



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

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was led by Director Valarie Frost.

ROLL CALL: PRESENT: Vice Chairperson Kirk Real (via Zoom)
Commissioner Dave Allen (via Zoom)
Commissioner Ted Spaseff (via Zoom)
Commissioner Stacy Valdez

ABSENT: Chairperson Winnie Heiss

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Meeting of November 11, 2020. A motion was made by Commissioner Ted Spaseff and seconded by Commissioner Dave Allen to approve the minutes from the meeting of November 11, 2020. The motion was carried by unanimous roll call vote.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS:

Director Valarie Frost began her announcements by informing the commission that the department was broken hearted over the sudden passing of Gay Givens. Gay was employed by the City of Lakewood for 30 years, and spent her entire career working at The Centre, the city's banquet and meeting facility. Gay was the Community Service Supervisor at The Centre, overseeing operations and serving as a main point of contact for the public and guests. Ms. Frost described her as a very friendly, sparkling personality, and a welcoming presence at The Centre for thousands of residents, guests and city staff over the years. Gay will be deeply missed by a wealth of family, friends and colleagues. It was said that grief support for staff has been made available through the Employee Assistance Program and Pathways Volunteer Hospice. Ms. Frost informed the commission that the Lakewood City Council and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors each adjourned their public meetings on Tuesday, December 8 in Gay's memory and respectfully requested that the RCS Commission follow suit.

Ms. Frost then reported that the state's new Regional Stay at Home Order was in effect for Southern California. It was said that the State Order would remain in effect for at least the next three weeks. The order instructs Californians to stay at home as much as possible, to stop mixing between households, prohibits private gatherings of any size, closes certain sector operations, limits occupancy at various businesses, and requires 100% masking and physical distancing. As a result of the revised health order:

- All public and private gatherings with individuals not in your household are prohibited, except for faith-based services and protests, which are constitutionally protected rights. Picnic shelters are to remain closed to the public.
- Lakewood's Nature Trail, community gardens and dog park can remain open for individuals or members of a single household. Just today, the county reversed its course on

playgrounds and is now in line with the state's order allowing playgrounds to also remain open.

- Public restrooms at parks will be open to support the public's use of open space and amenities that are open for public use.
- The city's coordinated pickleball program is canceled.
- Pools that serve more than one household may open only for regulated lap swimming with one person per lane and swim instruction. Permitted uses at Mayfair Pool have been canceled. The Lakewood YMCA's use at McCormick pool is permitted for lap swim and private swim lessons only.
- Day Camps such as the PALS program can remain open with the new requirement for 14-day closure with any outbreak (3 cases or more over 14 days)
- Youth Sports conditioning and skill building has been canceled for the remainder of the year.

Ms. Frost pointed out that as of December 7, the total number of cases in L.A. County was 443,674 with 7,582 known deaths. There were 2,293 cases and 16 deaths ascribed to Lakewood. It was said that in partnership with the Long Beach Conservation Corps, the City of Lakewood is developing a regional master plan for the Lakewood Equestrian Center, Rynerson Park and the San Gabriel River trails and the Camp Fire site. The master plan will provide a blueprint for enhancing and maintaining the Lakewood Equestrian Center and surrounding open spaces. Funding for this master plan is made possible from a grant provided by Rivers Mountains Conservancy's Prop 68 Grant Program. Ms. Frost noted that the community was invited to contribute to the master plan. An online community survey was said to be currently active through December 31 on the city's website. A printed copy of the survey can also be mailed to residents upon request to the Recreation Department. The commission was informed that two community meetings were calendared using a video conferencing platform. The community meetings are scheduled for Saturday, December 12 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and Wednesday, December 16 from 5 to 7 p.m. Registration is required for the community meetings; details are available on the city's website.

Next, Ms. Frost announced that the Project Shepherd Warehouse was in full operation. She shared that to date 427 families were registered for assistance for the holiday season. The program will provide food, toys for kids, disposable and yet necessary household supplies such as bath soap and laundry detergent, and grocery store gift cards in dollar amount commensurate with the number of people in the family unit. The Project Shepherd Program is regarded as an essential government function and as such, employing volunteers and paid staff to coordinate program elements is permissible under the current public health order. A maximum of 12 volunteers and staff can work on an assigned scheduled. Volunteers and staff are to wash or sanitize their hands prior to and after completing work, and affirm that they do not have COVID-19 symptoms nor have been exposed to the virus. Additionally:

- Temperature checks for all persons entering the facility
- Masks required at all times
- Gloves required at all times
- Frequent sanitizing of high touch areas—surfaces, restrooms and even canned items as possible

- Social distancing of six feet must be maintained

In closing, Ms. Frost reminded the Commission that City Hall would be closed from December 24 through January 3 for the Christmas and New Year's Day holidays. On behalf of all department staff, Ms. Frost wished the commissioners a happy and healthy holiday season.

Commissioner Ted Spaseff thanked Ms. Frost for her updates. He expressed his excitement at the playgrounds being reopened and thanked staff for all of their hard work and adaptability during the pandemic. He shared that he recently completed the Lakewood Equestrian Center online survey and mentioned that it contained great questions and was an easy process.

Ms. Frost confirmed for Vice Chairperson Kirk Real that the void from not being able to depend on schools and community members to donate food and canned goods to the Project Shepherd program was filled by utilizing \$100,000 secured from CARES funding, as well as generous monetary donations from Lakewood residents, businesses and elected officials—such as Assembly Member Anthony Rendon and Supervisor Janice Hahn.

REPORTS:

1. Facility Rentals Annual Report

Director Valarie Frost reported presented information regarding the rental of city facilities, including rooms, ball fields, and swimming pools, as noted in the written report. In addition to the process for renting a facility, Ms. Frost explained the various types of groups that typically make reservations and the criteria for each fee category. She mentioned that interest in popular facilities, such as Monte Verde Park, Mayfair Park, and the Lakewood Youth Center, often result in the receipt of multiple requests submitted at the earliest eligible time. Those situations are resolved by granting priority to Lakewood residents followed by a lottery, as necessary. The variety of available recreation facilities often results in satisfied customers who have booked alternate facilities during time frames that meet their needs. Rental fees were said to include the use of banquet tables and chairs for indoor room permits. Some facilities have staging areas equipped with a refrigerator, sink, and microwave, while others offer audiovisual equipment such as sound systems and projectors. For ball field permits, staff preps the field for play, which includes watering and dragging the fields, providing bases, and chalking the ball field.

Ms. Frost reported that in fiscal year 2018-2019, revenue received from facility reservations was \$274,035.26, while in fiscal year 2019-2020, \$199,827.50 was received for a 27.1% decrease. The across the board decrease in athletic fields, meeting rooms and swimming pools can be attributed to the shutdowns associated with COVID-19. Large gatherings, which are still presently halted, have been canceled since March 2020, with full refunds issued to permit holders. Prior to the shutdown, facility rentals were trending in a great direction having generated \$189,345.50 from July 2020 through February 2020. This reflects an increase of \$5,873.17 from the same timeframe in 2019.

Ms. Frost noted for the record, a correction to page two of the Facility Rentals Annual

Report. The report should reflect that the table accompanying the report is for fiscal years 2018-2019 and 2019-**2020**, not 2019-2018 as reflected.

Ms. Frost concluded the report by stating that the department continues to be committed to offering first-class facilities with high customer service expectations from the start of the rental process to the completion of the reservation at recreation facilities.

The Commission received and filed the report.

2. Holiday Programs Annual Report

Community Services Manager Nancy Hitt informed the commission that with the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions increasing in Los Angeles County, holiday celebrations were revised and reduced for the year, in order to keep members of the community safe and healthy. She shared that for the past 34 years, the Human Services Association has kicked off festivities with the Senior Holiday Luncheon at The Centre, where approximately 200 program participants would gather with friends to celebrate the beginning of the holiday season with lunch, dancing, socializing, and a visit from Santa Claus. Following this event, typically the Weingart Senior Center would host the annual Ugly Sweater Party during the daily lunch service, where seniors would enjoy live music, dancing, a raffle for prizes, and a prize for the best—or possibly worst—holiday sweater. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was said that these activities would not be held.

Ms. Hitt informed the commission that on Tuesday, December 15 and Wednesday, December 16 at the Weingart Senior Center, the Ugly Sweater Holiday Handout Drive-Thru event would be held in the east parking lot. During this event, Human Services Association lunch participants will be given goody bags filled with festive treats during their weekly frozen meal pick up to brighten their holidays. She noted that the Weingart staff was also working on a winter special, which will feature various Weingart staff members in clips such as interactive arts and crafts with items from around the house, CeCe's Christmas Cooking Show with step-by-step recipes that can be replicated at home, and Christmas carols and creative commercials that staff have developed. It was said that the winter special would be recorded and posted on the virtual recreation page on the city's website and on YouTube by December 17. Seniors will be provided with instructions in the monthly newsletter, and a flyer handed out to the lunch participants, on how to view the winter special. Ms. Hitt informed the commission that a link to the winter special would be provided to them for their viewing pleasure.

Ms. Hitt mentioned that the Burns Community Center and Weingart Senior Center would be closed on Friday, December 25 in observance of the Christmas holiday, as well as on New Year's Day, Friday, January 1. Burns Community Center will also be closed on Christmas Eve, Thursday, December 24; however, Weingart Senior Center will remain open. DASH operations will close to coincide with the above closures.

The commission was informed that drive-in movies would be offered at Lakewood Center

in the Del Amo Parking Lot on Saturday, December 12 featuring *Elf (2003)* and Saturday, December 19 featuring *Home Alone*. The movies will begin at 7 p.m. with car staging beginning at 6 p.m. Residents will be charged \$10 per car and non-residents will be charged \$15 per car. Pre-registration through eCatalog is required and is open to 100 cars.

Ms. Hitt announced that Santa Claus would not be visiting parks to speak with children due to the pandemic; however, she shared that he will be available virtually Monday, Dec. 14 - Saturday, Dec. 19. She shared that kids can share their holiday wish list by talking to Santa Claus virtually during the “Zoom Calls with Santa” program.

It was said that this Holiday Season, the City of Lakewood Recreation and Community Services Department is encouraging Lakewood families to capture jolly memories and participate in a Holiday Photo Contest. Interested families may choose to enter into any of the following categories including ugliest sweater, house or tree decoration, baked treats, and holiday spirit. Photos may be entered via Instagram or email between December 23 and 27 for a chance to win a prize.

Next, Ms. Hitt informed the commission that on Wednesday, December 16, athletes, staff and volunteers from Southeast Area Special Olympics are invited to a virtual holiday celebration that recognizes the program’s athletes, adult coaches, and year-round supporters. All Special Olympic athletes in the region have been invited to participate.

Ms. Hitt shared that for 22 years, participants in the city’s Adaptive Recreation Program (ARP) have gone Christmas caroling with City staff, friends and family, as they sing holiday tunes through the streets of Lakewood, near Palms Park. Unfortunately, in order to keep ARP participants safe during the pandemic, this event will be canceled for 2020.

In an effort to maximize efficiency as well as service to residents, it was said that park hours would be amended during the winter break period. City parks will be open 12 p.m. until 5 p.m. during the break period, but will be closed on Thursday, December 24 and Friday, December 25 in recognition of the Christmas holiday. On New Year’s Eve, parks will see an abbreviated schedule of 12 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Ms. Hitt concluded her report by stating that although the 2020 holiday season looks different, the Recreation and Community Services department strives to provide opportunities for people of all ages to celebrate the joy of the season in a safe and healthy manner with loved ones.

Commissioner Dave Allen gave kudos to recreation staff for keeping resident’s spirits up during such a trying time. He thanked staff for all of their hard work and effort.

Commissioner Spaseff echoed Commissioner Allen’s comments. He shared his amazement at staff’s ability to adapt and continue to provide activities that engage residents and keep seniors in good spirits.

Vice Chairperson Real stated that not only have staff set a high standard but they have also provided a model for other entities to follow as well.

The Commission received and filed the report.

3. COVID-19 Year-End Review

Assistant Director Kevin Bright highlighted important information as noted in the written report. Mr. Bright reported that on March 11, the World Health Organization (WHO) had declared a global pandemic and on March 13, a national emergency was declared for the United States. On March 12, a staff meeting involving all management staff in the Recreation and Community Services Department (RCS) was conducted with the intention to plan for impending cessation of programs, closing of facilities and new protocols for protecting public health. As the global COVID-19 pandemic progressed throughout the spring into current evolutions and phasing by the state of California and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health), RCS staff have adapted virtually all facets of departmental function.

It was said that in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic staff had postponed many department-led special events. It wouldn't be until late May that department staff realized that these events could not be offered and cancelling was necessary action. All registered participants received a full refund and event contractors and vendors were sufficiently notified of the cancellation thereby avoiding any additional contract fees. The 75th Pan American Fiesta, scheduled for Mother's Day weekend, May 7-10, was also canceled. Shortly after the cancellation of the Pan Am Fiesta several events were canceled to comply with the Public Health order regarding special events creating large gatherings. Mr. Bright noted that the whirlwind following the pandemic caused staff to alter thought processes when planning for upcoming events. Providing spaces at which to gather and create a sense of community is at the essence of special event planning, yet limitation of gatherings was at the core of maintaining public health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was said that the word "virtual" has become commonplace in RCS's vocabulary when thinking about special events. Staff reimagined several events in 2020 through a virtual experience. Mr. Bright listed the virtual events as noted in the written report. He shared that as the pandemic has worn on and staff have become accustomed to working within a "new normal" events began to be created which allow for gathering while maintaining safe distancing. Drive in movies and a drive-through pumpkin patch were two of the events noted in the written report. Other events such as the annual Patriot Day ceremony and the Tree Lighting ceremony were held virtually.

Next, Mr. Bright provided the commission with information on business at The Centre and TGIS during the pandemic. It was said that The Centre and contracted caterer TGIS have shared significant reductions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the cancellation of all events and gatherings at The Centre, TGIS was forced to halt most operations and have laid off most of their staff, with the exception of a handful of administrative personnel.

Besides The Centre events, Monte Verde had four cancellations of TGIS clients who had reserved the park for catered events. TGIS staff is currently working with all clients on re-scheduling for future dates. There have been many cancellations in the nine-plus months since the last event took place at The Centre. Staff estimates the loss of revenue to the city that would have been generated from Centre events scheduled from March 15 to December 31, 2020 at approximately \$176,089.

Concerning Aquatics, Mr. Bright reported that preparations were at their midpoint when the COVID-19 pandemic closures took effect. The shutdown was said to have impacted the preparation process including hiring and training staff, canceling the pre-summer session and ultimately delaying opening while staff awaited protocols from Public Health to safely reopen public swimming pools. When the protocols became available, it was said that management staff thoroughly reviewed them and determined that a full revision of aquatic programming was required in order to comply with Public Health protocols. New procedures addressed physical distancing protocols, types of programming which adhered to those protocols, entry and exiting guidelines, sanitizing guidelines, registration options and more. As a result, the aquatics program had a significant reduction in the number and type of programs offered, while allowing fewer participants which ensured physical distancing on the pool deck and in the water. Mr. Bright noted that programming was limited to Mayfair Pool only, as the recommended certified staff and scope of programming could not be achieved within regulations at two pools this year.

With regards to Day Camp, Mr. Bright reported that at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, camp staff were well into the planning stages. However, the pandemic forced camp management to begin exploring alternative ways to offer a summer camp. This led to the creation of the Camp Circle Summer Day Camp Program. It was said that Camp Circle was offered at two park locations, Mayfair and Palms Park, and had a total registration capacity of 50 participants between the two sites. Camp Circle was run by a combination of Day Camp staff, park staff and available seasonal staff. Public Health limited camp activities to only those where physical distancing was achieved. Masks were required of both staff and participants and sanitization and hand washing occurred numerous times throughout the day. Additionally, each camper was assigned their own set of supplies inclusive of scissors, crayons, markers and pencils. Mr. Bright noted that while Camp Circle was very different from the traditional Day Camp program offered, staff created a variety of fun activities throughout the day while ensuring staff and participant safety.

Mr. Bright informed the commission that following the Camp Circle model, and with the impending notification that school districts serving Lakewood would return for distanced learning only, a program was devised by staff to capture students of essential workers who had no supervision in the home during the school day. The program, called Park Alternative Learning Sites (PALS), was offered at eight park sites for up to 120 participants. It was said that while the program has not filled to capacity, three sites continue to be offered for as many as 30 youth per week. PALS offers participants a supervised center with access to

wireless internet and safe and socially distanced work stations.

Concerning youth and adult sports, Mr. Bright reported that both youth and adult sports were critically impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Lakewood Youth Sports (LYS) basketball season, and the adult softball and volleytennis spring seasons, were initially suspended then ultimately canceled. LYS basketball was in the final week of league play when games were ended and adult softball was suspended after three weeks of play, while women's volleytennis completed the first two weeks of their season. Ultimately, the pandemic restrictions continued beyond the spring, and it became apparent that further sports programming would not be allowed and all LYS and adult sports were cancelled for the remainder of the year. Mr. Bright informed the commission that an exception came down from Public Health in August, providing allowance for youth sports training. The training was to allow for only distanced skills and drills, and allowed for no games or scrimmages. Staff responded and organized a youth sports training program for LYS for flag football and volleyball—typical of LYS' fall sports offerings.

Next, Mr. Bright reported that toward the end of March, with the school district closures, programming at the Youth Center froze. Daily attendance numbers dwindled to zero as state and county directives prohibited programming. To date, many programs and services have been canceled. He mentioned, on a resilient note, the annual College Fair went virtual with rousing success, launching on Tuesday, October 13, there were over 400 visits to the virtual College Fair web page with an additional 300-plus visits to the webinar information page which provided portals to webinars specific to colleges around the nation. Additionally, Mr. Bright noted that since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Teen Resource Center (TRC) was forced to shut down completely. During this time, staff were challenged with reaching out to the community, and to engage residents and participants in other ways. It was said that recreation staff have worked hard to provide a virtual experience for participants. TRC staff have promoted the virtual recreation page to teens who frequent the facility. To conclude, both centers have developed teen friendly communication systems to “check-in” with their participants and ensure their social and physical well-being.

Concerning facility rentals, Mr. Bright reported that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on facility rentals. He informed the commission that facility rentals have not been permitted for a majority of the year. Initially, for existing community center reservations, it was said that staff implemented a six-week look-ahead period for cancellation of events. Each Monday, if Public Health restrictions had not been modified to allow gatherings, all facility permits occurring six weeks ahead were canceled and department staff contacted the permit holder. By September all facility permits had been cancelled, and none remain on the books, with no sign of initiating new permits in the near future. All canceled permits received full refunds. Mr. Bright informed the commission that to avoid additional cancellations new permits are not being issued until protocols are provided for allowing gatherings. He noted that upon loosening of restrictions and resumption of gatherings, a plan is in the works to allow interested patrons to make new

reservations in line with existing procedures, giving priority to Lakewood residents.

Next, Mr. Bright provided the commission with updates on park maintenance. He reported that the COVID-19 pandemic put a halt to much of the work maintenance staff are accustomed to doing. As the pandemic began to thoroughly grab hold of the community, park maintenance staff immediately shifted focus from making irrigation repairs and preparing game courts for play, to “Operation Sanitize.” Restrooms went from being cleaned two to three times a day to every hour. Play equipment and picnic shelters were sanitized three to four times a day. The commission was informed that in accord with Public Health orders and in response to slowing the spread of COVID-19, playgrounds, ballfields, picnic shelters and other park amenities were closed on Friday, April 3. It was said that when LA County allowed for the reopening of playgrounds ERD team leapt into high gear, clearing caution tape and restrictive fencing within 24 hours. Mr. Bright noted that park maintenance was instrumental in responding to kids and parents happily returning to the playgrounds for which they had yearned since April, and as they have since the beginning of the pandemic, ERD staff continue to focus on keeping the parks safe, sanitized and clean during the pandemic.

Concerning Turf and Landscape Maintenance, Mr. Bright reported that For ERD, the outset of the pandemic meant all trainees were assigned to report to parks to aid in sanitation of facility interiors, playgrounds and standalone restrooms. The move dramatically reduced the workforce for the turf and landscape crews. Additionally, crews were prohibited from sharing vehicles, meaning individuals required their own work truck. Cyclical work assignments normally completed on a weekly basis could not be completed according to the normal timeline. Several planned landscape renovation projects had been rescheduled or postponed indefinitely. One project that was successfully completed was the restoration of turf in Home Run Dog Park. With the dog park’s closure, staff was successfully able to grade, level and aerate the turf, install grass seed and water sufficiently. The results of staff’s hard work was very much appreciated by dog owners and dog paws when Home Run Dog Park was reopened on Friday, May 22. Several other completed projects were highlighted as noted in the written report.

Next, Mr. Bright provided the commission with updates on the Project Shepherd program during the pandemic as noted in the written report. He reported that food assistance for residents increased by 81% from February to March, and 89% at the initial peak of use in April. Likewise, utility bill assistance increased 52% from pre-pandemic numbers in February to April, and topped out at nearly five times more than before the pandemic by November. He noted that though trends improved with lesser need for support as the summer months came around, trends are worsening again. He informed the commission that across the board, the 2020 need will outperform 2019 on a monthly comparison. As the program enters 2021 and a possible second year of pandemic trends, it is anticipated that stringent state and county regulations will drive more residents to the program for much needed assistance. Mr. Bright reported that in response to the drastic increase in Project Shepherd recipients at both Palms Park and Burns Community Center, staff needed

to quickly restock both pantries with food, cleaning supplies, personal care items, and toilet paper. It was said that the city's Purchasing Officer and made multiple inquiries with grocery stores to secure the needed items, spending \$8,375 on items for the two pantries. A portion of this order was said to have been allocated to Seasons II Senior Apartments. Additionally, it was reported that Project Shepherd has encouraged cash donations and has utilized \$35,000 in CARES funding for the holiday program. Augmenting the Christmas holiday program, those registering also received gift cards for the intended purchase of Thanksgiving meal items this year. A grant from Los Angeles County Supervisor Janice Hahn's office in the amount of \$2,500 provided 50 Christmas trees and 50 gift cards to Michael's for decorations to residents. And finally, while the Teddy Bear Trees are in select locations around the city, staff have set up an Amazon Wish List which allows for direct donations of toys and no person to person contacts.

Concerning senior services, Mr. Bright reported that beginning March 13, all Active+ classes were canceled indefinitely. Following Public Health protocols, Pickleball was allowed to reopen on May 10. However, the latest Safer at Home order has once again closed the pickleball program through at least December 20. To provide fitness instruction while at home, it was said that the city's two part-time senior fitness instructors created a variety of fitness videos that are posted on the Virtual Recreation Center on the city's web page. As a result of the closure of the Weingart Senior Center, the Human Services Association (HSA) immediately began offering a "hot lunch to go" service. This program then converted to a "drive through frozen meal" service. Prior to the pandemic, HSA was serving 325 clients per week. Currently, weekly attendance is 142 people, with the city's DASH transportation program delivering to 12 clients that are unable to drive.

With regards to contract classes, Mr. Bright reported that the 2020 Spring Catalog was delivered to homes in late December of 2019, with classes beginning February 3, 2020. Of the 675 classes listed in the Spring Catalog, 85% (577) were canceled beginning March 13, due to COVID-19. At the time of cancellation, 1,450 participants were registered for current or upcoming classes. All participants received refunds, which totaled \$49,363. Also, due to the constantly changing nature of restrictions and protocols from Public Health, the Summer and Fall/Winter Catalogs were not printed and the Spring Catalog has already been tabbed for online production as well. It was said that postcards are being mailed in advance of each catalog to all Lakewood residents, directing participants to look for the online slate of classes. The commission was informed that Public Health changed protocols in late August allowing in-person, outdoor fitness. As a result, the catalog offers 238 virtual and 246 in-person class sessions.

Next, Mr. Bright provided the commission with updates on the DASH transportation program amidst the pandemic. He informed the commission that disabled and senior paratransit was dramatically affected as the pandemic unfolded. Changes began occurring rapidly and demand for DASH service decreased commensurately with those changes. Many senior clients opted to stay at home and heed the advice of Public Health authorities. Daily service and staffing needs decreased by nearly two-thirds within a week of the March

13 onset of regulations and health orders. When the Weingart Senior Center first closed to the public in mid-March, clients attending the congregate meal program were still transported to the facility so they could sign for their meals, and were then immediately transported back home. Quickly identifying that it was less necessary to have seniors transported for the sole purpose of picking up food and providing a signature, DASH, Weingart and HSA staff collaborated to eliminate the signature and DASH became a delivery service. DASH passenger vans now pick up meals at Weingart and deliver the meals to clients in an effort to minimize person to person contacts for the vulnerable population. Additionally, it was said that local grocery stores instituted early shopping hours for the safety of seniors and more vulnerable persons with CDC defined health conditions. DASH concurrently began flexing hours and reservation requirements to meet the transportation needs of those populations.

Finally, Mr. Bright reported on updates to the Adaptive Recreation and Special Olympics programs during the pandemic as noted in the written report. He informed the commission that as the pandemic progressed rapidly, and under the direction of WHO, and federal, state and local health experts, Special Olympics International (SOI) made the difficult decision to shut down all operations across the globe throughout the spring season. Before long, the organization shut down all operations indefinitely. Mr. Bright stated that in October, SOI released a “Return to Activity Plan” with stringent parameters to meet if there would be a return to activity for the athletes. Without setting actual dates, they published dates noting “not earlier than” for at least two tiers of their plan. For the first tier, which allows minimal participation and limited sports, it will not begin earlier than April 1, 2021. For the final tier, essentially returning to normal with no restrictions, the organization noted not earlier than January 1, 2022. It was said that the impact of the shutdown has eliminated all facets of what the clients benefit from. The commission was informed that in response to the difficult situation and in support of clients and their parents and caretakers, staff have communicated with the parents and athletes and have given them outlets to put into practice, which include exercise regimens to stay in shape as well as virtual training videos to access from the Special Olympics website. During this time staff also had the opportunity to speak to each family to conduct wellness checks and see how they have been impacted by the pandemic and to help identify needs and connect them to resources.

In conclusion, Mr. Bright reported that the COVID-19 global pandemic has clearly had an immense impact on the RCS Department and the ability of staff to provide recreational activities and facilities to the residents of Lakewood. Amid the COVID-19 crisis, he shared staff have exhibited resilience and creativity in response to the ever-changing landscape of Public Health regulations in efforts to provide safe facilities, programs and events. It was said that although roadblocks have proven plentiful in offering recreation to the Lakewood community, residents have benefitted from the expertise and knowledge of the department’s park and recreation professionals. He informed the commission that staff will continue to exercise ingenuity in service to the physical, social and emotional health of the Lakewood public through recreational opportunities during this unprecedented time.

Vice Chairperson Real commented that it is overwhelming to look back at what has gone on in the past year. He commended staff for their quick responses, versatility and creativity throughout it all. He shared his appreciation for all of the hard work and dedication from the RCS team.

Commissioner Allen stated that the Lakewood RCS Department is the best in the state and mentioned that the pandemic has given staff a chance to be creative. He shared that he greatly anticipates getting back to normal and celebrating events in person, the way residents are used to celebrating.

Commissioner Spaseff shared that he has always been amazed at the creativity of RCS staff when it comes to all of the many events put on each year. He noted that the pandemic has only highlighted and amplified the creativity of staff. He mentioned that while doors are closed some places, Lakewood RCS staff has not closed any doors, they remained innovative and kept events going despite the pandemic. He gave kudos to staff for a fantastic job.

The Commission received and filed the report.

4. Activities and Maintenance Report No. 5

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

The Commission received and filed the report.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Letter to Roland Preciado, Employee of the Month for November 2020.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:

Lakewood residents Chuck Bruesch and Jose Avila, as well as Norwalk resident Zed Hernandez, Long Beach resident Emily Ethier, and Bellflower resident Destiny Gomez came to the meeting to voice their grievances regarding the Home Run Dog Park. Concerns centered around new signage that was recently posted at the dog park detailing new weight classifications for both the small and large dog park divisions. Mr. Bruesch requested that the words “in your discretion” be added to the sign to allow for dog owners to determine at their own discretion, on which side of the park their dog should play. Mr. Avila questioned the purpose of the signs, stating that they cause division and issues at the dog park. He shared his concerns of the weight limit being too broad. Mr. Hernandez recommended that the dogs be separated by behavior not by size and asked for clarification on whether service dogs are exempt from the weight classifications or not. Ms. Ethier asked that the signs be removed and dog owners be allowed to choose a side at their own discretion. She mentioned the signs cause problems at the park and create a hostile environment. Ms. Gomez shared that the signs make her feel hurt and unwelcome. She recommended a medium dog park be added in addition to the small and large.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business brought before the Recreation and Community Services Commission, Vice Chairperson Kirk Real adjourned the meeting in honor of Gay Givens at 7:09 p.m. to Wednesday, January 13, 2020, at 6 p.m. in the City Council Chambers.

Michelle Williams, Administrative Secretary
Recreation and Community Services Commission