The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Meeting was held on April 18, 2019 at the Parks and Recreation Conference Room, 1501 E. Hadley, Las Cruces, NM.

PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:
Cassie McClure
Maryln Zahler
Stan Engle
Eric Montgomery
Megan Schuller
Eli Guzman

PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:
Robert Harrison

OTHERS PRESENT:
Hazel Nevarez, Senior Office Manager & Recorder
Sonya Delgado, Director of Parks & Recreation
Robert Nunez, Recreation Services Administrator
Phil Catanach, Recreation Services Administrator
Franco Granillo, Park Administrator
Cecilia Vasconcellos, Marketing & Event Coordinator
Christian Lentz, Halff Associations
Julie Herlands, TischlerBise
Elaine Stachera Simon, Public
Greg Shervanick, Public

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Vice-Chair McClure and recognized as having a legal quorum.

I. Introductions

Board members introduced themselves and stated the district they represent. Staff introduced themselves and stated their position. Public members present introduced themselves.

II. Conflict of Interest

There was no conflict of interest.

III. Approval of Agenda
Ms. Schuller moved to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Mr. Engle. 
Motion carried unanimously.

IV. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Zahler moved to approve the minutes of March 21, 2019 as presented, seconded by Mr. Engle. Motion carried unanimously.

V. Public Comment

Ms. Elaine Stachera:
Ms. Elaine Stachera Simon, who lives in the College Park neighborhood, District 2, was present to see what steps need to be taken to have a vacant lot in their neighborhood turned into a park. She said Ms. Jamey Rickman suggested the property owners be contacted to see if they would donate the land. Ms. Stachera Simon asked after contacting the property owners about donating the property or other options, trade or purchase possibilities, what would be the next steps and time frame.

Ms. Delgado said contact with the owner is first, and from there would need to contact Councilor Smith to see if this is something to be pursued and if so, there are several steps that would follow. One step would be to get on the Capital Improvement list to identify funding. Ms. Delgado said there would be a lot of decisions that would need to be made that are out of her realm. Ms. Delgado said there is no time frame.

Ms. Stachera Simon asked when reaching out to the owners, who would she refer them to regarding donating the land. Ms. Delgado said City Manager.

Ms. Stachera Simon also asked, since she has spoken to the manager of the Marriott, and will be speaking to IHOP, if sponsorship is an option. Ms. Delgado said it is but is the City Manager's decision.

Ms. Schuller recommended Ms. Stachera Simon also reach out to NMSU since the property that the Marriott is on is NMSU property.

Ms. Stachera Simon asked if there are costs involved regarding donation of the land. Ms. Delgado said this would be up to the owner and what is negotiated with City Manager. Ms. Zahler added under the anti-donation act, the city could not give the owners any funds for the land unless the city buys it outright.

Recommendations were given to Ms. Stachera Simon on how to possibly locate the property owners.

Mr. Gregory Shervanick:
Mr. Gregory Shervanick was present to comment on minutes of last month and Ms. Mathews statement concerning the Cool Corridor. Mr. Shervanick said Ms. Mathews did state there had been changes which there have been but she spoke to no one who
lives on that street and the Las Cruces Public School system had not been contacted. Mr. Shervanick said he met with their Director of Operations and showed him the blueprints so they would be aware of what’s transitioning. He said a meeting was held April 11 concerning pushing the project forward as quickly as possible. Mr. Shervanick said the neighbors still believe it is negligent for the city to put this project in on the city streets; it will endanger the health and possibly the lives of visitors and citizens on Nevada Avenue. He said even though there are changes to Nevada between Walnut and Lees Drive, it still will impact the park on its portion of the street as well as the traffic that is carried between the street and the school.

Mr. Engle asked Mr. Shervanick if he was able to personally speak to everybody in that corridor that lives on Nevada, is there evidence that Ms. Mathews did not speak to them. Mr. Shervanick said yes, to include the Las Cruces Public School system.

Mr. Engle asked if the residents would be ready to go on record to say they weren’t contacted. Mr. Shervanick said there would be a lot of negativity and no one on that street knows that this is actually happening; they are not informed, at all. He said the city has a mail merge list of 281 names of homes in the area, which they usually send out post cards. When Dona Ana Community United, the proxy organization that spoke for the city - would be contacting individuals, nobody ever showed up to those meetings and when they did, if they did, they weren’t informed of the physical major construction changes that were going to happen on Nevada. They were told this organization was thinking about painting on the streets, not putting trees in the street. Mr. Shervanick said he would be able to give the names of people he spoke with.

Mr. Engle asked Parks and Recreation if public wasn’t informed and want to be informed, is there any possibility for that to happen. Ms. Delgado said the April 11 meeting was to discuss creating a process that is more seamless when there are multiple departments working on a project, using the Cool Corridor project as an example. The meeting was not to talk on the specifics of the project.

Mr. Engle said for the record, he is for the project, but he does want the public to know what is happening and have a say in it. Ms. Delgado said she can put this topic on the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board meeting agenda for May 2019 and ask Economic Development to attend and ask Ms. Mathews to give an update, to give a list of dates meetings were held, what was discussed, how this got started.

Ms. Schuller asked what the generic protocol is for public meetings. Ms. Delgado said she could speak for Parks and Recreation, and said Parks and Recreation sends email blast for the particular neighborhood, postcards, if Councilor for the District has some interest in the project, they get people that have specifically asked for the information or use their data base, post in newspaper, Parks and Recreation website and Facebook page.

Ms. McClure asked if the Board felt there should be another meeting on this. Ms. Schuller said she felt there have been plenty of opportunities for the neighborhood to
be involved. Mr. Shervanick said the proxy group, who talks to the neighborhood, did
not discuss this project as it is designed, as green infrastructure and putting chicanes
in the street. They never discussed the hard construction or cost with the reason being
there was a conflict of interest between a non-profit group and city staff. Mr.
Shervanick said the non-profit discussed the project without the construction aspects
and that the city would discuss the project aspects. The only time construction
aspects were discussed was at the meeting held by Parks and Recreation, August 26,
2018 which was framed for the Board’s purposes and it was decided on what to say,
how to say it and how to tell the Board. Prior meetings weren’t really public meetings.

Mr. Montgomery inquired, as point of reference, the meeting of April 11 was designed
to set up an interactive policy between departments and best way to go forward on
future projects, so as part of that, was there any discussion on public outreach that was
outlined as part of this interactive policy or is it still in the works. Ms. Delgado said yes,
the meeting was internal, to figure out how departments can work together to move
projects forward, using the Nevada project as an example. Mr. Montgomery said a
suggestion going forward would be to have more interaction with the public during
public meetings.

Ms. McClure cut discussion to move forward with Board agenda. Mr. Shervanick
thanked the Board for their time.

VI. Unfinished Business

(Note: Item B was discussed first.)

A. Parks & Recreation Master Plan (Update) – Christian Lentz, Halff
Associates

Mr. Christian Lentz of Halff Associates presented a PowerPoint to the Board to give
them an update of where the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is currently, which was
introduced to the Board at their February 2019 meeting. Mr. Lentz said this plan has to
be adopted by June and the Board will be getting more information on this plan over
the next several weeks. Information shared with the Board was an update of project
status, what will be done next with public outreach, the relationship between the Parks
and Recreation Master Plan and the Park Impact Fee Study, and preliminary
recommendations of the plan. Mr. Lentz reported the key recommendations of the plan
will address park land, recreational facilities, programs, operations, and administration.
The 2019 recommendations may include some of the 2012 recommendations. A
copy of the PowerPoint presentation was provided to the Board.

Ms. Schuller asked how Ms. Delgado would like feedback on this plan. Ms. Delgado
said information can be sent by email or phone call, as long as the information goes
through the Chair.
Mr. Lentz asked Board’s thoughts, concerns on the plan. Ms. McClure asked how many outside entities were involved in the plan, i.e. Friends of Desert Peaks. Mr. Lentz said Friends of Desert Peaks were involved in some of the stakeholder outreach, specifically the Southern New Mexico Trails Alliance, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) hasn’t been spoken to. He said these recommendations were worded in the plan to work with these partners.

Ms. Schuller’s said her concern as with BLM, citizens have to realize that BLM has the potential to lease land out, and the repercussions of people not taking care of the land have an adverse effect on the people who are leasing the land to run their cattle or something to that effect. Her concern is how does the city do its due diligence as we start to partner with groups to protect the investment of the BLM. Ms. Delgado said the City would only go as far as the city limit. Mr. Lentz added there are plenty of precedence with federal and state lands with having a recreational facility co-located with lands that are otherwise working lands. He said an open lands space program doesn’t necessarily end at city limits. That is based on the most valuable land from an environmental and consolidation standpoint and will stretch beyond city limits. Ms. Delgado added the state is willing to have an outdoor recreation for the state so they would take care of from the city limit outward.

Mr. Montgomery said providing a map with amenities would be helpful. Ms. McClure pointed out Parks and Recreation has an app that provides this information.

Ms. Zahler said on a scale of one to ten, with ten being the highest, Mr. Lentz’ presentation is a ten. Her only negative comment was plan specified park instead of parks regarding dog parks. Ms. Zahler suggested having a small dog park limited to hunting dogs at Butterfield Shooting Range where they could be trained. Ms. Delgado said she wouldn’t put a dog park at the shooting range for liability reasons.

Ms. Zahler expressed her thoughts of where dog parks would be located and why they shouldn’t be in those locations.

B. Park Impact Fees Report (Update/Action) – Julie Herlands, TischlerBise

Ms. Julie Herlands, Vice-President of TischlerBise, presented a PowerPoint to the Board to inform them of revisions made to the Parks and Recreation Park Impact Fee Study previously presented in February 2019 and to show where the draft is at currently. Ms. Herlands reviewed land use assumptions, components for the fee, elements that impact the fee, categorization and classification of parks, coordinated and integrated with the master plan to ensure parks are in the proper categories. Ms. Herlands said park impact fees are based on current levels of service, looking at what is being provided to the current population. The PowerPoint showed a summary of the draft fees along with a comparison to 2012 fees. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation was provided to the Board.
Ms. Zahler asked what the cost to an individual person is to use a park. Ms. Herlands said the cost to the city at large is $572 per person. Ms. Zahler asked if the increase in cost of living and taxes has been taken into consideration. Ms. Herlands said this is specifically cost for a new resident to receive the same level of service on a park facility. Ms. Herlands said this is a cost for a home builder or developer to pay as they are building a housing unit to help the city continue to provide the same levels of service. Ms. Zahler asked if the realtor will balk at the increase. Ms. Herlands said the bottom line isn’t much of an increase and realtors and developers realize this is a cost of doing business.

Ms. Schuller asked when the Park Impact Fees go into effect. Ms. Delgado the Park Impact Fees will go before the CIAC in May 2019 for action. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board can choose to act on this today or wait until next month. From there, the Park Impact Fees will go before Council in June 2019 for final adoption.

Ms. Zahler asked what would happen if this plan isn’t accepted. Ms. Delgado said there have been open meetings attended by home builders, developers and realtors. Their comments were incorporated into the plan and they are aware this is coming.

Mr. Guzman said he would like to know the home builders, developers and realtors’ thoughts are on these proposed fees before acting.

Ms. Schuller asked what other impact fees are allocated in the city. Ms. Delgado said there are safety, utility, and park impact fees.

Mr. Montgomery asked with the new proposal, is there a specific mechanism for how to couple an inflation benchmark. Ms. Herlands said construction costs are recommended, market SWIFT standards. Ms. Delgado added currently, building a park is not in the Code. It has been part of a Resolution as an attachment. Ms. Delgado said next step would be to create a Code, once Park Impact Fee and Recreation Master Plan is established.

Ms. Zahler moved to table action on the Parks and Recreation Impact Fee study until the May 2019 Board meeting, seconded by Mr. Guzman.

Mr. Montgomery wanted to clarify his understanding of this plan:
- Recommendation of legal finding that would go forward on the construction cost index component
- Discounting factor was discussed, and Mr. Montgomery wants to make sure this is also included as part of the policy recommendation to City Council

Ms. Delgado said the construction costs could definitely be included. The discounting factor is more related to when the code is done and will need further discussion.

Motion to table action on the Parks and Recreation Impact Fee study until the May 2019 Board meeting carried unanimously.
Ms. Zahler moved to request the Parks and Recreation Director invite the Executive Director of the Home Builder’s Association or their designee to the May 2019 Board Meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

VII. New Business

There was no new business.

VIII. Staff Member Comments

Ms. Delgado informed the Board of Parks and Recreation’s part in assisting with the Asylum seekers and use of Parks and Recreation facilities, and how programming was rescheduled or relocated. Ms. Schuller asked how assisting with the asylum seekers transpired and what is the impact to staffing and facilities, and what needs to be considered getting the facilities back and cleaned. Ms. Delgado said staff utilized were Parks and Recreation staff because they know the facilities, they know emergency procedures, they are trained in CPR, and they know how to open and close the facility. She said Parks and Recreation was contacted to pull Meerscheidt Recreation offline because a facility was needed to house incoming asylum seekers. Basketball games and T-ball registration had to be cancelled due to shortage of staff. Staff was assigned to man Meerscheidt Recreation Center around the clock in three eight-hour shifts. There was custodial assistance that came in throughout the day to assist with cleanup. The last of the asylum seekers was moved out the evening of April 16. Meerscheidt Recreation Center was cleaned on April 17 to be ready for regular programming April 18. Frank O’Brien Paper Center will be next facility to be used this coming weekend and Park and Recreation staff is on notice.

Mr. Montgomery asked what the arrangements are with the Las Cruces Public School system and the budgetary impacts of moving games to Sierra Middle School; was there a contractual arrangement? Ms. Delgado said the school was asked if their gym could be used and they said it was ok. She said some players did cancel.

Mr. Catanach said staff did their due diligence to get Meerscheidt Recreation Center cleaned, scrubbed the building top to bottom, disinfected and sprayed for insects.

Ms. Zahler asked if the children of the asylum seekers being immunized. Ms. Delgado said she did not know. Ms. Zahler asked who she should call about this, and someone suggested she call the Department of Health.

IX. Board Member Comments

Ms. Zahler provided a handout to the Board, Sonya Delgado, Robert Nunez, and Hazel Nevarez with suggestions more toward Recreation and Parks for the Youth Board to consider doing. Ms. Zahler also provided Mr. Nunez a newspaper article from Los Alamos on what a youth group there does.
Ms. Zahler also expressed a concern with the one-year term for the Youth Board. Mr. Nunez said he will bring to the next Board meeting amendments to the by-laws regarding staggering membership years, odd years, so the Youth Board will have members for two years.

Mr. Engle said he understood, from attending the Youth Board meeting of April 17, topics they have addressed as a Board are things they live with. He said he and Ms. McClure did let the Youth Board know they would help steer them back to Parks and Recreation topics. He said one thing they want to do is take a tour on transit, which is important because most don’t have vehicles and could use transit to attend events in a park.

Mr. Montgomery said he wanted to go on record how happy he was to hear of staff’s involvement in assisting with the asylum seekers and is very proud staff was able to deal with such numbers within the resources available. He asked that his family’s personal gratitude be extended to staff who assisted with this.

X. Adjournment

Ms. Zahler moved to adjourn meeting, seconded by Mr. Engle. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Hazel Nevarez, Recording Secretary  Robert Harrison, Chair