



MINUTES
Recreation and Community Services Commission
Adjourned Regular Meeting
June 9, 2021

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was led by Commissioner Ted Spaseff.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Meeting of May 12, 2021. A motion was made by Commissioner Allen and seconded by Commissioner Ted Spaseff to approve the minutes from the meeting of May 12, 2021. The motion was carried with Chairperson Winnie Heiss abstaining.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS:

Assistant Director Kevin Bright began his announcements by informing the commission of the passing of former long-time City Manager, Howard Chambers. Mr. Bright reminded the commission that Mr. Chambers had served the City of Lakewood in that role for over 40 years and undoubtedly left his incredibly positive and meaningful mark on all Lakewood employees.

Next, Mr. Bright shared that at a recent council meeting the council unanimously approved the city's budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. City Manager Thaddeus McCormack, and Finance and Administrative Services Director Jose Gomez, were said to have presented the budget to the council, highlighting several key revenue and expenditure items. It was said that among the notable items was the \$2.7 million surplus the city will realize as it closes the books on the 2020-2021 fiscal year. Mr. Bright noted that though there were many uncertainties amidst the pandemic, careful attention to spending and diligent management by all staff, certainly helped. However, he pointed out that it cannot be understated the importance of the passage of Measure L and its impact on the city's solvency. Lakewood voters keeping those funds local greatly contributed to the overage and the city council duly noted this point on record. It was said that the 21-22 Fiscal Year budget was expected to produce a comfortable \$803,000 surplus, while setting aside \$3 million to the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) as was one of the primary goals for Measure L monies; to repair and upgrade critical city infrastructure. Mr. Bright reminded the commission that at the May commission meeting, Community Services Manager Alex Bauman, detailed a report on the CIP and included several items on the priority list which will target RCS facilities; among them are the San Martin Park Project with the picnic shelter replacements and new tot lot, as well as electrical retrofitting and roofing projects at several facilities. Lastly, Mr. Bright stated that there were a couple of major callouts from the budget presentation pertaining to RCS. The first of which was an allocation of about \$105,000 for a multicultural event, which was said to be in its early planning stages. The event will highlight racial equity, diversity and inclusion as directed by the REDI Committee. And secondly, ERD will begin recruitment of two newly created maintenance

trainee positions who will serve as an illegal dumping crew. The two-man crew will be assigned a vehicle daily to roam the city and help mitigate the growing problem Lakewood is experiencing with unlawful ditching of large items in streets and alleyways. Mr. Bright noted that the crew was allocated \$80,000 in personnel and supplies costs. He shared that the commission would get a full report on the RCS budget at the July commission meeting.

In exciting news, Mr. Bright shared that staff were anxiously awaiting the word from the governor's office and Los Angeles County Public Health on Tuesday, June 15, as it had been promised to be a date of major change with regard to pandemic protocols. He mentioned that staff were gearing up for a summer much more reminiscent of summers predating 2020. It was said that staff anticipated being allowed to make announcements of returning events and programs in the coming weeks based on the message received on June 15. He advised the commission to stay tuned to the Lakewood eMag, the city's website and social media outlets as RCS will work closely with public information to market programs as allowed by Public Health.

In the meantime, Mr. Bright shared that select programs had been greenlighted and fit within current pandemic guidelines. On Saturday, June 12, it was said that staff would host a Drive-In Movie at the Mall, featuring the original Jumanji film from 1995. On Saturday, June 19, the drive-in movie will feature Remember the Titans. The movies will begin at 8:00 p.m. with car staging beginning at 7:00. The cost is \$10 per car for Lakewood residents and \$15 for non-residents.

Next, Mr. Bright thanked the commission for their attendance at the 2021 Summer Kickoff held at Monte Verde Park to welcome the new part-time staff and kick off the RCS summer.

Mr. Bright then announced that the summer concerts series was set to begin on Thursday, June 17 with a first-ever Drive-in Concert at the Mall. He shared that 100 cars would be admitted to view the Amanda Castro Band, a modern big-band ensemble sure to please the crowd. On June 24, the Blue Breeze Band will wrap up the pair of drive-in events with an R&B and funk performance. The cost is \$10 for residents and \$15 for non-residents. Staging for the concerts was said to begin at 5:30 p.m. with performances beginning at 6:30 p.m. Mr. Bright informed the commission that during the month of July, summer concerts would return to the traditional site at Del Valle Park for the final six concerts, on Thursdays from July 8-August 12.

Next, it was announced that on Saturday, June 19, staff would welcome back LYS baseball, softball and t-ball games. Mr. Bright shared that coaches had been fingerprinted, meetings and trainings had been completed, and practices were being held at city park. He shared that staff was still working within COVID protocols, but were excited to be back playing.

On Friday, June 25, Mr. Bright announced that the Weingart Senior Center would host a Senior Health Fair, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. He shared that seniors would be invited to collect up to date information and be screened for various health metrics. Currently, 10 vendors have confirmed attendance. Pending Tuesday's announcements by Public Health, staff intend to host the fair indoors. A contingency to use the parking lot is in place if gatherings such as these are not allowed.

Moving forward, Mr. Bright shared that Director Valarie Frost, and the entire Lakewood Equestrian Center Master Plan Committee, extended their appreciation to the commission for their thoughtful input regarding the Lakewood Equestrian Center and Open Space Regional Master Plan presentation. He noted that the commissions' feedback and suggestions were taken into account and provided valuable direction when finalizing the plan. He shared that Lakewood City Council would receive the report from Kayla Kelly-Slatten, the grant project coordinator, Glen Dake, the project's landscape architect and Director of Recreation and Community Services, Valarie Frost at the July 13 regular meeting.

To conclude his announcements, Mr. Bright informed the commission that at their desks they would find a letter of thanks written by the son of a regular DASH client, Mr. Oscar Hernandez, praising Paratransit Operator V, Theresa Graves, for her care, compassion and attention as a driver. Mr. Bright noted the sincere thanks in the voice of the letter and how the writer notes Theresa's impact on Mr. Hernandez' quality of life. He stated that DASH serves many functions, but among the most important is allowing the older adults to age in place, without being relegated to a group home. He noted that the letter had been shared throughout the department's leadership and shared that staff wanted to include the commission in the communication as well.

Commissioner Spaseff requested that staff draft a thank you letter from the commission and addressed to Theresa Graves. He also shared that he recently walked by Mayfair Park and enjoyed watching the new swim instructors training in the pool. He thanked staff for the invitation to the 2021 Summer Kick Off and expressed that staff did a wonderful job and he was glad to attend.

Vice Chairperson Real echoed Commissioner Spaseff's comments regarding the 2021 Summer Kick Off event. He expressed his sadness that the commission was not able to stay for the entirety of the event due to COVID-19 restrictions. He shared that he was able to attend the Memorial Day service held at Del Valle Park and mentioned that it was very meaningful, thoughtful and appropriate. He also expressed his thanks to Community Services Supervisor Sabrina Junkin for her drive through event model, and shared that the Pathways Volunteer Hospice successfully mimicked the model for an event of their own.

REPORTS:

1. Commission FY 21-22 Work Calendar Adoption

The Commission reviewed the FY20-21 Work Calendar and had no questions or comments.

Mr. Bright recommended that the commission adopt the FY 21-22 Recreation Commission Work Calendar as proposed.

The secretary took roll and with a unanimous vote, the work calendar was adopted by the commission.

2. DASH Transit Annual Report

DASH Transportation Supervisor Jessica Johnson displayed slides and provided information on the DASH Transit program as noted in the written report. Ms. Johnson informed the

commission that the DASH fleet consists of six paratransit buses that seat 16 passengers and accommodate one wheelchair, and six accessible vans that seat five passengers and accommodate one wheelchair. It was said that DASH operates year-round Monday through Friday absent holidays. Ms. Johnson reported that throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, DASH had extended its operations to offer early morning shopping hours for seniors, delivery of hot and frozen meals to individual homes of DASH clients, and after-hour and weekend service to transport clients to vaccination appointments in Los Angeles and Orange counties. Per public health guidelines from the Governor's office, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Los Angeles County Public Health, DASH continued its social distancing measures, wearing of personal protective equipment (PPE), and cleaning and sanitizing of high touch areas in order to limit the spread of COVID-19 and protect employees and the public.

Concerning the Adult Recreational Travel Program, Ms. Johnson reported that due to COVID-19 restrictions, all adult travel excursions were suspended. She informed the commission that a Virtual Travel Program was developed and available online in the recreation department seasonal catalog. It was said that a page in the catalog was dedicated to the adult travel program featuring advertised links to virtual experiences including online tours, educational programming, online performances, and interviews with influential people.

Ms. Johnson stated that the DASH program has been instrumental in providing shuttle services for special events, however, due to COVID-19 restrictions, it was said that most of these special events and programs were canceled or offered virtually.

Next, Ms. Johnson displayed a slide detailing an overview of fiscal year changes in ridership for fiscal years 2018-2019, 2019-2020, and 2020-2021. She pointed out that there was a decrease in usage of DASH Transportation services in 2020-2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chairperson Winnie Heiss commented that she was very impressed with the presentation as well as the many services that DASH provides for Lakewood seniors. She thanked Ms. Johnson for her presentation.

Ms. Johnson confirmed for Commissioner Allen that the entire DASH fleet was less than six years old and should not need to be replaced for many years to come.

Commissioner Spaseff welcomed Ms. Johnson to Lakewood. He expressed his thanks for her presentation and mentioned that DASH offers a great program to seniors.

Vice Chairperson Real welcomed Ms. Johnson to Lakewood. He expressed kudos to the DASH staff for being flexible throughout the pandemic and always adapting to the ever-changing guidelines and regulations from the Los Angeles Department of Public Health.

The commission received and filed the report on DASH Transit.

3. Landscape and Turf Maintenance Annual Report

Environmental Resources Division Supervisor Mike McDade displayed slides and reported on the turf and landscape maintenance program. Mr. McDade reported that the Environmental Resources Division (ERD) maintains the turf, landscape and unimproved areas owned by the city. Additionally, he noted that ERD staff service over 200 city bus stops twice per week, remove illegally dumped items from 45 alleyways, and perform turf and landscape renovations throughout the city. It was said that service requests and work orders requesting pest control, landscape maintenance, and irrigation repairs were also a part of the weekly work schedule.

Concerning landscape maintenance, Mr. McDade reported that the landscape crew performs scheduled maintenance twice per week at the Lakewood Community Gardens and weekly at the Weingart Senior Center. In addition to facility maintenance, the landscape crew is responsible for providing the requested supplies and equipment used at city-hosted events. Mr. McDade noted that the majority of landscape maintenance staff's work is calendared on a cyclical basis; however, some responsibilities are performed as needed.

Mr. McDade shared that the COVID-19 pandemic heavily affected work schedules and responsibilities. The effects of the pandemic to the workforce were said to include reduced work crews—due to alternating work schedules and staff who needed to quarantine—crews reassigned to complete assignments outside of the normal scope of work, temperature checks twice daily for all personnel, and social distancing requirements that required staff to be assigned to their own vehicle. It was said that amid the challenges, staff persevered and pushed forward to maintain well-manicured landscapes throughout the city.

Next, Mr. McDade informed the commission that ERD maintenance staff had completed the first phase of the Studebaker Road beautification project between Robbie Gordon Ranch and Lemming Street. Details were provided as noted in the written report. It was said that the second phase of the project would include continued landscape from Lemming Street to the Centralia Curve on Studebaker Road.

Mr. McDade reported that in late 2020, ERD staff completed work at the Lakewood Equestrian Center which included removing overgrown vegetation and adding bark and new plant material at the petting zoo and pony ride concession. It was said that irrigation was also improved and the picnic area was treated with grass seed and fertilizer to support an attractive open space for visitors to enjoy. New irrigation was also installed at the horse arenas north of the petting zoo.

Regarding turf maintenance, Mr. McDade reported that the turf mowing crews were responsible for mowing, edging, blowing, fertilizing, aerating and renovating over 200 acres of turf among city parks, community facilities, street panels and center medians throughout Lakewood. He informed the commission that in December 2020, maintenance staff completed

a turf renovation project on the south side of Centralia Street between the 605-freeway overpass and Alburdis Avenue.

Concerning irrigation, Mr. McDade reported that ERD was responsible for repairing and maintaining irrigation systems on all city owned property. He noted that recently there were several irrigation system failures of which staff had done an outstanding job repairing. It was said that although hydraulic watering systems have long been phased out in the landscape industry, Lakewood still employs several hydraulic systems to operate irrigation. The commission was informed that staff continue to convert these hydraulic water operations to an electric operation, which Mr. McDade described was the best method. He shared that several of these types of irrigation conversions were scheduled, with one already having been started on the west end of Carson Street. It was said that the City of Lakewood was currently working with the Rain Bird Corporation, a manufacturer and provider of irrigation products and services, to enhance the city's smart irrigation system along the city's street medians and parkways. Mr. McDade pointed out that the technology, relative to the smart irrigation system, could work in conjunction with the city's weather station located at Mae Boyar Park, giving field supervisors the capability to control irrigation systems from an office computer or smart phone.

Commissioner Allen shared that Paramount Blvd. looks fabulous. He thanked staff for a job well done.

Commissioner Stacy Valdez stated that the landscape in Lakewood was far better maintained than in many other cities. She thanked staff for their hard work.

Vice Chairperson Real thanked Mr. McDade for his presentation. He mentioned that Studebaker Road was an eyesore but now looks amazing. He expressed his appreciation for all of the hard work performed by ERD staff.

Lastly, Mr. McDade provided a demonstration of irrigation equipment for the commission featuring an old hydraulic system that had been removed and replaced with a new electric system.

The commission received and filed the report on landscape and turf maintenance.

5. Activities and Maintenance Report No. 12

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

The commission received and filed the report.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

1. Letter to Part-Time Employee of the Month – Julia Walston – April 2021

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to be brought before the Recreation and Community Services Commission, Vice Chairperson Kirk Real conducted a moment of silence in memory of Howard Chambers. He then adjourned the meeting in Howard's name at 7:08 p.m. to July 14, 2021 at 6 p.m. in the City Council Chambers.

Michelle Williams, Administrative Secretary
Recreation and Community Services Commission