

Draft MINUTES

Washoe County Open Space and Regional Parks Commission
March 3, 2020

Commissioner Doolittle called the meeting to order at 2:31 p.m.

1. Roll Call

Members Present: Doug Doolittle, Heidi Anderson, Darla Lee, Jennifer Oliver, Greg Shorts

Staff Present: Eric Crump, Colleen Wallace-Barnum, Lindsay Liddell, Kathy Emerson

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Public Comments

No Public Comments

4. Approval of the Agenda for the Open Space and Regional Parks Commission Meeting of March 3, 2020.

Motion by Commissioner Shorts to approve the Agenda for the Open Space and Regional Parks Commission Meeting of March 3, 2020. Second by Commissioner Oliver. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Approval of the Minutes for the Open Space and Regional Parks Commission Meeting of February 4, 2020.

Motion by Commissioner Shorts to approve the minutes. Second by Commissioner Anderson. Motion carried unanimously.

6. Acknowledgement and recognition of Park Operations staff for their outstanding service and contributions to Washoe County

No items.

7. Eagle Scout Presentation

None.

8. Budget Presentation and Discussion – Eric Crump, Operations Division Director

Eric Crump, Operations Division Director, presented the Community Services Department Parks Budget stating that this presentation is an overview of the budget at a “20,000-foot level” and that a more in-depth workshop will be provided to the board members in the near future. Mr. Crump reviewed Washoe County’s General Fund for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 as well as the General Fund Expenditures FY 2020. This year’s economic outlook is characterized as “Stable with Slower Growth.” The Parks Budget consists of several funds, the General Fund, May Center, and Golf Fund with revenue of \$2.1MM and total expenses of \$7.84MM.

Commissioner Oliver asked what the Parks Budget was at the start of the Great Recession. Mr. Crump replied that he would be able to get that exact number for the commissioner, but that the current Parks Budget is above pre-recession levels and there are several components to those numbers. 70% of the

budget is labor and with 2-3% COLAs each year, there is an artificial growth that has not affected the service levels.

Commissioner Jung asked for Mr. Crump to forward an email showing Park's funding patterns over the past 12 years. Ms. Jung stated that she believed that the Parks funding was cut 42% during the Recession and that seeing the patterns will help speak to Commissioner Oliver's earlier question. Ms. Jung is unsure if today's Parks budget is truly beyond what it was before the Recession. Mr. Crump stated that they would provide those numbers, but that he was trying to state that dollar for dollar, for example, if Parks had \$10MM pre-recession and currently has \$10MM today, but is functioning with fewer staff and fewer services, so the dollars cannot compare. Cost of living has increased and \$10MM pre-recession is not equal to \$10MM today. Commissioner Jung also requested to receive an overview of the Parks Fund that developers pay into, how much is available and what may we "do with it." Commissioner Jung also request to receive an overview of the State Parks Fund which she believes Washoe County receives a portion. Mr. Crump responded stating he could prepare and presentation of the residential construction tax, the balances, and what it may be used for as well as a presentation on State Question SQ1 Funding and the projects associated with it.

Commissioner Doolittle asked for clarification of the Park Ranger Safety Officer fee offset. Mr. Crump stated that the fee off set was a mixture of two different budgeting sources including higher projected revenue sources compared to what budgeted and a partial decrease in seasonal positions.

Mr. Crump noted that one above-base budget request from Parks included two AmeriCorps positions or services agreements that would help with the weed abatement and management plan as well as looking at Washoe County Parks' infrastructure and inventory.

Commissioner Doolittle asked if the if the positions that they currently budgeted for were filled. Mr. Crump confirmed that the positions are filled.

Mr. Crump reported on fiscal year 2021 improvement projects to include Bower's Mansion Regional Parks Irrigation Renovation and wading pool improvements, Melio Gaspari water play park safety improvements, Rancho San Rafael's Log Flume ride demolition, and Lemmon Valley Park improvements.

Commissioner Jung requested that Mr. Crump look into asking if another entity would be interested in removing and relocating the Log Flume ride at Rancho San Rafael, such as someone who is affiliated with Burning Man. Mr. Crump replied stating that they have not tried that particular angle but have worked with engineering students from the University of Nevada, Reno, who were contemplating a project utilizing the flume ride in the past. Commissioner Jung suggested utilizing recourses that they currently have, including reaching out to Washoe County Art Trail and Burning Man representatives.

Mr. Crump concluded his presentation with a Washoe County's Budget calendar highlighting important dates.

Commissioner Shorts asked if the minimum wage increases for the state are included in the Parks' budget. Mr. Crump stated that they increased the pay wages two years ago in anticipation for the increases.

Commissioner Doolittle asked when the Budget Workshop for the commissioners would be held. Mr. Crump recommended that the workshop take place after the budget is approved. Most likely the workshop will be held off site.

Commissioner Jung asked if this presentation had an action item for the Commission to adopt the budget. Mr. Crump replied that it does not have an action item for the commissioners. Commissioner Jung asked when the Open Space and Parks Commission could provide guidance or input towards the budget before it moves forward. Mr. Crump stated that Assistant County Manager, Dave Solaro, has appeared before this board several times requesting that input and feedback relative to the budget, especially from the community. Historically there has not been an official adoption of any budgets by this board, but that method could be considered for the future. Commissioner Jung stated that the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) takes advice from this board. Commissioners Jung requested that the Parks Commissioners listen to their constituents and drive the budget forward more than staff so that the BCC uses the Parks Commissioners as an advisory board. Commissioner Doolittle thanked Commissioner Jung and stated that for the past three months the opportunity has been provided for the board to give input and direction to staff. While they have not seen a line-item budget, Commissioner Doolittle emphasized that staff has been available to answer any questions that they have had. Commissioner Jung wished to empower the board to review a line-item budget and provide feedback directly to the BCC. Commissioner Jung requested that the board create a path moving forward for the next budget to provide more input. Commissioner Doolittle thanked Commissioner Jung. Commissioner Jung thanked the board for all their hard work. Commissioner Shorts agreed with Commissioner Jung stating that they haven't seen anything this past year that they could have provided feedback on such as the CIP project presented today and that they would like to in the future.

Commissioner Doolittle thanked Mr. Crump for his presentation.

9. Presentation on Veterans Programs – April Wolfe, Therapeutic Recreation Specialist with City of Reno and Colleen Wallace Barnum, Parks Operations Superintendent with Washoe County

Colleen Wallace-Barnum provided some background on Washoe County programming that the board has received presentations on in the past. These programs are educational and entertainment focused including Come in From the Cold, Gardening in Nevada, and Fall Photo Hikes to name a few. Other than these free programs that are available, Washoe County staff does not provide typical recreational programming for Veterans specifically as the City of Reno does an excellent job providing those services. Washoe County has a Recreational Coordinator who manages all the aquatics facilities, amphitheater, contract classes, and permitting for sports leagues. Washoe County has worked directly with outside agencies to accommodate events for veterans noting that the Division of Wildlife utilized Marilyn's Pond to provide a "Veteran's Fishing Day." The City of Sparks does not provide veteran-specific programming either, but does have therapeutic programming for special populations.

Colleen Wallace-Barnum introduced April Wolfe, who has worked for 13 years as the Therapeutic Recreation Specialist with the City of Reno. Ms. Wolfe provided a brief presentation of their programming for veterans including "Fit but Not Forgotten," "Military to the Mountains," and "Military Sports Camp." The City of Reno also works with other programs and outside agencies such as "Project HERO" and noted their Kiwanis Partnership that provides mechanic workshops and bicycles for veterans.

Commissioner Doolittle thanked Ms. Wolfe for her presentation. Commissioner Shorts stated that it was the City of Reno's program that inspired him to ask what Washoe County was doing for the veterans. Commissioner Shorts asked what Washoe County could do to help. Ms. Wolfe replied that she would request more positions be created that are equal to her current position with the City as a certified recreational therapist. Ms. Wolfe stated she would be open to more partnerships as she has with local non-profits and the City of Sparks, but currently she has limited growth opportunities due to the staffing and financial needs necessary to expand. Commissioner Shorts asked again if there were any facilities or specifics that Ms. Wolfe could think of presently that Washoe County could offer. Ms. Wolfe stated that there weren't any specific needs at this time.

Commissioner Doolittle thanked Ms. Wolfe once again.

10. Program / Park of the Month

Farm Camps at Rancho San Rafael Regional Park - Fayth Ross, Executive Director, Urban Roots

Colleen Wallace-Barnum introduced Fayth Ross, Executive Director for Urban Roots. Urban Roots has conducted a children's farm camp at Rancho San Rafael and the Nevada Farms and Family Area, previously the Great Basin Adventure, for the last two years. Parks is looking to enter into a longer agreement with them which will be presented to the board next month.

Fayth Ross shared her presentation on Urban Roots, a non-profit that just celebrated their ten-year anniversary in Reno, Nevada. Urban Roots works closely with Washoe County School District and offers classes and programming at the Urban Teaching Farm as well as Rancho San Rafael with a mission to help change the way children eat and learn by growing healthy minds, bodies, and communities in Northern Nevada through gardening.

Commissioner Doolittle thanked Ms. Ross stating that Urban Roots is a wonderful program.

Commissioner Oliver asked if Urban Roots has Spring Break camps. Ms. Ross stated that Urban Roots is open for Spring Break, but is only held at one of their locations. Commissioner Oliver exemplified the fact that Urban Roots is a perfect example of how "opening up the doors" to a non-profit helps the community while at the same time helping show case the parks to the community. Ms. Ross stated that her favorite part of their program is hearing how many different families have never been to Rancho, but because of their program, parents and families are able to enjoy the resource that is Rancho San Rafael when they bring their children to Urban Roots programs or classes.

Commissioner Doolittle thanked Ms. Ross once again, especially for her commitment to the community beyond Washoe County Parks.

11. Parks Reports

Colleen Wallace-Barnum highlighted that within the Parks District Report, Celia Walker from Lazy 5 Regional park was promoted from a Park Ranger I to a Park Ranger II position stationed out at Rancho.

The May Foundation supported a significant ask at the Wilbur D. May Arboretum, \$150,000 for interpretive panels to be installed throughout the botanical garden. Bill Carlos, the horticulturist, is working closely with the foundation and Fallon Media to produce the signs over the next 18 months.

The Animation Academy at the museum has commenced and showed a great turn out. The Assistant Curator, who is also the Recreation Coordinator, Samantha Szesciorka, did a presentation on Wilbur May for the Historic Preservation Society of Reno. Over fifty people attended for the exciting event.

Commissioner Shorts thanked staff of the bigger type on the reports received.

Commissioner Doolittle attended the Animation Academy with his family and loved it. Commissioner Doolittle asked for a progress update on the Ballardini Ranch Trail connection to Thomas Creek within the Planning Report. Ms. Wallace-Barnum stated that that the south end is a little further along than the north end. The north end must go through a NEPA process, the National Environmental Policy Act process, as the trail will be on Federal land. The southern end is currently researching an appropriate connection to the Thomas Creek trailhead. There are clearances that need to be obtained regarding impacts on cultural resources. Once the alignment is agreed upon then they would gather the crews to build the connection. Commissioner Doolittle requested an estimated time of completion for the current projects.

Commissioner Doolittle asked for clarification regarding the ice arena that is being built at the South Valleys park which he heard about on the news. Assistant County Manager, Dave Solaro, explained that they received an unsolicited proposal in 2016 from a third-party group for an ice rink. The Board of County Commissioners entered into an agreement with that group. Part of the process requires that the group “has the money in the bank” before moving forward with the agreement and the current non-profit for the project has raised a significant amount of money. Mr. Solaro has some plans on his desk waiting for review. A portion of land was set aside just north of the library during the recent Master Plan process. Mr. Solaro explained that he believes everyone may have been caught off guard with the news that this project is ready to go. Mr. Solaro is working with the non-profit and the developer to ensure that portions of the plans and grants are being met and stated that a report would be presented to the board if in fact the project moves forward. Commissioner Doolittle stated he would like a report as he has fielded several questions on the ice rink. Mr. Solaro offered to put the board in direct contact with the developers stating that they are able to develop the land per the land lease that has been executed.

Commissioner Anderson asked if the Festival of Lights was being canceled. Ms. Wallace-Barnum confirmed that in light of current travel restrictions that the event has been canceled this year. Ms. Wallace-Barnum noted that Washoe County has entered into an agreement with the event for several years and they look forward to bringing it back to the community in 2021.

Commissioner Doolittle thanked Ms. Wallace-Barnum for her report.

12. Director’s Report

Assistant County Manager, Dave Solaro, highlighted a few items from his report. On February 25th the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) approved the agreement between Washoe County and the Reno Tennis Club, an item that was on the Planning Commission’s previous agenda. The BCC also awarded a bid to Sullivan Structures for the Bowers Mansion repairs phase three, which includes the exterior deck reworking and ongoing maintenance work for the structure. The BCC also approved a resolution to augment the golf course fund to \$2, 903,000.00 to increase funding this fiscal year. This is in relation to work being done at Wild Creek Golf Course and these were monies that came from the School District for the sale of the water rights and the land to be utilized on that project.

Mr. Solaro wished to speak to the budget stating that while it may seem like a once a year event, that the board can come to staff at any time with requests or concerns as the budget is something that is worked on throughout the year. The board may ask for reports on specific budgets and reports on how decisions were made. After the budget workshop, Mr. Solaro feels the board will have a better idea of how the budget works and functions and that that workshop will most likely spur additional questions regarding programming or other budget items. Mr. Solaro reiterated that any time the board has questions or sees something in the community regarding budget, that those requests may be forwarded to staff. Mr. Solaro did receive one email from Commissioner Nenzel concerning operational items which they are working on with staff.

Commissioner Doolittle thanked Mr. Solaro for his report.

13. Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Oliver ask that they receive information regarding what structural changes were made at the time of the recession so that it may give them context when reviewing the budget during the upcoming workshop.

Commissioner Oliver also asked if there has been any discussion regarding the egress at Bartley Ranch. With only one exit across the bridge, it takes some time to leave the park during events. Commissioner Oliver asked if there were any reports or plans for an additional egress for that park.

Commissioner Shorts asked that for the budget workshop if they could get a report on acquisitions for new parks and if that was available.

Lindsay Liddell wished to introduce herself for the record as the new District Attorney assigned to the Parks Commission and the Parks Department. Commissioner Doolittle thanks Ms. Liddell and apologized for not introducing her at the beginning of the meeting.

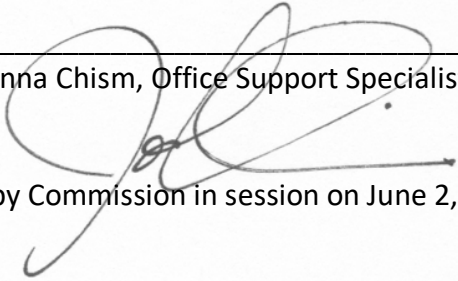
14. Public Comment

No Public Comment

14. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 4:00PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Johnna Chism, Office Support Specialist

Approved by Commission in session on June 2, 2020.

Chair