



MINUTES
Recreation and Community Services Commission
Adjourned Regular Meeting
November 8, 2023

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was led by Commissioner Dave Allen.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Meeting of October 11, 2023. A motion was made by Vice Chairperson Veronica Lucio and seconded by Commissioner Dave Allen to approve the minutes from the meeting of October 11, 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 reminding the commission that the city had taken over management and operation of the Lakewood Equestrian Center on November 1. Ms. Frost mentioned that city staff, including staff from the Environmental Resources Division (ERD) had been very active at the facility taking care of necessary landscaping, and working closely with the Public Works Department to address standing work orders. The commission was informed that Community Services Supervisor Kelly Garnetti would serve as the administrative supervisor for the facility, along with a team of part-time employees, who report to her in this leadership role and assist with administrative duties, including accepting horse boarding applications and serving as good customer service liaisons to equestrian center users. Ms. Frost noted that the city was working with a consultant/equestrian manager by the name of D. Joy Gould. It was said that Ms. Gould is in charge of caring for the horses, including feeding, manure management, and overall health maintenance of the horses. All staff involved in the daily care of the horses report directly to Ms. Gould.

Next, Ms. Frost provided updates regarding ERD. She informed the commission that the position of irrigation specialist had been filled in-house, and mentioned that the employee would take on that role in the coming weeks. This move resulted in a vacant park maintenance worker position. A job announcement was posted for the position and was said to be closing on Friday, November 10. Over 250 applications were received.

Assistant Director Kevin Bright provided information on programming and upcoming events. Mr. Bright reported that on Monday, November 13 a Community Promotions Committee meeting would take place in the Executive Board Room at 6:30 p.m. The commission was informed that the RCS team was asked to propose a new event series, which will celebrate Women's History Month in March 2024. RCS Department managers, along with their teams, have been hard at work developing a program agenda. It was said that staff would present this program to the committee

for their direction. He noted that the program would celebrate the strength and diversity of women in Lakewood, while providing training and enrichment opportunities. The commission was asked to RSVP with their secretary if interested in attending the Community Promotions meeting.

Mr. Bright reported that Project Shepherd registration began on Wednesday, November 1. To date, 209 registrations have been made; the registration period continues through Wednesday, November 15.

On October 20, the department sent out a request to reputable and trusted playground manufacturers to secure plans for a new 2 to 12 year old playground to be installed at Cherry Cove Park. This project is set to be funded by LA County Prop A Maintenance and Servicing funds. It was said that these funds are held by granting agencies to ensure longevity and ongoing use of previously grant funded projects. Mr. Bright noted that Cherry Cove Park fell under that umbrella and the playground will be paid for with these funds. The commission was asked to expect an invite to the upcoming Park Development Committee meeting where staff will present proposals for review by the committee, and a design will be selected for the project.

Mr. Bright informed the commission that on Friday, November 3, staff who hold positions in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) participated in a simulated emergency tabletop exercise. The simulation was developed by a committee of staff represented by each city department and hosted in a fully set up EOC. It was said that staff were challenged to address an emergency, which simulated an explosion in an apartment on Oliva Avenue—in proximity to the Weingart Senior Center. Mr. Bright noted that this was the second such tabletop experience held as a training for staff and built on concepts that were learned at the last event. Staff were further challenged and live use of radio communications to field staff were employed, while new and perplexing curve balls were hurled at the EOC staff. In summary, Mr. Bright said it was an amazing training, and staff continue to learn, prepare and exercise their emergency response muscles in these simulations.

Lastly, Mr. Bright announced that on Friday, December 1, the annual Tree Lighting Ceremony would take place at 4:30 p.m. with food trucks, game booths, and a visit from Santa Claus. The official tree lighting was said to be taking place at 6:30 p.m.

Commissioner Ted Spaseff thanked staff involved in the Lakewood Education Foundation (LEF) Golf Tournament Fundraiser. He mentioned that the wrap-up email was very informative and nicely done. Commissioner Spaseff also shared that he attended the Halloween Carnival at Del Valle Park. He said it was a fun event and he appreciates the passion staff have for the event, and the wonderful job they do with the décor and running the event each year. He mentioned that he attended the Palms Park Mini-Pitch Grand Opening as well, and said it was a great event and that the mini-pitch and new basketball courts looked amazing. Lastly, Commissioner Spaseff commented that he attended both the Senior Health Fair and the Halloween Party at the Weingart Senior Center, and said that both events had a great turn-out and were well put together.

REPORTS:

1. Aquatics Program Annual Report

Community Services Supervisor Veronica Ramirez displayed slides and provided information regarding the aquatics program in 2023. Ms. Ramirez reported that the 2023 season reestablished a full traditional schedule of programs offered under city management at Mayfair and McCormick pools for the first time since the 2019 season. It was said that the 2023 Aquatics Program operated at Mayfair and McCormick Pools with the support of 27 Lifeguard/Swim Instructors, five Senior Lifeguards, seven Cashier-Clerks, and two Pool Managers. The customary schedule of programming was offered with Mayfair Pool opening Memorial Day weekend through September 25. McCormick Pool activities were offered beginning June 17 and concluded on September 4.

Ms. Ramirez provided details regarding the unforeseen closure of Mayfair Pool and the resulting changes that were made to the aquatics programming as noted in the written report. Details regarding the recruitment process, staff training, and aquatics programming were provided by Ms. Ramirez. It was said that a significant adjustment was made to the pool visitation schedule for city-led camps. Previously, the Summer Day Camp program visited Mayfair Pool once per week for one and a half hours, part of which overlapped with public recreation swim sessions. In an effort to provide a fully private swim session for camp participants, the visits were moved to McCormick Pool during a slightly earlier time slot. Ms. Ramirez noted that this allowed campers to utilize the entire pool with full supervision of aquatics staff.

Lastly, Ms. Ramirez provided the commission with details regarding program revenues in 2023 and provided comparisons to previous years.

Ms. Ramirez informed Commissioner Allen that although staffing for aquatics programs remains difficult throughout the state, staff have been creative in ways of recruiting, and were able to fully staff the pools in 2023, with the hope to do the same in the coming years.

Vice Chairperson Veronica Lucio commented that her daughter was enrolled in swim lessons during the summer and mentioned that the transition from Mayfair to McCormick Pool was seamless.

Commissioner Spaseff commended Ms. Ramirez and her staff for doing such a great job with the transition.

Chairperson Stacy Valdez mentioned that programming at the Lakewood YMCA was also affected by the Mayfair Pool shutdown. She thanked staff for making the transition smooth for all.

The Commission received and filed the annual report on Aquatics Program.

2. Incident and Injury Annual Report

Community Services Manager Joseph Vasquez expanded on information on the department's incident and injury reporting process as noted in the written report. He reminded the commission that recreation staff completes a department incident and injury

report form to record all incidents and injuries occurring on a city recreation facility. Management personnel, including the department director, review the reports for completeness and to identify potential trends. Statistical information, including type of incident and an estimate of loss to the city, is transferred into a spreadsheet allowing staff to recognize specific types of incidents and injuries occurring on a facility. Mr. Vasquez reported that through October 2023, there were 194 incidents reported across all facilities for the year, which reflects a decrease compared to the previous year. It was said that historically, staff see between 20 to 30 reports submitted during the final two months of a year. During the entirety of 2022, there were 272 incidents reported, which reflects an increase from the 234 reported in 2021.

Mr. Vasquez reported that of all the facilities, Boyar Park, Mayfair Park and San Martin Park have reported the highest volume of incidents this past year. Concerning the types of incidents, it was said that vandalism, patron injuries and Gatekeeper calls by city staff were the department's most frequent classification of incident. The category "other" logged 20 incidents, which reflects a variety of types including animal control issues, facility damage reports other than vandalism, and program participant behavioral issues

The commission was informed that a summary of the 2023 incident and injury reports and a three-year comparison of statistics, by facility and by type, was provided in their agenda packets.

The Commission received and filed the annual report on Incident and Injury.

3. Holiday Recreation Programs and Events

Community Services Manager Nancy Hitt displayed slides and provided details regarding 2023 holiday recreation programs and events. Ms. Hitt announced that the city's 10th annual tree lighting ceremony and community gathering would take place on Friday, December 1 outside The Centre beginning at 4:30 p.m. with festivities wrapping up at 8 p.m. Information regarding the many holiday events planned for seniors were provided by Ms. Hitt. Details regarding the Senior Holiday Luncheon, the Grandparents, Grandchildren, and Great Grandchildren's Holiday Party, the Kristmas Karaoke Dance and Sing party, and the annual Ugly Sweater Party were provided as noted in the written report.

Next, Ms. Hitt provided the commission with details regarding events such as the Pathway's Light Up a Life event, instructional classes unique to the holiday season, and planned holiday fun for Special Olympians and Adaptive Recreation Participants as noted in the written report.

Ms. Hitt informed the commission the Rotary Club of Lakewood would be delivering grocery store gift cards to families and seniors enrolled in the Project Shepherd Holiday Program on Monday, November 20, so that recipients can purchase Thanksgiving food items. She shared that the Lakewood Project Shepherd Holiday Warehouse operations begin on Wednesday, December 6 with volunteers assisting with organization of food delivery and packing boxes of food for registered Lakewood families for distribution on

Friday, December 15 and Saturday, December 16.

Holiday programs at local parks, as well as park hours of operations, were detailed by Ms. Hitt. It was said that during the school winter break period, winter break camp is offered in two sessions, December 26 to 29, 2023 and January 2 to 5, 2024. The themed “Winter Wonderland” camp was said to include winter themed arts and crafts, games, activities, and excursions to the Santa Ana Zoo and the O.C. Discovery Cube. Additionally, Ms. Hitt shared that Santa would make an early appearance on Saturday, December 23 at each of the parks, followed by a candy cane hunt.

Ms. Hitt reminded the commission that in an effort to maximize efficiency as well as service to residents, park hours are amended during the winter break period. City parks will be open from 12 to 5 p.m. during the two weeks of school vacation–this includes New Year’s Day–but will be closed on Sunday, December 24 and Monday, December 25 in recognition of the Christmas holiday. On New Year’s Eve, parks will see an abbreviated schedule of 12 to 3 p.m.

The Commission received and filed the annual report on Incident and Injury.

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 2023 and a listing of upcoming activities for December 2023.

The Commission received and filed the report.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Letter to Sofia McCoy, Employee of the Month for September 2023.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business brought before the Recreation and Community Services Commission, Chairperson Valdez adjourned the meeting at 6:37 p.m. to Wednesday, December 13 at 5 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

Michelle Williams, Administrative Secretary
Recreation and Community Services Commission