



City of Jonesboro

Municipal Center
300 S. Church Street
Jonesboro, AR 72401

Meeting Minutes Public Services Council Committee

Wednesday, June 5, 2024

4:30 PM

Municipal Center, 300 S. Church

SPECIAL CALLED MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ROLL CALL (ELECTRONIC ATTENDANCE) CONFIRMED BY CITY CLERK APRIL LEGGETT

Present 6 - Chris Gibson; Joe Hafner; Ann Williams; Brian Emison; LJ Bryant and Janice Porter

Absent 1 - Anthony Coleman

3. NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTIONS TO BE INTRODUCED

[RES-24:064](#)

A RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN FOR THE JONESBORO PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Sponsors: Parks & Recreation

Attachments: [Sloan email 05162024](#)

Councilmember Joe Hafner said, I will say, as I've read through this, it covers a lot of topics. It's very detailed if you get into the appendixes. I realize that there are some things that may not be explained as well as we might want them to over some confusion. I'm referring to Mr. Sloan's email over Beatrice Park and how it's described; but I think this is something that can serve as a blueprint for years to come. It's not just for one administration or another. It's something that I think is going to be very useful. If it's adopted I think it's something that we really have to stay on the administration as far as what the priorities are going to be. There are a lot of things in here about departmental reorganization, new parks, maintenance to old parks. I would be really interested. I mean, I don't need to know it today, but as we get into this moving forward, what the priorities are going to be in the short-term and long-term priorities.

Chairman Chris Gibson said, well to your point, this does provide us a pretty good road map of where we need to go. I think a lot of the administration of this project, or this plan, will fall on the shoulders of this committee. I think we will have to make a lot of those decisions and drive these initiatives forward. So point well taken. Anything else by the committee?

Councilmember LJ Bryant said, Mr. Chairman, I would just say I was really impressed

with that placer AI stuff that was in Rachel Anderson's article. I know Brian was quoted in that article, and Jeremy Biggs did some really cool data from the eclipse and stuff. That was kind of the missing piece to me in this big report would have been for the consultants to have used something kind of like what the city has, because I would think they have something like that—who visits the parks, what radius do they come from? I mean, it's kind of the same thought process on the JETS bus stops for folks walking from, and then even on traffic counts. Throw down a traffic counter, and just to help us make priorities, you know. I mean, you have to weigh all the things and try to treat the parks fairly; but by the same token, the parks that are highly utilized deserve some special consideration too. So I think that some of those tools like what you all used in that article today, I think they would be really cool to help us make some of those decisions.

Councilmember Ann Williams said, that touches on something that I mentioned at the prior meeting; and it is that you can have the best park system in the world, but if people that are actually in need of it and can utilize it and those that would very much benefit from it can't get to it, what's the point? And that is why I am really emphasizing us doing an expansion of the JET system; because for a kid on the north side to get to Craighead Forest without a car, Craighead Forest might as well be in another county, you know, literally for that kid. It makes me sad that we brag about how wonderful Craighead Forest is, and that is really cruel if kids hear that and think, how do I get there? So I really think we need to work on a public transit system that provides access to both Craighead Forest and Joe Mack Campbell Park for kids that need it, because they are in need of those parks and the experience they can have there.

Councilmember Joe Hafner said, Mr. Chairman, if I may add to that. One of the questions that I wrote down (I don't have to have the answer today) was how many of our parks, especially our major parks, have JETS stops? You know, Craighead Forest, Joe Mack, Allen Park, Parker Park, the large parks. Chairman Chris Gibson said, Danny, can you answer that right off the top of your head? Councilmember Joe Hafner said, I don't have to know it today. I think another benefit of having JETS stops at these parks would be the way we can use our funds for sidewalks and stuff near JETS stops. So to me if some of these parks need sidewalks, if they are big enough or used enough (back to LJ's point) that they should have a JETS stop, then what's the harm in putting the JETS stop there to help people get there? That goes back to the connectivity plan too, is we want to get people more connected so they can get across town and not in a car but on a bus, bike, sidewalk, their own two feet. And Danny, I don't want to get into the weeds today, but the access base assessment, it mentioned eight existing and funded aquatics facilities in Jonesboro; but the figure only showed four: two splash pads and two pools. So I don't know if that was just a typo, because it didn't have anything about the new proposed sports complex.

Parks and Recreation Director Danny Kapales approached the podium and said, if I had to go back and look, I would say they are bringing in the ones that are potentially privately owned like the Trim Gym or other locations that people have access to, but those would not be the ones that are truly public access ones. Councilmember Joe Hafner said, they just didn't show them on the figure, on the illustration, so that kind of confused me a little bit. Mr. Kapales said, but currently we only have the two pools and the two splash pads. And I think to answer your first question, I'm trying to think through it. I believe major park-wise, Craighead Forest, Joe Mack Campbell and Southside are the only three that are considered major parks and then the shooting range that do not have JET access. Everything else I believe has bus stops at them.

Councilmember Ann Williams said, and I have brought this up before and I don't want to be kind of a naysayer or killjoy; but splash pads don't really substitute for a pool as far as kids learning how to swim, do they? Mr. Kapales said, that is correct. You will not learn how to swim at a splash pad. But I do believe splash pads are a need throughout our community because it does provide activity and play and a place to cool off through a hot day. Councilmember Ann Williams said, yeah, there is nothing wrong with that, but my concern has been that there are a large number of kids growing up in Jonesboro not having access to learning how to swim; and I think that is a very big health and safety concern that you have people growing up, unable to swim, if they were to fall into a body of water, and they are denied the lifelong pursuit of swimming as a recreation. Because it is a very good aerobic type of exercise, nonimpact, something you can do throughout your whole life, and we are cutting a generation off from that by not providing a place to actually learn how to swim.

Councilmember Joe Hafner said, that might be something, I don't know if there are grant opportunities out there to get grants for kids to take free swim lessons. I mean, now that we have twice as many city pools, you should be able to teach twice as many kids. Mr. Kapales said, I agree, or at least be able to provide low cost swim lessons at some point. Councilmember Joe Hafner said, I grew up as a lifeguard at the YMCA. Mr. Kapales said, so you are ready to do swim lessons. Councilmember Joe Hafner said, I could teach them right now. I always told kids, I said, I can swim in a thousand feet deep water, and they are like, really? I was like, yeah, I mean, I can't touch the bottom, but I can swim in it. But that's the end of my talk. I have nothing else productive to say. Chairman Chris Gibson said, anything else by the committee before this goes really sideways? Anything by the community? Anything from the staff? Danny, do you have anything to add? Mr. Sloan, do you have anything to add?

Mr. Kapales said, just thank you all for looking at this and helping with it. I really do appreciate it. Councilmember Joe Hafner said, and I will say, I don't want to speak for Mr. Sloan, but I think this council, and it's in the ordinance on the adoption of Beatrice Park, we know what the deed restrictions are, and those will be followed. So I don't think there is going to be any issue there.

John Sloan, 1101 Neville, approached the podium and said, my sister has told me a number of other comments that aren't in that letter. I just hope that everyone who votes on that plan reads it as closely as she did. She didn't read just the part on Beatrice Park. She read the whole long plan. You know, I think what she mentions in there, it's really more of a vision and a list of tasks. I mean, a plan to me is something you plan. You've got your priorities, and you've got a way you're going to execute it. I can't see, and she couldn't either, any way that the city is in a position to say that this is an executable plan at this time. It's a great vision, but is it really a plan? Chairman Chris Gibson said, I think that is the way we've got to take it. We've got to take one bite of the steak at a time. We're not going to be able to eat the whole cow in one fell swoop. Mr. Sloan said, thank you for listening. Chairman Chris Gibson said, thank you.

Chief Administrative Officer Brian Richardson approached the podium and said, just to kind of echo some of that conversation, some of the suggestions in there are not just, say, a basketball net needs to be replaced here, or you need a park over here. But there are also some ideas. And there are some mindsets they want us to adopt as a city, you know, walkshed, just a general upkeep schedule of our parks, access, swimming, outdoor aquatics, soccer, baseball, all of those things. But there is also a mindset that we've already kind of started exploring that's in some of these areas that are defined as park lacking. You know, what are some zoning incentives that we can provide? What are some outside the box concepts that we can explore to help increase

parkland and also to help fund that? And of course we've got another committee right now that is looking at impact fees. We've got a committee that is kind of looking at, I guess it's more of an internal task force, it's looking at our zoning codes to see what can be changed there. So, yes, this plan, if you were to cut a check today, not many cities, if any, can afford to fulfill all the obligations on it. But also you've got to start somewhere and it does lay out some pretty immediate priorities that maintenance stuff that we can begin to work on immediately. Actually, in this year's budget, I believe there is \$1.5 million set aside for implementation in the master parks plan. So some of that stuff can start immediately being resolved. But also, again, just that the overall mindset about how we need to kind of rethink how we plan and prioritize not just parks, but everything related to a park like connectivity, safety, and all this stuff kind of exists in the same ecosystem. The inspiration behind the plan I think does provide that.

A motion was made by Joe Hafner, seconded by Brian Emison, that this matter be Recommended to Council. The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 5 - Joe Hafner;Ann Williams;Brian Emison;LJ Bryant and Janice Porter

Absent: 1 - Anthony Coleman

[RES-24:065](#)

A RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE JONESBORO HEALTH ACCELERATOR PLAN FOR THE JONESBORO PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Sponsors: Parks & Recreation and Grants

A motion was made by Brian Emison, seconded by Joe Hafner, that this matter be Recommended to Council. The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 5 - Joe Hafner;Ann Williams;Brian Emison;LJ Bryant and Janice Porter

Absent: 1 - Anthony Coleman

4. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Joe Hafner, seconded by Brian Emison, that this meeting be Adjourned. The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 5 - Joe Hafner;Ann Williams;Brian Emison;LJ Bryant and Janice Porter

Absent: 1 - Anthony Coleman