



MINUTES
Recreation and Community Services Commission
Adjourned Regular Meeting
October 11, 2017

MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER at 6:00 p.m. by Chairperson Kirk Real

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was led by Commissioner Ben Delarosa

ROLL CALL: PRESENT: Chairperson Kirk Real
 Vice Chairperson Dave Allen
 Commissioner Ben Delarosa
 Commissioner Winnie Heiss
 Commissioner Ted Spaseff

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A motion was made by Vice Chairperson Dave Allen and seconded by Commissioner Winnie Heiss to approve the minutes from the meeting of September 13, 2017. The motion was carried by roll call vote, with Commissioner Ben Delarosa abstaining.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS:

Assistant Director Valarie Frost began by thanking the commissioners for their support of the department's two most recent events; the Lakewood Education Foundation Golf Tournament, and the College Fair. She continued by providing information regarding upcoming programs and events. Ms. Frost announced that the Benefits and Information Fair will take place on October 16 at the Weingart Senior Center, and free flu shots will be offered from 1 to 3 p.m. on October 18 also at the Senior Center. The Lollipop Lane Craft Boutique will once again be held at Mayfair Park from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on October 21 where over 115 vendors will cater to shoppers looking for unique home décor and maybe even a few early Christmas gifts. At 10 a.m. on October 21, Lakewood's Special Olympics bowling team, Split Happens, will compete in a tournament at Del Rio Lanes in Downey. To further support our Special Olympians, this year's Tip-A-Cop fundraiser is scheduled for Thursday, October 19 from 5 to 9 p.m. at Red Robin at Lakewood Center Mall. Sheriff personnel, along with Lakewood's Special Olympics athletes and coaches, will be serving customers throughout the night. Tips and donations will be accepted to benefit the Special Olympics program. FUN-Tastic Family night will be held on October 27 at The Centre and will feature "Reptile Encounter." Then, as always, Halloween Carnivals at eight parks, will continue to provide a safe environment for Lakewood's costumed-candy-collectors on October 31. Four parks; Bolivar, Del Valle, Palms, and San Martin, will also feature haunted houses in addition to carnival games and stage contests.

Ms. Frost mentioned that November events include the Award of Valor Luncheon on Wednesday, November 8, and the Turkey Softball Tournament on Saturday, November 18. This fundraiser benefits Project Shepherd. She reminded commissioners to advise the secretary if they plan to attend the Award of Valor Luncheon, as well as the 2018 CPRS Conference to be held in Long Beach on March 13-16, 2018.

Ms. Frost updated the commission with news about staff. She reported that today, Diana Botros, an Administrative Clerk in the department, submitted her two-week notice. Although Diana will be missed, we are excited for her as she moves on in her career. On a sad note, Ms. Frost

announced that retiree Joe Eash, passed away. Joe retired as the Environmental Resources Division's Light Equipment Operator in 2105 after a 23-year career with the city.

Commissioner Ted Spaseff commended staff on the outstanding effort put forth to execute the Lakewood Education Foundation golf tournament. He added that Kevin Bright did a great job as emcee of the awards banquet and kept the event on schedule. Commissioner Spaseff reported that he had an opportunity to visit the College Fair and found it to be excellent. The event appeared to be very well attended, and students, including his granddaughter, were excited to get to speak with representatives from the colleges. He thanked staff for a great job on the event.

Commissioner Heiss reported that she was able to attend the College Fair as an exhibitor providing information to students on scholarship opportunities from the Pan American Association and the Friends of the Lakewood Libraries. She noted that she spoke with many students who were Sophomores in high school. She was very encouraged to see these young people seeking opportunities early. Commissioner Heiss stated that the College Fair was another first-rate event that was very well organized, and she enjoyed it.

Chairperson Real commented on how many people attended the College Fair. He added how he has seen the event grow over the years from the Youth Center, to a standing room only audience at The Centre this year. He also was impressed with the number of colleges as well as military programs that were represented. He reported that he spoke with a representative from Long Beach City College who mentioned that the college's new president attended the event. Chairperson Real found this to be representative of the significance of the event to the community. He praised staff for the efforts to put on another typical Lakewood event.

Ms. Frost stated that she will convey commissioners' comments to Director Lisa Litzinger, Mark Freeman who coordinated the College Fair, and to Alex Bauman who organized the golf tournament.

REPORTS:

1. Park Maintenance Annual Report

Mike Cracium introduced himself as the new Environmental Resources Division Supervisor and shared his professional and personal background with the group. Mr. Cracium displayed slides as he highlighted and expanded upon information included in the written report. He made particular mention of the varying different types of projects completed by the Light Equipment Operator, and how helpful the new tractor is on a daily basis. Mr. Cracium explained the timeline and process for maintaining ball fields, as well as the work done on irrigation equipment throughout city facilities to ensure efficient water use. Looking forward, Mr. Cracium plans to work closely with the Environmental Resources Division management staff and field crews to improve the aeration and fertilization program at parks, as well as the pesticide program.

Chairperson Real commented that he was very pleased to see that renovation of the medians on the west side of Lakewood Boulevard has begun.

The Commission received and filed the report.

2. Adaptive Recreation and Special Olympics Annual Report

Community Services Manager Chuck Martucci introduced Community Services Supervisor Joe Vasquez to present the report, noting that Mr. Vasquez has been coordinating the Adaptive and Special Olympics programs since December 2016. Mr. Vasquez displayed slides and reviewed the activities offered, such as the various free activities, and day trips and holiday parties, which cost a small fee, on Tuesday afternoons. Special events and dances are also planned periodically. Photos are taken regularly, and the participants enjoy creating scrapbooks at the end of the year of all their experiences. Mr. Vasquez mentioned that Mr. Martucci organized a transition party for the program participants. The event was held in December, upon Mr. Martucci's promotion, to welcome Mr. Vasquez to the Adaptive Recreation and Special Olympics family. Mr. Vasquez noted that the much appreciated, yet overwhelming event, helped to smooth the transition of the programs' supervision.

As documented in the written report and shown in the slides, Mr. Vasquez elaborated on sports, accomplishments, and unique opportunities Lakewood Special Olympics athletes experienced over the past year. He announced that this year's LAMP/LCEA fundraiser in September for the Lakewood Special Olympics program raised over \$5,000, and as usual, the athletes were victorious over city staff in the basketball game. A great time was had by all.

Commissioner Spaseff stated that, although he is proud of all that the Recreation and Community Services Department does, he is most proud of the Adaptive and Special Olympics programs because not all cities have these programs. He enjoys playing basketball with the athletes each year at the annual fundraiser, particularly because he can see their growth from year to year.

Vice Chairperson Allen asked if the geographical area of participants in the programs have expanded. Mr. Martucci explained that the Adaptive Recreation Program is for Lakewood residents, and that the Special Olympics program consists of athletes from throughout the southeast Los Angeles area.

Commissioner Heiss expressed her pleasure with the enthusiasm displayed by Mr. Cracium and Mr. Vasquez in their new positions.

Chairperson Real inquired if moving the Adaptive Recreation Program to Bloomfield Park affected the program's enrollment at all. Mr. Vasquez confirmed that all participants continued with the program after the move.

The Commission received and filed the report.

3. Activity ZONE Annual Report

Community Services Manager Kevin Bright reviewed the schedule, activities, and statistics of the after-school Activity ZONE program as printed in the written report. He pointed out that Mayfair Park continues to have more participants than the other parks, and noted that many of the other parks are within close proximity to schools that offer competing after-school programs on campus. Mr. Bright also noted that a part-time staff member at Mayfair Park made a significant difference with how the program was administered at that park, which positively affected attendance. As a result, staff with this same drive and dedication to the program are being identified at each park.

Mr. Bright reported that he read an article this year that focused on the importance of play in a child's development. Although this is a well-known fact among recreation professionals, he was surprised to learn from the article, of the importance of unstructured play. Many of the activities in Lakewood's programs are very structured. An unstructured play environment allows children to think for themselves, figure out how to be safe in a potentially unsafe environment, and how to take risks and still survive. In the 2017 Summer Activity ZONE program, an activity named, *Making Time for Play*, was implemented daily at each park. Staff was encouraged to simply put out various toys and other play equipment for the children to use to create their own play, with safe but minimal interaction from park staff. A goal for the future is to implement more of these type of activities and to use the playgrounds as a great opportunity for unstructured play.

To further improve upon the program, Community Service Leader 4s and Specialists who run the Activity ZONE programs at each of the parks, have been asked to select one or two of the programs scheduled, and create a curriculum, a design, and supplies needed, for the activity, and then provide that to each of the other parks. This empowers some of the senior staff to get in to programming aspects of the job, provide direction to other parks, which will also create some buy-in among all staff. Activities and supplies needed will be readily available to put out when kids arrive.

Mr. Bright concluded, stating that the Activity ZONE program continues to be successful and serve its purpose providing a place for kids to show up and call their own after school and during vacation periods.

Mr. Bright then explained details of some of the specific activities listed on the program in response to Vice Chairperson Allen's inquiry.

Chairperson Real complimented Mr. Bright and staff on emphasizing unstructured play.

The Commission received and filed the report.

4. Activities and Maintenance Report No. 4

A written report and discussion of the Recreation and Community Services Department Programs, Services and Maintenance Activities for the month of September 2017 and a listing of upcoming activities for November 2017.

The Commission received and filed the report.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Letter to Co-Part-Time Employees of the Month, Eric Walker and Julia Walston, for the month of August 2017.

Chairperson Real commented that the letters are, as always, so very appropriately written to the recipients. The letters are so much better and more significant than a standard form letter.

The Commission received and filed the letters.

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ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

Chairperson Real invited all present to stand for a moment of silence in remembrance of Joe Eash.

There being no further business brought before the Recreation and Community Services Commission, Chairperson Kirk Real adjourned the meeting at 6:43 p.m. to November 8, 2017, at 6:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers.

Barbara Di Iorio, Secretary to the
Recreation and Community Services Commission