

MESQUITE

T E X A S

Real. Texas. Service.

CITY OF MESQUITE PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

Regular Meeting held at
Westlake House
421 Gross Rd.

7 p.m.

October 8, 2009

MINUTES

I. Call to Order

Chair Rich Davis called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

II. Roll Call of Members

Present: Rich Davis, Linda Rose, Phillip Hawkins, Andy Leake, David Burris, Gregory Dyer and Jerry Jones.

Members Absent: Andrea Jasper

Staff Members Present: Cliff Keheley, Oscar Martinez, Lauren Miller, Travis Sales, Kevin Rogers, Craig Dishman, Crystal Cooksey and Lisa Keith.

Guests: None

III. Adoption of Minutes

Linda Rose made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 10, 2009 meeting. Phillip Hawkins seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

IV. Hear From the Public

None

V. "Star" Employee Recognition

Cliff Keheley introduced Robert Medina as the October 2009 Star Employee. Mr. Medina is a Chemical Application Technician for the Park Services Division. This is a one employee operation responsible for the application of pesticides at 67 parks and 1,600 acres of turf. During the summer he works 5 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday through Thursday and 5 -10:30 a.m. on Friday, to avoid higher wind speeds, higher temperatures and children/citizens in the parks, which all adversely impact our spray program. Mr. Medina accomplishes all of the spraying with little or no assistance. He has a good attitude and works diligently to effectively spray and treat all areas each week. His work is directly responsible for all of our turf grass awards. Travis Sales said that most cities employ upwards of six people to do the same job that Mr. Medina does as a one man operation.

VI. Old Business

A. None

VII. New Business

A. Recreation After School Program Discussion

Cliff Keheley said that we began to notice problems at certain recreation centers where we offer RASP and are looking at solutions. We will be making a presentation to the City Council and would like input and direction from the Advisory Board Members.

Oscar Martinez said that in 2001 children were hanging out, unsupervised at Thompson Gymnasium after school. MISD said do something or shut down the center. This is when the Recreation After School Program was created. The program evolved over the years and is now offered at seven locations. The centers are open to the public during RASP hours. Some parents have their children hang out at the recreation center or adjacent park area after school, rather than enrolling them in the RASP program. This is what has caused concern.

Craig Dishman gave a presentation of After School Challenges. Highlights:

- There were 315 children enrolled in RASP during the month of September 2009.
- There are a large amount of children not in the RASP program at the centers between 2-6 p.m. Children not enrolled in RASP do not receive adequate supervision and are not checked in and out of the center.
- Dunford Recreation Center had the highest average of after school patrons managed by three part-time staff. With Kimbrough Middle School next door, staff is challenged with young children intermingling with older children. We have had to break up several fights between middle school kids and have even had to call the Police on a number of occasions. The presence of Police at the center concerns some of the RASP children and their parents. Florence Recreation Center has some of the same problems. A lot of children hang out at the public park adjacent to the center. At Goodbar and Rutherford Recreation Center the staff to participant ratio after school is 1 to 30.
- Young children that do not have a participation card stay outside the recreation facilities in an environment which is not safe or ideal. The school has issues with property damage, vandalism and graffiti. This is not a safe environment for children who hang out in park areas with older children and adults.
- Non-RASP participants and adults pay a \$10 yearly participation card fee to use the recreation center, whereas RASP participants pay \$100 per month. In lieu of enrolling their child in RASP, some parents pay the \$10 fee for their child to go to the recreation center after school.
- Option 1: If no change is made to the current structure non-RASP children will freely continue to come and go at the center, which creates an unsafe environment. Revenues will not cover the center expenses. There is a misconception of parent expectations where some think that we operate like a day care facility. Some parents will continue to have their children receive a moderate amount of care for a minimal price.
- Option 2: Set age requirements where in order for kindergarten, first, second, and third grade children to be at the center during the hours of 2-6 p.m. they must be enrolled in RASP. Additional programs could be offered for the middle

school age group with daily, weekly, or monthly fees. This would create somewhat more of a safe environment. In most cases revenues would cover expenses. However staff costs would not be ideal, parents would have higher expectations, registration and collection of fees would be burdensome and RASP would be greatly affected. Maximum building occupancy codes could also become a factor.

- Option 3: During the hours of 2-6 p.m. offer “RASP only” at all of the participating centers. This would create the safest environment, check in and sign out would be mandatory, we would be able to offer and promote healthier snacks, have more quality, structured and organized activities with the revenues covering the expenses. However, some children would be forced out of the center. There would be no program for middle school children.
- There are 25 additional elementary schools in Mesquite where RASP is not offered. Those children do not have a recreation center to go to after school thus parents are utilizing other options for after-school care. Parents of children not enrolled in RASP schools would have to explore other after-school care options.
- In summary an unsafe environment exists for participants, the public and staff. Revenues are not covering expenses. We can have a quality and more structured program and are receptive to future possibilities with our after-school program.

Oscar Martinez said that after school, MISD vacates their campus grounds of students. There is a misconception of our facilities by some parents, which is apparent by the kids who hang out outside our buildings and in the back of the schools. Staff met with the school principals, who strongly encourage us to take control of the situation. This change would impact a lot of people. District Center Supervisor Crystal Cooksey said that when changes are made, parents will be irate because they want us to keep their kids in the center without paying \$100 per month vs. \$10 per year. Center staff has no contact information with the parents of non-RASP children.

Concerns and suggestions discussed by Board Members:

- Consider reducing the cost of RASP so that it is more affordable.
- Look into the possibility of developing a program for the Middle School age group and securing the facilities to support it.
- Graffiti and vandalism may increase if kids have no where to go.
- Disparity between cost differences associated with the \$10 annual fee and the \$100 monthly RASP fee is a problem and needs to be eliminated.
- RASP is not a day care program but is perceived as such by some parents.
- Increase the yearly center participation fee.
- Consider reducing the cost to financially challenged families.
- There is an existing unsafe environment for children and a liability factor when students are not enrolled in RASP.
- The priority is providing safety and well being for the children.
- Closing the centers for public use to certain age groups during RASP hours.

Oscar Martinez said that we plan to set the parameters, meet with the PTA's, and obtain support from the principals. We would send informational packets to the schools to be distributed to each student to take home to their parent.

Rich Davis asked for a motion to support and recommend changes in the RASP program that would provide better safety and well being for the children. Andy

Leake made a motion for the City Council to consider approval of such changes. David Burris seconded the motion with all in favor.

VIII. Subcommittee/Staff Reports

A. CIP Report

Lauren Miller updated the Board with the current status of the CIP Report.

Highlights:

- The City Council funded the additional amount needed for the Achziger School Park Project.
- With combining the cost of all three Park Signs Replacement bids signage for 10 sites will be funded.
- The Evans Recreation Center Parking Lot Project is 95% complete.
- Craig Dishman said that the Evans Recreation Center Renovation Project is underway. The interior of the facility will be painted, will get new windows, new cabinets and countertops, and new flooring. The project is expected to be complete by the end of this year.
- The City Lake Park Erosion Control Project is moving along.

B. Recreation Services

Oscar Martinez gave an update of the Recreation Services Programs and Events.

Highlights:

- Kevin Rogers said that despite the rain the Disc Golf Tournament took place this past weekend.
- Pumpkin Fest will be held at City Lake Park on October 17th.
- The 3rd Annual Haunted Trail and Campout is scheduled for October 23rd and 24th.
- The planning of Christmas in the Park continues.

C. Park Services

Travis Sales gave a report of the Park Services Division projects. Highlights:

- The Median Color Program planting will begin Monday. Due to budget cuts plantings will only be made in high visibility medians.
- The Gentry Trail Dedication is this week.
- The fish juice experiment has shown no impact or change in the turf.
- With the exception of an electric meter, the Town East/635 Project is complete.
- Sewer line construction will take place at Valley Creek Park from November through March.
- Park Services competed at the Parks Rodeo in Arlington and placed 5th out of 10 in our region. Farmers Branch was the overall winner.

IX. Board Concerns


None

X. Requests for Information, Agenda Items

None

XI. Adjournment

Andy Leake motioned to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by David Burris and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:26 p.m.



Cliff Keheley, Director
Parks and Recreation Department

Date Approved: 11/12/09