



MINUTES
Recreation and Community Services Commission
Adjourned Regular Meeting
September 9, 2020

MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER at 6:10 p.m. by Vice Chairperson Kirk Real.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was led by Commissioner Dave Allen.

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

ABSENT: Chairperson Winnie Heiss

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Meeting of August 12, 2020. A motion was made by Commissioner Dave Allen and seconded by Commissioner Stacy Valdez to approve the minutes from the meeting of August 12, 2020. The motion was carried with a roll call vote with Commissioner Ted Spaseff abstaining.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS:

Director Valarie Frost began her announcements by sharing that the City Council had voted unanimously and appointed longstanding Planning and Environment Commissioner, Vicki Stuckey, to serve the remainder of Diane DuBois' council term, which ends in March of 2022. Ms. Frost explained that the seat had become vacant upon Diane's retirement on August 31. Ms. Stuckey was sworn into office by City Clerk Jo Mayberry on the morning of September 9.

It was said that Council Member Stuckey has been a resident of Lakewood for 28 years. She has been a Lakewood city commissioner for 19 years, serving four years on the Community Safety Commission and 15 years on the Planning and Environment Commission. She has served as chair of that commission four times. She retired from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department after 34 years of service where she rose through the ranks from deputy, to sergeant, to lieutenant, ultimately earning the rank of captain and becoming the commander of the Altadena Sheriff's Station. She has also been very active in several Lakewood community organizations, including the Pan American Association and the board of directors of the Lakewood Regional Medical Center. Ms. Frost described Council Member Stuckey's appointment as history-making, in that she is both the first African American resident of Lakewood to serve on the City Council and the first woman of color to serve on the council.

Moving forward, Ms. Frost shared that the Fall/Winter Catalog was currently available online. The new catalog was said to feature virtual and outdoor activities for participants of all ages. She explained that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Lakewood is committed to providing programs and services to the extent allowed by the L.A. County Department of Public Health (Public Health). Fall recreation programs begin on Monday, Sept. 21 and run through Jan. 2021.

Ms. Frost announced that the City would solemnly commemorate Patriot Day with a livestreamed flag-lowering ceremony beginning at 6:30 p.m., on Friday, Sept. 11. She noted that although the community is unable to safely gather as in past years, due to the pandemic, residents can still join in the commemoration of Patriot Day at 6:30 p.m. by tuning in to Lakewood's City TV channel 31, or on Facebook. The thirty-minute ceremony was said to include the presentation of the colors, remarks from Mayor Todd Rogers and a brief musical performance. Pastor Tim Buzbee will lead a moment of silence before the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department trumpet players play Taps as our nation's flag is lowered for the night.

To support Lakewood resident families who have children in distance learning, the Park Alternative Learning Sites (PALS) program is underway at Mayfair Park, Boyar Park and the Youth Center. Ms. Frost shared that the program offers a safe atmosphere for children to complete their schoolwork and participate in virtual learning while in a group setting of one adult to ten children.

It was said that the Lakewood Family YMCA would continue to operate McCormick Pool through the month of October. Swim lessons, lap swim, water aerobics, and youth aquatics swim team are also offered with ongoing registration

Ms. Frost informed the commission that Lakewood's annual College Fair would take place virtually and will be displayed on the city's website from Oct. 13-27, 2020. She explained that students will have the opportunity to connect to representatives from colleges and universities, take virtual college tours, participate in live ZOOM sessions, and view scholarship information. As an incentive, all students who attend a live ZOOM session are eligible to win a \$250 scholarship sponsored by the Lakewood Teen Action Committee.

The annual Lollipop Lane craft boutique was said to have been canceled for the year. Ms. Frost noted that staff was looking to host a spring event if permissible given the state of the pandemic.

Ms. Frost concluded her announcements by informing the commission that RCS was currently in the development stage of planning several Halloween activities including drive-in movies at Lakewood Center and possibly at Artesia High School, a photo contest, restaurant candy bag handouts, and a drive-through trick or treat event hosted at Lakewood Center. She mentioned that the activities planned were in fact a joint effort between several partners, including the Office of State Assembly Member Anthony Rendon, Lakewood Center, the Rotary Club of Lakewood, and the Lakewood Family YMCA.

Vice Chairperson Real thanked Ms. Frost and the RCS staff for doing such a great job at reimagining events and programs during the entire pandemic. He noted that while many cities have shut down their recreation programs entirely, Lakewood has managed to continue operating with revised programs and plenty of opportunities for residents to participate, all thanks to the RCS team.

Ms. Frost confirmed for Commissioner Spaseff that information regarding the 2020 Virtual College Fair had been posted to the city's website. She noted that staff was currently working with local high schools on additional methods of advertising.

Commissioner Spaseff then echoed Vice Chairperson Real's sentiments regarding staff's amazing job at continuing to be creative and adaptive with regards to programming during the pandemic.

REPORTS:

1. Fall and Winter Recreation Programs

Community Services Manager Nancy Hitt displayed slides and reviewed the virtual programs, outdoor classes, and reimagined events offered for fall and winter by the Recreation and Community Services Department as noted in the written report. Ms. Hitt reported that the Fall/Winter Catalog was posted online Labor Day weekend. Postcards directing residents to the website were said to have been mailed in late August. The cover displays the words "Fall into Fun" with activities that are currently allowed depicted in the letters, such as pickleball, DASH, dog park, walking the nature trail, and volunteering for Meals on Wheels. Ms. Hitt pointed out that the fall and winter catalog includes mostly virtual offerings as well as limited in-person outdoor fitness and dance classes, which were recently permitted by Public Health. She mentioned that the travel programs page lists links to attractions offering virtual tours for a virtual travel option.

Ms. Hitt informed the commission that with the four school districts which serve Lakewood currently engaged in distance learning, the After School Activity Zone is not offered. Instead, the city is offering Park Alternative Learning Sites, also known as PALS, at Boyar Park, the Youth Center, and Mayfair Park from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. for first through fifth graders. It was said that 30 children had enrolled in the program to date. Ms. Hitt shared that at the end of August, Project Shepherd had received an allocation of federal capital CARES Act funds. It was said that the Project Shepherd board authorized a portion of these funds to be used for families needing assistance with paying for the PALS program. Residents can apply through the Burns Community Center.

Ms. Hitt reported that the Lakewood Youth Center and the Teen Resource Center remain closed due to the pandemic. She announced that the College Fair would be offered virtually on the city's website October 13-27. Colleges from across the country will connect with students to discuss admission requirements, application deadlines, student life, and address student questions.

Next, Ms. Hitt shared that the fall Lakewood Youth Sports (LYS) season of flag football, volleyball, and volleytennis would not be offered. She mentioned, however, that a COVID-compliant, camp-style clinic was being planned. The camp was said to take place at two park locations, on seven Saturdays, beginning October 10, for both flag football and volleyball, for children ages 4-14. It was said that the first six weeks would focus on skill development, with an individual skills competition on the seventh Saturday.

LYS basketball signups are scheduled to take place December 5 through 12, pending Public Health guidelines, with practices beginning in early January and league play beginning January 23.

Ms. Hitt remarked that most senior activities were still not allowed, per Public Health guidelines, however, she declared that many senior fitness instructors had posted videos of their fitness classes on the Virtual Recreation Center web page as a means to help keep seniors active. It was said that City TV possessed DVD copies of these videos that are available upon request. Pickleball is currently allowed and has four regular players, playing one-on-one with their own equipment, wearing masks and getting their temperatures checked.

Since congregate dining is not allowed, the Human Services Association has converted their meal program into a drive-through weekly frozen meal pick up. The Weingart staff has used this opportunity to host "drive-through parties." In August, they hosted a drive-through luau in which they played music, dressed in Hawaiian attire, and handed out goody bags to participants. The next drive-through party was said to be a Halloween party taking place on October 27 and 28.

Ms. Hitt confirmed that the Older Adults Benefits Fair would not be held in October as normal. She explained that benefits information would instead be posted in the senior section of the Virtual Recreation Center web page, adding that a free flu shot clinic was being planned with Public Health for the fall.

Halloween carnivals for the year have been canceled. In their place, the city will offer Halloween themed drive-in movies on October 30 and 31 at the Lakewood Mall, as well as a location in eastern Lakewood. A photo costume contest will also be available through email and Instagram at #LakewoodFun with prizes awarded to the winners of each category.

Ms. Hitt concluded her report by stating that needy families can sign up for Project Shepherd Holiday Assistance November 4 through 18. She mentioned with schools operating virtually during the fall, it was assumed that they would be unable to participate in a food drive. As a result, Project Shepherd is prepared to purchase all of the canned food, gift cards and teddy bear gifts, if necessary, in part due to the federal capital CARES Act funds that the city received. Ms. Hitt noted that teddy bear trees would still be available for shoppers to choose a bear and purchase a gift for a child. It was said that community groups interested in helping with donations would be directed to donating grocery store gift cards or fulfilling teddy bear requests. Food and gifts will be distributed on December 18 and 19. In addition, residents that registered for the Project Shepherd Holiday Assistance Program will also receive a one-time grocery store gift card to help purchase Thanksgiving food items, also made possible by CARES Act funds

Commissioner Valdez stated that the Lakewood Family YMCA would like to assist with

Project Shepherd.

Ms. Hitt confirmed for Vice Chairperson Real that the CARES Act grant was for \$100,000. Mr. Real mentioned that the Thanksgiving grocery store gift card was a nice addition.

Commissioner Allen commended staff on doing a wonderful job continuing to meet the needs of every resident.

2. Human and Senior Services Programs Annual Report

Community Services Supervisor Sabrina Junkin provided information regarding programs, activities, and services offered at the Weingart Senior Center and the Burns Community Center as noted in the written report. She reported that in March, the Project Shepherd Extension Program saw a dramatic upsurge in residents' need for the food pantry, with an increase of 81% from February to March, and 89% at the peak of service in April, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, utility bill assistance was said to have increased 52% from pre-pandemic numbers from February to April, and 63% from February to June. In response to the drastic increase in Project Shepherd recipients, at both Palms Park and the Burns Community Center, Ms. Junkin explained that staff needed to quickly restock both pantries with food, cleaning supplies, personal care items, and toilet paper, which she mentioned was not easy to find in the early days of the pandemic. It was said that RCS staff worked with Purchasing Department staff, and made multiple inquiries with grocery stores, to find all of the needed items, spending \$8,374.91 supplying the two pantries. A portion of this order was said to have been allocated to Seasons II Senior Apartments, which requested food, cleaning supplies, and personal care items for residents finding it difficult to shop. Additionally, Ms. Junkin reported that Project Shepherd had contributed \$34,025.51 to the Lakewood Cares program, which served over 1,000 residents on Saturday, May 9. The contribution helped to purchase boxes, food, and grocery store gift cards.

Prior to the school year, Project Shepherd held its annual Backpack Program for “back-to-school” backpacks for Lakewood children in need. Backpacks and school supplies were said to have been distributed to 251 children August 6 through 10. Ms. Junkin mentioned that due to the pandemic, staff took the backpacks directly to clients' vehicles with a “curbside” pickup process.

The commission was informed that beginning March 13, all Active+ classes were canceled indefinitely. Following Public Health guidelines, pickleball was allowed to reopen on June 10. Ms. Junkin pointed out that the average participation since reopening has been steady, with four players twice per week, a decrease of 75% from pre-pandemic attendance statistics. Also, to provide fitness instruction while at home, the city's two part-time senior fitness instructors were said to have created a variety of fitness videos that are posted on the Virtual Recreation Center web page on the city's website.

Next, Ms. Junkin shared that in January, the Burns Community Center obtained a new tenant, Refresh Youth Center, occupying two small offices on the second floor. Ms. Junkin explained that the mission of Refresh Youth Center is to prepare children with instruction and motivation to pass any test in life, by fostering a relationship with students that struggle to overcome adversity. Executive Director, LaRonda Smith, utilizes their office space Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. It was said that in June, the Public Safety Department, previously operating out of city hall, moved to the community center and took occupancy of the remaining vacant offices on the second floor. Public Safety staff was said to be currently occupying five offices and a few additional areas to run the department's day-to-day operations. The move allowed staff at city hall and Public Safety staff to socially distance, creating a safer work environment during the pandemic.

Next, Ms. Junkin reported on the programs and services that continue to be offered at the Burns Community Center including Lakewood Meals on Wheels, Mothers at Work Children's Center, information and referrals to area agencies and organizations for individuals needing services not provided by the city, oversight of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funded service agencies, and adult volunteer referrals.

Programs and services currently canceled or postponed at the Weingart Senior were said to include a variety of fitness classes; a variety of dance, art, and handicraft programs; the older adult congregate meal service provided by the Human Services Association; free seminars covering health-related topics, financial matters, consumer information, insurance benefits, driver safety courses, technology assistance, and more; free and low cost special events such as bingo, dance parties and live entertainment performances; the Karaoke Dance and Sing Program; the card room/library normally used for quieter recreational opportunities; a mobile book checkout, called Iacoboni on the Go; assistance programs provided by organizations such as Disabled American Veterans, the Hearing Loss Association of America, and the AARP Tax Aide Program.

Ms. Junkin stated that on Friday, March 13 the Weingart Senior Center closed to the public in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. She shared that several regularly scheduled programs were reimagined so they could still be offered. Programs were said to include the AARP Tax Aide Program, several fitness classes, the congregate meal service, the Annual Health Fair & Benefit Information Fair, and case management services.

Ms. Junkin reminded the commission of the many other human and senior service programs and resources that are available to residents including the Palms Park food pantry and the Community Assistance Directory. She shared that Lakewood also provides financial support through CDBG allocations to non-profit agencies, such as the Community Family Guidance Center, Lakewood Meals on Wheels, Pathways Volunteer Hospice, and the Human Services Association, all of which provide services to residents.

Commissioner Allen thanked Ms. Junkin and staff for all of their hard work and effort during the pandemic.

3. Activities and Maintenance Report No. 3

A written report and discussion of the Recreation and Community Services Department Programs, Services and Maintenance Activities for the month of August and a listing of upcoming activities for October 2020.

The Commission received and filed the report.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Letter to Alvin Tumala and Ron Keester, Part-Time Co-Employees of the Month for July 2020.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business brought before the Recreation and Community Services Commission, Vice Chairperson Kirk Real adjourned the meeting at 6:57 p.m. to Wednesday, October 14, 2020, at 6 p.m. in the City Council Chambers.

Michelle Williams, Administrative Secretary
Recreation and Community Services Commission