



CITY OF LAS CRUCES

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

July 18, 2024

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board held a meeting on July 18, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. at 1501 E. Hadley, Building A, Las Cruces, NM.

Members Present:

Fred Raish – At large member
Laura Haas - District 6
Charles Beard – District 2
Aracely Tellez – District 3

Members Absent:

Alana Bradley - District 4
Miley Sarah Grandjean - District 1
VACANT - District 5

Others Present:

Steven Bingham, Director, Parks & Recreation
Robert Nunez, Deputy Director, Youth Services, Parks and Recreation
Phillip Catanach, Recreation Deputy Director, Parks & Recreation
Hazel Nevarez, Senior Office Manager, Parks & Recreation
Franco Granillo, Parks Deputy Director, Parks & Recreation
Catherine Mathews, Landscape Architect, Parks & Recreation
Greg Shervanick, Public
Steve Armstrong, Public
Kenneth Coppedge, Public
CW Ward, Las Cruces Youth Soccer

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Meeting of July 18, 2024, at 1501 E. Hadley, Building A, Las Cruces, NM was brought to order at approximately 6:00 p.m. by Chair Raish and recognized the meeting as having a legal quorum.

1. Introductions:

Board Members introduced themselves and stated the district they represent. Attending staff introduced themselves.

2. Conflict of Interest:

There was no conflict of interest.

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3. Approval of the Agenda:

Vice-Chair Haas moved to approve the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Meeting Agenda for July 18, 2024, seconded by Board Member Tellez. Motion passed.

4. Approval of the Minutes May 16, 2024:

Board Member Tellez moved to approve the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Meeting Minutes May 16, 2024, seconded by Vice-Chair Haas. Motion passed.

5. Public Participation:

Greg Shervanick had two questions. One concerning transfer of funds of \$1,849,000 to the new land purchase at Motel, Bruins, and Highland. And that it has been passed through the City Council as a consent item without public knowledge. Is the \$1,849,000 part of the old deal or is it additional amount to purchase that property? Also that the item that passed on Monday also says, "we need more money for that purchase of property." He is asking if the \$1,800,000 part of the original deal or is that additional amount of money to pay for that property. Staff stated the amount seems high, possibly \$1,819,000. It has been on City Council a couple of times. And they will look into this. Greg Shervanick's second question is what is going to be put in Pioneer Park. Staff stated the Pioneer Women's Park gazebo is underway and funded by capital outlay funding from the state legislature. The gazebo is being replaced with a gazebo of the same footprint, same size, shape, and details, difference is it is made out of powder coated steel, rather than lattice, will be cutout panels. The current project is only the gazebo, but they are seeing additional funding for the walkways.

6. Action Items:

6.1 Metro Central Phase 2 Neighborhood Park Name Recommendation - Ocotillo Park - Cathy Mathews, Landscape Architect:

City Council at Monday's meeting agreed to a reimbursement agreement for a neighborhood park in Metro Central Phase 2. The park is about 1.8 acres. Per policy, staff is recommending a name for the park of Ocotillo Park. This park has a putting greens/putt-putt golf type of theme, and a chalk wall.

Board Member Tellez moved to recommend the name of Metro Central Phase 2 Neighborhood Park to Ocotillo Park to the City Manager, seconded by Vice-Chair Haas. Motion passed.

7. Discussion Items:

1 **7.1 Sports Field Scheduling, Steven Armstrong, Member of the Public:**
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3 Steven Armstrong stated that he is just raising awareness and discussion
4 about field usage. He started a 501(c)(3) for youth baseball program for
5 disadvantaged kids. In the process discovered people could pay for or get
6 fields for the kids to practice on, but other kids would not get to practice or go
7 to areas not really appropriate, covered in goatheads. He spoke to moms who
8 were driving children around, but seeing fields with gates that were locked. He
9 did request of information from the City for the various fields. The CLC online
10 athletic field reservation. Reservations will be through a fee on an equitable
11 basis. If the leagues aren't using them for practice on weekends and
12 weeknights there is a problem. If they are not being distributed on an equitable
13 basis, also a problem. If there are big organizations coming in it is great for
14 the revenue and the community, but if it is at a huge expense to the kids in the
15 community/local community then need to take a look at that. On the link, it
16 says, "reservations will only be taken for the following week, only in person"
17 and then the online system set up to make a reservation, making this
18 confusing. Another member of the public stated he tried to make reservations
19 and was told over the phone that leagues have everything booked from June
20 to January. And also told to make reservations, you have to come in, in
21 person, as the website not usable until next year.
22

23 If he comes in on Monday morning and reserve a field for upcoming Sunday,
24 he cannot do it. It has to be the Sunday after that. There is very little flexibility
25 in the system. What is required to prepare the field for practices is open for
26 discussion. When you reserve the field you are waiving, you agree to be safe,
27 waiving liability. The fields are not dragged for smoothness between games.
28 What does it take to get the fields ready to be used then drives how much time
29 required for the reservation to be made.
30

31 Looking at exceptional and priority, and priority goes to residents of Las Cruces
32 and leagues and coaches. Example, LCYBA they will carry priority. If a coach
33 comes in from the same league, there is no priority, and charged just like
34 average person from the street. This is a frustration for coaches, they have
35 already paid LCYBA, they already paid registration fees, but in order to reserve
36 a field they are paying the exact same amount the guy that did not do any of
37 that.
38

39 Looking at actual LCYBA permit and actual use. There is a chronic issue with
40 timing, organization, LCYBA getting things in on time - this then bootstraps
41 employees here and make it difficult with permit request because they are not
42 timely. Monday through Thursday five to nine, Friday five to ten, all fields, and
43 via the permitting and procedure, the fields are not even open until ten.
44 Saturday eight to four. Looking at this online, there are 110 documents. There
45 is a "not used" in the middle, that is Steve Armstrong, part of his audit going in
46 and saying that field was booked and it was not used. As you go through these

1 come up at an alarming level. Entire complexes booked, locked, no children,
2 no maintainer, no body on the fields. Question of are the resources to scarce
3 for the demand? Build batting cages for low cost which can multiple the use
4 of each field by four.

5
6 So P&R received a permit from LCYBA that says due to some of our
7 disorganization we're just going to request a bunch of fields for a bunch of
8 times. That element needs to be looked at when approving permits, what are
9 asked for, for permits. And then also if the field is not going to be used. This
10 pulls back to application and reservation process. It was mentioned that
11 practice is for two hours, and games are about one hour. The fields are
12 allocated via blackout days are used for games and practice time is spent
13 fighting for a random field somewhere.

14
15 And organization called Perfect Game that holds tournaments was shown.
16 They ask for a few days in February to hold a tournament. As you get closer
17 to the tournament some teams drop out and sometimes they wait to cancel
18 certain games and divisions until the very end. So they have asked for a bunch
19 of fields, but do not have the participation, but don't want teams to drop out, so
20 as it gets closer they hold out, and then days before the tournament, they
21 cancel, some of it. They had asked for February 9, 10, and 11 and then
22 cancelled all but one day. They cancel on the 6th. But you have to reserve a
23 week prior, so those days are lost to everyone. Policy is getting in the way of
24 equitable distribution of the fields because there are no exceptions. The
25 revenue was established on the permit at the initial request, but as the
26 cancellations came in and dropped the number of fields, the revenue dropped
27 too. There was an effort to ask to have cancellations two weeks prior to
28 release the fields. There are many examples of not cancelling two weeks
29 before and the revenue dropped and the fields were not released. The
30 blackout dates that were on there initially would get removed. So blackout
31 dates would be the 8th and 12th for the above example.

32
33 The blackout dates are overly inclusive. Have tournaments asking for more
34 than they need. Have LCYBA asking for more than they need. Have folks
35 blacking out more dates than they need. His people would go out at the close
36 of business on blackout dates and take pictures. They found the fields were
37 not being worked on, not being prepped all the time, sometimes yes,
38 sometimes no. A good portion of the time all of the complexes were locked.
39 So there was no devoted structure effort to how to prep the fields, when to
40 prep, to maximize the availability of the kids. Worst example is Monday. Tear
41 down is completed by four or five o'clock. There are no more employees for
42 maintenance on the fields. No blackout date on Tuesday. Blacked out all of
43 day on Monday and therefore kids cannot practice on Monday night.

44
45 The policy is not working well. During the season of practice, need to reserve
46 the Monday prior, due to first come first serve. If no announcement that the

1 fields are now available once a cancellation happens, then they remain
2 unused.

3
4 Lastly, LCYBA round robin fee charged. At bottom of screen, "did not cancel
5 field with the first two weeks' notice, 25% fee attached." So LCYBA was not
6 timely with his permit and has created a level of frustration. But all directors
7 that came for permits were sent the e-mails about the two weeks. But when
8 they cancelled none were assessed a 25% fee except for LCYBA. Theory is
9 good, but implementation is not working.

10
11 There is a bigger demand than facilities. That can be narrowed with a more
12 efficient and equitable distribution. For a solution, need to include everyone,
13 maintenance, scheduling, increasing the flexibility. Revisiting the policies and
14 procedures would be a good start. Policy looks okay on paper but application
15 has issues. If policy changes take extended time, work to help the system as
16 those policy changes are being worked on. It was mentioned that 90% of the
17 policy is really good, it is the application of the policy that is creating problems.
18 The allocation of what the mandate is on an equitable basis to the Las Cruces
19 community that are sponsored and co-sponsored that is problematic. All of
20 the things that are triggering effects in that policy for the application of the field
21 use are not created equal. Examples, reservations are required 48 hours
22 prior. This is an internal policy, not City mandate. The language about you
23 have to do it a week prior, there is no exception in there. What if there is an
24 asterisk that says exceptions by approval of the director.

25
26 **7.2 Mistletoe and Dutch Elm Tree Disease - Franco Granillo, Deputy of Parks**
27 **and Recreation:**

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29 Franco Granillo stated they are experiencing issues in the parks with both
30 mistletoe and Dutch elm tree disease. Salopek Park, on Stern Drive toward
31 NMSU has a lot of mistletoe and possibly losing six of the trees. The trees are
32 old. Dutch elm disease on the downtown mall, there are about four to six trees
33 are showing signs late signs, and then there are also some that may be
34 treated.

35
36 Dutch elm disease fungus see nice side of the tree and then in the middle of
37 the tree see areas that are bare and leave dropping. Spread by elm beetles
38 that take the fungus. This is from Asia and introduced to the U.S. accidentally.
39 The tree dies back and roots die back from nutrients being lost from not
40 enough leaves. Mechanical and cultural, chemical and biological treatments
41 are used. Mechanical is pruning. Cultural would be introducing another type
42 of beetle. Biological can be an injection of some kind. Chemical would be
43 spray.

44
45 Mistletoe is easier to identify. So a tree goes into decline and see a big green
46 growth which is the mistletoe. It is a parasite. It attaches itself to the tree and

1 sucks nutrients and water and the branch will decay and die. It grows on a
2 wide range of trees. It is hard to remove as it is sticky. Does cause a loss of
3 outer branches. Spread by birds, wind, humans. It is impossible to remove
4 and control once established. For removal of the trees in Salopek park is about
5 \$32,000.

6
7 They could plant 24-30 new trees there.
8

9 **7.3 4th of July Event Recap - Phil Catanach, Recreation Services Deputy**
10 **Director:**

11
12 Phil Catanach stated showed a video of the electric light parade. The parade
13 is 1.5 mile route that runs from Apodaca Park to Meerscheidt. Start off with
14 the electric 5k fun run put on by Las Cruces Running Club, and the run the
15 route opposite in a circle. They had 410 participants. The theme of the parade
16 was Rocking in the USA. There were 58 entries and over 120 vehicles include
17 floats, car clubs, safety, law enforcement, and different organizations. This
18 parade has been going on since 1994. Estimated 7,000 to 9,000 spectators.
19 The second night is the 4th of July concert and fireworks, and a video was
20 shown. They have a partnership with NMSU that started in 2016, using the
21 Sisbarro park, and combine resources. It is from 6:00 - 10:15 p.m. This year
22 brought in Black Jacketed Symphony cover group from Alabama. Started with
23 2,000 to 3,000 people but by darkness there were 8,000 to 10,000 people.
24

25 **8. Staff Member Comments:**

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27 Franco Granillo stated the dog park rules have been discussed for years. They want
28 to get them on the books for an ordinance to be read and that is an ongoing process.
29 The rules were redone and have been sent to legal for review. Two separate
30 president's of the dog park coalition have also reviewed them and like them. The
31 reason for an ordinance rather than guidelines is because of so many issues with
32 dogs and codes needs something to back them up. The rules are in draft form and
33 will be emailed to the board members. They are working with the community
34 constituent representative for public feedback. He stated with Steve Armstrong, that
35 all those policies have been vetted through legal, Council, as well as the fees and
36 charges. It will cost more for on-call due to having to open gates when they normally
37 wouldn't. Those fields are under lock and key as they are to a public park. You
38 have to be insured. If they are left open, people go in, trip on base pegs, get into
39 the restrooms and then complaints about dirty restrooms. They are servicing fields
40 due to league organizers. Also mentioned fields are not known they were released
41 until Monday, after the tournament. Last year went from 42 tournaments to 54 and
42 overtime costs for the City show that.

43
44 Robert Nunez stated their summer program was fast and furious, only 26 days as
45 children return to school Monday. Over 450 youth in the programs. Served over

1 30,000 meals to the youth this summer through the food program. Preparing for the
2 school year at seven different locations.
3

4 Steve Bingham stated he thinks people need to understand putting on a parade that
5 is good is hard. He feels it is the best parade he has ever seen. There is a new
6 administrator who will be a great asset to the community. The City used to do
7 summer food program that is free through federal grant, but got turned over to a
8 nonprofit. This spring the nonprofit informed the City they were not doing it anymore.
9 This is the 30,000 meals for low income, limited access to food. City did it for 35
10 years previously, and then FYI took it over for 15 and they stopped this past spring
11 and we took it back.
12

13 **9. Board Member Comments:**
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15 Vice-Chair Haas extended her thanks for everything staff does. She likes to come
16 prepared and if there is anything that would help them in their discussions/decisions,
17 don't be shy about sending things. Like the weekly calendars and events coming.
18

19 Board Member Aracely Tellez stated today felt a bit heavy. Moving forward it would
20 nice to have more input from staff as they are knowledgeable. Also thanked the
21 staff.
22

23 Board Member Charles Beard found this a bit overwhelming.
24

25 Chair Raish thanked everyone.
26

27 **10. Adjournment:**
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29 Vice-Chair Haas moved to adjourn, seconded by Board Member Beard. Motion
30 passed.
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Chairperson