



MINUTES  
Recreation and Community Services Commission  
Adjourned Regular Meeting  
March 10, 2021

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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 February 10, 2021. A motion was made by Vice Chairperson Kirk Real and seconded by Commissioner Ted Spaseff to approve the minutes from the meeting of February 10, 2021. The motion was carried by unanimous roll call vote.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS:

Director Valarie Frost began her remarks by informing the commission that according to the latest data, the number of people in Lakewood who were vaccinated was 11,068. It was said that the percentage of people having received at least one dose in the city was 17.9%. In California, 9,458,722 doses were said to have been administered with 16.9% of Californians having received at least one dose.

Ms. Frost reported that vaccines were available for residents 65 and older; education and childcare workers, including part-time staff with assignments with Park Alternative Learning Sites and the after-school Activity Zone; emergency services, which encompasses all city employees given responsibilities serving within the emergency operations center; transit workers, including DASH employees; and custodial and janitorial workers, which would include the city's maintenance personnel. She shared that on the local vaccine distribution front, staff continued to be persistent in requesting vaccination sites in the city. Senior center staff have been assisting seniors who need help navigating vaccination websites in order to get appointments, and DASH Transit service has extended operations to take seniors and disabled residents to and from their vaccination appointments if they do not have transportation.

Ms. Frost mentioned that the commission might notice more activity at city parks in the evenings and on weekends due to the fact that Public Health protocols now allow for the use of athletic fields for training and single-game competitions.

Next, Ms. Frost informed the commission that former City Manager Howard Chambers' medical condition had taken a turn for the worse. She mentioned that Mr. Chambers was referred to hospice care after his many-years battle with cancer.

Ms. Frost then reported that Wayne Piercy had been diagnosed with lymphoma cancer. She shared

that his doctors believe that the cancer is 80% curable, and if his strength improves, they would like to start chemotherapy. She explained that he was not up for visitors, but welcomed cards. She mentioned she would share the contact information for the two Lakewood legends with the commission upon request.

On a happier note, Ms. Frost shared that the department would welcome Lorraine Delarosa as the Community Services Supervisor for The Centre beginning Monday, March 22. Lorraine began working for the city in 2010 and left Lakewood in 2018 to pursue a full time position for the Aliso Viejo Community Association. She grew up in Lakewood and is very excited to return to the city.

Moving forward, Ms. Frost reported that there were many events scheduled to commemorate the spring season, starting with Virtual Earth Walk, available online with the following components:

- Photo/Coloring Contest
- Nearly a dozen environmental videos
- Message from Woody the Talking Tree

Other spring events offered include:

- Drive-in movies at the mall on March 20 (The Croods), April 10 (Trolls World Tour), and April 24 (The Karate Kid)
- The Easter Bunny will visit parks and community centers between March 20 and April 2.
- Spring Zoom Party

Next, Ms. Frost shared with the commission that as a requirement for the Prop 68 planning grant for the Lakewood Equestrian Center Master Plan, a community survey was circulated throughout the greater Lakewood community, while also targeting users of the LEC and the adjunct facilities included in the master plan. The survey was primarily conducted in an on-line format from mid-November through December 31, 2020. Opportunities to participate were advertised through social media, on the city's website, and Lakewood's eMag and in hard copy marketing through direct mailing and postings. For those without internet access, it was said that a mailed version could be requested and over-the-phone surveys were offered as well, the latter extended through February to ensure all opinions were captured. Ms. Frost shared that nearly 1,200 responses were received, with 84% of respondents noting they are Lakewood residents. Generally, responses represented favorable opinions of the facility, though a few outlier responses note areas for improvement.

Ms. Frost then expressed her congratulations to ERD Supervisor, Mike Cracium, who finished his course work for a Bachelors of Arts degree from California State University Long Beach. She shared that the department was very proud of Mike for this educational accomplishment.

Ms. Frost concluded her announcements by informing the commission that staff had submitted a competitive grant application to the state for \$8.3 million to complete several facility improvements at Bloomfield Park. She shared that staff should know the outcome of the grant

submission by late summer. Some of the facility improvements and enhancements which would be funded through the grant were said to include:

- New synthetic turf soccer field with walking track, sports lighting, and restroom building
- New school-aged playground
- Baseball diamond #2 renovation and additional field lighting installed
- ADA compliance upgrades and interior renovations for the park office and community building
- Combination batting cage, driving range and bocce court facility

Vice Chairperson Real shared that he attended the Virtual Arbor Day program and mentioned it was a delight. He stated that it was not nearly as fun as seeing staff dressed up and performing, but mentioned it was fun and entertaining nonetheless. He congratulated staff on a job well done.

#### REPORTS:

##### **1. RCS Part-Time Staff Recruitment Annual Report**

Community Services Supervisor Joseph Vasquez displayed slides and provided information on the RCS part-time staff recruitment programs for recreation leaders, facility staff, Lifeguard/Swim Instructors, Sports Officials, DASH Transit drivers, and Environmental Resources staff as noted in the written report.

He shared that the Recreation Leader Assessment Center, which the department uses to assess candidates' qualifications, consists of three breakout rooms: in-basket, interaction, and work place scenario, followed by an exit question. The in-basket breakout room was designed to help assess candidates' skills in problem-solving, time management, delegating, and following directions. The interaction breakout room was designed to gauge a candidate's ability to follow directions, lead, work as a team, and to determine their level of enthusiasm. The work place scenario breakout room was designed to assess candidates' organizational, problem solving and individual leadership skills, as well as their ability to work well with others and their willingness to participate. Mr. Vasquez informed the commission that post hire trainings included a new hire training, program specific training—such as for Lakewood Youth Sports (LYS)—a year-round safety training program, and a quarterly training program.

Concerning the aquatics program recruitment process, Mr. Vasquez shared that aquatics recruitment, for positions such as such as Lifeguards, Swim Instructors and Cashiers, typically take place in April to prepare for the summer season. In an effort to find the most qualified candidates, staff reaches out to local colleges, high schools and swim teams. Mr. Vasquez shared that the aquatics recruitment process includes in-water testing and a group oral interview. Upon completion of in-water testing, it was said that candidates must attend a Lakewood hosted Lifeguard Certification School. This course was said to be hosted by pool managers and other senior lifeguards. Mr. Vasquez shared that once candidates successfully complete the Lifeguard Certification School, candidates are then selected for employment. Once selected, it was said that candidates must then complete a water safety instructor training

through a third party agency, and attend an aquatics in-service where the aquatics supervisor and the Pool Managers discuss Lakewood-specific standards and policies with regard to the pool and aquatics programming.

Concerning the sports program recruitment process, Mr. Vasquez shared that Lakewood continues to provide in-house sports officials for the LYS and adults sports programs. He reminded the commission that the LYS program includes three sports seasons: baseball/softball/t-ball in the summer, flag football/volleytennis/volleyball in the fall and basketball in the spring. Officials from those programs who are in a veteran status also typically fill in for adult sports as well. Mr. Vasquez explained that typical trainings for sports officials include rules training, mechanics training, a written examination, and a full dress practical.

Concerning the DASH Transportation recruitment process, Mr. Vasquez shared that drivers are required to go through an interview selection process and a thorough background check is conducted. The background check was said to include department of transportation records. Once selected, it was said that drivers start as operators of the accessible vans. He explained that this is because only a class C driver's license is required to operate an accessible van. Once they are hired and they complete the required training, a separate in-house training is conducted for class B commercial licensing. This enables drivers to obtain a class B driver's license and become available to drive the 16-passenger DASH buses.

Mr. Vasquez then reported on the recruitment process for the Environmental Resources Division (ERD). The commission was informed that ERD fills a variety of part-time positions to assist the full-time workforce. It was said that these positions include part-time Maintenance Aides, custodial staff and members of the two-year Maintenance Trainee Program. Mr. Vasquez mentioned that recruitment for these positions are based on an interview process and testing. Employees receive new hire training on basic skills and equipment needed to be successful in the position. Maintenance Trainees in the two-year program, receive training in both park maintenance—alongside a senior maintenance worker—and are put on the landscape crew to perform roadside maintenance and other miscellaneous tasks throughout the city.

Lastly, Mr. Vasquez informed the commission that COVID-19 affected staff training and development just as it affected other department programs and activities. It was said that staff managed to successfully complete recruitment processes throughout the year with safety guidelines including social distancing and face masks. In order to keep staff busy, Mr. Vasquez shared that new programs, services and ideas were developed to allow staff to continue to work throughout the pandemic.

Following Mr. Vasquez's report, ERD staff including Senior Park Maintenance Workers Edward Salas and Jesus Barrios, and the city's Licensed Spray Applicator Mark Benavides, shared positive feedback regarding their experience as a participant of the Maintenance Trainee Program.

Commissioner Ted Spaseff thanked Edward, Jesus and Mark for sharing their experiences with the commission. He expressed his appreciation for the wonderful job staff does with mentoring.

Vice Chairperson Real shared that he was delighted to get a chance to hear from ERD staff regarding their experiences in the Maintenance Trainee Program. He mentioned that the commission seldom gets to hear from ERD staff and expressed his appreciation for their attendance and for sharing their personal experiences.

Chairperson Winnie Heiss echoed her fellow commissioners' comments and thanked the ERD staff for attending and sharing their experience with the commission.

The Commission received and filed the report on part-time staff recruitment.

## **2. Volunteer Program Update**

Community Services Supervisor Caitlin Cariaso provided information regarding the many ways that Lakewood's volunteers are celebrated during National Volunteer Month, which takes place in April. She shared that for 2021, Lakewood would be celebrating the many hardworking volunteers who persevered through the COVID-19 pandemic. It was said that many of the department's programs would not be possible without the assistance of the hundreds of volunteers who give their time, energy and efforts to help others. Ms. Cariaso noted that typically the Older Adult Volunteer Recognition Luncheon is held at The Centre in April. She informed the commission that the luncheon for 2020 was canceled, however, the current year's luncheon will be held in a drive-through format at the Weingart Senior Center. Volunteers from 2019 and 2020 will be recognized with a certificate, gift card and small gift of appreciation. Staff from the Burns Community Center, the Weingart Senior Center and Lakewood Meals on Wheels will be in attendance to greet and thank volunteers.

Ms. Cariaso shared that Lakewood Volunteer Day, typically held in April, was canceled in 2020, and was tentatively postponed to September 2021.

It was said that in 2020, the LYS season began as normal with basketball in January. Unfortunately, the basketball season was cut short beginning in March and all other sports seasons were unable to occur. 120 volunteer coaches contributed 2,161 hours during the LYS basketball season.

Ms. Cariaso shared that Lakewood Meals on Wheels continued to provide services during the pandemic to the Lakewood community. A dedicated group of 75 volunteers contributed 11,019 hours of service. It was said that Meals on Wheels made adjustments to the program to keep volunteers and clients safe, such as extra sanitizing, utilizing the Burns Community Center activity room to prepare food socially distanced, leaving the food at the client's porch in a disposable plastic bag and wearing appropriate personal protective equipment.

Next, Ms. Cariaso informed the commission that typically, Burns Community Center volunteers provide class instruction and supervision for special activities such as book club, poker club, and technology classes. In 2020, five volunteers provided 15 hours of service in the months preceding the pandemic. Another 20 adult volunteers worked at the Weingart Senior Center providing class instruction in specialty classes such as knitting, crocheting, sculpting, painting, and dance from January to March contributing 530 hours of service. Lastly, cut short by one month, the 2020 Tax Program held at the Weingart Senior Center utilized 12 volunteers in February and March contributing 288 hours of service.

In 2020, 18 teen volunteers contributed 76 hours of community service assisting at Palms Park and the Lakewood Youth Center. Teens have been unable to get together since the onset of the pandemic last March.

Lastly, Ms. Cariaso reported that the Project Shepherd Holiday Assistance Program is made possible because of the many volunteers who generously give their time. This year, in order to create a safe, socially distanced environment, volunteers were limited to members of the Lakewood Rotary Club and select community volunteers. Approximately 47 volunteers contributed 191 hours assisting in the warehouse. Volunteers helped pack food for families and assisted recipients with loading their cars curbside. These same volunteers also assisted with delivering to homebound residents. This enabled 436 families to receive food and gifts over the holiday season.

The Commission received and filed the report on volunteer programs.

### **3. The Centre Operations Annual Report**

Community Services Manager Nicole Duran provided information regarding the operation of The Centre over the past year, as noted in the written report. Ms. Duran reported that in 2020, The Centre was greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Large gatherings came to a complete halt in March 2020, causing multiple cancellations of catered and non-catered events and recreation classes held at The Centre. These cancellations were said to include the annual Daddy/Daughter Date Night, the FUN-Tastic Family Night series, department sponsored dance recitals, and several recreation classes such as Baby Hip Hop, Aerobics, Ballet Characters, Yoga for Fitness and many more. Ms. Duran reminded the commission that in March 2020, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) orders ceased all gatherings exceeding ten individuals. She noted that this action greatly affected clients of the contracted caterer, contract classes and city meeting and events. It was said that in 2020, 161 contract classes and 184 scheduled TGIS events were canceled.

Ms. Duran informed the commission that despite the pandemic, several city-run programs and special events traditionally hosted at The Centre were reimaged and offered in alternative formats. FUN-Tastic Family Nights were said to be offered virtually through the city's website. To celebrate the accomplishments and well-deserved retirement of former Council Member Diane DuBois, a drive-through car parade was held in the east parking lot of City Hall in October 2020. A virtual program for the 2020 Award of Valor took place outside The

Centre in November 2020. For the annual Tree Lighting event in December of 2020, the Civic Center Plaza was well decorated with a beautiful holiday tree and oversized toy soldiers, a family-sized red sleigh, and gigantic presents. Although the event was held virtually, with no in-person audience, the program was aired by CityTV and available on several channel outlets according to residents' cable provider. Following the ceremony, at 7:30 p.m., three aerial fireworks shows were simultaneously displayed in different regions of the city.

Next, Ms. Duran reported that the meeting and banquet rooms at The Centre were repurposed throughout the pandemic. It was said that the Sycamore Room provides office space to four city staff, the Weingart Ballroom was staged to host city council meetings, and the Executive Board Room served as a room where members of the public could also watch city council meetings in the event that the Ballroom reaches capacity. For relatively small meetings, when staff has to meet in person, the Weingart Ballroom and Maple Room were used as to achieve social distancing for meeting attendees.

Mr. Duran informed the commission that in 2020, the installation of the roller shades replaced the existing mini-blinds and curtains throughout The Centre. The installation included motorized and manual roller shades in the Council Wing, Weingart Ballroom, Art Studio, Executive Board Room, and the Maple, Sycamore, and Oak Rooms. ADA compliant automatic doors were also installed on the east entrance to The Centre and Council Wing entrance doors.

Lastly, Ms. Duran reported that since October 2010, Thank Goodness It's Sofia (TGIS) has provided food and beverage service at The Centre. It was said that the pandemic put a complete stop to in-person service. Ms. Duran shared that TGIS Catering had reimaged their business and services by providing boxed lunches and full catering service to essential workers during the pandemic.

The Commission received and filed the report on The Centre operations.

### **3. Vandalism Annual Report**

Community Services Manager Alex Bauman provided a summary of vandalism statistics on city facilities in 2020. A three-year comparison of statistics related to vandalism of Recreation and Community Services facilities was included with the written report. Mr. Bauman reviewed the various types of vandalism, number of incidents at each facility, and the cost associated with each loss. In 2020, there were 58 incidents totaling an estimated \$42,083.43 in direct damage or loss to the city. This represents a decrease of 6 incidents from 2019's total of 64. Even with fewer incidents, the estimate of loss for 2020 demonstrates an increase of 13.3% from the prior year.

Mr. Bauman informed the commission that the increase in loss was attributed to an incident that took place in December of 2020 where a maintenance shed at Rynerson Park was broken into, resulting in an estimated loss of \$21,757.23, with most of the loss attributed to the theft

of a park utility vehicle. He shared that 2020 would have seen a 34% decrease in overall loss if not for this incident.

Next, Mr. Bauman reported that city-wide, graffiti remains the department's single most frequent classification of vandalism with a total of 29 even though this was a 34% decrease from the previous year.

Mr. Bauman clarified that miscellaneous property damage refers to damage caused to fixtures, buildings and other assets. He shared that examples might include vandalized trash receptacles or bleachers that require repair or replacement. It is estimated that the city spent \$3,988.00 in 2020 on 17 incidents to manage this type of vandalism. It was said that this statistic was higher in quantity when compared to 2019, but does represent a financial decrease of over \$5,400.

In conclusion, Mr. Bauman noted that vigilance at Lakewood recreation facilities would continue to be a priority with continual reporting to the sheriff's department, the expedient removal of graffiti and repairs to vandalized property, and staff's diligence in monitoring facilities throughout business hours.

Assistant Director Kevin Bright clarified for Commissioner Spaseff that the loss from the incident at Rynerson Park's maintenance shed would in fact be covered by insurance. He informed him that the Administrative Services Department was currently working to determine coverage.

The Commission received and filed the report on vandalism.

#### **4. Activities and Maintenance Report No. 9**

A written report and discussion of the Recreation and Community Services Department Programs, Services and Maintenance Activities for the month February 2021 and a listing of upcoming activities for April 2021.

Commissioner Spaseff congratulated Ms. Carioso on being named Co-Manager of the Year for 2020.

The Commission received and filed the report.

#### **WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS**

1. Letter to Part-Time Employee of the Month – Michelle Cervantes – January 2021

#### **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:**

None.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business to be brought before the Recreation and Community Services Commission, Chairperson Winnie Heiss adjourned the meeting at 6:58 p.m. to April 14, 2021 at 6 p.m. in the City Council Chambers.

Michelle Williams, Administrative Secretary  
Recreation and Community Services Commission