

**City Council and Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
Special Joint Meeting Minutes
December 17, 1999**

Item 1 Called to Order by Chairman Jamie Hamilton at 12:05 p.m.

Roll Call

City Council Members Present: Reford Theobold
 Jim Spehar
 Jack Scott
 Gene Kinsey
 Janet Terry

Board Members Present: Jamie Hamilton
 Tillie Bishop
 Bob Cron
 Lena Elliott
 RT Mantlo
 Karen Madsen

City Administration Staff Present: Mark Achen, City Manager
 Ron Lappi, Finance Director

Parks & Recreation Staff Present: Joe Stevens, Director
 Don Hobbs, Assistant Director
 Erika Doyle, Administrative Specialist

Item 2 Approve Minutes

R.T. Mantlo moved to approve the November 24, 1999 minutes. Bob Cron seconded the motion.

Unanimously Approved: Yes 6 No 0

R.T. Mantlo moved to approve the November 30, 1999 minutes. Tillie Bishop seconded the motion with the following text additions:

Item 2 shall include Tillie Bishop's request to have better communication with the parties involved when fees are raised.

Item 3 shall include in its criteria for a golf professional that there be experience managing multiple golf courses.

Unanimously Approved: Yes 6 No 0

Item 3 RRC Associates Presentation – Needs Assessment Survey

Joe Stevens introduced Chris Cares and Mike Simone from RRC Associates. RRC Associates is a survey compiling and research company located in Boulder, Colorado.

Mr. Cares and Mr. Simone have been in the process of performing a needs assessment survey for the City of Grand Junction Parks and Recreation Department. Specific criterion was determined through the participation of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, Parks and Recreation Staff, and RRC Associates expertise.

The survey's basis was to test the inclination of implementing a ¼% sales tax increase to support expansion within the Parks and Recreation Department. Examples include a large outdoor amphitheater, community recreation/senior center, completion of Canyon View Park, additional neighborhood parks, trails & bike paths, outdoor water park & aquatics center, large regional parks for general park use, and adding another outdoor swimming pool were all listed as possibilities.

The survey consisted of 508 completed interviews of registered voters living within the limits of the City of Grand Junction. The support for the ¼% sales tax increase for the total sample is roughly 59% in favor (20% would definitely vote YES, 39% probably vote YES), 33% against (15% probably NO, 18% definitely NO), and 8% were undecided. (For a sample of 500, margin of error for the 59% in favor would be about +/- 4.50%, meaning the result could be as low as 54.7% in favor or as high as 63.3%.)

Mr. Cares stated that recently 4 out of 5 cities in Colorado of similar size to Grand Junction had passed a sales tax increase for similar civic support. Longmont recently passed a sales tax increase for a civic center with 71% support.

As far as alternatives to a “sales tax” – the sales tax option is clearly the most preferred method (41%) to fund improvements to Parks and Recreation facilities (that is, over a property tax increase or creation of a recreation district).

Mr. Cares stated that while there are generally high levels of interest/support for all of the various specific improvements tested, greatest support/interest is for both a large outdoor amphitheater (21% “most important” improvement) and building of a community recreation and senior center (19%). Some emphasis on the senior center component would likely help sway opinion in an election among older segments. Completion of Canyon View Park (14%), small neighborhood parks (also 14%), and trails and bike paths (12%) form the second tier of priorities. Outdoor water park and aquatics center (8%), large regional parks (6%), and adding another outdoor swimming pool (5%) round out the list.

Tillie Bishop asked what the definition of amphitheater was. Mr. Cares stated that the question asked on the survey was “a large outdoor amphitheater for concerts, plays, and the performing arts”. Jack Scott asked if the proposed amphitheater would be in lieu of a

convention center. Reford Theobald answered that it would be similar to Red Rocks in Golden, Colorado.

Mr. Cares brought up the next two questions on the survey and relayed that the results were very positive. The first question was regarding the importance of developing new parks and recreation facilities as a priority in meeting the needs of the community. 47% responded that it was one of the most important priorities. The second question inquired as to how well the respondent thought the parks and recreation facilities were meeting the needs of the community. 54% stated that the needs were mostly being met. Mr. Cares stated that this was very positive and was a consistent answer with how the other questions were answered. Mr. Cares then commended the Parks and Recreation Department for opening themselves up to possible criticism by including open-ended questions in the survey.

Mr. Cares stated that there is a public perception that parks and recreation has plenty of money due to Colorado State Lottery advertising. RRC Associates also found via the survey that there needs to be more communication and there is a need to educate the people that didn't have an opinion. Mr. Cares then opened the survey discussion to the floor.

Jamie Hamilton asked Joe Stevens what the next step was. Mr. Stevens answered that he saw the survey as a tool. Mr. Stevens suggested that the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and staff further clarify what they would actually do with the money as well as make sure they have enough information to put it to a vote. Tillie Bishop, Bob Cron, and Jim Spehar all concurred with Mr. Stevens stating that it is absolutely essential to know exactly what the money would be spent on and that if it would go to a vote that it is packaged correctly.

Lena Elliott inquired as to what a positive percentage would be on the survey where RRC Associates would advise the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and City Council to go forth with a proposal to the voters. Chris Cares stated that a "positive result" is hard to gauge and the packaging is key. Some places have a 50% or lower support range in their needs assessment survey and end up passing with a large margin. Looking at what is taking place around the state and combined with our survey results, it suggests a positive end at the poles.

Bob Cron asked if we might run into Tabor problems. Ron Lappi stated that if the ballot proposal were worded correctly, there shouldn't be any conflicts.

Lena Elliott addressed the Council asking how each of them generally felt about this issue and if they felt they had enough information to gain their support or should the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and staff stop their investigating now.

Reford Theobald stated he has supported this idea for years and yes, the Board had his support.

Tillie Bishop advised the need of a Master Plan with some of these ideas on it. Mr. Bishop also stated that he thinks Lena's question to the Council is a bit premature. Mrs. Elliott answered Mr. Bishop that the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board had been working on this project for a very long time and that Mr. Bishop hadn't been on the Board for that long. Mrs. Elliott stated again that at this time, all she wanted was the Council's basic philosophy before proceeding or find out if they are beating a dead dog. Jamie Hamilton stated that he agreed with Mrs. Elliott as the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board has found out that sometimes the City Council and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board are not always on the same page.

Gene Kinsey stated that he was pleased that the survey was completed and that the results show that there are some needs, however, he wouldn't support it with a tax increase. Mr. Kinsey stated that maybe the City could donate land and then the people who would use it could fund it via memberships. For example the YMCA as is done in Arvada, Lakewood, etc. Bob Cron stated that he can see Gene's point about the recreation center/senior center, however, what is his view about some of the other ideas that couldn't be funded by memberships like parks, amphitheaters, etc.

Jim Spehar interjected that he could hear "leveraging" from Mr. Kinsey to have a partner the City could work with like the YMCA. We need to acknowledge that folks have said yes on their wish list. However, I would be a bit uneasy about the results as far as the ability to fund these wants and/or needs. Mr. Spehar also said that he didn't consider the survey results to indicate a slam-dunk in the political arena. The survey is great...but needs a lot of work before we go for a vote or even to the public with this idea. Mr. Spehar also brought up the fact that the City would receive an enormous amount of opposition from private athletic clubs in town.

Jack Scott somewhat disagreed with Mr. Kinsey and Mr. Spehar as he stated that City would need to keep up with many of these improvements or 10 years from now we would be very behind with all the growth that Grand Junction has been experiencing and as far as the private athletic clubs – there are many, young and old, who cannot afford to join.

Gene Kinsey asked what would go into the recreation center – would it be exercise equipment, pools, track, etc.? Mr. Kinsey thought that this would be an issue that would need to be nailed down.

Janet Terry agreed with Mr. Kinsey as far as what would or would not be going into the recreation center. Ms. Terry also said that she was not prepared to state her position at this time.

Reford Theobald stated that he didn't know if he wanted to support a recreation center that would "compete" against the private athletic clubs. However, if a YMCA would work in this community, Grand Junction would already have one.

R.T. Mantlo stated that the other communities that the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board looked at were supported with a tax increase and he didn't want to go back to ground zero and start all over for Council.

Janet Terry asked for additional time to look at the survey. Ms. Terry also asked RRC Associates how they blend the questions 1) the needs are mostly met and 2) we need improvements? Chris Cares answered that he had previously made the point that it seemed the population was largely satisfied – however, the majority would support this initiative. The two questions were completely separate and one would not likely effect the other. Ms. Terry asked how much time would it take to Master Plan some of these options. Joe Stevens answered that the basis is already there for Canyon View and Matchett – 3 months would likely be sufficient.

Jim Spehar added that the Master Plan and programs we currently offer would have to be reviewed and updated on the revised Master Plan but that we could still be able to go to a vote in the fall of 2000 if that's what the Council decided.

Reford Theobald stated that Mr. Spehar and Ms. Terry raised several issues that would need to be dealt with – for example the athletic clubs. Mr. Theobald suggested that we bring the private athletic clubs into the discussion and planning. Mr. Theobald also wanted it to be known that he is very uncomfortable with anything that might include initiating a special recreation district.

Janet Terry asked if any of the other area recreation centers contracted services out. Reford Theobald answered that he hadn't been looking at that at the time. Mr. Theobald also stated that he thinks the Council ought to make a decision as to whether the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board ought to run with it or say no if the Council is not interested in pursuing it.

Gene Kinsey stated that he will pursue additional information on his own.

Mark Achen stated that since only 21% prioritized the amphitheater and 19% prioritized the recreation/senior center – there is a lot of work yet to be done on the Master Plan as well as the packaging of projects would need to be tackled very carefully for the ballot proposal.

Janet Terry stated that she would like to see the Parks Department receive more money. However, would hate to take it to a vote and get turned down. Mark Achen suggested that it might also be wise to shorten the plan to 5-10 years.

Tillie Bishop then introduced Adele Israel from VISTA. Ms. Israel stated that she regularly works with kids and wanted to let the City Council and Parks and Recreation Advisory Board know that kids in the Grand Junction area don't feel that their needs are being met and although they are not of voting age, they soon will be. Ms. Israel offered her assistance if anybody would like to get some kids together for a meeting and gave her phone number (241-2887).

Janet Terry said that she was curious about statistics for youth use of other area recreation centers. Joe Stevens stated that he would try and get some numbers together.

Lena Elliott asked Joe Stevens to send the survey results to the senior groups that they had been meeting with. Mark Achen also asked that Mr. Stevens brief the other council members that were unable to make the meeting.

Janet Terry asked if the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board should go back and do another survey on specific items. Lena Elliott answered no – they've surveyed enough, now all we need is great marketing. Chris Cares interjected that he would be hesitant to suggest another survey.

Item 4 Other Business

Lincoln Park Golf Course

Janet Terry would like to be able to tell a particular resident that the City Council and Parks and Recreation Advisory Board have met regarding the Lincoln Park golf balls and that at this time no plans are being pursued.

Two Rivers Convention Center Update

Joe Stevens stated that the project is currently on track.

Item 5 Adjourn

Tillie Bishop moved to adjourn the meeting, Lena Elliott seconded the motion.

Meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Erika L. Doyle
Administrative Specialist