

Park Board Minutes
July 16, 2019

Members Present: Candy Sullinger, Gabe Miller, David Parish, Bob Simmons, Julie Wolfe, Andrew Brown and Jamie Whiteis

Members Absent: Danielle Dingman, Scott McCaulley and Garrett Vanderpool

Staff Present: Cindy Shook, Jason Reinsch and Marsha Fulton

The meeting was called to order.

Gabe Miller made a motion to approve the Park Board minutes dated June 18, 2019. Julie Wolfe seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Business:

1. The first item on the agenda was the presentation of the financial report for June 2019. Cindy opened the item by stating that it was always exciting to see this report because it showed half of the year and gave a good picture of how the department had done so far. Cindy noted that the pool cost center was down significantly due to the large amounts of rain that the area had experienced, especially early in the pool season. Cindy shared that not only were the daily admissions down, but there were a significant number of pool parties both private and during regular hours that had to be refunded. Bob stated that continuing to track the actual number or refunded activities might be beneficial if questioned about the revenue decrease. Andrew stated that over the weekend he had been at the pool and noticed the softball tournament and wondered if there was anything offered to the teams to entice them to use the pool. Cindy explained that the department actively marketed to our tournament visitors, and had been doing so for years, through a discount offer in the player's guide that is distributed to every tournament visitor. She also mentioned that we sometimes host World Series Opening Ceremonies at the pool to increase exposure. Cindy acknowledged that there was still time to recover and they would be keeping a close eye on the financials. Next, Cindy pointed out that the tournament revenue was up and she attributed it to the Firecracker Baseball Tournament that Jason and Carlie put together, which brought in around \$6,000 in revenue. Cindy then pointed out that the campground was again doing well, adding that the Corp. of Engineers running water was not causing a significant impact. Cindy went on to add that special events continued to be successful and increase in revenue, and youth sports were on pace with the previous year. Cindy noted that the expenditures for both parks and Liberty Plaza were up so far in 2019. Gabe asked if there was additional funding provided when the department took over Liberty Plaza. Bob stated that Liberty Plaza had been an unfunded mandate for the Parks Department. Cindy did explain that the city was looking into a possible parking system as a way to help offset some of the additional expenses that were being incurred due to Liberty Plaza and Downtown. Gabe then inquired how

tracking at the campground was going since instituting the new software. Jason stated that our new Campground Manager, Chad Glaser, had proven to be very data driven and felt between the capabilities of the software and Chad's desire to continue to see the campground grow and be successful, they would be able to put together beneficial information going forward. Gabe asked if they were tracking the satisfaction of the campers and Jason responded yes. In addition, through software, they were sending thank you cards at the conclusions of visits that offered an opportunity to complete a survey. Jason also noted that the software allowed the campground to auto generate things like birthday and anniversary cards as an ongoing marketing tool. Gabe stated that on the surveys they should keep them simple, 3-5 questions maximum. Gabe added that it would be great to have an aggregate view of the numbers and finances. Cindy responded that Chad will be asked to compile some of the information that would assist in decision making and pricing for the future in the off-season. Jason then added that he personally had been working on cost recovery models that tracked both the direct and indirect costs for many of the programs that are currently being run by the department. Gabe concluded by saying that he felt that it was important to document as much as possible regarding the campground in order to have beneficial information when asking for additional funding for campground improvements.

2. The next item on the agenda was the tournament update. Cindy shared that they were in the second of three consecutive Girl's World Series. She shared that USSSA had 63 teams in their tournament the previous week, FASA has 52 teams this week, and next week FASA was scheduled to have 56 teams. Jason added that in addition to the softball, there had been a volleyball tournament the previous week and there was a basketball tournament starting tomorrow. Andrew inquired about what percentage of the gate proceeds the department received. Cindy explained that the department received facility rental fees, not gate percentage. She added that a big financial benefit comes from the direct visitor spending in the Branson community while each tournament was in town. Gabe stated that a coach's survey would be great to solicit input from our coaches of ways that we could continually improve our programs. Cindy stated they have done surveys for many years and the biggest issue was trying to get people to complete them. Bob mentioned that during the recent sports presentation at the Board of Alderman meeting, there was a lot of dialog about the desire to see improved and more sports facilities. This led the board to the next item on the agenda.

3. The next item on the agenda was an update on the sports facility discussion. Cindy explained that a sports facility task force from the Branson Lakes Area CVB had been formed to evaluate ways to increase sports facilities in the Branson community. Cindy stated that the group was very passionate and had continued to have open dialogue with the City regarding ways to enhance and expand sports facilities. She acknowledged that some of the conversation at the Board of Alderman meeting did reference a lack of availability of facilities, as Bob had mentioned. Cindy went on to explained that the department always give practice times to teams, but when the season starts it limits the amount of practice slots at the RecPlex because games are

going on in the evenings. With that said, there continues to be opportunities at Alexander fields and at Stockstill Park. Cindy shared that David Large, the Athletic Director for Branson Schools, had attended coaches meetings, and shared with the coaches that the school facilities would also be open for practices for both baseball and softball and soccer. Cindy then stated that another issue that they had heard from a few citizens at the meeting was regarding the level of competition in the area. Cindy mentioned that larger cities like Springfield and Kansas City with much larger populations, naturally have a higher level of competition. She explained that in addition to ball fields there were citizens advocating for an indoor pool, more basketball/volleyball courts and continued trail expansions, all of which would require a dedicated funding source for the initial capital expense, as well as ongoing maintenance. Cindy stated that the department would love to see all of these expansions and improvements, but there must first be a plan to fund and maintain these new facilities. Andrew asked if they had ever looked into a PPEL, Properties, Physical Plant, and Equipment Levy. Cindy said she had not heard of that before, but if he could email her some information she would be happy to review it. Bob then stated that they were currently looking for a date to have another sports facility discussion, but July was packed so it looked like it might be sometime in August. Bob added that the City's responsibility was to provide a place for local citizens to play, not necessarily solve every problem. Cindy agreed, noting that higher level players/teams, would always find a place to play, but it was important to provide space and opportunities to all players. Bob then asked about the possibility of sharing space and facilities with Ballparks of America. Cindy stated that they had been recently working with BofA, but it was proving to be very challenging because both the Parks Department and Ballparks of America were essentially operating at the same time. Cindy did mention that they had found some dates that they could work together and definitely looking at it with from a fresh view point.

4. The next item on the agenda was an update on capital projects. Cindy opened this item stating that they had been reviewing 2019 and 2020 capital requests earlier in the day. Cindy shared that she was very excited that the campground road overlay was on track to be completed in August. Jason added that Springfield Striping and Sealing would be seal coating the outdoor walking path that goes around the soccer and baseball fields. Jason stated they were looking at an early September start for the project.

5. The next item on the agenda was the review of Lakeside Forest GPS integrated map. Cindy opened this item by introducing Alexis Hutchinson, intern with the Branson GIS Department. Alexis shared with the board her background and her field of study at MSU in Springfield. Alexis then explained how she had created a QR code and was able to integrate it with the Lakeside Forest map so that when a person scanned the code it would allow them to utilize the GPS in the phone to show them exactly where they were in relation to the trail they were on and locate the nearest trail marker. Jason added that trail markers were installed every tenth of a mile and they were in the process of having the QR code printed on stickers so they could be placed

on markers throughout the park. He noted that this system would be a great benefit for emergency management if someone was lost or injured in the park. Cindy added that it was easy to download the free QR reader and it read the code quickly and easily. Cindy added that they hoped to expand it to use on all the trails.

6. The next item on the agenda was the Parks and Recreation update. Cindy and Jason shared two videos with the board, one featuring Jason and the new fishing program at the Community Center and the other of Cindy being interviewed by Ozarks Live in regards to the USSSA tournament. With no additional comments the board moved on to member's reports.

Member's Report

1. Julie Wolfe shared that her AquaFit class was going well and she had two 18 year old boys in the class this time. Additionally, she shared that she thought it might be good to add non-slip tape to the pool ladders to assist some of the patrons in getting out.

2. Bob Simmons shared that he had recently visited with Cris Bohinc, and through their conversation, questions came up about park hours, specifically at Sunset Park. A new person had moved into that area and he is concerned about people in the park after dark. Cindy stated that while she always wants to be sensitive to the neighbors of the community parks, the hours were consistent for all the parks, and in that particular park, there are lights along the walking path. Candy Sullinger agreed and remarked that she thought consistency is important very important to allow for both citizens and law enforcement to clearly know the park times.

3. Andrew Brown shared that the Branson Craft Mall off of Gretna Road had recently closed and was being transformed into a trampoline park.

Gabe made a motion to adjourn. Julie seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Meeting Adjourned 6:30pm