

Bond Advisory Committee

September 3rd, 2014, 2:00 p.m.

Upstairs Conference Room – Civic Center

The Bond Advisory Committee met on Wednesday, September 3rd, 2014 at 2:00 pm in the Upstairs Conference Room, Civic Center, 1100 North 6th Street, Abilene, Texas. Stormy Higgins, Chairman of the Committee was present and presiding with the following members: Carissa Platt, Jack Wilson, Sylvia Leal, John Hill, Shannel Anderson, Jason Smith, Sam Vinson, Mike Dunnahoo, Terry Johnson, Lt. Col. Michael Harner, Brent Casey, Rev. Iziar Lankford, and Robert Kern. Committee members absent were Dr. Allison Garrett and Michael Hernandez.

Stormy Higgins called the meeting to order.

Chairman Higgins stated that the committee has been given the minutes from the August 20th meeting, and there being no additions, corrections or deletions to the minutes as presented Rev. Iziar Lankford made the motion to approve the minutes as presented. Robert Kern made the second, motion carried.

James Childers Community Services Director, briefed the committee on the Projects for the Abilene Public Library, and the Parks and Recreation Centers.

ABILENE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Library Programs and Users

The Abilene Public Library (APL) provides thousands of programs (planned events) for several different age groups:

Children's

- 2,158 programs
- 51,394 Attendees

Young Adults

- 64 Programs
- 1,147 Attendees

Adult

- 1,199 programs
- 6,115 Attendees

New South Branch Library

Need for Permanent Branch

- Our current South Branch library was set up initially as a “pilot” to determine if a permanent location would be viable for the southern portion of the City
- Since 1998, the South Branch has more than validated the need for a larger branch location to serve the southwestern portion of the City

Strategic Plan

- The development of a permanent south branch library has been a top priority of the 2004 Library Strategic Plan and its 2010 update
- The Strategic Plan recommends the construction of a 20,000 sq ft facility to meet the needs of the southern part of the City

New Branch Library Details

- A new branch library at approximately 20,000 sq. ft. would provide:
 - More computers available for patrons
 - Increased space for children’s collection and programming
 - Small conference room, quiet study room, and a multi-purpose community room
 - Staff offices and appropriate storage

Benefits of a New Branch

- Development of a larger branch library operation would allow for better service delivery
 - South Branch staff provides excellent services and programs with extremely limited space
- It would provide a much needed community meeting space in an area of the city that doesn’t have one
- Extra space could allow for introduction of a new library concept
- Maker Space
- All Digital Library Space
- The economic benefit of libraries is \$4.42 per every \$1 invested in libraries
- Introduction of new facilities increases the circulation in all branches of the library system

New South Branch Library Project Costs	
Land acquisition, site prep, construction, and parking	\$5,700,000
Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment	\$525,000
Planning, architectural, and contingency	\$1,275,000
Total Project Costs -	\$7,500,000

Other Cost Considerations

- The construction of a new facility necessitates ongoing Operation and Maintenance (O&M) costs that must be accounted for by the City

- Luckily, much of the O&M incurred by a new branch library is offset by the existing operation in our current lease space
 - Existing Staff
 - Existing Collection
- We project that we will only need a minimum of one full time and one part time employee to operate in a new facility

Private Support

- The Friends of the Library strongly support the construction of a new branch library and are willing to contribute up to \$1,000,000 towards the “soft costs” of opening a new facility

Impact of not Funding a New Branch

- The lack of space in the current lease location will necessitate a move in the near future
- Any immediate move would be into another “temporary” situation
- Having solid plans for a permanent branch location will greatly aid in making transitional decisions

A Different Avenue

- Another potential option for a permanent branch library could be the purchase and renovation of an existing facility
- Many communities have had great success in renovating former retail stores and similar buildings into state of the art library facilities
- The availability of a building with the ideal size and location is the biggest barrier to this route
- It is difficult to project how much savings, if any, could be attained with a renovation of a facility
- Additionally, bond funds could be used to acquire the land for a future library capital project

Main Library Asbestos Abatement

- This move would be the necessary first step before any major renovations can be done to the building
- The basement and some of the 2nd floor has been abated
 - Cost considerations are for the remainder of the building

Remediation of Asbestos in the Main Library - \$600,000

PARKS DIVISION

Your Parks System

The City of Abilene Park System is comprised of 31 parks that total over 1,246 acres

- 1,032 of those acres are developed
- The system is comprised of:
 - 5 Pocket Parks (Ex. Minter or Carver Parks)
 - 5 Neighborhood Parks (Ex. Gill or Flores Parks)
 - 15 Community Parks (Ex. Nelson, Rose, and Red Bud Parks)
 - 6 Regional Parks (Ex. Lake Kirby and Johnson Parks)

Parks Bond History

- 2006 Bond
 - Amount Approved - \$2,245,000
- \$1,125,000 - Lake Fort Phantom Hill Park/Boat Ramps/Docks and Dyess Recreation Area Improvements
- \$1,300,000 - Ball Field Lighting and Parks Improvements
- Park propositions previously placed on bond:
 - Last time denied – 1998 (\$1.9 Million)
 - Previous time approved – 1967 (\$685K)

RECREATION & SENIOR SERVICES DIVISIONS

Current Facilities

- City of Abilene operates 4 Recreation Center's that offer programming for Seniors, Adults, and Youth
 - The City operated 5 facilities until Cesar Chavez Recreation was closed on 8/18/14
- Three of the four remaining Recreation Centers are located primarily north of N. 1st within 3 miles of one another and the southernmost center is located on S. 7th
 - Cobb Recreation Center – Built 1959 13,406 sq.ft.
 - Daniels Recreation Center – Built 1962, 18,000 sq. ft.
 - Sears Recreation Center – Built 1960's 17,000 sq. ft.
 - Rose Recreation Center – Built in 1940's (repurposed in 1960's)
 - Aquatic Facilities – Rose Park swimming pool
 - Nelson Splash Pad opened in 2012
- Parks Master Plan
 - The last adopted Parks Master Plan was in 2008
 - 2014 Parks Master Plan update is in its final stages

New Recreation Center

- Development and Construction of a City-Wide Serving Recreation Center

Cost - \$16,000,000

- This project is the top priority for indoor projects in our 2014 Parks Master Plan

Paradigm Shift

- The example using the Smith family was to highlight the paradigm shift that has taken place in the design of recreation facilities
 - The focus was on neighborhood recreation facilities when most of our facilities were built in the 60's and 70's
- Modern recreation facilities are focused with providing a large variety of activities and programming under one roof to engage a broad base of people

Benefits of New Facility

- As demonstrated in pervious slides, a new centralized facility becomes a “family” center
- This facility would be the centerpiece to engage the 14 to 65 age group that we're targeting
 - There are ancillary benefits of engaging the 14 to 18 age group
 - Rentals in the new facility will be a big draw
- New facility in essence replaces our existing deteriorating recreation facilities
 - New facility approximately 55,000 square feet
 - Existing square footage in 4 current facilities is 58,406

What Happens to Our Current Centers?

- Both the 2008 and 2014 Park Master Plans recommend repurposing our remaining facility into less program intensive models
 - Daniels transitions to Community Center
 - Cobb transitions to a event/meeting rental facility
 - Rose is given to Adaptive Recreation for their programming
 - Sears remains a rec center and would eventually be replaced down the road

Operating Model

- A shift to a centralized recreation facility would require repurposing existing recreation staff to the new facility
 - Majority of permanent recreation staff would work in new facility
- Additional part-time staff would be necessary to ensure that customer needs are met
 - 18 part-time employees - \$240,000
- An indoor aquatic piece would require hiring full-time lifeguards
 - 6 full-time lifeguards - \$150,000
 - 15 part-time lifeguards - \$215,000
- We anticipate generating the revenue to offset the new salary expenses

Membership Model

- Potential Fees based on our analysis:
 - Drop In Rate
- \$4 (youth) \$6 (adult) \$10 (family of 3)

- All Facility Pass
- Monthly membership
 - Individual \$25
 - Senior \$20
 - Family \$50
- Annual membership
 - Individual \$250
 - Senior \$200
 - Family \$500

Project Scalability

- The indoor aquatics component of the project is a considerable cost driver for both construction and ongoing operational costs
- Removing the indoor aquatic component saves approximately \$6 Million from project costs and nearly \$400,000 in operation costs
- The tradeoff for removing the aquatics component is loss of revenue from memberships, classes, and rentals

Impact of Not Adding New Facility

- Replacing aged facilities is an expense that no city can avoid
 - We will eventually have to replace these facilities and it will become more expensive the longer we wait
- Potential need to close some facilities
- We will not be able to engage our target demographic 14 to 65 years old (which constitutes 65% of the City's population)

Southside Park Development

- Development of a Community Park on the far south side of the City

Cost - \$4,000,000

- This project is the top priority for outdoor projects in our 2014 Parks Master Plan

Lack of Parks in South

- Vaughn Camp and Lake Kirby are the two southernmost Parks in the City
- No parks exist along the heavily populated Buffalo Gap Road corridor
- The map to the right produced by HALFF shows that the southwestern portion of town does not fall into the service radius of any of our community or regional parks

Proposed Park Amenities

- A new park development would include amenities such as:
 - Playground

- Pavilions
- Restrooms
- Trails
- 53 Total Acres
- Emphasis will be placed on retaining green space in the park and utilizing the existing trees at the site

Benefits of New Park Development

- This park development is essential in an area of the City that is grossly underserved by our parks system
- This area is one of the fastest growing areas of Abilene and will need a community park to accommodate that growth
- Addressing the needs of a community park will aid in the development of viable neighborhood parks in this area of need

Impact of Not Developing A Park

- Not taking this opportunity to develop a park will further perpetuate the park ‘black hole’ that exists in the southwestern part of the City

Aquatic Facility Enhancements

- Full Renovation of Rose Park Pool into Modern Family Aquatic Center and construction of Splash Pads in Parks

Cost - \$8,500,000

Aging and Overused Aquatics

- The closing of Stevenson Pool was due to the pool’s age (59 years) and deteriorating infrastructure
- Rose Park pool is 39 years old and like most aging pools runs the risk of running into a major mechanical issue
- Nelson Splash is only two years old, but staff is already detecting accelerated wear and tear at the facility due to the high volume of users

Additional Features

- In addition to the aquatic features, this renovated facility would also provide:
 - New locker room and shower facilities
 - Full service snack bar
 - Large shade structures that are available for rent for parties and events

Operation of the New Facility

- We estimate that the operations of the new larger facility will require the same 15 lifeguards that we target to hire when both pools were in operation

- Seasonal staff members we typically hire during the summer months can man non-lifeguard capacities

Benefits of New Aquatic Facility

- The greatest benefit is that we address the most consistent request we receive from the public
- It would alleviate “leakage” that takes place when our residents leave town to visit cities with similar facilities
- We start attracting families from outside of the City to our new facility
- We will have an easier time in recruiting and retaining lifeguards (cool factor)

Impact of Not Renovating Rose Pool

- Not addressing one of our biggest requests from residents
- Rose’s age will open up to potential major equipment failures that will be expensive to replace
- Operating a single pool with Rose’s amenities is grossly underserving the public

New Splash Pads

- Adding 4 new splash pads into various parks around the City

Cost - \$2,500,000

Extremely Popular

- Nelson Splash is has been our most popular park amenity since it opened the summer of 2012
- Hundreds of Families visit the pad daily during the peak season
- The high usage has begun to take its toll on the facility
 - Already having to replace the surface and other features due to high usage
- It’s important to we introduce more splash pads into our parks and recreation system to ease the burden on Nelson Splash

Benefits and Impact

Benefits

- Benefits of more Splash Pads
 - Splash Pads are fun and people love them!
 - They provide a free, safe, and convenient aquatic experience for families
 - They do not create any direct personnel costs
- i.e. don’t have to be staffed

Impact

- Impact of not adding more Splash Pad to our system

- People would have to continue and travel from all across the City to one location
- Nelson Splash would continue its high volume of use
- The City would start to incur expenses for repair and replacement faster than anticipated

New Football/Soccer Complex

- Development of a 9 Field flat field sport complex

Cost - \$10,000,000

Our Biggest Challenge

- The biggest problem that we currently experience in our Parks system is the lack of quality practice and competition space for sports leagues
- Baseball
 - We have sufficient baseball and softball fields to accommodate league play, but they're scattered in various neighborhood and community parks
- This set up is not conducive for tournament play
- Flat Field Sports
 - We only utilize three competition exclusive fields (No practicing on them)
 - The greater challenge is to find safe and adequate practice locations for all of these teams
- Must use baseball outfielders in the fall to allow for early evening practices
- Important to note that Big Country Soccer Association utilizes the privately owned Abilene National Soccer Complex

New Sports Complex

- We are proposing taking 40 acres of undeveloped parkland at University Park and placing a 9 flat field complex at the location
- A complex of this size would more than triple the amount of competition ready fields we currently have

Complex Features

- Synthetic Turf
 - We are proposing using synthetic turf on all playing fields
- Lighting
 - Lighting all fields to allow night time play
- Parking
 - Parking lot for 500 cars
- Visitor and participant amenities
 - Pavilions
 - Restrooms
 - Concession Stands
 - Playgrounds

Benefits of Synthetic Turf

- The specific benefits of synthetic turf:
 - Would allow for heavy use year around
- Can be used for:
 - Games
 - Practices
 - Tournaments
 - Reduced Maintenance
 - Safest playing surface possible
 - No need for irrigation
- Estimated savings of 1 Billion gallons of water over 20 years

Benefits of the Sports Complex

- A complex at this size with synthetic turf and lights would accommodate our current users as well as any other future groups that do not use our facilities
 - Fields can be used for both practice and games
 - New and efficient lighting technology will allow for cost savings
 - New turf technology increases participant safety
- A complex with this many fields will make Abilene a destination for tournaments and other events
 - “Leakage”, or losing our local residents to events in other cities, is one of biggest problem we experience in certain youth sports
 - The economic impact from hosting tournaments:
 - Soccer
 - Football
 - 7 on 7
 - For example, a 100 team U14 3 day soccer tournament would have an estimated economic impact of \$250,000

Impact of not Addressing Field Shortage

- Potentially see a decrease in participation in sports that use City fields
 - Due to dissatisfaction with quality of fields
 - Due to increased “leakage”
- Miss opportunity to have a facility that can be a draw for regional and state-wide tournaments
- Safety
 - Unirrigated and overused fields lead to more injuries for participants

Project Flexibility

- We are proposing constructing this project at University Park, but the project can be moved to any location as long as it has sufficient acreage and access

- Project costs would have to increase for land acquisition

Parks Enhancement Package

- Replacement of park amenities throughout our parks system

Cost - \$5,000,000

Investing in Our Park System

- This package replaces critical infrastructure throughout our parks system
- Most of the items are packages that we often take for granted when we visit our parks
- These “nuts and bolts” are critical to ensure we have a healthy parks system

Parks Restroom Replacement

- Cost- \$1,100,000
- Restrooms will be replaced in the following parks:
 - Cal Young
 - Nelson
 - Red Bud
 - Rose
 - Cobb
 - Lake Kirby
 - Will Hair

Pavilion Installation

- Cost - \$500,000
- The construction of new pavilions in the following parks:
 - Nelson Splash
 - Red Bud
 - Rose
 - Vaughn Camp

Park Road Repaving

- Cost - \$1,600,000
- These funds would be used to repair the park roads in our system with the most need

Parks Trails Renovation

- Cost - \$1,250,000
- These funds would replace existing asphalt trails in our parks with concrete

Playground Modernization

- Cost - \$520,000

- These funds would accelerate the replacement of the older playgrounds in our parks system

Benefits and Impact

Benefits

- Benefits of the Parks Enhancement Package
 - Addresses acute needs of many parks throughout our system
 - Enhances the park visitor's experience
 - Addressing needs via Bond program frees up capacity in annual CIP process for more new projects

Impact

- Impact of not addressing items in enhancement package
 - Critical parks infrastructure will continue to deteriorate to unsafe levels
- Park Roads
- Trails
- Playgrounds
 - CIP process would continue to be weighed down by sizable parks infrastructure projects

Chairman Higgins adjourned the meeting at 3:51 p.m.

Danette Dunlap, TRMC
City Secretary

Stormy Higgins
Chairman