

**2023 MINUTES
SPECIAL CALLED MEETING
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2023, 5:30 PM
OWENS MULTIPURPOSE CENTER
1405 SW 11th STREET, LAWTON, OK, 73501
CONFERENCE/BREAK ROOM**

The Meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was held Monday, February 27, 2023, at the Owens Multipurpose Center, 1405 SW 11th Street, Lawton, Oklahoma, and called to order by Chairperson, Michael Scott, at 5:38 p.m. Meeting was held in the Owens Center break room.

ROLL CALL:

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mike Scott, Terry Brierton, Linda Neal, Susan Thompson, Anthony Cox, Jacobi Crowley, David Tyler

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jason Wells, Jason Scott

STAFF PRESENT: Christine James, Parks and Recreation Director; Mitchell Dooley, Parks and Recreation Deputy Director; Kyla Christorf, Recording Administrative Assistant III

OTHERS PRESENT: Kim McConnell, Lawton Constitution Journalist; Allan Hampton, Council Member Ward 5; Matina Davis, Advocate for the youth; Christal Thompkins, Advocate for the youth.

II. REPORTS

- A. Mitch Dooley, Parks and Recreation Deputy Director introduced a project Park and Recreations have been working on in partnership with the tea set program called Painted Spaces. Painted Spaces is a program where they paint play areas and fun activities on the concrete and sidewalks with stencil. Painted Space Project is going out for a grant that has been approved. They will be starting out at the Owens Multipurpose Center. Then moving to the Patterson Center and King Centers later. Mitch and the Park and Recreations believe the Painted Space Project will make a lot of families happy and bring joy to the community.
- B. Chairperson Michael Scott informed the commission members that there are spaces in the commission council that need to be filled. That it is his hope that the positions be filled before the scheduled meeting in April. Michael Scott stated the serving commissioners are encouraged to stay until their replacements arrive.
- C. Chairperson Michael Scott asked for the commissioners to check the roster and make sure their information is correct. To inform Kyla Christorf, Administrative Assistant III if any changes need to be made so that we can

have an accurate roster and everyone has knowledge of the meetings that are taking place, where they will be held, and what time they will be at.

III. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

- A.** Matina Davis addressed her concern about the King Center's AC not working. She stated Park and Recreations beautified the outside of the King Center, but the inside of the King Center needs some work.
- B.** Christal Thompkins addressed the same concerns and added that the equipment inside the King Center is run down. That the center needs money for new equipment and inside maintenance.
- C.** Commissioner Jacobi Crowley stated it is a highly crowded and popular area when it comes to basketball and recreations. He stated Park and Recreations extended the hours of operation at the King Center because of this. He proposed looking into grants to refurbish the King Center.
- D.** Chairperson Michael Scott asked for a report before the next meeting. Christine James, Park and Recreations Director stated that it is on a list of repairs that will be done when Park and Recreations budget and funding allows us to accomplish these tasks. That it is being proposed in next year's budgets. That it all depends on what the City of Lawton Council wants to do.
- E.** Commissioner Susan Thompson asked if Park and Recreation can repair the HVAC systems. Christine James, Director of Park and Recreations, stated that it is on the list of repairs. The repair list for the City of Lawton is written on a scale of what is the highest priority down to the least priority of all the facilities needing to be fixed. The top of that list right now is The Water Treatment Plant. If the water treatment plants, go down, all the City of Lawton's water will go down. The City of Lawton is trying to take care of the bigger priorities first. She stated there are HVAC problems in all the facilities. That throughout the years the City of Lawton have not done a very good job at maintaining those HVACs. That Park and Recreations are going to work on the HVACs as soon as money is available to work on them.
- F.** Christine James let the Commission Members know that Park and Recreations are aware of the King Center's HVAC issues. She has already gotten a quote for the cost to fix the HVAC at the King Center. She said fixing the HVAC is one of the top priorities on the list. Furthermore, she stated when there is more funding Park and Recreations will start getting all the things on the list fixed one by one.

- G. Commissioner Susan Thompson asked if there is no way of fixing the system that is already there. Christine James informed her unfortunately with how old the HVAC systems are there is no way to repair them. The HVAC systems would have to be replaced. With the effects of Covid still hitting shipping. There is a waiting list between 6 and 8 months before we would see equipment arriving.
- H. Chairperson Michael Scott asked if the funding for Parks and Recreations are separated by budgets for separate facilities. Christine James informed him that it is not separated by facilities, that HVAC for the King Center would fall under the budget for repair and maintenance for recreations.
- I. Commissioner Anthony Cox asked if the repairs will be done before the summer. Christine James Park and Recreations Director let him know as soon as it is ordered, it will all depend on the shipping and how fast it will get here
- J. Commissioner David Tyler proposed that the Park and Recreations department investigate places that can donate paint or equipment to the centers.
- K. Commissioner Jacobi Crowley implores Park and Recreations to consider discussing the needs of all the Park and Recreation centers. To have each center do an assessment of the needs from the highest priority to lower priority on the next meeting

IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

V. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Consider approving minutes from the January 17,2023, Meeting.

MOTION by Anthony Scott; SECOND by Linda Neal

AYES: Mike Scott, Terry Brierton, Linda Neal, Susan Thompson, Anthony Cox, Jacobi Crowley, David Tyler

NAYS: None.

MOTION CARRIES

- B. Recommendation to have the Municipal pools open with the expectation to pay funds to open the pool without the wading pools, and to cut the staff that monitors the Elmer Thomas splash pad.

Mitchell Dooley, Park and Recreation Deputy Director, presented agenda packets with a PowerPoint of the current status of the municipal and wading pools. Mitchell Dooley explained the Municipal pool and wading pools are currently in a state of general disrepair.

That the wading pools are old, cracked, and impossible to keep water inside of them. That they must be filled multiple times per day. Making it extremely difficult to keep the chemicals levels balanced. Also, The Municipal pool has similar issues regarding water quality and chemical level balancing. He explained that the filter for the pool will likely need to be replaced and that it needs the water pressure to be tested for leaks.

Mitchell Dooley, Park and Recreation Deputy Director, broke down both the number of visitors for the 2022 season and the costs of opening the wading pool and Municipal pool for the upcoming 2023 season.

Mitchell Dooley informed the commission that participation at the splash pad at Elmer Thomas Park far exceeds that of both the wading and municipal pools put together. He added that additional money could be saved by recommending the splash pad not be monitored by Park and Recreation Staff. He pointed out that he had compared splash pads in surrounding communities and across the nation are often unmonitored by staff. That many are run on timers with set hours of operation.

He pointed out that the anticipated attendance at the pools is low, but the operating costs are high, plus the additional cost of repairs to make the pool operable. He stated Park and Recreation staff must weigh all options in the decision of whether to open the pool.

Mitchell Dooley recommended to the commissioner members that we keep the wading pool and the Municipal Pool closed for the 2023 season. He also recommended the money that is normally spent on typical operating costs be reallocated toward major repairs anticipating the 2024 summer season and in preparation for the new aquatic facility per the Aquatics Master Plan from Halff and Associates.

Chairperson Michael Scott asked how much it cost to get the pool up and running in the 2022 season. Christine James, Parks and Recreation Director, stated that the thousands of dollars that have been spent on the pools it was

barely holding together in the 2022 season. That even last year they had to close the pools multiple times because of the chemical levels not staying balanced. That the lack of maintenance throughout the years have caused a lot of problems. Deputy Director Mitchell Dooley added to this by stating that is why the filter needs repairs.

Christine James stated if the change in climate can mess with the chemical levels as well. That it is required by the state to take water samples. That there are always regulations that must be followed to keep a pool open. Due to not being able to keep the water to a certain quality, they had to close. She informed the commissioner members that it has never been budgeted to fix the wading pool and Municipal pool the way they need to be fixed. She stated that is why Park and Recreation has brought it to their attention this year. Furthermore, she asked when we stop the bleeding, or do we keep throwing money at it to get it to keep going.

Jacobi Crowley asked what the guarantee that shutting it down this year that it will be fixed or if it will be another thing on the list of stuff.

Christine James let them know there is no guarantee. She also stated the funds we would have used on trying to open the pools could go into fixing those repairs. Then hopefully have it up and running for the 2024 season.

Chairperson Michael Scott brought up the Aquatics Master Plan, asking when that will be and will the Municipal pool fit into it

Christine James let them know there are plans to put in a new pool and that will be in our next meeting Thursday, March 23, 2023, that that could be a replacement to this pool. It would be two to three years down the line if that does get approved.

Anthony Cox stated he does not think it is a bad idea to shut it down.

Susan Thompson stated it is her understanding we do not have the funds to do anything right now. Christine James said yes that we are competing with other city departments and projects for the funding.

She broke down how long it would take before they could even start up construction on the new pool.

Susan Thompson stated her concern on the fact that the youth have nothing to do. She stated what would they be doing causing mischief in the community. If we could redirect money to the Recreational Centers if the pools close.

Terry Brierton stated his concerns on Park and Recreations used to care about the kids and his concern is that the kids should be put first. That the other communities around are behind their kids, “if you build it, they will come”.

Christine James let them know we can’t go to council asking for funding and not tell them the whole truth. That we should tell them the situation we are in, but this is where we are at. That we need the commissioner member’s support on what to do.

Chairperson Michael Scott stated even if we opened the pools, it might not be open for that long. That it is old and antiquated.

Jacobi Crowley asked if we are more worried about making money or providing a safe place for families. He stated on paper it sounds right to save the money to close the pools down, try to see what’s next. But if it does close, the city will run into more problems. That if it’s closed, more families will leave Lawton instead of staying. That he sees the staff’s point of view on wanting to close and wait for the new Aquatics Project, but to not over jump it before we have a new pool. We should keep the Municipal pool open.

David Tyler pointed out that the part of town the Municipal pool is in has been overlooked for too long.

Linda Neal proposed that we close the wading pools and save some money that way.

Terry Brierton stated the little kids would still have the splash park at Elmer Thomas, that it would give the teenagers a place to go as well.

Mitchell Dooley, Deputy Director stated that the pool technician said it was not the worst pool he has ever seen. He also indicated the appropriate funding; the pool could be operable.

Christine James Director of Park and Recreations stated if it is just the sand in the filter needing to be replaced park and recreations could find money to fund that but if the whole filter needs to be replaced the City of Lawton Council will have to fund it.

Christine James suggested if closing wading pools to use the saved funds to pay the lifeguards more.

Mitchell Dooley, Deputy Director made one last point if the filter does need to be replaced that there is a three-month waiting time.

Anthony Cox asked how we would keep it from breaking down in the future. Christine James stated that the Municipal pool is so old it is putting band-aids

on it at this point. Anthony Cox asked if the Aquatics Plan was up and running, how would Park and Recreation prevent it from breaking down. Christine James explained with the upkeep of maintenance through a maintenance plan that will have to be approved by the City of Lawton Council.

Allan Hampton, Council Member Ward 5 stated that he is trying to get it deemed as a historical landmark. That he has a trust he has put together for historical places. That Jacobi Crowley is right about doing something for the families to keep families in Lawton. The pool is in this shape because of not adequate maintenance. Furthermore, he stated he already has money set to the side for maintenance for the pools. If it is deemed historical, there are programs and groups that will pay for the Municipal pool to be fixed. Recommend coming to city of council with numbers to band aid the pool.

Linda Neal proposed to have the Municipal pools open with the expectation to pay funds to open the pool without the wading pools, to cut the staff that monitor the splash pad.

MOTION by Linda Neal; SECOND by Terry Brierton

AYES: Mike Scott, Terry Brierton, Linda Neal, Susan Thompson, Anthony Cox, Jacobi Crowley, David Tyler

NAYS: None.

MOTION CARRIES

*****Special Meeting will be held on Thursday, March 23, 2023, at 6:00 p.m., for purposes of going over the draft aquatic plan. *****

VI. ADJOURN

MOTION by Anthony Cox; SECOND by Jacobi Crowley

AYES: Mike Scott, Terry Brierton, Linda Neal, Susan Thompson, Anthony Cox, Jacobi Crowley, David Tyler

NAYS: None.

MOTION CARRIES

Meeting adjourned @ 7:01 p.m.

Approved 2023.03.23 Special Meeting