

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Minutes September 20, 2007

Item 1: Meeting Called to Order by Joe Stevens, Director of Parks & Recreation at 12:04 p.m.

Roll Call

Board Members Present: Dennis Teeters
Lenna Watson
Dr. William Findlay
Reford Theobald
Jack Scott
Nick Adams
Tawny Espinoza
Bruce Hill (Ex-Officio)

Parks & Recreation Staff Present: Joe Stevens, Director
Don Hobbs, Assistant Director
Shawn Cooper, Parks Planner
Traci Altergott, Recreation Superintendent
Doug Jones, Golf Course Superintendent
Tricia Watson, Leisure Services Representative

Item 2: Introduction of Council Member Bruce Hill, Newly Appointed City Council Ex-Officio Member of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

Joe Stevens introduced Councilman Bruce Hill as the newly appointed City Council Ex-Officio, who will be replacing Councilman Doug Thomason. Welcome Bruce!

Item 3: Introduction of Newly Appointed Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Member Tawny Espinoza

Joe Stevens introduced Tawny Espinoza as the newly appointed Parks & Recreation Advisory Board member. Ms. Espinoza briefly discussed her background, stating she has been in Grand Junction for the past ten years. Tawny Espinoza said she had previously worked for the Parks & Recreation Department in many capacities, including serving as a Pool Manager, lifeguarding, and teaching swim lessons. Ms. Espinoza is currently employed with the Mesa County Health Department and has a genuine interest in promoting health and wellness throughout the entire community. Welcome Tawny!

Item 4: Election of Officers

Per the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board bylaws, Joe Stevens opened the floor to nominations for Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Chair. Jack Scott nominated Lenna Watson. There were no other nominations and nominations were closed. Dennis Teeters seconded the nomination. Lenna Watson was unanimously selected as the Chair of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board.

Motion adopted by Parks and Recreation Advisory Board: Yes 7 No 0

Congratulations Lenna!

Interim Chair, Joe Stevens, turned the meeting over to Lenna Watson. Mrs. Watson opened the floor for nominations for the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Vice-chair. Dennis Teeters nominated Nick Adams. There were no other nominations and nominations were closed. Tawny Espinoza seconded. Nick Adams was unanimously selected as the Vice-chair of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board.

Motion adopted by Parks and Recreation Advisory Board: Yes 7 No 0

Congratulations Nick!

Item 5: Approve Minutes

Nick Adams moved to approve the July 19, 2007 Parks & Recreation Advisory Board minutes. Dennis Teeters seconded.

Motion adopted by Parks and Recreation Advisory Board: Yes 7 No 0

Item 6: 2008 Parks and Recreation Fees & Charges

Joe Stevens provided information on the Parks & Recreation fees and charges policy, including details regarding the current resident versus non-resident fee structure. Mr. Stevens stated the option of doing away with the non-resident rate could decrease revenues by an estimated \$69,000. (\$60,000 general recreation fees and charges, \$9,000 golf courses) Joe Stevens stated the City's Parks & Recreation Department charges include both resident and non-resident fees, but there is only one fee for the pool admissions, green fees, and for Two Rivers Convention Center. Mr. Stevens reported golf season ticket sales fees reached a high in the mid-90's with a little over 900 season tickets sold, of which only 100 were non-residents. Joe Stevens expressed that, should the non-resident rate be eliminated, it is anticipated season ticket sales will increase. Mr. Stevens stated the Department has also reviewed recreation team registrations and said they have always recovered 100% of the cost of the adult sport programs. Joe Stevens said the Department has always been very deliberate at underwriting the cost of the youth sports programs, stating this will not change should the non-resident rate be eliminated. Mr. Stevens discussed the difficulty of administering the current two tiered fee structure, stating many people find ways to circumvent the system. Joe Stevens said if a majority of the players on a team are City residents, they are currently charged the "resident fee"; if the majority of the players are non-residents, they are charged the "non-resident fee". Mr. Stevens said the system results in the administration staff having the burden of verifying individual addresses. Joe Stevens stated there are also many business owners who own a business within the City limits, yet live outside the limits, who often dispute paying the non-resident rate, stating they also pay City taxes. Mr. Stevens expressed the idea that a one fee structure makes a lot of sense from an administrative perspective, stating the fee structure should need not be based on revenue. Joe Stevens said the Recreation Department has enough flexibility in fees and charges to generate additional revenue and increase utilization. Mr.

Stevens requested a recommendation from the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board for City Council consideration.

Reford Theobold provided a history as to the reasons why there is currently a two tiered fee structure, stating the original concept was to convince residents of their benefits of being a City resident. Mr. Theobold stated there were a lot of annexations taking place at the time, which made the issue very controversial. Reford Theobold stated the City Council realized as a City that they were giving away virtually every resident benefit in order to remain “everyone’s” friend, unfortunately, this did not change anyone’s opinion of the City and caused the opposite effect. Mr. Theobold stated it soon became the expectation of people living near the City to have the same rights as those living within City limits. Reford Theobold expressed, should the non-resident rate be eliminated, the loss of revenue would not be insignificant. Mr. Theobold also expressed concern that, while people who live outside City limits are having to pay taxes, residents of Fruita and Palisade are also paying taxes and would not be happy if Grand Junction residents expected to receive the same privileges in Fruita and Palisade as they receive in Grand Junction. Reford Theobold stated that giving non-residents special privileges, just because they are here a lot and pay sales taxes as shoppers, is not a legitimate argument any more than Grand Junction residents expecting those same privileges when going to Glenwood Springs, Vail, or Denver is. Mr. Theobold said the bottom line is the people residing in City limits pay property tax and have no choice in the matter, while the people who pay sales taxes by shopping in Grand Junction are “choosing” to use City streets, City parks, and City police and fire protection services while they are here. Reford Theobold stated, as Grand Junction witnesses growth around the City, there will soon be other cities in competition with Grand Junction for revenue, for the next Wal-Mart, for the next shopping center, etc.; therefore, Grand Junction needs to be competitive, not just economically, but also in how the City treats its own citizens. Mr. Theobold said, if a change is made, the City is going upset the residents. (In this scenario, by either raising the City resident rates or by giving a discount to those who live outside City limits.) Reford Theobold expressed his concern that the City residents are going to be frustrated and they are ultimately the City’s taxpayers and voters.

Lenna Watson asked Bruce Hill for his insight regarding the proposed change to the fee structure. Bruce Hill stated he would like the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board to discuss the issue and forward their recommendation to City Council for review. Mr. Hill stated the Parks & Recreation Department will need to continue following the underlying principle of 70% cost recovery, whether the rates change or not. Councilman Hill discussed the fact that technology has improved, yet there are many recreation registrations that can not be processed via the internet, due to address verifications. Bruce Hill expressed when someone is a customer, they are a customer no matter where they live. Mr. Hill stated the annexation process has changed a lot in the past ten years, and thanks to the previous councils, there is not nearly as much conflict as there once was. Bruce Hill said he recognizes “residency discounts” are no longer a selling point for annexation. Councilman Hill stated the bigger picture is that the City wants to promote living well in the community, yet is creating a barrier rather than realizing we are one community.

Jack Scott asked if the blending of the two fees was still an option. Joe Stevens said a blended fee would be problematic for the City residents, as blending the fees will result in an increase to the resident rate. Department guidelines and 2008 proposed fees anticipate 70% ± overall cost recovery with adult sports leagues recouping 100% of direct cost and youth programs and special events recovering from 0 % - 100%.

Traci Altergott reported the drop-in fees at the Bookcliff Activity Center are currently one fee, stating people would rather pay the higher drop-in rate than having the perception they are paying more as a non-resident. Ms. Altergott stated current registrations consist of 57% residents and 43% non-residents versus five years ago when 54% were resident and 46% were non-resident. Traci Altergott stated adult sports registrations are currently 60% resident, as many of the adult sports participants are figuring out how to get around paying the non-resident rate. Dennis Teeters asked if the majority of the problem is with the adult sports. Traci Altergott said, while she would guess approximately 30% of the resident team registrations are not being truthful, the two tier fee structure is also problematic at the swimming pools, as customers pay one fee at Orchard Mesa Community Center Pool, yet have to pay two fees at Lincoln Park-Moyer Pool.

Reford Theobald stated the City is basically subsidizing the lack of a Parks and Recreation Department outside of City limits, as Grand Junction is a city of 50,000 trying to support a community of 150,000. Mr. Theobald stated if this could somehow be quantified in terms of numbers, the City could ask the County for some type of reimbursement for treating everyone in the entire community the same. Bruce Hill said he questioned whether or not such a concept would be supported, stating the City could also turn it around and raise “all” of the rates due to the intense use. Councilman Hill stated the question the Board should be asking is “what is right for the Parks and Recreation Department?”. Mr. Theobald said cities are formed because people want more than a county can offer, stating if the City tells the residents they are going to give away what they currently pay extra for (in the spirit of “community”), it will erode the reason for cities to exist. Bruce Hill pointed out there is not a resident discount for other items such as traffic tickets, etc. Mr. Hill stated a large part of our revenue comes from the people who work and shop in Grand Junction. Councilman Hill stated the goal should be to promote the use of the department, and asked the Board to consider whether or not the current system is promoting misuse.

Joe Stevens said the Parks and Recreation Department is predicting overall use will increase if the non-resident rate is eliminated. Jack Scott asked if there are any other incentives the City can offer to residents, such as the option of early registrations. Joe explained that early registrations would be an option, although staff would still be faced with the administrative problem of verifying residency.

Lenna Watson asked what fee structure other municipalities are using. Joe Stevens said Grand Junction’s service area is unique, and that some cities do not care where the revenue comes from as long as they accomplish the cost recovery. Tawny Espinoza asked how one fee structure would affect the new recreation center. Joe Stevens responded it was unknown at this time how the proposed recreation center would be handled administratively. Dr. Findlay expressed the main point of persuasion should be the increased participation. Joe Stevens said the one tier fee structure could be implemented on a one year trial basis, which would provide real data for making an informed decision for 2009, as well as providing elected officials the opportunity to see the impact of nonresidents on City services. Nick Adams expressed concern, stating once the resident discount is removed, it will be very difficult to reinstate. Lenna Watson asked if the system offenders appear to be age based. Joe Stevens responded there doesn’t appear to be a pattern, with the exception of the adult sports programs. Mr. Stevens stated the City has an opportunity to demonstrate to the community they have a bigger concern about the health and vitality of the entire valley.

Lenna Watson asked the Board for a recommendation for City Council. Reford Theobold moved for the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board to recommend continuing with the current fee structure. Jack Scott seconded. Nick Adams stated he was also in support of continuing with the current fee structure.

Motion failed by Parks and Recreation Advisory Board: Yes 3 No 4

Reford Theobold, Jack Scott, and Nick Adams voted yes.

Dr. Findlay moved for the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board to recommend the elimination of the resident/non-resident fee structure. Tawny Espinoza seconded.

Motion adopted by Parks and Recreation Advisory Board: Yes 4 No 3

Dr. William Findlay, Dennis Teeters, Tawny Espinoza, and Lenna Watson voted yes.

Item 7: Other Business

Dr. Findlay stated he would like the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board to pursue increasing the park impact fees. Reford Theobold expressed concern regarding TABOR and the difficulties of keeping the funds if the fees are increased. Bruce Hill responded the City cannot let TABOR deter them from implementing increases.

Joe Stevens reported there have been discussions with School District #51 regarding partnering in order to pay for “activity center” type improvements at Columbine Elementary School. Mr. Stevens stated the school has tentatively agreed to initially underwrite the cost of the City’s portion of the project without interest with remittance over a three year period. Reford Theobold stated the recent partnership at the Bookcliff Activity Center has opened the door for future City/School District #51 partnerships. Joe Stevens agreed, stating the Bookcliff Activity Center is unique and is a good model for future agreements.

Tawny Espinoza asked if the City can partner with businesses for worksite wellness programs to increase utilization and revenue. Joe Stevens recommended Tawny Espinoza discuss the issue in more detail with Recreation Superintendent, Traci Altergott.

Traci Altergott briefly reported on the September 25, 2007 synthetic turf ribbon cutting at Stocker Stadium. Ms. Altergott encouraged the Board members to attend the exciting event.

Item 8: Adjourn

Chair Lenna Watson asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Nick Adams moved to adjourn and Dennis Teeters seconded. Meeting adjourned at 1:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Tricia Watson
Leisure Services Representative