



## **Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes**

February 14, 2024

The Centre at University Park

**Attendance:** James Ferstl, Samuel Ellis, Linda Smith, Mike Bernardo, Ron Bara, Quinten Whiteside, Cannon Fletcher, Quincy Grant

**Absent:** Ben France, Summer Campbell, Chemia Woods

**City Board of Director Liaison:** City Director Andrea Lewis, City Director Capi Peck

### **LRPR Staff:**

Parks Director-Leland Couch, Deputy Director Administration-Angela Nelson, Deputy Director Operations-Justin Dorsey, City Attorney-Beth Carpenter, Safety and Training Coordinator-Courtney Perry, Facility Recreation Supervisor-Susie Matheny, Parks Marketing and Social Media Coordinator-Brittany Nichols, Administrative Assistant Parks Director-Mahogany Burkhalter

**Welcome, and Introductions:** Vice Chairman Ferstl: Chairman Ben France is traveling. So, I'll be running the meeting today. We've got some new appointees and would like them to tell us about themselves and what they think about Parks. Quincy Grant is not here. Quinten Whiteside tells us about yourself. Commissioner Quinten Whiteside: My name is Quinton Whiteside. I am originally from North Little Rock, Arkansas. I live in Little Rock now. I went to school at Fayetteville for Undergraduate and Law School. I spent a little bit of time in Washington, D. C. for about five years. Now I'm back, I'm an attorney at Wright Lindsay and Jennings law firm. I'm also the Chief Operating Officer there. So, I've learned a lot about budgets. I love Parks and Little Rock. I think that you're doing a great job. I have two (2) little kids and we go to War Memorial Park. I like to play golf at Rebsamen. I've run the half marathon before. I used to play golf at Hindman and War Memorial all the time. So, I feel like I have a good idea of the park system. I'm so excited to be here. Thank you. Vice Chairman Ferstl: Thank you. Now we'll move on to roll call and then approval of the minutes.

**Roll Call and Approval of Minutes:** Vice Chairman Ferstl: Do we have a Quorum? City Attorney Carpenter: The bylaws state that the quorum is an attendance of a majority of the voting members serving on the commission? How many are serving on the commission? Parks Director Couch: We just got two (2) new appointees. We do have a list. Cannon Fletcher just walked in. Can you mark him present? Vice Chairman Ferstl: On my account, we're good, I just wanted to verify it. City Attorney Carpenter: As long as we have a majority of the commissioners that actually serve on the commission. Vice Chairman Ferstl: I think we're good. I appreciate that you guys have a copy of the January meeting minutes, so I'll entertain a motion for approval of those minutes. Commissioner Smith: I moved for approval of the Minutes. Commissioner Bernardo: I Second. Vice Chairman Ferstl: Thanks, any discussion or amendments to the minutes? No discussion. Motion passed. Minutes Approved.



**Citizen Communication:** Vice Chairman Ferstl: Do we have citizen communication? Please introduce yourself. You've got three (3) minutes. Citizen: My name is Barry Goldberg. I am here to talk with you today about Macarthur Park. I was the chair of a committee. The rotary in the Little Rock area banded together in 2004 to establish a rotary grove in Macarthur Park, the agreement with the city when we put it all together. We worked with Pete Rausch and the Parks department. The agreement was that we would fund the grove, and we would provide volunteers to help to get them planted on planting day. The city would then be responsible for the trees and the plaques that went with them. You can see that the only thing left standing is one (1) tree and one plaque. I'm not very involved locally. I travel a lot. I have not been there for a long time. I left my seat when the Macarthur group was established. I am here to figure out how to get that Grove reconstituted. It was a collaboration between the rotary clubs and the city. Unfortunately, care of the trees and watering the trees, was required. They're gone. So, I don't know how to move forward. But I'm here to find out if we can get some energy behind it from Parks. Vice Chairman Ferstl: Barry, when were those trees planted? 2004? Yes. Director Couch: I appreciate you coming today and sharing this information. I was not aware of any of this. I was aware of the plaque, but I didn't know about the hundred (100) trees. Do you have any information? Any kind of agreement that we can relate back to? If you can, leave your information. We'll reach out to you to further this conversation and make this right. I've known little about it, but we'll be willing to work with you to understand more about the project. We're excited to have trees at Macarthur Park. There's a great group that's been meeting there every Friday morning at eight (8) am. I recommend that you come and speak with them. They've only been doing it since I think, 2006. Citizen: They did know. They were there at the beginning and apart of helping to plan this. I do have records from the donors. I have pictures from the event. Pete Rauch was the lead for the city so any of his records would also probably be useful. Director Couch: I do remember Pete, but he's been gone for a long time. We can go through some of our records but if you have any record or the rotary has any records, that would be helpful. Please leave your contact information and we'll reach out and continue to work on this with you. Vice Chairman Ferstl: Unless anybody has a major objection, we're going to move staff reports to the end because I want to make sure we have enough time for the new business discussion. I think this will help us move forward in terms of structure and operation. So, we'll go to old business.

### **Old Business**

Vice Chairman Ferstl: Webex 2024. Parks Director Couch: I don't think there's any new discussion on that item. I would like to say I appreciate staff. I did request staff to do a lot of training on our Webex and we were able to get started without any problem. I really do appreciate the effort that went into finally, getting our Webex system up and working and all the little issues figured out. So, thank you. Vice Chairman Ferstl: Commissioner Smith: I'd like to discuss that item. Vice Chairman Ferstl: Director Peck, you mentioned the going back to, in person only? Is there any more information on this? City Director Peck: We hadn't had any discussion. We haven't had that yet. It's been mentioned before in board meetings, but there's been no discussion in months. But I'll get an update. Vice Chairman Ferstl: I have an update.



The Election of Chair and Vice Chair. Upcoming Events. Tell us about the Eclipse. Director Couch: So, we switched from Mike to Brittany but since Mike is here, he'll speak. He is the Assistant Director of LR Marathon, and this will be the last meeting before the Marathon event kicks off in March. Mike Garrity: Thank you. We are sixteen (16) days away from the marathon weekend. March 1<sup>st</sup> through March 3<sup>rd</sup> are the dates for our weekend of events. Friday is our Health and Fitness Expo. This event is at the Statehouse convention center on Saturday at 7:30am. We have our 5K and our 10K, which are both completely sold out. The expo will start again, on Saturday, 8am to 5pm. The hours are a bit different from what they were in the past to try to catch the 5K and 10K runners after they finish, so they can still come to the expo. At 11 am, we have our kids' race. It's their final mile. They run their twenty - six (26) miles when school starts. They plan it out so that they run their final mile on that Saturday of race weekend. Right now, we're at about 1250 kids signed up. We were hoping to get upwards of 1500, but 1250 is still pretty good. We have about 650 parents, guardians, and adults who are running with them as well. So, if you have not seen that part of the race weekend, it's pure and utter chaos, but it's wonderful to watch. It's on La Harpe. You can be in Riverfront Park and watch it. You will get to see 1200 kids run down and come back. They get to go through the big finish line, like everyone else on race weekend. Then on Sunday, we have our marathon and half marathon.

The Marathon is completely sold out and the half marathon has about 50 spots left. There will be 4000 runners on Sunday running. Saturday, it's a total of 4500 with the kids race, the 5K, and the 10K. So, we're about 98 % sold this year. Last year we were 75% sold out. So, we've seen the numbers go up this year. Its coming back pretty well, since Covid. The big change for us this year is the marathon and half marathon course. We're going back to the pre I-30 construction course. We're going to shorten the distance we run in North Little Rock and expand where go in Little Rock. We're now able to go east of I-30 without it being interfered with, from all of the construction. We're going to go out near Falcon Jet on the North end of the airport. That's our furthest East point. Our furthest West point is Murray Park. We go out to the Dog Park area and then all the traditional areas we've been to before. We'll be going by the Governor's Mansion down Main Street and Central High School and going by the State Capital and seeing all the highlights there. So, it's a great weekend.

If you want to come down, and see? On Thursday of race week, which is 2/29 at 2pm. We're doing a walkthrough of the Convention center. You'll get to see how everything's set up and get a behind-the-scenes look that not many people get to see. It'll be at 2pm down there at the convention center. We're bringing our Public Safety officials through. This is so that if anything happens, they have an idea of what's happening down there at the convention center. But of course, we'd love to have the commission down there as well. There's no need to RSVP or anything. You can just show up at the bottom of the escalators in the Marriott. This is where we will be gathering before we start our walkthrough. That's all I have. Any questions? Commissioner Fletcher: Do you have any idea of how many different states and countries people come from? Mike Garrity: Traditionally, it's all fifty (50) states. In the past, we've had up to fourteen (14) different countries. Not sure what the numbers are right now, this year, but I believe all fifty (50) states are represented. We usually get a pretty good contingent from Mexico, Canada, and England. In the past, China has been a heavy participating group as well. Thank you.



Brittany Nichols: I'm going to run through some small event highlights. So, a few days ago we attended the State of the City. We had a table set up out front for the citizens and residents that were attending. We got some people to sign up and engage with us. So that was a really great response. I think Active Aging Seniors also hosted Mardi Gras. We had our 1<sup>st</sup> annual Sneaker-Ball at one of our community centers. That was a success. There will also be various Valentine's Day parties and dances going on. This week, as well as later in the month, a Black History Month program in partnership with the Old State House, and then of course we've done a lot of Eclipse planning. Shawanda isn't able to be here to touch on that. We have released a timeline to the city of Little of Little Rock as we ramp up communications. Also, a traveling planetarium will be installed at one of the community centers and will be giving away some glasses. Lastly, the STEAM program that Stephens is orchestrating with the Museum of Discovery will be the day after your next commission meeting. So, take a look at our city calendar. All the events are there, as well as on the parks and recreation calendar.

### **New Business**

Vice Chairman Ferstl: Thank you so much for that. Okay, we're moving on to New Business and with the presentation for the Hindman Park Neighborhood Association, we're ready for you.

Parks Director Couch: I'd like to welcome City Director, Joan Adcock as well. She's in the room and she's part of this group. Thank you. Presenter: Good afternoon, commissioners, my name is Venita Franklin. I am representing the Hindman Park Committee, which is a subcommittee of the Hindman Park Community Neighborhood Association. Everyone should have a copy of our recommendations for Hindman Park. First of all, I want to start out with the members of that committee, Director Joan Adcock, our president. Mr. David Houchin, who is here. He's a member Chuck Bishop is not here, but he is one of our members he had other business to attend to. Mr. Maryland McBride, who is here. MS. Catherine who's not here and myself, Venita Ross Franklin. I have been nominated secretary by City Director, Joan Adcock, thank you very much. All of the members have lived in the Hindman Park community for twenty (20) plus years and our main concern with any upgrades is the noise consideration.

All of the neighbors that border, including myself border the park. So, our main concern would be the noise. No excessive noise or activities in the park. I personally visited about ten (10) parks, and I was most impressed with what was going on there and I recommend that some of the things that are going on at River Front Park take place at Hindman. Number one (1), is the upgrade to Ballfields and basketball courts. Number two (2), also an upgrade on our playgrounds to include Splashpads and disability accessible playground equipment. I took pictures and I submitted them to Director Adcock and we both were really impressed with the splash pads. Number three (3) is to add picnic tables in various areas throughout the park with our acreage. We feel like that would bring about some beautification to our parks and make them a little bit more accessible for people that are visiting. Number four (4), upgrades and repairs to the clubhouse upstairs and downstairs for future neighborhood association meetings and events. Our clubhouse is a little literally falling apart. The animals and the critters are taking over. But we think that upgrades to the clubhouse could make it functional for different events for our community and possibly bring some revenue as well. Number five (5) upgrade to the tennis cords to include pickle ball. We have some elderly people in our community that would love to



see pickle ball added to our tennis courts. Number six (6) is to widen the road leading up to the clubhouse and also the lighting that leads up to the clubhouse in the wintertime months. It gets dark at five (5) o'clock. There's no lighting there. So, Number seven (7) one (1) of our recommendations is to add lighting going up that road. Also, beautification because the, the brush is kind of growing out of control. Of our recommendations about widening that road, this would be because it's a really tight fit when driving up and down that road. Number eight (8) is on-site security in light of increased criminal activity in the park. There's a picnic bench. A lot of people go back there to fish. A lot of people go back there and shoot off their guns in broad daylight. The police have told us to call sometimes they ask for a license plate. Of course, I never can see a license plate, but there has been sometimes after they're done shooting. So, one of the things that we recommend is that there be on site security that can kind of just be visible and I think that's a big part as long as there's some visibility of security. Number nine (9), secure and upgrade the gates at all entrances to the park. People are getting into the park in other ways, outside of the, the two main entrances, there's a main entrance on Brook-view, then there's another main entrance on Hindman Park Way. So now that house is there, there have been times when people literally drive between her house and my house to get down to the park. People that found ways to get around those gates. They're not secure. People are getting in there, going up the hill and staying there all night.

Number ten (10) build entrances on Hindman Park Way and Brook-view that actually lists the name of the park. Other parks have little monuments that have the name of the park there. We don't have anything like that. So, we'd like to have signs. We're trying to make our neighborhood more of a community, more inviting to neighbors, and to people who are coming to visit the park. Number eleven (11), fence off unallowed entrances to the park. Entergy came and cut down all the trees to prepare for the winter storms. But now there's clear visibility into the park, that also creates a problem. There needs to be something that separates the border of our homes from the park. A fence would be wonderful. Number twelve (12), build a larger second (2<sup>nd</sup>) pavilion in the park that's located just before driving up the hill to the clubhouse. We only have one (1) pavilion, we have one (1) playground area right next to the restrooms. As well as some benches that are strategically placed throughout the park. This would be more inviting to visitors to just come. People can come and eat lunch. Number thirteen (13) a bulletin board at the Hindman Park Way entrance. When we have neighborhood association meetings, we have to take signs and we stick them in the ground, at strategic areas throughout the neighborhood. We place them where people can see that we're having a meeting. But if we had a Bulletin board right there at the entrance of the park, it would allow all of our neighbors to know.

I started the Welcome wagon committee where we would actually go door to door, introducing ourselves to the neighbors. So now we are a little bit older, and nobody can go door the door anymore. So, a Bulletin board would be functional at least at getting some information out to our community about what's taking place. Number fourteen (14), clean out the creek and fishing areas. There are down trees. There are all kinds of debris. When it rains hard, the streets flood, and whatever the trash is, it just flows right on down the creek into the area that used to be the golf course. Then it floods and you cannot even see that picnic bench. So, cleaning out the creek would help that area. It would make it a little bit more comfortable for people that come out there to fish. It would also help the beautification of the area. It would make the creek look



better if that was cleaned out. I have one (1) that's not listed here. In a Maumelle Park they have a Band Pavilion. I'd like to see that so events could be hosted there. In conclusion our committee intends to solicit corporate sponsors as friends of Hindman Park in order to secure financing to support future upgrades and agree upon needs of the park. In Riverfront Park there's statues and markers. We would love to see some of the similar things going on there happening in Hindman Park. Vice Chairman Ferstl: Thank you for that. Does anyone have any questions? We appreciate that. It was a great presentation. I am sure Director Couch, and his staff will go over this and formulate an answer.

Director Couch: Thank you. I appreciate the presentation. I'd like to share a few things about the Hindman Park area. There are two (2) different areas. There's Hindman Park, which has a restroom, ball field, playground, accessible pavilion, and all the amenities of a neighborhood park. Then there's the golf course with the pro shop. The board chose to close the golf course and currently the Parks department doesn't have any funding for the two hundred (200) plus acres of land. We are trying to achieve maintenance out there. There is a great Disc Golf course out there. It was voluntarily built by some Disc Golfers. There's a lot of great things going on. We would like to get some additional funding for that, and hopefully there'll be some way to achieve that in the future. I love your list. There are many things that I have on my list. There are some things that we can achieve just from a maintenance standpoint that can be fixed. Some of the big capital items, we'll have to figure out how to get funding for that in the future. So, I appreciate that.

We have a place where you can fill out a special infrastructure request form on our website. I do recommend that you apply. These requests will be for our future bond money that we will have. We haven't allocated all of the bond money. We're spending some of that now. We'll be having a new round of this in the future so that is an option. There's also a new process that has been started, that just got approved with the city board, and that's for a proposal for a master plan. We have a rough master plan. It's an idea that was generated from a task force group when the golf course was originally shut down. We're actually now moving forward. There will be a lot of community meetings to ensure that we have a lot of community input opportunities. So, your committee, your neighborhood, and all will be invited to be a part of that. I think this is an opportunity for you to share your desires there as well. Currently there's no funding for any of that to be built, but the opportunity is that we make a master plan. Then we can present it to the board and the board can help us find some money for the future. Thank you again for your presentation. Vice Chairman Ferstl: Any other questions from the commission before we move on? I just wanted to recognize the new Commissioner Quincy Grant. He is on virtual. I'm not going to ask him to speak at this point. Just so, you know, you'll have to introduce yourself next time. We're glad that you're on. City Attorney Carpenter: Mr. Chair if the new commissioner is online, to be counted present, he needs to be seen and heard. Vice Chairman Ferstl: We've got a quorum, so we'll just move on. City Attorney Carpenter: Well, it's my job to note that because, if he misses the requisite number, which is three (3) consecutive meetings or more than (25) twenty-five percent of the meetings. Vice Chairman Ferstl: Quincy, is there a way to turn on your camera and microphone? Ok, so I'm not getting a response, so we'll just move on. Next item is Chief Education Officer and Zoo Education Manager presentation.



Presenter: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Jessica Duval. I'm the Conservation Education Manager at the Little Rock Zoo. I am joined by Jennifer Glasgow from the Mayor's Office for Support. So, thank you for having me today. We wanted to share a little bit of information about the city of Little Rock Green school yards initiative. As well as a new effort that we are hoping to be adopted this fiscal year, if possible, called the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights. Just a little bit of historical context, the city of Little Rock and the Little Rock School District adopted or agreed to the Green School Yards Initiative in 2021. So, we're in year three (3) for the Green School Yards Initiative. The broad goal was to help increase access and opportunities for children to spend time outdoors. I know that's a value that we have at the Zoo along with the Parks department. I did want to mention that the Green School Yards Initiative did start as a cohort that was fiscally supported in collaboration with the Children in Nature Network and in partnership with the National League of Cities.

The Little Rock Zoo in 2023, helped take a leadership role in managing the Green School Yards Initiative with a larger team of stakeholders. Using different city departments. We do have Shawanda from Parks sitting in on that. We do have nonprofits who are involved and community members who are passionate about the initiative. Research shows that children who learn and play in nature are healthier, happier, and perform better in school. This image that you are seeing shows the countless number of benefits that come from having green spaces that children have access to. That can be on their playground at school. That could be their local park. That can be any green space within the city limits. That they're able to explore, spend time learning, having fun, and engaging with others. However, we do know that access to green spaces is unequally distributed amongst the population. We do know that there are countless benefits to spending time outdoors and this initiative is to help increase those opportunities for students. Not only of Little Rock School District, but also our residents here in Little Rock. We are focused on the children though, but we know with children there comes their caregivers and all of the other folks who might be in a family or community unit.

These images are of heat maps with an overlay of where a couple of our Little Rock School District schools are located. They show attendance zones. As well as schools that have disproportionately benefited from Cardio metabolic conditions. So, students who may be experiencing higher rates of obesity or some other health concerns. It's my understanding that when the Green School Yard Initiative was started, this was one of the major influencers in making sure that it was brought to life. We're able to help create transformations at certain schools across the school district, as well as thinking about the larger picture of green spaces. There are similar health disparities with obesity related conditions of adequate sleep, and strokes. All of those kinds of health-related items that you saw as the benefits we are seeing in these areas. We did have a little bit of data collected. When they do the BMI recordings (that are mandated for all Arkansas Public Schools) children that are under the fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) grade do not see drastic disparities in their health with their BMI. But when they hit fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) grade, we start to see a much greater impact.

Dr. Michael Thompson (With the support that we have from UAMS School of Public Health) has been helping us with the Green School Yard study. To help us make data driven decisions that will help us measure the impact that we might have with transformations at our pilot schools. We have two (2) schools. We're currently working with Stephens Elementary and



Washington Elementary. In his preliminary data, from students who are in the fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) grade or higher. We see a disparity between the boy's activity level and the girl's activity level. There is more of a prevalence of severe obesity amongst fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) graders. This is something that we're just thinking about. The total picture of health equity along with health and wellness, in our city. This is apart of the Green Schools Yard Initiative, the cohort that we're also a part of, the Childrens and Nature Network, and National League of Cities focus to establish a Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights. Here in Little Rock.

We are one (1) of fifteen (15) cities that have been a part of the Green School Yards Initiative. We are looking at ways that we could adopt practices to help us come up with common language and support. This could potentially be used for policy in the future for these transformations, things like joint use agreements. We thought that a Children's Bill of Rights would help us have that common language, identify support, or how we really look at how to redo playgrounds at the school district level. Also, how parks can think about how they develop play spaces. Once we get far enough along to think about joint use, how can we ensure that students and youth of our city are able to benefit? Whether they have immediate access to a green space at their school, or if they're able to go to a nearby park for that. So, on the slide, you can see some draft language about a Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights. I want to be clear; we are still in the initial phase for this. It's still a draft format. Some of the things that we are thinking about that we want every child in a Little Rock to have access to, is shade when playing outdoors, clean potable water near playgrounds and gathering spaces, safe pathways to walk to school, community center gardens to learn about where food comes from and how it nurses our bodies, the ability to explore, play outdoors, safe, welcoming, culturally affirming places, opportunities to compost and recycle for a healthier environment, the ability to participate in outdoor learning and discovery as part of their school day. Bike, ride, hike, hunt, or forage on public lands. Splash, swim, paddle in lakes, ponds, and community pools. Protect and preserve our environment for future generations. So, there is a draft document in the works. That is something that we are recommending and hoping to have support from this commission, as we work through its final format. Hopefully it will be adopted this year in 2024.

Fifteen (15) states and six (6) cities have already implemented or are developing their own Children's Bill of Rights. They're out there if you are not familiar with the concept, process, and what it can mean for their policymaking. We are hoping to get support from the commission on this as we look to move forward. Hopefully, to adopt it in the future. If you guys have any questions about either the Bill of Rights or School Yards Initiative. I'm happy to help answer those. Thank you. Vice Chairman Ferstl: I appreciate that. Any questions? Commissioner Bernardo: Thank you for your presentation. Is there anything that you think Parks and Recs does, that we need to do better, be mindful of to align with your initiatives? Presenter: I do think that the work that we've already been doing in collaboration with the Parks department is great. An area of focus that the Children in Nature Network and National League of Cities has started a grant funded initiative help build capacity within the city. We actually have a full-time position. That part of the job is now dedicated to supporting Green School Yards Initiative. They're addressing the idea behind play structures and not just having your traditional structures. Helping to create more natural looking, green, resilient spaces that children can play in, and have creativity. We do know that in some of the preliminary work that we've been doing with





playground transformations show that the current playgrounds installed are very expensive because there are these large metal structures. Not to say that those don't encourage a lot of play and activity. Then some of the ideas around how we create shade as we're having a change in the environment. It's getting hot in cities. We're trying to make sure that we have areas for children to have rest and respite. In the school space, children spend their entire time indoors. There is a benefit to taking learning outdoors and into the environment. So, some of the ideas we've had in the core group for the initiative are for the schools to have outdoor classroom designed areas where they can take learning into those spaces. That is something that parks could consider as well when they're developing their spaces if they're in close proximity to a school. Vice Chairman Ferstl: Anymore questions? Parks Director Couch: I have a few. But, Jessica, I'll meet with you after. I think we're getting kind of pushed on our timeframe here, but great presentation, and I appreciate you working with our staff. I've shared this with some of our staff and advised who Jessica can reach out to as well to discuss outdoor recreation. Thank you.

Vice Chairman Ferstl: Quincy? Can you hear us? Commissioner Grant: Yes. Vice Chairman Ferstl: We just needed, from a legal perspective to be able to hear you and see you on camera, to count you in. Vice Chairman Ferstl: There is something I want to discuss with you all and open it up for discussion. If we have to wait to decide next time that's fine. But, if you'll look in your packet at the copy of our bylaws, under responsibilities on the first page, second item responsibilities of article two, if you look through these bullet points, you're going to see words like advise, you will also see recommend. Someone might disagree, but to me, those, those words have a different feeling, although they're similar to me. I just don't think we're doing enough of this. We need to do more of it to conform to the bylaws. Ben and I know would like to create more opportunities for us to make some decisions and to actually give our recommendations and support. We actually want to vote on items.

I think there's some different ways that we can do this. I want you to think about it. We can discuss it here a little bit and if we have to discuss it more next time, we'll do it. First thing is staff reports. Staff reports are important. It's in the bylaws that we have staff reports. But I can read. You can read. So, to me, I think historically that's taken up a large chunk of our meeting time that could be spent more productively. So, my suggestion to think about is to have staff reports printed out. Have them here and available if we have questions. But not take up time listening to what's printed out for us. The second thing I'd like for you guys to think about is that I'd like to see an agenda item or a report from the Parks Director. It should be on the initiative that he plans to take the city board. So, if he plans to take something to the next city board meeting, I would like for us to hear that, and to actually act, and vote to recommend to the city board that it'd be approved or not recommend. I'd like this so he can go to the city board meeting and have something in which he could say that we discussed it, and they believe strongly in this. I think that helps him. I think we really need to have a line-item standard. To have one (1) presentation each time and maybe we don't have to use it. These are some of agenda item changes that I think we'd like to see. I'll say let's do no presentations next month and get to business. I think we need to discuss our subcommittees and, and their viability. I think we need to decide if it's useful to have the committee and who's the best person to take that on. We want to make sure that we get some value out of those. Social media for example, now we've got Britney. She didn't need our opinion on a lot of that stuff. I don't think unless she needs it. I think



we need to talk about running out of time today. Just open it up if anybody's got any comments right now, otherwise we can put this on the agenda for next time and really take some formal action. City Attorney Carpenter: I appreciate the attention to revising the agenda to be more useful. I think to comply with what the bylaws intended; I support these changes. I'm ready to see some of these changes and I agree the limitation to one (1) presentation would be really good. Vice Chairman Ferstl: Not that they weren't great, anybody else want to comment. Parks Director Couch: I think we're towards the end and this could be a great discussion, but we're running up against people's schedules. Something to Discuss, especially if we're going to be discussing more than updates and things of that nature, I think we need more time. Vice Chairman Ferstl: If we can get an agenda that works more and it's more valuable than maybe we will free up some time, but if we need to add time, I'm certainly open to that discussion. Anybody else make a comment? Okay, we'll put that on the agenda for next time.

### **Board Liaison Feedback**

City Director Capi Peck: Thank you I'm not a voting member, I am the liaison, but I think those are all excellent suggestions. I love seeing the staff reports, but like you say we can read and that seems to take up a big chunk of time. Regarding what you're asking about, more discussion when Leland comes to the board. He does his homework, but I'm not saying that we should all weigh in, but Leland's pretty smart and knows his way around. We have an inordinate number of parks for a city, our size and maintenance has become a big problem. With the pandemic, a lot of people for the first time or since they were children rediscovered our parks. People were seeking a place to be outside, be safe, and they flooded our parks. We broke records that year and I think that's continuing because it's such a natural beautiful resource. We have some difficult things head of us at the city. If you listened to the State of the City address last week, we're going to go after the sales tax again. I personally think if we keep it focused on, on the three (3) P's. Which is the kind of sales tax initiatives that almost always pass that's public safety, public infrastructure, and parks. There is a fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) port investment in the port, but we have got to fund our parks and do a better job of maintenance. I think you'll hear more about the sales tax initiative. I don't believe that the board has had an opportunity to weigh in yet. I appreciate your expertise and want to have more feedback, but Leland probably has a list of about 500 items that we need in our 63 parks. He does a great job of getting grants, funding these things, checking the temperature of the board, and kind of chipping away at these things, a little at a time.

Parks Director Couch: I do appreciate the compliment very much. I've talked to the Chairperson and the Vice Chair at these meetings and what they're referring to in the bylaws is that the commissions are to advise us on what the Parks Director and Parks department spend their money on. There's no way we're going to get down to what we spend every day, but I think it's an opportunity that I can put on the calendar to let them know about some of the items that we're planning on taking to the board. If it rises to the level of going to the board, those are big decisions and big money items. I would want to have my commission advise us on those items. I feel that it'd be great to show that commission was included in the decision making and that fully supports this. Obviously, if they don't fully support, it might not be something to take to the board and need to discuss it a little bit more. I think this is a great conversation and I appreciate it. I just wanted to share two (2) dates that are really important. February 29th at five (5) pm.



There's a Reservoir neighborhood meeting at The Unitarian Church on Reservoir Rd. It's about the tornado recovery of the park and we have a lot of staff who will be present to give information and presentations. So please come out and support us. Then, there will be a meeting on March fourth (4<sup>th</sup>). We're having a public meeting on improving the trails in North Allsop Park. We're looking forward to getting some community input on that as well. I'll let the Vice Chair close out unless Capi has something.

City Director Peck: The board we now seek input from boards and commissions and a lot of times when there's something that pertains to a particular boarding commission, a letter will be read. That the commission supports this or that. I would also encourage all of you as individuals to work with your ward directors or at-large directors. If there's something in particular, in your neighborhood or at your favorite park, that's our job. I think we have to just work with the board. The city board works together with the commission and works with Leland. Come up with some things that are feasible for us to do at this point in time and maybe we can come up with a package that the public will have an appetite for, in the general election in November. I don't really know anything about it. I just know that the mayor mentioned the four (4) P's. I'm on board with it.

Commissioner Fletcher: Leland are you all going to put up anything regarding Reservoir such as signs. The neighborhoods that are trying to learn off of that. I mean, all those neighborhoods should know about this because it's their park. Brittany: I'm helping set up that meeting and doing the community outreach to get folks in that community there. So today I met with the Unitarian Universalist Church, and they are connecting me with someone in their congregation that has a list of all of the apartment managers. We plan on sending direct communication to the apartment managers, the community right there, the neighborhood association. I'm also meeting with Joshua Baxter who has been on the front lines, talking about this with the community. So, we'll use those people and vehicles to try to focus the, the outreach on the people that will be using the park. City Director Peck: Also, since that is my ward, I have reached out to all the surrounding HOA's people in Leawood. There's not really a Neighborhood Association. It's a pool membership thing. I've gotten my word out to the people that call on me frequently who live in Leawood. Vice Chairman Ferstl: The next meeting is going to be March thirteenth (13<sup>th</sup>) back here. You will have the immensely talented be Ben France running the meeting, hopefully. With that, we're adjourned.

Meeting Adjourned at 1:12pm