

PARKS & RECREATION BOARD MEETING

7-10-2007

The Parks and Recreation Board held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, July 10, 2007, at 8:30 a.m. in the Education Building at the Zoo. Board members present were Amber Cree, Gail Russey, Mike Schweikhard, Leroy King. Board members absent were Moses Hall, Susan Arrington, and Toney Gutierrez. Community Services staff present were Mike Hall, Director; Tony Neitzler, Assistant Director; Carl Scott, Senior Citizens/Recreation Administrator; Bob Cheatham, Parks Administrator; Jeff Bullock, Zoo Superintendent; and Linda Hansen, Executive Secretary.

Amber Cree called the meeting to order – 8:30 a.m...

Invocation was given by Gail Russey.

Gail Russey moved that the minutes of the April 3, 2007, meeting be approved. Mike Schweikhard seconded the motion. With all in favor, the motion carried.

Presentation of Service Awards: (Zoo) Jeff Bullock presented a service award for Dawn Valre, Mr. Bullock stated that she has been with the City for 5 years and started with the zoo as a night keeper. She is one of the individuals that prepare the meals for the animals. Mr. Bullock presented a 5 year service award to Roy Greer, he also started out as a night keeper, and he currently helps with the maintenance. His assistance with welding and carpentry has been very useful. Denise Ibarra was also issued a service award from Mr. Bullock. She is one of the mammal keepers and currently works very close with the elephants. Bob Cheatham awarded Charles (Marty) Martinez a 5 year service award. Marty is currently a crew leader and is responsible for the Parks in the downtown area and City Hall. There are a lot of flower beds in this area; Marty and his crew do a very good job on this area.

Parks Master Plan Update: Mr. Neitzler stated that the consultant firm is about half way through with all of the collection of information from special interest groups. The public meeting was very positive with about 50 in attendance; the posters with ideas on the master plan were displayed at the Civic Center where citizens could make remarks or vote on what idea they liked or disliked. The displays were moved to the Library for a short time period to allow further input. The citizen survey is currently going on and should be through shortly. The displays will be at the Community Services office and the board is invited to come by and see the suggestions and make any comments. Mr. Neitzler stated the Jim Carrillo with Halff Associates would like to bring the preliminary results to the next board meeting, but asked if we could move the board meeting to the second Tuesday of August. We have received lots of comments and emails with different comments. Mrs. Cree asked if there was any comments with regards to our current park system, and also stated that the ratio of people per park is higher in Abilene than a lot of cities.

Presentation of Summer Leisure Guide: Carl Scott stated that they will be having the first Movie in the Park on Friday August 3rd, weather permitting, and again on Friday, August 17th. The featured movies will be “Monster House” and “Happy Feet”. The yearly TAAF track meet will be held this weekend. The Senior Jamboree is scheduled and we are expecting a large turn out again this year, we have over 60 booths registered.

Participation Report: (Recreation) Carl Scott stated the numbers overall are down a little, but the special event numbers are up with the increased participation from our Adaptive Recreation Center. The Steam n Wheel bike race was a success this year. Mr. Scott stated that with last year’s cancellation due to the rain we were concerned about the number of registrations. We had a record participation with 258 cyclists registered. Instructor and class user hours are running about the same and after school hours are running about the same with school enrollment down. Tennis centers numbers were affected by the rain, but other than that they are running about the same.

Participation Report: (Senior Citizens) Carl Scott stated that numbers are down a little with vacation and weather being a factor. We are anticipating the opening of the new apartments across from the center to help boost numbers for Rose Park Senior Center.

Participation Report: (Golf) Mike Hall stated that numbers are good, April and May rain hurt the numbers on the weekends. He then described actions taken to improve the greens over the winter and into the spring.

2008 Budget Schedule: Mike Hall stated that the next process will be the City Manager presenting the proposed budget to City Council.

Operation Report: (Recreation) Carl Scott stated that the rain has hampered the numbers at the pool. Last year was an exceptional good year but the rain has caused a decrease in numbers this year. Summer playground is a success with 6 of our centers full. Last year we had 607 registered and this year there were 643 registered. There were 77 registered for our summer track program. Last year we had two other clubs split off so we actually have three clubs. This year we teamed up with ACU to coach the track club. The Community Foundation donated money for our scholarship program that funds payments to needy children to attend our summer playground program. We were able to fund all requests.

Operation Report: (Parks) Bob Cheatham stated that the rain has been very good for the plants. But the extra rain and the shortage of employees have made it difficult to keep up with cutting of the grass. There have been several fund raising projects at the athletic complex. The rain has delayed the Nelson Lighting Project; we should be back on schedule soon. Installation of light poles at Lee Complex, Curly Hays and Flores will begin soon; the manufacturer is behind on sending poles. The Lee Park playground is in the process of being replaced.

Operation Report: (Zoo) Jeff Bullock stated that The Zoolute to Dyess event held on May 19 hosted over 4,400 guests to the zoo with over 2,900 being military personnel. June 16th was the Zoo Day Splash Party sponsored by Atmos Energy. From 10-3 on July 4th, the Doud Radio Group held its Fourth of July Celebration in the Zoo and in the evening the Zoological Society hosted a private musical concert event before and after the fireworks display. This event was very popular again this year. Zoo Teen training has begun for this summer season with 44 Zoo Teens signed up. The education coordinator has been busy with the summer camps so she will not be moving until after summer camps are over. Blue Bell will be holding their 100th Anniversary on July the 28th in the Zoo parking lot. Attendance is up about 20,000 year to date. The Zoo new entry is about 98% complete. Work is underway on the Wetlands Boardwalk project and we hope to have it completed by the end of the month. Rain has created many delays. Work is still being done on the creepy crawler center and should be completed soon. The parking lot project is underway with the drawings almost complete. The giraffe renovation project is being designed. That should begin sometime this fall. Bids are being taken on tree trimming. There have been 51 trees identified that need to be removed or trimmed. The new ring-tail exhibit has opened this week next to the hyena exhibit. The chicken program is still a success with over 33 chicks on the ground. Jeff announced that he will be leaving the Abilene Zoo to accept a position in Greenville, South Carolina. The new learning center will be utilized by giving satellite classes for schools that have attended or will attend the zoo with additional training. Mike Schweikard asked if the room will be available for outside businesses to rent for meetings. Mike Hall stated that hopefully in the future this will be an option.

Amber Cree informed the board that since 1963 donations from \$1 to \$1000 have been received creating the first million dollars for the project and the recent million dollar donation made it possible for the Zoological Society to build and donate this building to the City of Abilene.

Jeff Bullock took the board on a tour of the new facility.

Meeting adjourned 9:30 a.m.