

MINUTES

SEPTEMBER 14,
2022

6:30PM

IN PERSON, CITY HALL

TYPE OF MEETING	Parks and Recreation Board Monthly Meeting
CHAIR	Will Bertron
SECRETARY	Evan Mintz
ATTENDEES	Members Present: Will Bertron, Sami Morrison, Richard Cunningham, Manish Agrawal, Evan Mintz, Stephen Damiani, Lulu Lopez, Arlene Wells Staff: Susan White Council Liaison: John Montgomery
VISITORS	Additional Attendees: Judy Little, Lara Lehmann, Douglas Pritchett, Lynette McGlamery, Nina Springer, Alida Drewes

I. **Call to Order:** Will Bertron called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

II. **Citizen Comments:**

Judy Little: She is passionate about the rules and appreciates the changes made by the parks department and tennis/pickleball committee. However, this is one issue that needs further discussion: The 20% fee. She is concerned it will be passed along to residents. Instead she offers the idea of an annual permit with a flat fee. She is aware about concerns of trainers making money from West U property, but says that is just one trainer at Weir and most trainers don't make that much. The percentage fee should be applied after data is collected. Other cities allow trainers to run unlimited lessons.

Lara Lehmann: She appreciates the board listening to people's concerns, with a few exceptions: The 20% fee, the biweekly reporting, and having to type in all names of people using the court. The fee would scare away trainers and the reporting is time consuming. For the trial fee the city should just collect data and with that in hand then better set a fee and other rules. The city is still getting the money from a tennis fee or reserving a court.

Doug Pritchett: He's not necessarily opposed to a fee but is concerned that by imposing it up front before we collect data then our results get skewed. We should collect data under the new rules before imposing fees and other rules.

Lynette McGlamery: The reservation system will provide a lot of info and we shouldn't impose a major policy change. Also we shouldn't have to input the names of all people who use the court, just the trainer. And maybe the city should have more surveys or convening of tennis users. All of the rules sound like punishment and maybe there is a way to do it differently. Resources should instead be put into a better reservation system that allows people to see all of the courts at once – and cancel reservations online.

Alidia Drewes – People are angry about these rules. We shouldn't price people out. More research is needed. So what if trainers are making money from West U property? They're

providing a service to the people, maybe more so than the city itself. This fee schedule isn't easy to find on the website.

- III. **Meeting Minutes:** Minutes for the amended August PRB meeting were approved unanimously.

IV. **Friends Update: Sami Morrison, Friends Board Chair**

The board had its first meeting after summer break. A new board member has joined, Jordan Jewett, who was appointed Aug. 22. She had previously served as the park lovers ball auction chair and is this year's 2023 auction cochair and is going to be chairing the event next year. Several other members have been reappointed by City Council.

Fathers and Flashlights is well underway. It is coming up Nov. 5 & 6. Registration notices go out tomorrow. There have been some excellent sponsorships, with Texas Children's Hospital as a new sponsor.

Parks Ball: A Park for all Seasons will be the theme. Feb. 11th.

V. **Council Update: John Montgomery, Mayor Pro Tem**

The ordinance change serves as a reminder how important all of the committees are, but one of the things unique about Parks and Rec is that it is probably the most critical to how residents interact with the city.

The city met to discuss the budget. The tax rate will be flat this year. The values of properties have risen – which is controlled by the county. This is important because the city is undergoing a certificate of obligation sale to fund big projects: drainage on the east side, movement of the public works to the property near Goode Company Seafood, Buffalo Speedway drainage, the water treatment plant. This will be about \$46M.

There is also an approximately \$120-130M debt financing lined up for the new fire station, senior center, city hall, library, and west side drainage project.

The water and sewer rate will go up. Water infrastructure is important – look at the news about Jackson, Mississippi, which stemmed from decades of underinvestment in water infrastructure. West U is in very good condition – in fact, during Uri, West U kept water pressure even as the city of Houston had a boil notice. Water is an enterprise fund, which means that water fees pay for water infrastructure. In an effort to promote conservation, there will be a significant increase at the highest use tier. This is to avoid having to dig a new water well and avoid buying water from the city of Houston, which is raising rates. We send our water to Texas A&M to test our water, which gives us the top rating.

Citizen academy is starting for people to learn about the city, who works for the city, and what the city does. It is once per week for five weeks.

~~VI.~~ **Ordinance – Regulations for Commercial Activities and Concessions in Parks**

Policies & Procedures and Enforcement: Susan White:

Comments have begun to dwindle and we feel like we've come to a good general agreement. The 20% point has come up a lot. While this is a trial policy, it is our hope that this becomes the policy. We will continue to monitor outcomes. It is a concern that professionals are using city property and the city should be compensated for that. Implementation is just around the corner.

There are a lot of moving parts. The city is looking at our software and has put out an ERP to look at software citywide, including new parks and rec software or even something just for tennis.

Pros are not happy with the changes and they haven't been handing over information willingly, so we're glad that we'll finally be able to start tracking and collecting data, and will be taking feedback into account.

A question was asked about enforcement. There will be permits that pros can display. The code enforcement officer will be working in a way that is as customer friendly as possible, but we're setting up internal enforcement procedures.

Tennis Committee Report – Nina Springer: We created these rules for a reason. People were teach on our courts and we had no idea who it was, who they were teaching, when, why. This was a liability and the city needed to create some kind of control. So the city created a rule based on other similar cities to regulate people who made money using the courts. And the city would have some kind of sense of the scope.

People were upset that they couldn't use the courts during prime times because pros were dominating the courts. While people are upset about the 20% fee, there are also many people upset that pros get to come here at all.

In her perspective, these rules are a balance between perspectives. Right now the rules are a trial run and we don't really know anything. That's why we want people to say who is on the court and for the pros to report – so that the city knows whether fears about pros dominating courts are founded. We don't really know what's happening.

Regarding the 20% fee: Nobody wants costs to go up. But 20% is not on the high side. And other the other hand we have people who don't think pros should be there at all, so they're not fully satisfied and view the deterrent effect as a positive thing.

She supports the 20% fee but it can go down or up depending on results. This is all a trial period.

A question was asked about how one gets on the tennis committee

Updated parks signage: New rules about trainers will be posted at parks facilities

~~VII.~~ **Parks & Recreation Update: Susan White, Parks and Recreation Director**

Fee Schedule update – There is still a waiver in place for senior citizens and disability, which provides a discounted membership.

Consultant – Facilities Usage Study – In 2022, the city is also hiring a consultant to do a top-to-bottom assessment of classes and usage, determine what it is costing the city,

what revenues are.

Edloe Pathway – The bid is out now for work. If all goes to plan we should be able to go to council as early as Oct. 10th. We're working with comms and HCFCD, which will be removing the fence and old trees, in coordination with the work. CM Montgomery is talking with Centerpoint about figuring out a way to bury the powerlines.

Judson Park – They're replacing the artificial turf and found old drainage infrastructure – we didn't have plans for the last project – that's good and saves us money. Gaga pit is being installed. Centerpoint is supposed to disconnect utilities to an old creosote poll and other poll. We're in the queue and we've paid them, but they haven't come out yet. The new LED and solar powered lights are in. The painting has been completed. New picnic tables, drinking fountains and BBQ pit are up next.

Events, Etc. – This is the last week of swimming at Colonial Park. The Halloween fun run is coming up soon and revenues will be used to replace the running track at the Rec Center.

VIII. **Weir Park Improvements: Will Bertron, Chair**

Fixing the raised turf area triggers some complex issues, notably to comply with ADA, but also other issues. Simply dealing with all of that ran into hundreds of thousands of dollars, which would consume much of the budget. So we're asking a contractor to see if there are other ways to deal with it. Other proposals are working fine, but first we need to get these big issues out of the way. We still need to get a user group in place, but we're waiting to address these issues.

IX. **Park Ambassador Reports & Remarks**

- Colonial Park: Amar Patel (east). The grass looks good! It looks like turf; Evan Mintz (west) Looking forward to being able to go through the gate again; Stephen Damiani (pool) it is great.
- Friends Park: Sami Morrison – Noting to report.
- Huffington Park: Brett Bingham –
- Jennie Hughes Park: Laura Turley –
- Judson Park: Richard Cunningham – We already covered it, lots of working happening
- Recreation Center: Manish Agrawal – Is it possible to powerwash the sail that covers the park? (Yes! It is in the 2023 budget) And there was an issue in registering for swim classes that is now fixed. There was also discussion about use of the field by large groups of people who might or might not be from West U.
- Whitt Johnson Park: Arlene Wells – Everything looks fine
- Wier Park: Lulu Lopez –

XI. **Order of Business: Will Bertron, Chair**

New business: We will be looking to policies and programs for senior citizens. There is also a need to look at field use policy. Next meeting is Oct. 12th

XII. **Adjournment**

Motion to Adjourn – 8:17 pm.