on the board. Candy welcomed her back to the board.

Jason Reinsch shared with the board that this will be the last Park Board meeting as he had recently resigned to accept a position at Branson Schools and go back into the field of education and coaching. He went on to say that he had really enjoyed getting to know everyone and had appreciated their support. Jason added that he knew that park's department was in great hands, and how Cindy had been an incredible mentor on how to do things the right way. Jason concluded that he couldn't express his gratitude enough and a huge thank to everyone.

Clark Harris stated that the city's loss will be the High School's gain.

Scott McCauley added that he had worked with Jason at College of the Ozarks and he knew he would find him at Branson somewhere. Scott concluded with congratulations and good luck to Jason.

Andrew Brown wished Jason good luck and stated he might see him around as a substitute teacher.

Mica Farley stated that she was excited due to the fact that her oldest daughter was playing softball and benefit from Jason coaching.

Candy Sullinger thanked Cindy and Jason for their extra effort to pull the Zoom meetings together, specifically their technology help. Candy added that she would be seeing Jason around and wished him well.

ADJOURN

Motion was made by Julie Wolfe, and seconded by Clark Harris, to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor.

Meeting adjourned 6:25 pm