



Minutes: Tulsa County Parks Advisory Board

Tuesday – November 19, 2024 – 10 a.m.

Buddy LaFortune Community Center

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12:11 pm, Dec 02, 2024

Attendees

Members Present: Janet Nelson, Tom Bennett, Deborah Hale, Vince Westbrook, Patrick Carr, Jason Mikles

Members Absent: Ruth Harrison

Others Present: Matt Hancock (Director), Josh Stewart, Michael Liebe, Karsten Villanueva, Meagan Ross, Bob Baker, Melissa McCorkle, James Rea, Michael Craddock

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Janet Nelson at 10:01 a.m., seconded by Vince Westbrook.

Introductions

Introduction of Matt Hancock, Parks Director and all attendees.

Approval of Previous Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the previous August 5th, 2024, meeting was made by Tom Bennett and seconded by Patt Carr.

Roll Call

Yeas: All Present, Nays: 0. Motion carried.

Reports

• Director Reports

- After eight (8) weeks as Director of Tulsa County Parks, Matt has nine (9) key areas that Parks will be diving into. These priorities have been shared with the Deputy Commissioners.
 - Parks will begin to lean into The County, utilizing other departments such as IT, Admin Services, etc. to aid Parks in their effort to grow.
 - “Keep the Score”: It is important to know how Parks has developed over time and share the story of Parks. Karsten does a remarkable job telling the story and how the Parks has a quality of life for the County. Would like to focus on regional impact of County parks as well as the relationship between Golf and Tennis. It is important we have relationships with partners we can trust, which includes third party partnerships and elevating the relationships we already have in place.
 - “Brand is everything”: It is important to be consistent with branding. We’re sending out name badges with the Tulsa County Parks Logo on them so individuals can feel confident that parks employees *are parks employees* and adds consistency for how the employees look. We’re looking to elevate the Tulsa County Parks brand.
 - Budget and Finance: This is part of “knowing the score”. It ensures Parks has the wherewithal to do work and make sure services for the people get better every day.
 - Capital Development: The expiration of the park bond is a hot topic but we’re looking into what it means for the longevity of Parks.
 - Janet Nelson: When is that?
 - Matt Hancock: We can go back to it any time now that we’ve paid it off.
 - Janet Nelson: So, we would need to initiate it?
 - Matt Hancock: The BOCC would initiate it, based on public request. What Parks needs is long term plans. The Park Bond could help with that, but it won’t cover it.

- Nick Sidorakis has given a review of the Parks' Golf Courses and how we can improve. The feed back was very positive, but it will take funds to make that happen. Matt will provide a recommendation to initiate the bond and the BOCC will take it from there.
- Long range planning.
 - Patrick Carr: How would you go about creating a long-term plan?
 - Matt Hancock: Evaluate Parks Feedback, Community Feedback, and Stakeholder feedback. In addition, our assets have a life cycle, and we need to assess where we are with our assets and look to the future.
- Networking/Partnerships:
 - There are four (4) great parks departments in Tulsa: Tulsa City, Tulsa County, Riverparks, and The Gathering Place. We could align with them as well as Owasso and Broken Arrow.
 - We went to ORPS which was a great networking opportunity. Another Conference available is the NRPA and we could potentially lean into them for best practices.
- Park Board, BOCC, and Community are essential to improvement and progress.
 - DC James Rea: Matt came to the BOCC with a comprehensive plan, and we would like to commend him for this.
 - Janet Nelson: Didn't you do something like that Tom?
 - Tom Bennett: Yes, I did that two times ago and would love to give it to you.
 - Mike Craddock: Commissioners have been begging for this kind of long-term plan for years and appreciate the benefit of a plan.
 - Vince Westbrook: As you assess the facilities at LaFortune Park do you see the baseball fields being part of that plan?
 - Matt Hancock: We have a user agreement with Steve from Tulsa Little League (TLL). The contract is with Steve who is affiliated with TLL. It is a fifteen (15) year term currently for baseball. We have a lot of third-party agreements, and we are currently going through each of them trying to understand if the agreements we have are equitable. Some are and some are not. We want people to be invested in the parks and we have an opportunity with Steve.
 - Deborah Hale: How many years is left on the agreement?
 - Matt Hancock: IT is a fifteen (15) year agreement with two (2) renewals.
 - Vince Westbrook: Are there any other locations for baseball? That corner (Yale & 61st) is prime real estate for the area.
 - Matt Hancock: The amount of baseball played is not enough. We plan to use baseball at O'Brien.
 - Janet Nelson: That area (Yale & 61st) used to be busy.
 - Matt Hancock: Strategic conversations with TLL are necessary. There is a current agreement.
 - Janet Nelson: Do we make any money off it?
 - In some ways. Some of our agreements have monetization and some do not. There are some agreements we can't speak to clearly. Some agreements aren't even on paper but rather a handshake. This is not how we plan to operate in the future.
 - Patrick Carr: Has anyone looked at the agreement?
 - Matt Hancock: Yes. The DA's office has looked at it.
 - Janet Nelson: I know they have a big program in Jenks and Bixby. So, there might be some competition. Did we not talk about getting a new software program?
 - Matt Hancock: RecDesk is a great asset. It is not utilized as much as it could be however, Karsten and I are making a plan for that.

- **Communications**

- ORPS Award

- The Tulsa County Parks Communications Team was given an award at the ORPS conference for "Excellence for Communications and Marketing". Ashley and Karsten worked together to share TCP's story.
 - Michael Craddock: We are very excited for you and Ashley to get that award. A lot of that has to do with tenacity and without Karsten, the Parks Department would have been a much worse place for

Matt to have come into. We want to sing Karsten's praises for having held the parks department together alongside Megan Blackford. Her efforts were not unnoticed by The County, and we felt very comfortable leaving it in her hands during that time.

- Brand is important, hence the name badges. Michael, Matt and Karsten went to every park, maintenance, golf, Recreation Centers, etc. and did an audit for what is permanent, temporary and what we need, etc.

- **Major Projects:**

- Case facility: Expected to have the keys on April 18, 2025.
- ARPA meeting later this week for the County to discuss the Chandler Park Lower-Level ADA trails. The expected completion date is July 2025.
- O'Brien Baseball will utilize ARPA dollars and is expected to be completed Halloween 2025.
 - Ground Breakings at O'Brien and Chandler. Should be hearing from Karsten or Meagan.
- Additional Fundraising opportunities with Melissa (conversation to happen Friday Afternoon).

- **Maintenance Updates**

- Season ends around October 1st (It never really ends but that's what we say).
- Maintenance was able to get a lot of tree work and other stuff done what we normally wouldn't in the wake of weather.
- Focuses during this time:
 - Fine tuning.
 - Leaf Removal.
 - Reset with training.
 - Training for chemical application.
 - OTRF (just came back from this conference and have been recertified).
 - Rodeo/Bus Stop coming up in December.
- First impressions are big. The landscaping around the Buddy LaFortune Community Center is complete as well as the Case Tennis Center. We are looking into landscaping the front entry of LaFortune Golf and the Overlook at Chandler.
- Resetting for next year.
 - Matt Hancock: Very impressed with the attention to detail. It's the little things: trimmed, edged, mowed. Not everyone comes to the parks but they my drive by a park. We were not blessed with the forty-eight (48) inch line that was busted and flooded the golf course; however it gave the opportunity to see the park in a different way. A lot of trees have gone down due to storms and aging and there is an Arbor Opportunity for long range tree plans. A lot of trees have had a very dry summer which has morphed into a wet fall and the trees are falling. Everything has a time frame on it. Michael and Scott's team has helped tremendously to be proactive.
 - Janet Nelson: They are beautiful trees and a lot of different kinds.

- **Golf Updates**

- It's been a great year for golf. The rounds are about where they were last year (9-10K rounds). The goal for 2025 is 100K rounds.
- Preparing for 2025:
 - Cleaning during the wintertime while tournaments and Junior Clinics aren't currently going.
 - Winter is coming and we utilize discount cards for revenue during the wintertime.
 - To deter break ins, we have installed signs and a decoy. Was it a camera last time?
 - Matt Hancock: The kind of cameras we have are flock.
 - Janet Nelson: Are they decoys or are they real?
 - Matt Hancock: Both.
 - Michael Craddock: Security is very important to us. The County has gotten IT and Building Ops researching to put out several different cameras that are real time. Matt's masterplan involves not just the Golf Parking Lot but all locations to make sure they are safe for the public and taxpayers. We want people to feel safe coming to the parks.
 - Janet Nelson: I recently read about a homeless man living in the garden.
 - Matt Hancock: As a Parks Department, the "Bus Stop" will be the first time we're all together. Safety is paramount. If I don't feel safe, I'm not going to truly experience what recreation is. We want to build a culture of "if you see something, say something". We live in a community that has a

challenge of homelessness. Having staff, members, community picking up the phone and mentioning when things like this are going on. Some people don't have the resources, and some people don't want the resources, but we don't want to Parks to be a place for people who "choose" not to use the resources. It's not that we don't want to welcome people, but we must keep in mind what the intended use is. Is it malicious?

- Vince Westbrook: A lot of country clubs have had a lot of the same kind of stuff. They target doors being left unlocked.
- Janet Nelson: It looks like people cut the fence, has that happened Michael?
- Michael Liebe: Yes.
- Matt Hancock: We're also making sure that staff are visible, then folks who want to do bad things will be more reluctant. We're trying to build a culture of "if something is wrong, let's talk about it", that way when something big happens, people feel comfortable talking about it.
- Janet Nelson: Is par 3 open in the winter?
 - Josh Stewart: Yes.

• Tennis Updates

- Melissa and Peter are both in Orlando at a large facility for a director's meeting. They get back on Friday and we will have a conversation about finishing The Tennis Center.
- There were thirteen (13) kids to participate in the Special Olympics Program.
- Starting Friday Park Board members will receive park updates so they can 'know the score'. This past week was pictures of kids enjoying tennis.
- The outdoor season is wrapping up and will be moving to indoor soon.
 - Janet Nelson: There are so many instructors.
 - Deborah Hale: There are nineteen (19) instructors and over two hundred (200) teams. We don't have enough courses to get all the matches in so we have matches during the spring *and* fall and we are almost maxed out. Kids will come in the junior program and then families will join in. The players are ages five (5) to thirty-five (35). You're not going to find that kind of programming anywhere else. I'd really like to toot Melissa's Horn. She's being awarded with the "Gift of Tennis" to the Tulsa Hall of Fame on February 1st.
- We're looking into adding benches and memorial opportunities to golf and hoping to support Pat McCrate's bench. We're looking for ways to fundraise and working with Josh to make sure that benches exist.
 - Janet Nelson: I've been looking for that buckeye tree.
 - Josh Stewart: We found some closer to Ohio and we have a spot picked out for his bench. We talked to Scott about it.
 - Janet Nelson: If I can help in any way, let me know.

Action Items

- No Action Items.

New Business

- Patt Carr: Last meeting we had discussed for a way to make donations easier, possibly earning a 501c3
 - Matt Hancock: I've met with TCF which has accounts for Tulsa County Parks (which was preceded by Park Friends). I've also spoken to Jeff with River Parks who has a 501c3. Currently, the system we have put into place is when we receive donations those get approved by the BOCC, when we utilize funds that can be reimbursed by TCF they will go through the procurement process (BOCC) and then Tulsa County Parks Department will be reimbursed through the corresponding TCF fund.
 - Janet Nelson: So we don't have a reason to change anything?
 - I think there isn't any priority. The mechanism is working. There was a lack of communication between Parks and the BOCC in the past. The procurement process must be followed. When auditors come in, and there is no documentation through the BOCC, you cannot prove state statute. That can get you fired, thrown in jail. No one needs to go to jail for trying to do things too quickly. We just need to make sure they run effectively and right on point, as smoothly as government can operate.

- TCF also already sends out tax deductible receipts. The method we have now is good. Making sure The County accepts the donation as well and the gift goes through the BOCC.
 - Michael Craddock: It's all about transparency.
 - Janet Nelson: So it's not a priority?
 - Matt Hancock: I don't believe it's a priority today.
- Meagan Ross will reach out to each of the Park Board members for one-on-one time so Matt Hancock can get to know the Park Board members better and understand what interest they have in Tulsa County Parks so Parks can better help them help Parks.

Adjournment

Janet Nelson moved that the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Meagan Ross, and this was agreed upon at 11:12 a.m.