

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Meeting

August 20, 2020

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board held a meeting on August 20, 2020 at 6:01 p.m. via zoom.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Members Present:

Stan Engle
Robert Harrison
Cassie McClure
Eric Montgomery
Megan Schuller

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Members Absent:

Maryln Zahler
Eli Guzman

Others Present:

Dominic Aragon
Phil Catanach, Recreation Administrator
Sonya Delgado, Director of Parks and Recreation
Catherine Mathews, Landscape Architect
Hazel Nevarez, Senior Office Manager
Robert Nunez, Youth Services Administrator
Tony Trevino, Interim Deputy Director, Public Works
Ceci Vasconcellos, Community Engagement

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Meeting of August 20, 2020 via Zoom was brought to order at 6:01 p.m. by Chair McClure and recognized as having a legal quorum.

1. Introductions

1.1 Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Members

Board members introduced themselves and stated the district they represent.

1.2 Parks and Recreation Staff

Staff introduced themselves and stated their position.

2. Conflict of Interest

No Conflict of Interest.

3. Approval of Agenda

Ms. Schuller moved to approve agenda as presented, seconded by Mr. Engle. There was no discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Montgomery moved to approve minutes of July 16, 2020 as presented, seconded by Mr. Harrison. There was no discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Harrison moved to approve minutes of August 4, 2020 as presented, seconded by Mr. Montgomery. There was no discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Public Participation

Ms. McClure read all emails submitted to the Parks and Recreation Administration email regarding scheduling change for Pickle Ball and Tennis.

Mr. Harrison commented that if any Board members want to comment on this subject, it can be put on agenda for a future meeting.

Ms. Nevarez read one other email that came in missed by Ms. McClure.

Ms. Schuller expressed her appreciation to Ms. McClure for reading all the emails received and reiterated to Mr. Harrison that her question was to make sure we follow the correct protocol as the comments that were made seem to have a short timeline before being placed on agenda for next month.

Mr. Engle said that unless Ms. Delgado can cover a lot of answers to the general theme from the public input, he agrees with Ms. Schuller that waiting another month might be too long to address all of it.

Ms. Delgado said what she could do is, she doesn't want to accidentally not answer one of those questions in all the emails, she will reply to each email and answer the questions and copy the Board. She said she will try to respond within 48 hours after this meeting if this is acceptable to the Board.

Chair McClure asked if they did an FAQ for Ms. Delgado, if that would be easier. Ms. Delgado said she can answer some of those questions when go over the Covid updates. She said she wanted to make clear, she knows it was said the Board would be taking action on some rules, and that is not the case. The update that is on the agenda for Covid Updates was to let the Board know where Parks and Recreation is staff wise, things innovatively done to change some programming, what Parks and Recreation has been able to do, where Parks and Recreation were with regards to the orders, how Parks and Recreation got there. Ms. Delgado said a lot of questions can probably be answered at this meeting, but she wants to make sure she doesn't miss any questions, and someone think a question wasn't purposely answered. Ms. Delgado said she will make sure all

questions are responded to and that the Board is aware, and every person receives a reply from her.

Mr. Harrison said he will hold his questions and comments until the Covid update.

6. Action Items

N/A

7. Discussion Items

7.1 Go Bond Project Updates, Tony Trevino, Interim Deputy Director of Public Works

Mr. Trevino reviewed with the Board a screenshot of Go Bond Projects showing the updated program schedule of projects from inception of 2019 to 2022, outlining steps of Planning & Scoping, Design, Bidding, and Construction in their planned phase by quarter, and actual status throughout.

Mr. Trevino informed the Board the schedule included all Go Bond Projects totaling \$35.6 million: Dog Parks, Recreation Trails, Park and Sport Courts, E. Hadley Ave. Recreation Complex, Unidad Playground, East Mesa Public Recreation Complex, Fire Station #3 Replacement, New Animal Services Center.

Mr. Trevino informed the Board a work session is scheduled in September to go over all Go Bond projects in more depth with City Council.

Mr. Harrison asked if there is anything for the general public to show what is being spent on projects, construction costs. Mr. Trevino said yes, the scope was provided at the last Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and has not changed. He said pricing could be available when requested.

Ms. Vasconcellos informed the Board there is a Go Bond Project web page the public can access and get the latest up to date information, Las-Cruces.org site and look for Go Bond Project.

7.2 Parks and Recreation COVID Updates – Sonya Delgado, Parks and Recreation Director

Ms. Delgado informed the Board she would begin with some background and then have team members talk about some of the things they have done in their areas to get programs out and what they are looking for in the future.

Ms. Delgado informed the Board Parks and Recreation's budget has stayed whole. No one has been placed on furlough. At the beginning of the pandemic, March 20 is when staff was sent home. Parks and Recreation was considered non-essential. In less than two weeks, Parks and Recreation was informed their assistance was needed to take care of some things because people were out and about on the trails, in the parks, and calling in about different things. The first group to come back online was the Parks team and then slowly, the rest of the staff was brought back online. Staff will be back at approximately 32 hours by the end of August and will try to be back

at full time by middle of September, taking into consideration spacing requirements and staggered schedules. Offices have been equipped with spacers on the floor to identify distancing. Staff checks in with a thermometer and goes over the Covid health questions before entering the facility. Masks are worn unless staff is in their own office alone and if someone enters, masks are put back on. Meetings are done virtually, and if staff gets together in groups, it is less than five, so the public health order is not violated. If staff can't do their specific program when back at 40 hours, there will be stuff for them to do with all that is going on at Parks and Recreation.

On the parks and program situation, Ms. Delgado informed the Board she and the Board receive a lot of questions like what about Albuquerque, why does Alamogordo, Ruidoso, El Paso.... Ms. Delgado said she cannot speak for them. All she can tell the Board is what she was asked to do by the Council and the Mayor. She said when this first started, everything got shut down and a plan was put together to see if some things could be opened and the Governor was willing to listen to those. Ms. Delgado was asked by Council and the Mayor to send a plan to the State Epidemiologist so they could review it and see if it fell within the Governor's order. The plan was approved and is what is utilized currently. Ms. Delgado said she doesn't know what Albuquerque, Alamogordo, Ruidoso did, or if they were asked to do the same thing. She said some agencies asked how we put our plan together and she shared this same information and they have utilized some of the things we've implemented. Ms. Delgado said she knows it is frustrating and staff feels that every single day and are trying to get back to a normal also and bring back programs that can be. Ms. Delgado said she commends all the managers and supervisors because this has not been easy. She asks the community to hang in there with us and we will continue to do our best. She said one of the issues that has been happening is groups getting together, possibly because they are getting comfortable. She said we have to make sure that doesn't happen. Ms. Delgado said with this plan and moving forward, it should be easier. She added this can always be revisited and as soon as the Governor relaxes some of those orders, staff can start looking on what else can be added and what else can be opened. She again expressed thanks to her team for doing an outstanding job in navigating thru all this.

Mr. Catanach informed the Board the Recreation section programs and facilities closed on March 13 with the exception of the Regional Aquatic Center which closed at the end of business March 14. The pool maintenance workers continued to work from that point to present because the pool still needed to be serviced. When staff was put on extraordinary leave, managers continued to work on hiring, purchasing, receiving and all duties needed. Daily office activity has increased monthly as have been moving forward. Currently, Recreation staff is working 32 hours a week and should be up to 40 hours beginning in September.

Mr. Catanach informed the Board the City Wellness Program remained active from closing and continues now by providing fitness challenges thru Move Spring, an app that can be done and tracked thru the computer and portable devices. During this time, staff has distributed food for Senior Programs beginning April 2 thru May 22, four sites daily for mass distribution and on Fridays were getting big boxes from the State, which continues as of this date. Staff is currently helping three different Senior sites with drive up meal pickups at Frank O'Brien Papen Community Center, East Side, and Benavidez Community Center. Specialty courts opened May 26 and Recreation staff has been monitoring, tracking and opening facilities for Pickle Ball, Tennis, RC

Airport, RC track for cars, Butterfield shooting range. Staff is getting ready to step up with Pickle Ball and Tennis on August 24.

Mr. Catanach informed the Board June 11, Virtual Music in the Park began. Fourteen band only concerts were recorded and posted on the City's YouTube, Vimeo, and City's web page. The link can be found on Facebook.

Mr. Catanach informed the Board Regional Aquatic Center and Frenger Pool opened June 14 for lap swim only. The upstairs gym at the Regional Aquatic Center was opened at 25% capacity. Recreation staff continues since June to record virtual videos for hiking, biking, sports skills, art galleries, and are posted on the City's Vimeo page and Facebook.

Mr. Catanach said one of the big things taken on this year was the virtual 4th of July parade and the fireworks show. He said he thinks the community liked that we still moved forward with the 4th of July during these pandemic times.

Mr. Catanach said staff is following all CDC guidelines. Staff has put up plexiglass guards, procured the necessary PPE, working thru the proper distancing requirements, shower protocols, cleaning and sanitation schedules, and rules are posted for patron and staff safety.

Mr. Nunez informed the Board Youth Services had a wonderful summer program for 18 days that ended on August 7. There were 65 youth in the program, following all guidelines, utilized all City facilities. He said moving forward, there will be discussion with early childhood and care development thru the State's office to discuss how we can receive some temporary approvals and what we need to put in place to continue programming – mentoring, tutoring and offering youth and their families to get assistance with technology. Mr. Nunez said he hopes to get this started by Labor Day.

Mr. Nunez informed the Board overall, staff has been very positive. They have had some great trainings, trainings continue, and staff is thinking outside the box. He added youth and parents are thankful for staff providing the programs, keeping everybody safe, and doing what we need to do for our community.

Mr. Nunez informed the Board the Juvenile Citation Program was recently approved for FY21 \$308,799. The program is currently doing 100% virtual intakes, assessments, classes, and follow-ups. The program is going very well, working closely with JPO. There will be a meeting with Las Cruces Public Schools and Gadsden Independent Schools on how we can help them when they identify youth that are not being as focused with this remote learning.

Mr. Nunez informed the Board Keep Las Cruces Beautiful is currently providing supplies, recruiting groups of five. He said this program is also grant funded and have been notified that the grant was approved for \$41,000 and will be going to Council in September.

Ms. Mathews reported on behalf of Mr. Granillo on Park status. She informed the Board Park staff came back on a limited basis two weeks after the initial shut down – maintenance staff only four hours Mondays and Fridays for litter and general cleanliness issues. Parks was originally

considered non-essential, so staff was brought on gradually. One construction worker was tasked with checking playgrounds to make sure they remained closed - twice a week. These conditions lasted until mid-April when staff was increased to 16 hours per week and then 24 hours per week in May. Parks brought on operators for modified mowing schedules as grass started growing and irrigators to make sure turf was maintained properly. Median staff came back with their normal duties. In April and May, ten of the 23 temp employees were brought back on. In early August, work hours increased to 32 hours per week. Staff coming in at ten-minute staggered shifts to make sure distancing is maintained in the mornings. It is anticipated to be back at 40 hours per week by mid-September dependent on the Governor's orders.

Ms. Mathews informed the Board the design and construction staff – Landscape Architect and two project specialists, transitioned to working remotely in March full time to present. They continued to observe and inspect construction projects, meet with contractors on site, wearing masks and maintaining social distancing. This allowed for keeping all construction projects, planning, and design moving forward. In April, transitioned to some in office work on Tuesday and Thursday mornings observing proper distancing and masks.

Ms. Mathews informed the Board the Youth Conservation Corp program started in July with seven Youth Conservation Corp crew members, training them how to work using social distancing and mask.

Ms. Mathews informed the Board, currently upon entering the office, team does temperature check and reviews the Covid health questions to ensure proper Covid procedures are followed.

Ms. Vasconcellos informed the Board she has been working with Parks and Recreation from day one to provide information to the public by means of press releases, posting information on social media, and using direct email when appropriate with resources like eTrac. She said it is a constant effort to keep information out there because it is changing so quickly. She said a web page was created where the community can go in and see the latest updates and get information of open facilities, closed facilities and programs, guidelines and how to use them. The website is LasCruces.org/covid19parkschedule.

Ms. Vasconcellos informed the Board her role is also keeping the community engaged by getting activities on social media, short videos, psa's with suggestions on games to play and activities to do. This has been an ongoing effort. Videos were also shared provided by organizations like the National Fitness Campaign to encourage people to stay active.

Ms. Vasconcellos informed the Board staff also participated in events such as Earth Day. She said she worked with Keep Las Cruces Beautiful to get them information on how to do clean ups during this time. She said she also worked with staff to put together an Electric Light virtual parade. Most recently, an I Spy campaign was done on social media to bring awareness to the cup signs on fences off Hadley and Solano.

Ms. Delgado added that all exempt staff stayed on 40 hours since March 20 and hopefully all staff will be back on board by mid-September and hopefully can ensure there is enough space for everyone to operate in.

Ms. Delgado added Pickle Ball and Tennis was brought up earlier and one of the issues there was the public health order said there should be less than five people in a group, and when the courts were opened, there were large groups gathering there to play and other community members could see this and were asking why couldn't they go to the park. Ms. Delgado added State Police were called at one point about a mass gathering at Apodaca Park. Ms. Delgado said she would not like to get a fine or go against the Governor's orders. She said she does understand the frustrations and understands people want to be out and about and play. She added we are Parks and Recreation, it's our passion and it's our passion to provide these services for the community and it has been difficult. Ms. Delgado said staff will be working with the Pickle Ball community and the Tennis community as things are rolled out. She said the reservation is going to help control group gatherings. Ms. Delgado said she has received calls from people who didn't get an opportunity to play because they couldn't stay long, she also received a call thanking her for the reservation because now they would get an opportunity to play, and she has received calls saying their time is being taken away who want to play longer. Ms. Delgado said Pickle Ball and Tennis were the pilot programs for some programming – trying to offer something instead of nothing. She says she gets the calls from all the other groups that want to play. She said as things get better and community gets healthy, we will be able to open things and we will be the first ones to open the gate and welcome everyone back.

Mr. Engle said he would like to see what the Board feels about Ms. Delgado still answering the emails more directly. Mr. Harrison said it would be nice and courteous to respond. HE said if the Pickle Ball and Tennis Communities could come up with some Covid Safe practices, it might be beneficial to staff and them.

Chair McClure asked if reservations could be extended longer, if it would work better. Ms. Delgado said the plan being used is the one approved by the Epidemiologist so she can't add any more hours to the program itself. But she can change the way the hours are – move the hours to another day or earlier or later. If hours were increased or programs increased or increase facilities to be opened, the plan would have to be sent back to the epidemiologist and base it on changes the Governor has made. She said this can be done once the orders change or relax. Ms. Delgado said she doesn't know if anybody else had to do this. Chair McClure asked what the turnaround time was when the plan was sent to the epidemiologist. Ms. Delgado responded it was at least a couple of weeks. Then it had to be looked over, make sure protocol was in place, news releases sent, signage in place and then opened. At that time, staff would open but there was not enough staff with enough hours to stay the whole time to enforce the rules. Now with increased hours, we will be able to have staff there the entire time to enforce the rules. With regards to increasing play time, time will be taken from another day which will shorten that day or get rid of that day and could result in a smaller number of players that can play. Ms. Delgado said Parks and Recreation will work with the Pickle Ball and Tennis communities but just ask that they let Parks and Recreation try the reservation and then get feedback because there are a lot of other people that don't belong to these organizations that also want to play.

Mr. Harrison asked if the New Mexico Recreation and Park Association (NMRPA) have a specific goal or number that will give the go ahead to open in the park setting. Ms. Delgado said the gating criteria that is being followed is what is coming from the State and Department of Health. The NMRPA or NRPA recommends following guidelines set by the State.

Mr. Harrison asked if there are any Covid Safe practicing for courts and meeting with the Pickle Ball and Tennis community and letting them know this is what needs to be done vs answering every single question. Ms. Delgado said when plan was put together, safe practices were looked at to see which ones would work. The team has done the same thing now. Ms. Delgado said Parks and Recreation can work with the Pickle Ball and Tennis Communities but the guidelines that will be used are the ones coming from the state.

8. Staff Comments

Ms. Mathews informed the Board her section continues working on projects, in particular recently focusing on the skate park assessment, finishing up that report on the existing skate park so can prepare to dive right into the skate park renovation as soon as the funding from the state becomes available this fall. Electrical improvements continue at Veterans Memorial Park, coordinating those improvements with planning and design for the parking lot so these two projects can work seamlessly together when the project starts. Highland Park is rendering completion of design process so within the next two to three months, Ms. Mathews will report on the construction and bidding process, and let the Board know when construction will start.

Ms. Mathews reported on behalf of Mr. Granillo what is being accomplished in the Parks section. Staff is working on internal design standards over the next several months to use as a reference and to pass along to Community Development so can start to inform overall City design standards for landscapes and parks as the Community Development department moves forward with modifying those design standards. Documents, policies, and guidelines will be incorporated such as Tree Care Policy, Median Design Standards, Irrigation Standards, and Park Amenities Standards. Sports fields staff continues to assist maintaining trails. They recently laid down their first application of pre-imposed emergent treatment to help keep weed issues under control. Trees along Hadley Avenue has experienced an issue with a mite and the Community Forester will be applying a miticide to try to save the trees. The Right of Way and Median staff is working on the City Beautification Program called Clean Sweep. They are entering into a four-week cycle city wide. Park GIS staff is looking at readjusting schedule to reduce driving time, using technology to realize some efficiencies, limiting time and resources as best we can to accomplish maintenance of medians and right of ways and keep levels of service. Construction staff is working on several projects, including the installation of a sculpture called Tree of Knowledge at Calle Abuelo Neighborhood Park. Parks furnishing replacement program is moving forward - replacing furnishings at Benavidez Community Center Park, working on ADA tables and benches at Butterfield Shooting Range. Construction staff is also working on engineered wood fiber safety surfacing replacement at playgrounds through out the City. Mr. Granillo will be compiling another list of winter projects for construction staff to work on so that we can methodically accomplish bigger kind of repair projects needed , including bollard installation in several parks and more intense trail

clean up, especially around the I25/University Ave interchange. Park staff will be looking to clean the lower portion along Triviz and remove some of the erosion and sand build up.

Mr. Nunez had no further updates.

Mr. Catanach said his staff will continue doing what they are doing with virtual programming. They will work in trying to get Pickle Ball and Tennis under control as best they can, working with those communities. Staff is currently working on what they will do in the future as things start to open. They understand we have a need for the sports and activities, and know that groups like baseball, basketball, volleyball and others are not getting the opportunities like pickle ball and tennis. They want to make sure they do the best they can for pickle ball and tennis, but they also want to let the community know we are looking out for them as well and chomping at the bit to get back to the sports and open up our fields. Staff is focusing on what they will do when they get back and get the message out. Mr. Catanach expressed his thanks to the recreation staff for everything they have done.

Ms. Vasconcellos said she will work with Ms. Delgado and staff to get some FAQ's together and posted on the website as soon as possible so the community can have this information.

Ms. Nevarez had nothing to share.

Ms. Delgado had no additional information.

9. Board Comments

Ms. Schuller expressed her sincere appreciation to the Parks and Recreation Board during this unprecedented time and said to keep up the good work. She gave kudos to Parks and Recreation staff and said the Board is here with them and appreciates staff each and every day and their due diligence for making sure our community is safe. She wanted to make sure this is passed on to all Parks and Recreation staff.

Mr. Harrison expressed appreciation to the Pickle Ball group for their comments and to the Chair for reading all the emails. He expressed appreciation for Ms. Delgado and staff for individually focusing on the topics and trying to find the happy medium.

Ms. McClure said she appreciates the enthusiasm for the pickle ball and tennis community to come out and support their efforts and being the test for the reopening. Ms. McClure said she drives by pickleball area on Saturday mornings and expressed the group aspect has been kind of shocking for her, with seating there now and it seems like the limits are being skirted. She said she appreciates the flexibility for the Parks and Recreation staff to see that the play can happen but thinks the group should take the responsibility of policing themselves.

10. Adjournment

Mr. Montgomery moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Engle. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Hazel Nevarez, Recording Secretary

Cassie McClure, Chair

DRAFT