



MINUTES
Recreation and Community Services Commission
Adjourned Regular Meeting
September 13, 2023

MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER at 6 p.m. by Chairperson Stacy Valdez.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was led by Commissioner Anitza Valles.

ROLL CALL: PRESENT: Chairperson Stacy Valdez
Vice Chairperson Veronica Lucio
Commissioner Dave Allen
Commissioner Anitza Valles

ABSENT: Commissioner Ted Spaseff

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Meeting of August 9, 2023. A motion was made by Vice Chairperson Veronica Lucio and seconded by Commissioner Dave Allen to approve the minutes from the meeting of August 9, 2023. The motion was carried with a unanimous roll call vote with Commissioner Anitza Valles abstaining.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS:

Director Valarie Frost began her announcements by thanking the commission for their support of the 2023 Special Olympics program fundraiser. She noted that while fundraising totals were not yet available, it was expected that over \$5,000 had been raised for Lakewood Special Olympians. Ms. Frost informed the commission that the employee-led fundraiser helps to cover expenses for uniforms, sports equipment, tournament fees, transportation and hosting of tournaments at one of our Lakewood facilities.

Next, Ms. Frost thanked the commission for their attendance at the annual Patriot Day ceremony. She stated that as a community, and as a nation, we will never forget the tragic events of September 11, 2001 and we will forever be grateful to the men and women who have served and continue to serve in various positions within the military, armed forces and public safety services.

Ms. Frost shared that department staff were working diligently on the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Long-Range Plan. Stakeholder interviews with city council members, the city manager and the Recreation and Community Services Commission Chair were said to be scheduled between September 18 and September 25. Additionally, small focus group meetings with Lakewood businesses, sports organizations, community-based organizations, service clubs, and the community at large will take place between October 4 and October 6. Ms. Frost informed the commission that they would soon be invited to participate in the meeting of community-based organizations, which is scheduled for Friday, October 6 via Zoom from 10 to 11 a.m.

The commission was asked to mark their calendars for Thursday October 19 from 5 to 6 p.m. Ms. Frost announced that a grand opening celebration of the Mini Pitch at Palms Park was being organized by staff and sponsors. While the community is invited to participate in the grand opening celebration, a limited number of young athletes will be invited to participate in a mini soccer clinic

on the new court with Lakewood's very own professional soccer star, Jalen Neal. It was said that additional details regarding the event would be sent to commissioners via email in the coming weeks.

Lastly, Ms. Frost reported that improvements at The Centre were well underway and are expected to be completed in time for scheduled events in the ballroom on Monday, October 2. It was said that improvements at The Centre include new carpeting and lighting throughout the ballroom, as well as new paint in the lobby, along the staircase and in the ballroom. In addition, new banquet chairs will be purchased. Ms. Frost mentioned that department staff were very excited about the fresh new look of The Centre. She shared that the commission would get an opportunity to experience the improvements at The Centre at the College Fair on Tuesday, October 10.

Parks Superintendent Abel Andrade informed the commission that 12 ERD staff members would attend the Annual Landscape Expo taking place in the city of Anaheim on September 20 and 21. Mr. Andrade reported that ERD staff was busy with several projects citywide, including the second phase of the Arbor Yard beautification project; a landscape project around the two new Rynerson Park bridges; and the installation of a back arena and the filling of potholes at the Lakewood Equestrian Center.

Assistant Director Kevin Bright provided information on programming and upcoming events. Mr. Bright reported that on Sunday, September 17 The Summer Stampede Car Show would take place at Mayfair Park from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. It was said that the car show is a fundraiser for the Greater Lakewood Chamber of Commerce, for which the city provides facility and staffing support. Nearly 200 cars will be showcased along with live entertainment and a food truck. Mr. Bright noted that the family friendly event was a mainstay in Lakewood that always helps to end the summer strong.

Next, Mr. Bright informed the commission that after the reopening of Mayfair Pool the weekend of August 12, staff hosted the final sessions of summer swim lessons, aerobic lessons, lap swim and recreation swim. It was said that the return to the pool was very well received by residents. Mr. Bright shared that the post-summer private and semi-private swim sessions were scheduled to conclude on September 25, with the final recreation swim session to take place on Sunday, September 24.

Commissioner Allen shared that he saw a short video highlighting Senior Park Maintenance Worker Jim Piacenti in the Lakewood eMag. He commented that it was great to see and very well put together. He shared that he hopes to see more employee video highlights in the future. He asked that staff extend his kudos to Mr. Piacenti.

Vice Chairperson Lucio mentioned that she attended the Special Olympics fundraiser event and said that it was a great event and it was nice to see that all of the staff participate. She shared that it was obvious that everyone in attendance was having a great time.

REPORTS:

1. Fall/Winter Recreation Programs and Events

Community Services Manager Nancy Hitt displayed slides and provided information

regarding fall and winter recreation programs and events as noted in the written report. Ms. Hitt informed the commission that registration for 2023 fall classes began over the Labor Day weekend. She shared that classes would begin on Monday, September 25 and run through January 2024. It was said that the catalog was made available online beginning Thursday, August 31, with residents receiving postcards directing them to the website. Ms. Hitt mentioned that the cover features the statement “Fall Breeze and Autumn Leaves” and is accompanied by pictures of special events and activities that take place during the fall season.

Ms. Hitt provided information regarding after-school and school vacation supervision as noted in the written report. Details regarding the “Winter Wonderland” Day Camp taking place December 26-29 and January 2-5 at Bolivar, Boyar, Mayfair, and Palms Parks were provided to the commission as well as information regarding adjusted park supervision hours, which adjust to school schedules to provide additional supervision on early dismissal days and holidays.

Ms. Hitt provided information regarding teen programming. She reported that the Lakewood Teen Action Committee’s Youth in Government program would return in 2023. She noted that the program calendar would begin in December and conclude in May 2024. Additionally, she announced that the Lakewood Teen Action Committee would resume in the fall and would continue to focus on service to the community. She shared that meetings were scheduled to begin on Tuesday, September 19. Additionally, the commission was informed that the annual College Fair would return to The Centre on Tuesday, October 10. It was said that over 50 colleges from across the country are expected to host a display booth and over 400 students and caregivers are anticipated to attend.

Commissioner Allen commented that pickleball had become very popular in the community. He asked if any groups have inquired about an exclusive place to play. Mr. Bright informed him that there was indeed pressure from the community. Ms. Frost noted that the matter would be addressed through a survey question with regards to the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Long-Range Plan.

2. Human and Senior Services Programs Annual Report

Community Services Supervisor Sabrina Junkin displayed slides and provided information regarding human and senior programs in 2022-2023 as noted in the written report. Ms. Junkin reminded the commission that the city offers a variety of programs and activities for older adults and seniors along with programs and partnerships aimed at providing services to residents who need assistance. Ms. Junkin shared that a vast array of human and senior service programs were offered at the Burns Community Center and Weingart Senior Center. It was said that many of the programs were offered directly by city staff, while other services are provided by partner agencies in and around the city. Ms. Junkin provided information regarding the programs, activities and services offered at the Weingart Senior Center and the Burns Community Center as noted in the written report.

Ms. Junkin reported that at the Burns Community Center, the Project Shepherd Extension

Program assisted 261 families, which was said to be a 23% increase from 2021, and 828 individuals, which was said to be a 27% increase from 2021. For calendar year 2022, 518 boxes of food were distributed, 77 families received assistance with utility bill payments, and 53 families received grocery store gift cards. Additionally, 412 families were assisted during the Holiday Assistance Program, a 1% decrease from 2021. It was said that the annual Backpack Program secured donations of school supplies and backpacks for 460 children. Ms. Junkin shared that it was the highest number of backpacks the program had ever distributed.

Details were provided by Ms. Junkin regarding the many Active+ classes offered at the Burns Community Center as noted in the written report. It was said that classes range from fitness classes, to artistic classes, to educational seminars, and are designed for the more active older adult to keep the mind and body sharp.

Ms. Junkin informed the commission that in June of 2020, the Public Safety Department, previously operating out of city hall, moved to the Burns Community Center and took occupancy of the remaining vacant offices on the second floor. It was said that the Public Safety Department continues to use the offices and open space upstairs to run the department's day-to-day operations.

Finally, Ms. Junkin informed the commission about the free and low-cost programs and services offered at the Weingart Senior Center. Details on those various programs and services were provided to the commission as noted in the written report. Ms. Junkin noted that Lakewood also provides financial support to non-profit agencies by allocating Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to five social service agencies—Community Family Guidance Center, Meals on Wheels of Long Beach, Pathways Volunteer Hospice, Human Services Association, and Su Casa-Ending Domestic Violence.

Vice Chairperson Lucio shared that it is wonderful to see so many programs offered that help to keep seniors active and outdoors. She mentioned that it is beautiful that Lakewood seniors are able to socialize through music and dance.

3. Fest-Of-All Preview

Community Services Supervisor Lorraine Delarosa displayed slides and provided information regarding the 2023 Lakewood Fest-Of-All as noted in the written report. Ms. Delarosa shared that the event would take place on Saturday, October 14 from 2 to 8 p.m. at Lakewood Center. It was said that the event would consist of a multicultural food court, a family fun zone, a concert stage and a cultural stage with live entertainment, a craft village, a children's cultural booth, community booths for Lakewood non-profit organizations, an art and poetry showcase, and an activity called Passport around the World. Details regarding the event elements were provided to the commission as noted in the written report.

The commission was informed that a free shuttle would run from the east parking lot at City Hall to the event entrance. It was said that the shuttle would operate from 1:30 p.m. to

8:30p.m., with pickups and drop-offs scheduled in 15-minute intervals.

Lastly, Ms. Delarosa provided information regarding event supervision and public safety. She shared that city staff would be working during the course of the event, monitoring the various event components, assisting Fest-Of-All attendees, entertainers, and vendors. Additionally, to ensure a safe and clean event, it was said that staff would manage crowd control issues such as litter collection, replenishment of event supplies, distribution of handouts, and staffing the first aid stations. Event staff will be identifiable in their Fest-Of-All event staff t-shirt. The commission was informed that the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, community safety officers, and mall security would provide uniformed security on foot throughout the event complex to provide a greater sense of safety and security for all event attendees. Additionally, she noted that information and first aid centers would be located at the south entrance of the event near the Family Fun Zone.

4. Day Camp Program and Holiday Vacation Camp Program Annual Report

Community Services Supervisor Kelly Garnetti displayed slides and provided information regarding the Day Camp Program in 2023 as noted in the written report. Ms. Garnetti reminded the commission that Summer Day Camp at Monte Verde Park began in the 1960s, offering children ages seven to nine years old weekly recreational activities in a supervised, daily camp setting. It was said that the program had evolved throughout several decades and as of summer 2023, now provides the opportunity for youth, ages six to 12 years old, to participate in a weekly summer camp program from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. Details regarding camp offerings, such as excursions, weekly themes and special events were provided by Ms. Garnetti as noted in the written report. Ms. Garnetti also provided the commission with information regarding the program's full cost-recovery budget model.

Concerning day camp personnel, Ms. Garnetti reported that in 2023, a successful recruitment was held to fill the position of day camp director following the retirement of the director at the conclusion of the 2022 camp season. It was said that five additional staff were hired as recreation leaders I and II as part of the department-wide summer recreation leader recruitment.

Lastly, Ms. Garnetti provided information regarding the Junior Counselor Program as noted in the written report.

Community Services Supervisor Brianna Tavera displayed slides and provided information regarding the Holiday Vacation Camp Program in 2023 as noted in the written report. Ms. Tavera informed the commission that over recent years, the Activity Zone program saw a noticeable decrease in attendance, most notably within afterschool programming. Staff recognized that parks were receiving minimal to no attendance for Activity Zone and thus concluded that the community no longer had a need for an after school program at park facilities. However, staff identified a need to support families and school-age children during vacation break periods when schools were closed; thus, seasonal spring and winter camps were created.

Ms. Tavera informed the commission that staff had developed a spring break day camp program for children ages six to 12, offered at Bolivar, Boyar, Mayfair, and Palms Parks. Camp took place beginning April 10 and ending April 14, 2023. It was said that the program provided supervised activities from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. on a one-to-12 staff-to-camper ratio. A total of 44 participants were registered for the inaugural session. Resident participants were charged a fee of \$150. Ms. Tavera pointed out, like with the Summer Day Camp Program, the program maintained full cost recovery, with revenue totaling \$6,790.

It was said that due to the success of the spring break camp, staff were currently in the planning phases for the upcoming winter break camps to be offered in similar fashion. Ms. Tavera noted that winter break camp would be offered in two sessions, December 26 to 29, 2023 and January 2 to 5, 2024. The themed “Winter Wonderland” camp will include winter themed arts and crafts, games, activities, and excursions to the Santa Ana Zoo and the O.C. Discovery Cube. It was said that the fees for camp will be \$180 for Lakewood residents, and \$195 for non-residents and is advertised in the Fall/Winter Recreation Catalog.

Commissioner Allen shared that it was nice to see recreation back in full force post Covid. He mentioned that RCS staff was quintessential. He commended staff for their hard work and dedication.

5. 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 2023 and a listing of upcoming activities for October 2023.

The Commission received and filed the report.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Letters to Alyssa Mejia and Jade Vasquez, Co-Employees of the Month for July 2023.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business brought before the Recreation and Community Services Commission, Chairperson Valdez adjourned the meeting at 6:45 p.m. to Wednesday, October 11 at 6 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

Michelle Williams, Administrative Secretary
Recreation and Community Services Commission