

## **Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Minutes Regular Meeting – November 6, 2014**

### **Item 1: Meeting Called to Order by Scott Coleman at 12:06 p.m.**

Meeting Location: Parks & Recreation Conference Room

#### Roll Call

Board Members Present: Kyle Emert  
Scott Coleman  
Bob Wiig  
Marc Litzen  
Jim Doody (Ex-Officio)

Board Members Absent: Kristy Emerson  
Gary Schroen  
Dr. Scott McBrayer

Parks & Recreation Staff Present: Rob Schoeber, Director  
Tressa Fisher, Administrative Specialist  
Traci Wieland, Recreation Superintendent

### **Item 2: Approval of Minutes**

Marc Litzen moved to approve the October 2, 2014 Parks and Recreation Advisory Board minutes. Kyle Emert seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Motion adopted by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board: Yes 4 No 0

### **Item 3: School District 51 Calendar Letter**

Rob Schoeber shared the “draft” letter to the School District regarding the significant impact the 2014-2015 school calendar change has had on recreation programs and facilities (See attached). Discussion ensued, with the Board members requesting the letter include more detailed examples if available.

Scott Coleman moved to approve the School District 51 letter with any additional examples staff can provide. Bob Wiig seconded

Motion adopted by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board: Yes 4 No 0

### **Item 4: Whitman Park Committee Update**

Rob Schoeber provided an update from the recent Whitman Park Committee meeting, stating the purpose of the first meeting was to simply open up dialog in the community regarding potential options for the park. The meeting resulted in a large range of ideas, including, but not limited to, doing “nothing”, public event plaza, outdoor museum exhibits, arboretum, parking garage with a rooftop park, indoor recreation space, senior center, private concessionaires and/or food trucks, selling/exchanging the property, downtown

meeting space, fencing the park, dog park, etc. The Board discussed the committee's suggestion list, as well as the option of the park becoming a parking area with an ADA accessible ramp/bridge providing direct access the museum tower. The idea included turning the museum's existing parking into a grass area for the museum's patrons. The suggestion was made that, perhaps, the goal shouldn't be to save the park, but should be to save the museum.

Rob Schoeber also reviewed the list of challenges that were identified at the committee meeting, which included parking, vagrancy displacement, community perception, funding, restrooms, pedestrian connections, lighting, small size, proximity to bus station, 4<sup>th</sup> Street housing, and social services, etc. While no funds have currently been committed to this project, there is a sense of urgency coming from the museum, DDA, and surrounding businesses. The committee hopes to come up with a final recommendation to be presented to City Council by April or May 2015.

### **Item 5: Project Updates**

Traci Wieland provided an update on the upcoming improvements to the Westlake skate park, which built in 1996, was one of the first skate parks on the western slope. At the time the skate park was leading the way for design and functionality, unfortunately, Grand Junction has now fallen way behind everyone else. Team Pain, an international company that builds skate parks, has suggested the improvements include numerous cosmetic changes and amenities, including the removal of the fencing and cattle guard, grinding and patching the bad concrete areas, and graffiti removal. In addition, plans may include filling in the square bowl and installing additional features to the east. The Board will be updated regularly as the project continues to move forward.

Traci Wieland provided a Las Colonias update, stating the Colorado Discover Ability (CDA) is ready to move forward with their construction after agreeing to the proposed restroom location, which will allow for more natural spaces in the park's design. Staff has made the recommendation to select two consultants (Method studios and Design Workshop), as well as Ted Ciavonne to work as a "team" designing a final design for the amphitheater that is functional and "affordable".

Rob Schoeber reported on the recent discussions taking place regarding the yellow billed cuckoo's critical habitat area that has been identified along the Riverfront Trail system. Although, according to US Fish and Wildlife, there has been only one siting in the area during the past 30 years, their decision to designate the area as "critical habitat" could delay, if not halt, all construction in the area. The City Attorney's office recently requested a 30 day extension to the official comment process. Board members are highly encouraged to take the time to share their opinions on the US Fish and Wildlife website.

### **Item 6: For the Good of the Community**

Kyle Emert asked for an update regarding the program suggestions from the last board meeting. Traci Wieland stated she had recently met with Colorado Discover Ability to discuss potential programming. The CDA is very interested in partnering local athletes with a disabled partner/buddy, but would like to discuss the possibilities further after they have completed construction and moved into their new location. Bob Wiig reported there is already something similar in place that includes a summer program and a ski program during the winter. Marc Litzen stated the local little leagues also run partner programs for children with disabilities.

A brief discussion took place regarding the current status of the Western Colorado Botanical Gardens (WCBG), who recently reinvigorated a “Friends of the Botanical Gardens” group. Traci Wieland said she attends the committee meetings, in which WCBG has stated they plan to start some aggressive fund raising campaigns and become much more active in pursuing their own funding.

**Item 7: Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 1:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tressa Fisher  
Administrative Specialist



November 10, 2014

**DRAFT**

Mesa County Valley School District 51 Board of Education  
 President Greg Mikolai  
 2115 Grand Avenue  
 Grand Junction CO 81501

Dear President Mikolai,

I'm writing this letter on behalf of the Grand Junction Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. This eight member advisory board assists in the planning of recreation activities and helps promote a long range program for the development of the City's park system. We understand the School Board is soliciting additional feedback regarding the change to the expanded school calendar, so this letter will serve as our opinion of such.

The change to the expanded calendar has impacted numerous areas within recreation programming; however, we'd like to call your attention to three main areas of concern. First, there has been a significant impact to summertime activities including swimming lessons, tennis lessons, pool memberships, pool attendance, and summer camps. The reduction of summer by two weeks over the past two years has eliminated one summer swimming session. This equates to gross revenue of \$7,000 but more importantly is the number of children. Approximately 180 children lost the opportunity to learn or refine critical life-saving techniques. In addition, the reduction of summer by two weeks has virtually eliminated much of our drop-in swimming during the month of August and significantly reduced membership sales. This gross revenue loss is estimated at \$4,500.

The second area of concern is the loss of programming time in school district facilities. The Parks and Recreation Department currently utilizes most every elementary school and several of the middle schools for adult and youth sports. Times available for use have traditionally been held to school days; therefore, the already congested use of school gyms is further complicated. This impacts numerous community organizations as well.

The final area of concern is directly related to our seasonal staff. The Department hires approximately 200 seasonal staff throughout the year to assist with everything from the golf range to lifeguards to summer camp leaders. A majority of these staff are high school students. The shorter summer season obviously impacts the Department's ability to provide programming since staffing is limited; however, the bigger impact is directly to the students. Part-time jobs aren't necessarily a choice for many in our community, so the loss of two weeks of work is a very significant collective impact to the students we employ.



As an attempt to combat the challenges we have faced with the expanded school calendar, the Department has expanded programming opportunities for both fall and spring break. We have had relatively lackluster participation thus far identifying cost as the main barrier. Parents are obviously making other accommodations for their children during these breaks; however, it is safe to assume that not everyone is taking time off of work or going on vacation. It is more likely that children are at home alone.

Parks and Recreation programs provide opportunities to address critical issues in our community, such as childhood obesity, nature deficit disorder, and the almost constant barrage of electronic media. By virtue of participation in recreation programs, children and adults are improving their physical fitness, cultivating their social interaction skills, and building community, all of which are critical functions to our community's overall health. We urge you to consider the far-reaching community impacts of this change and would welcome a conversation with you regarding our thoughts. If you would like additional information, please contact our Director, Rob Schoeber, at 970-254-3842 or email him at [robosc@gjcity.org](mailto:robosc@gjcity.org). Thank you for asking for feedback, and we look forward to talking with you more.

Sincerely,

Scott McBryer  
Chairperson