



MINUTES
Recreation and Community Services Commission
Adjourned Regular Meeting
March 13, 2024

MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER at 6 p.m. by Commissioner Dave Allen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was led by Commissioner Anitza Valles.

ROLL CALL: PRESENT: Commissioner Dave Allen
Commissioner Ted Spaseff
Commissioner Anitza Valles

ABSENT: Chairperson Stacy Valdez
Vice Chairperson Veronica Lucio

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Meeting of February 14, 2024. Due to lack of a quorum, the minutes of February 14, 2024 were tabled for approval at the meeting of April 10, 2024.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS:

Director Valarie Frost began her announcements by reporting that the annual Earth Walk event would take place at Monte Verde Park on Saturday, March 16 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. In addition, she announced that on Thursday, March 21 the California Parks and Recreation Society Distribution D10 Awards and Installation Banquet would take place. She informed the commission that two Volunteer Merit Award winners, including the Lakewood Tree Huggers and the Lakewood Women's Club, would be recognized for their many contributions to city recreation and Special Olympics Programming. The commission was asked to RSVP to their secretary if they would like to attend. Lastly, Ms. Frost notified the commission that the city anticipates City Council election results for District 4 would be certified at the next City Council meeting, and could possibly result in a new appointment to the RCS Commission, which would replace current Chairperson Stacy Valdez. She noted that Vice Chairperson Veronica Lucio would assume the role of Chairperson until a new commissioner is appointed and the annual commission reorganization was complete.

Assistant Director Kevin Bright provided the commission with information on the LeadHer Lakewood series. Mr. Bright reported that the series kicked off on Wednesday, March 6 with a Behind-the-Scenes of Success tour, which led 30 Lakewood residents through four different women-owned businesses within the city of Lakewood, at which business owners shared their trials and tribulations, their successes, and how they arrived where they are in the present. To conclude the tour, it was said that the group was treated to lunch at the final stop. Mr. Bright mentioned that a great time was had by all. The commission was informed that the second event in the Lakewood Lead'Her series, Wine and Design, would take place at Monte Verde Park on Wednesday, March 13 from 6 to 9 p.m. and currently had 77 registered. On Wednesday, March 20, the third event in the series, a Women's Wellness Fair, would take place at 10 a.m. at Mayfair Park. Mr. Bright shared that approximately 14 vendors would be present, and 86

residents were registered to attend thus far. Finally, Mr. Bright reported that the capstone event of the series was scheduled for Tuesday, March 21 in The Centre Ballroom from 6 to 8 p.m. and would include a lecture from keynote speaker Dr. Maria Silva-Palacios.

Mr. Bright informed Commissioner Allen that the LeadHer Lakewood series had not been declared as an annual event.

Commissioner Spaseff shared that he recently attended the Lakewood Youth Hall of Fame Awards Banquet and mentioned that staff did a fantastic job orchestrating the event. He thanked staff for their hard work and dedication.

Commissioner Allen commented that he attended an Arbor Day presentation and mentioned that it was one of the best productions to date. He commended staff for an amazing performance, stating that everything from the costumes to the acting was spot on. He noted that it was great to see the kids so excited and engaged.

REPORTS:

1. Volunteer Program Annual Report

Community Services Supervisor Caitlin Cariaso displayed slides and provided information regarding Lakewood's Volunteer Program. Ms. Cariaso reminded the commission that April is recognized as National Volunteer Month and the Recreation and Community Services Department shows appreciation for the hard work of Lakewood's volunteers by offering several events to both celebrate and encourage volunteerism. Ms. Cariaso noted that many of the department's programs would not be possible without the assistance of volunteers. Events to recognize the efforts of volunteers during the month of April were said to include the annual Lakewood Volunteer Day recognition luncheon, the Lakewood Youth Sports Coaches Recognition Event, and the Older Adult Volunteer Recognition Luncheon. Details regarding each event were provided as noted in the written report.

It was said that in 2024, California Parks and Recreation Society (CPRS) District 10 is hosting its Awards and Installation Banquet on Thursday, March 21, where two Lakewood volunteer groups will receive the Volunteer Merit Award. The Tree Huggers, a high school club on the campus of Odyssey STEM Academy in Lakewood, volunteered at Lakewood's Nature Trail one Saturday per month in 2023, removing litter, maintaining paths and removing unwanted weeds and tree suckers. The Women's Club of Lakewood is also being recognized for their unwavering commitment to the City of Lakewood's Adaptive Recreation Program (ARP), through generous donations augmenting programming at the ARP Pool Party and BBQ, the ARP Luau, and the annual ARP Prom.

Ms. Cariaso reported on the total number of service hours contributed by volunteers of the Lakewood Youth Sports program, Lakewood Meals on Wheels, Burns Community Center, Weingart Senior Center, the Tax Program, Lakewood Volunteer Day, Teens in Lakewood Care, Halloween Carnivals, and Project Shepherd in 2023 as noted in the

written report.

The commission was informed that the annual Lakewood Volunteer Day was scheduled for Saturday, April 13 from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. The commission was asked to RSVP with their secretary if interested in attending.

Commissioner Allen said that volunteerism is what has made, and continues to make both the RCS Department and the City of Lakewood strong. He thanked staff for their efforts.

The commission received and filed the annual report on the Volunteer Program.

2. The Centre Operations Annual Report

Community Services Supervisor Lorraine Anthony displayed slides and provided information regarding The Centre operations in 2023. Ms. Anthony reported that The Centre is Lakewood's premier event and conference venue. She noted that the facility has a reputation for high-quality catering, meeting rooms, and recreational experiences for adults, children, families, business and commerce and community organizations. It was said that in 2023, approximately 1,100 catered and non-catered events and recreation classes were held at The Centre.

Ms. Anthony provided the commission with information regarding city-led events and programs offered at The Centre, such as FUN-Tastic Family Nights, Daddy/Daughter Date Night, department-sponsored dance recitals, and several recreation classes, as noted in the written report. Other annual events that are hosted at The Centre were said to include the Patriot Day Ceremony, the Tree Lighting event, and the Mother's Day Brunch. Details regarding each event were provided by Ms. Anthony. She shared that over 1,900 participants attended the 140 classes and recreation events in 2023, which brought in \$38,428.46 in gross revenue to the city.

The commission was reminded that in July of 2010, the City of Lakewood entered into an agreement with Thank Goodness It's Sofia Catering Services, Inc. (TGIS). In July of 2016 the agreement was renewed for a second time and in June of 2021, the agreement was extended for another five-year term. It was said that the partnership has proven mutually beneficial to both the city and TGIS and continues to serve residents and clients with the highest level of food, beverage and customer service. Events held in 2023 by TGIS were said to include the annual Mother's Day Brunch and three private tasting events.

Lastly, Ms. Anthony provided details regarding the many facility improvements completed at The Centre in 2023 as noted in the written report.

Commissioner Spaseff commented that the new carpet and chairs look great in The Centre. He also mentioned that it was nice to see revenues going back up. He thanked Ms. Anthony and her staff for a job well done in 2023.

Commissioner Anitza Valles noted that every event she has attended at The Centre has been spectacular and well organized. She added that the menu is always phenomenal.

The commission received and filed the annual report on The Centre Operations.

3. Vandalism Annual Report

Community Services Manager Joseph Vasquez provided a summary of vandalism statistics on city facilities in 2023. A three-year comparison of statistics related to vandalism of Recreation and Community Services facilities was included with the written report. Mr. Vasquez reviewed the various types of vandalism, number of incidents at each facility, and the cost associated with each loss. In 2023, there were 80 incidents totaling an estimated \$61,578 in direct damage or loss to the city. This represents an increase of 13 incidents from 2022's total of 67. It was said that although increased vandalism is worrisome, total direct damage or loss to the city decreased 10.5%, down \$6,825 from 2022's total. Mr. Vasquez noted that in 2022, a single incident in which the park utility vehicle was stolen from the maintenance shed overnight acquired \$20,000 in estimated loss.

Mr. Vasquez informed the commission that several recreation facilities saw individual increases when compared to 2022 statistics. Specifically, Bolivar Park saw a measured increase in damage due to graffiti, and a single instance of turf damage. This single incident, in which an individual lost control of their vehicle, causing them to drive erratically across the grass of Diamond #2, resulted in \$3,122 worth of damages. There continues to be an increase in theft across the city, with 14 total compared to 10 incidents in 2022. Graffiti remains the department's single most frequent classification of vandalism with a total of 31, which was a decrease compared to the previous year's 39 incidents.

It was said that new security camera upgrades, providing high-definition surveillance, were installed throughout the city. Additionally, Mr. Vasquez noted that city continues to contract out additional security efforts to roam the city in the evening and in the early hours of the morning.

A summary of the 2023 estimate of vandalism loss and a three-year comparison of statistics, by park and by type, was provided to the commission.

Mr. Vasquez confirmed for Commissioner Allen that staff continues to work closely with the Lakewood Sheriff's Department to handle graffiti removal throughout the city.

The commission received and filed the annual report on Vandalism.

4. RCS Part-Time Staff Recruitment Annual Report

Community Services Manager Joseph Vasquez displayed slides and reported that the Recreation and Community Services Department employs a large workforce of part-time

personnel to provide exceptional programs and services to the residents of Lakewood. It was said that the department maintains a strong recruitment, training and retention program to provide supervision and coordination of the many recreation programs and services offered to the community.

Mr. Vasquez informed the commission that the department hires and trains dozens of part-time employees annually for parks, programs, aquatics, transportation, and maintenance services. It was said that the employment process varies for each program, and may consist of various examinations. In depth information on the employment process was provided by Mr. Vasquez, as noted in the written report. It was said that to date there are 285 part-time employees working within the department, 94 of which were hired since March 2023. Mr. Vasquez pointed out that in comparison to 2022, the department saw an increase of 10% in new hires in 2023. Two notable instances help contribute to this increase. First, city staff regained operations of McCormick pool following a brief period of permitted use by the Lakewood YMCA. Second, city staff took over operations of the Lakewood Equestrian Center in November 2023.

Mr. Vasquez noted that staff recruitment and retention remains a high priority for staff throughout the year. It was said that the department assigns year-round recreation leaders to assist with the operations of the city's parks and community centers, with an annual recruitment that takes place each spring. Also in 2023, 16 new part-time staff joined the Environmental Resources Division to assist with park, turf, and landscape maintenance throughout the city. In addition, 14 maintenance aides and ten custodians are included in the part-time work force.

Mr. Vasquez reported that for all positions, employees attend in-house training on customer service, equipment operation and general landscaping and maintenance techniques. He noted that part-time employees have had much success with obtaining full-time employment within the public and private sectors following their service to the City of Lakewood.

Commissioner Spaseff commented that the department does a great job of hiring quality and enthusiastic staff.

Commissioner Valles congratulated the department for hiring such a qualified staff for the Lakewood Equestrian Center.

Ms. Frost confirmed for Commissioner Allen that the department was beginning to see an increase in applications for positions like maintenance personnel and recreation leaders. She noted that things seem to be more stabilized in terms of recruitment. She noted that hiring for aquatics personnel would remain more difficult due to the large amount of certification hours required for aquatics positions. She confirmed for Commissioner Allen that the job recruitment postcard mailed out by the department, did indeed help in increasing interest.

The commission received and filed the annual report on RCS Part-Time Staff Recruitment.

5. 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 of February and a listing of upcoming activities for April 2024.

The Commission received and filed the report.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Letter to Aimee McSparren, Employee of the Month for January 2024.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Phil Norris, a Lakewood resident, spoke regarding park safety. He shared that he had checked sand levels at Lakewood parks a year prior and noticed that they were below the safety standard of nine to 12 inches deep. He noted that they were only six to nine inches deep and stated that according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, they should be installed at 12 inches, and be at least nine inches deep when compacted, for falls up to four feet high. He mentioned that his home park is Boyar Park, and shared that while there recently, he noticed that there was a component of the play structure where a child could potentially fall from that was about 6 feet tall. He cited his concern that a child could be hurt if they fell from that height and the sand was not at least nine to 12 inches deep below. He called for a playground safety inspection to be done to ensure sand levels are safe.

Additionally, Mr. Norris requested that at the upcoming Earth Walk event that staff provide signs on the Nature Trail that point out drought-tolerant plants so that residents can be made aware of the different types of drought-tolerant plants they can incorporate into their own yards.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business brought before the Recreation and Community Services Commission, Commissioner Allen adjourned the meeting at 6:37 p.m. to Wednesday, April 10 at 6 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

Michelle Williams, Administrative Secretary
Recreation and Community Services Commission