



MINUTES  
Recreation and Community Services Commission  
Adjourned Regular Meeting  
October 14, 2020

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MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER at 6 p.m. by Chairperson Winnie Heiss.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was led by Chairperson Winnie Heiss.

ROLL CALL: PRESENT: Chairperson Winnie Heiss  
Vice Chairperson Kirk Real  
Commissioner Dave Allen  
Commissioner Ted Spaseff  
Commissioner Stacy Valdez

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Meeting of September 9, 2020. A motion was made by Vice Chairperson Kirk Real and seconded by Commissioner Dave Allen to approve the minutes from the meeting of September 9, 2020. The motion was carried with a roll call vote with Chairperson Winnie Heiss abstaining.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS:

Assistant Director Kevin Bright shared with the commission that Community Services Manager Chuck Martucci responded to the inability to offer the Survive for 7 emergency preparedness class by working with CityTV staff to create a virtual class. It was said that the virtual class showcases Mr. Martucci's renowned stage presence as well as his knowledge of emergency preparedness. The presentation offers residents an attractive, welcoming and most importantly, informative class, that they can view from the comfort of their home. The class went live on Tuesday, Oct. 13, and can be found at [lakewoodcity.org/survive](http://lakewoodcity.org/survive).

Next, Mr. Bright reported that Community Services Supervisor Kelly Garnetti had reimagined the annual College Fair. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not possible to hold an event of this magnitude at The Centre. It was said that Ms. Garnetti and her team recognized that local high school students still have a future to look to and that college is a big part of that plan. Ms. Garnetti worked closely with the city's webmaster and Public Information office and designed a thorough sampling of over 200 universities and institutions. The virtual fair resource guide includes each school's top programs offered, virtual tours and sign-up information for online Zoom-style information sessions. Additionally, there is an online college information webinar offered by John H. Wilson III, director of the non-profit West Angeles COGIC Education and Enrichment Program. It was said that the webinar requires pre-registration and will cover the following topics.

1. "10 Common Biggest Mistakes in the College Application Process"
2. "How much will you pay for College?"
3. "Effective Government Response to the COVID-19 Crisis on the College Access Process"
4. "College Affordability, Cost Sustainability, and your Household"

Lastly, the webinar will provide a first-person question and answer opportunity using a Zoom style presentation. The session will be offered three days, Thursdays, Oct. 15 and 22, and Monday, Oct. 26. Each session is open to 90 participants. It was said that the College Fair went live on Tuesday, Oct. 13 and can be found on the special events tab on the RCS page on the city's website.

Mr. Bright concluded his report by sharing that the annual Lakewood Education Foundation Golf Tournament Fundraiser was yet another event that had to be reimagined due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was said that staff were directed to develop a new opportunity to raise funds to support Lakewood's highly valued teachers. Staff vetted many varying ways to raise funds for LEF and arrived at several innovative options. Major sponsors who have donated will be offered an opportunity to have a slot in a foursome golfing with Mayor Todd Rogers on Monday, November 9 or 16. Playing a best-ball format, supporters are asked to either buy a Super Bowl pool style square, whereas the score from the two rounds of golf will determine the winning square and grand prize valued over \$300. It was said that each square cost \$25 for a total of \$2500 raised by that portion of the fundraiser alone. The second supporting choice is one similar to a jog-a-thon pledge where a supporter would pay a certain amount of dollars per mile run. In this format, staff is asking that pledges be made at \$10 per birdie made by the golfers, \$50 for eagles, and \$500 for a hole-in-one. The supporter may also simply make a one-time pledge of their choosing. It was said that Community Services Manager Nicole Duran was the lead organizer for this fundraiser. Mr. Bright noted that while a golf tournament will be sadly missed by many in the community whom typically participate, students in Lakewood will still benefit from this fundraiser. He shared that a flyer was provided to the commission in their agenda packet and asked that commissioners contact their secretary if interested in contributing to the fundraiser.

Parks Superintendent Philip Lopez provided information regarding the sanitation of park playgrounds and restrooms amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Lopez informed the commission that ERD staff have been opening the park restrooms early in the mornings to allow time for cleaning and sanitizing. He mentioned that staff deep cleans and sanitizes the park restrooms every two hours throughout the day. Concerning the playgrounds, ERD staff has been using backpack sprayers to sanitize the play equipment every Monday and Friday morning. He mentioned that approximately 2-2.5 gallons of cleaning agent is used per 20-minute cleaning session. The chemical sits for 10 minutes to allow it to kill any germs and/or viruses present.

Next, Mr. Lopez provided an update on the Lakewood Equestrian Center (LEC). He shared that since 1987, Sandie Mercer Ranch, Inc. has coordinated equestrian activities and boarding facilities for horses at the LEC. The family-run business is currently under a lease agreement with the City through October 31, 2020. With the lease agreement scheduled to expire, staff developed a process of securing an interim caretaker to manage the property and its activities until a long-term concessionaire could be secured. Mr. Lopez informed the commission that a recent City Council Meeting, City Council members approved staff's recommendation for a one-year contract with the LLC held by Ms. Sonya Jahn, a current stakeholder at the LEC. Ms. Jahn has agreed to enter into a one-year agreement with the city, beginning November 1, 2020 and ending October 31, 2021, to temporarily manage and maintain the equestrian center. It was said that City Council also gave

staff the direction to begin the process of securing a long-term concessionaire to manage the property as early as November 1, 2021.

Mr. Lopez reported that city staff would work closely with Ms. Jahn to ensure the care of the horses, support of community based activities and events, and property maintenance that address the safety and setting, to provide for a seamless transition of all facility operations. He noted that over the past year, the city has made significant improvements to the equestrian center and has worked with an organized group of equestrian center users to make additional improvements. In the most recent weeks, it was said that several staff from the Environmental Resources Division, Public Works Department and Water Department have been on the property to address critical facility improvements prior to the managerial transition. These improvements were said to include the construction of a new hay barn—designed in-house by the city architect and constructed with labor from the Long Beach Conservation Corps. ERD staff were said to also be active at the property, repairing irrigation and completing landscape maintenance in areas of high visibility. Mr. Lopez mentioned that in the coming months the Public Works Department will take the lead on the demolition and removal of several dilapidated and unsafe structures, including the old management office, the old hay barn, and an old restroom on site.

Vice Chairperson Kirk Real shared that he attended a recent City Council Study Session where City Council reviewed the proposal concerning the Lakewood Equestrian Center. He commended Ms. Frost for her breadth of knowledge and expertise in the many complexities involved in the process.

Director Valarie Frost began her announcements by sharing that city staff would not host a traditional Special Olympics fundraiser as in year's past, whereby supporters were treated to dinner and a sports competition with Special Olympics athletes. She explained that amid the COVID-19 pandemic, alternative fundraising activities were planned to support the program. The Loft was said to be catering lunch for employees at a cost of \$20 per person on Thursday, October 22, with more than half of the proceeds going directly to the Lakewood Special Olympics program. It was said that participants of the fundraising lunch would be entered into an opportunity drawing, where multiple winners will be randomly drawn to receive a raffle prize. Ms. Frost mentioned that a silent auction would also be held on Thursday, October 22 at The Centre. She shared that donations for the auction were still being accepted. For those unable to join in on lunch or shop at the silent auction, tickets for a 50/50 raffle are on sale for \$5 for one ticket, or \$20 for five tickets.

Ms. Frost announced that in place of Lakewood's storied Halloween carnivals, the City of Lakewood would offer several alternatives to help residents celebrate the spooky holiday. She shared that a series of drive-in movies at Lakewood Center were slated for Fridays, October 23 and 30 and Saturday, October 31. On Saturday, October 24 a drive-thru pumpkin patch and treat bag distribution will also take place at Lakewood Center. In addition to these scheduled events, residents will be able to participate in a fun and "Spooktacular" Halloween Photo Contest over the Halloween weekend.

Ms. Frost concluded her report by sharing that congratulations were in order for Liz Loera, RCS's Administrative Clerk. Ms. Frost shared that through a competitive selection process, Liz was promoted to fill the position of Administrative Secretary in the Public Safety Department. The position was vacated by Theresa Gutierrez, who retired from the city after 17 full-time years of service. Liz will begin her new role in the Public Safety Department beginning Monday, October 22.

Commissioner Ted Spaseff commented on the reopening of the playgrounds. He stated that it was amazing how fast word spread and how excited the children were to head over to play. He shared his appreciation for the ERD crews for keeping the playgrounds clean and safe for the children. Commissioner Spaseff also shared that he was excited to check out the upcoming virtual college fair.

Ms. Frost then confirmed for Commissioner Spaseff that the horseshoe pit project at Del Valle Park is a Public Works Department project that ERD has been pushing them to finish. She mentioned that the materials had been ordered and staff was awaiting a few pieces of special treated durable wood. She informed the commission that the Public Works Department has been pulled in several directions, including performing work at the Lakewood Equestrian Center, which has created a delay in finishing the horseshoe pit renovation.

Commissioner Spaseff expressed his delight for the new ADA parking spots at Del Valle Park. Ms. Frost informed him that Bolivar and San Martin Parks were next to receive ADA parking spots.

#### REPORTS:

##### **1. Park Maintenance Fall/Winter Report**

Parks Superintendent Philip Lopez provided information regarding park maintenance during the fall and winter seasons as noted in the written report. Mr. Lopez shared that the park maintenance branch of the Environmental Resources Division of the Recreation and Community Services Department continue to provide daily landscape and custodial maintenance at all city parks and facilities. Maintenance is performed by a team of full-time and part-time maintenance staff including specialized irrigation repair and light equipment operator positions, which provide specialized skills to support park maintenance and facility projects.

Mr. Lopez reported that during the typical fall and winter seasons, maintenance staff at parks adjust their priorities to providing maintenance support to Tot Lot programs, after school programs, and Lakewood Youth Sports (LYS) activities, ensuring that play equipment and play areas are clean and equipment is in good condition, free from hazard. He noted that LYS programs, park activities and tot lots have been canceled since March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was said that despite cancellations, maintenance staff have continued to clean and inspect play areas at all city parks.

In addition to routine maintenance, Mr. Lopez shared that park maintenance personnel have

several projects scheduled for fall and winter. He noted that Biscailuz Park was scheduled for renovation of the west planter in the fall. New plant material will replace the existing aged ivy. Mayfair Park's current landscape was said to be scheduled for an update in the winter. The bird of paradise and fortnight lilies surrounding the wading pool will be replaced with a plant material featuring a California native theme. The current overhead spray method of watering in the planters will be converted to water conserving drip irrigation which is more suited to the drought tolerant variety of plants set to be installed. Mr. Lopez informed the commission that the new plant material would be well established and ready to impress by spring 2021.

Mr. Lopez highlighted the duties and functions of the city's light equipment operator as noted in the written report. He expressed that it is a unique position that plays an important role in the Environmental Resources Division. It was said that the light equipment operator (LEO) is trained to operate tractors, loaders, and the backhoe, and is licensed to operate a forklift and boom truck. During the fall and winter, the LEO will assist with removing outdated landscape at Biscailuz and Mayfair Parks and help renovate the wildflower meadow at Rynerson Park.

Next, Mr. Lopez remarked that park maintenance staff are trained to perform basic irrigation repair and monitoring water schedules, but a full-time irrigation repair worker is designated to troubleshoot issues, make moderate to advanced repairs, and ensure irrigation clock controllers are functioning properly. Responsibilities were said to include resolving hydraulic issues that prevent sprinkler heads from popping up, repairing mainline breaks and leaks, and repairing and updating electrical wiring needed to maintain communication from the irrigation clock to the water controller.

Finally, Mr. Lopez reported that irrigation repair staff would focus efforts on making repairs at the Civic Center complex during the fall, where sections of irrigation parts have been compromised by tree roots. Another assignment is the conversion from overhead spray irrigation to water conserving drip irrigation as part of the previously mentioned renovation projects at Biscailuz and Mayfair Parks.

The Commission received and filed the report.

## **2. Adaptive Recreation and Special Olympics Annual Report**

Community Services Supervisor Joseph Vasquez displayed slides and provided information regarding the Adaptive Recreation Program as noted in the written report. Mr. Vasquez reported that the City of Lakewood has proudly served the intellectually and physically disabled population through the Adaptive Recreation Program since 1981. The Adaptive Recreation Program takes place at Bloomfield Park with participants meeting every Tuesday, from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. The weekly program was said to include arts and crafts, athletics, life skills workshops, special events, and small trips to local businesses. Additional program support comes from the Lakewood DASH Transit program which provides free transportation to and from the

program for Lakewood resident participants.

In addition to weekly programming, it was said that Bloomfield Park staff facilitate at least one special event each month for participants. Mr. Vasquez informed the commission that from fall 2019 until the pandemic fully affected programming in March 2020, staff coordinated Halloween and Valentine's dances, and a dinner and movie event. In addition, the inaugural ARP Friendsgiving event was said to have taken place at Bloomfield Park one week prior to Thanksgiving. Mr. Vasquez shared that the event was a hit, with just over 75 participants and their family members in attendance. Participants brought dishes to share during a potluck style dinner, and gave thanks to the people and things that were most important to them.

Moving forward, Mr. Vasquez provided information regarding the Lakewood Special Olympics Program as noted in the written report. He mentioned that basketball and bocce were offered during the spring season, bowling is offered in the summer, and softball, soccer and golf during the fall. It was said that the city provides plenty of opportunity for the athletes to be recognized including the Lakewood Hall of Fame Awards Banquet. At the banquet in February 2020, Jonathan Hernandez was selected as the 2019 Lakewood Special Olympics Athlete of the Year. Jonathan competes in softball and basketball each year. It was said that his enthusiasm and good spirit helped him stand out amongst his other teammates, and earned him this special award.

Mr. Vasquez reported that in February 2020, the Lakewood City Council chose a number of service organizations and individuals which they felt provided outstanding service to the community. He announced that the Lakewood Special Olympics Program was selected as one of these impactful groups and was recognized at the Legends of Lakewood awards banquet. City staff, Special Olympics athletes, volunteer coaches, and members from the Special Olympics Southern California (SOSC) team joined together to accept this very special award.

Next, the commission was informed that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and for the safety of program participants, the 2020 activity schedules for the Adaptive Recreation and Special Olympics programs were put on hold. Mr. Vasquez shared that Bloomfield Park staff came up with creative ways to keep in touch with program participants during the pandemic including conducting wellness checks on a monthly basis to ensure participants are doing well and in good spirits. Program participants were said to have also been given priority registration for the Lakewood Cares Food Drive, at which 13 families received assistance.

Lastly, Mr. Vasquez shared that DASH transit staff teamed up with the Adaptive Recreation and Special Olympic Program to do a Halloween Treat Drive-by to pass out goodie bags to 70 participants of the program.

Commissioner Spaseff thanked Mr. Vasquez and Mr. Martucci for doing an outstanding

job at providing such a great program for all ages, adding that it means a lot to the parents of the participants that their children have a safe and fun place to hang out and make memories.

Chairperson Heiss echoed Commissioner Spaseff's sentiments, sharing that it brings tears to her eyes to hear of the wonderful things the program provides for the adaptive population.

The Commission received and filed the report.

### **3. Activity Zone Annual Report**

Community Services Supervisor Irving Montenegro Jr. reviewed the schedule, activities, and statistics of the after-school Activity ZONE program as printed in the written report. Mr. Montenegro reported that the Activity Zone program is a free program offered to school-age children and pre-teens at eight city parks offering indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities with assisted homework direction for all attendees. The program is designed to provide recreation activities after school and during school vacation periods. During the school year, the program is offered Monday through Friday, from 3 to 5 p.m., with a flexible schedule to accommodate early dismissal days and holidays. During the summer months and vacation periods, programs are offered from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. The program emphasizes physical activity and free play as a way to enhance self-esteem, exercise, and overall wellness.

Mr. Montenegro informed the commission that due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, the Activity Zone was indefinitely suspended on March 16. It was said that the closure was in compliance with protocols for minimizing the spread of COVID-19 as prescribed by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health). In response, RCS staff created various free virtual classes and activities through the city's website on a virtual recreation center webpage.

Mr. Montenegro reported that as Public Health standards for closures evolved, permitting the reopening of programs, an eight-week summer camp program called Camp Circle was developed. Camp Circle was offered to youth, ages 6-13 with supervised, structured, recreational activities and social experiences which had been critically absent during this time. The program was organized to accommodate 50 participants—30 at Mayfair Park and 20 at Palms Park.

As children have returned to school without in-person classes, Lakewood designed a distance learning program called Park Alternative Learning Sites (PALS) offered at three locations including Mayfair and Boyar Parks and the Lakewood Youth Center. Mr. Montenegro explained that initially, the program consisted of a monthly registration fee but has since shifted to a weekly registration fee to offer more flexible opportunities for families. Additionally, a 10% discount was offered for families with multiple participants registered. Further, the Project Shepherd Program has allocated monies from federal

CARES Act funding to provide tuition assistance for families in need. Mr. Montenegro stated that in the coming months, staff will continue to explore alternative ways to offer programs that will enrich and provide recreation and, where possible, social opportunities for school-age youth.

Mr. Montenegro noted that a table documenting attendance for the 2019-20 school year was provided in the commissioner's agenda packet. He noted that, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the spring 2020 program ended in mid-March with spring vacation 2020 and summer vacation 2020 not operating at all.

Mr. Montenegro concluded his report by stating that Activity Zone, Camp Circle and PALS have and will continue to provide families with the opportunity to have children attend safe, interactive recreational programs throughout the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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 and a listing of upcoming activities for November 2020.

The Commission received and filed the report.

**WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS:**

1. Letter to Kristina Veneciano and Lauren Ahlgrim, Part-Time Co-Employees of the Month for August 2020.

**ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:**

None.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business brought before the Recreation and Community Services Commission, Chairperson Winnie Heiss adjourned the meeting at 7:04 p.m. to Wednesday, November 18, 2020, at 6 p.m. in the City Council Chambers.

Michelle Williams, Administrative Secretary  
Recreation and Community Services Commission