



City of Jonesboro

Municipal Center
300 S. Church Street
Jonesboro, AR 72401

Meeting Minutes Public Services Council Committee

Tuesday, April 16, 2024

4:30 PM

Municipal Center, 300 S. Church

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

Present 7 - Chris Gibson; Joe Hafner; Ann Williams; Brian Emison; LJ Bryant; Anthony Coleman and Janice Porter

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[MIN-24:029](#)

Minutes for the Public Services Committee Meeting on Tuesday, March 19, 2024

Attachments: [Minutes](#)

A motion was made by Brian Emison, seconded by Anthony Coleman, that this matter be Passed. The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 6 - Joe Hafner; Ann Williams; Brian Emison; LJ Bryant; Anthony Coleman and Janice Porter

4. NEW BUSINESS

5. PENDING ITEMS

6. OTHER BUSINESS

[COM-24:007](#)

MONTHLY UPDATE FROM JETS

Attachments: [Three month JETS ridership 2024](#)

Chairman Chris Gibson said, I don't see Lee here. So Danny, do you want to go ahead and do Parks? And then if he shows up, we will circle back.

Filed

[COM-24:008](#)

MONTHLY UPDATE FROM PARKS & RECREATION

Parks and Recreation Director Danny Kapales approached the podium and said, good afternoon. So, update wise, I will just start with a few of the last events that we have had here recently, and that was the eclipse. Hopefully you all had a chance to get out and see what was going on with it. I will tell you, we planned for Joe Mack, for

Southside, for Craighead, for the shooting range to have some impact. I think I was really surprised with Craighead even though I know it is just an absolutely gorgeous park. I think maybe some of my ignorance on thinking that folks are going to go to the soccer fields or the open play area at Southside and want to hang out, Craighead was full. We were estimating about 10,000 folks showed up with plates from all over. One of the things we looked at, you had your Wisconsin, you had your Idaho, Colorado's. We had Texas plates in Jonesboro, which was interesting because the eclipse came right through Texas. But they were here in town. We had folks from all over. But not to leave Joe Mack out, we had 3,000 folks at Joe Mack, and that park was full on a Monday. Same thing, plates from all over the place. And so the eclipse day, I felt like even if you didn't get out and see it at the parks, we had activity to the point that my guys out at the shooting range said basically about twenty minutes after it was over with, the traffic on I-555 was already backed up to the shooting range going toward I-55. That's a pretty good distance to be backed up as far as traffic flow trying to get back to either Memphis or somewhere else in that direction. I felt like that was a really good day, a lot good folks, people bragging on the parks. There was one couple that was from Miami that came up who had never been here. And they were like, yeah, we're coming to Craighead Forest for a vacation, we're going to come out and camp, spend the week here just because it's different. It's a different feel. It's a place to come and that is what that was supposed to be about, bringing people to town to want to do something different.

So we had that on Monday. We got everything turned around and cleaned up, and then this weekend came up. We had 54 soccer teams for our spring soccer tournament. We had somewhere pushing 60 teams for our baseball tournament. We had right at I think 20 teams for a softball tournament. Miracle League was going on. Then we had 145 high school and junior high trap shooters out at the shooting range shooting. So it's just, as soon as you got over with on Monday, you turn right around and you're trying to get ready for those activities again. But that doesn't mean we didn't have anything in between because we still had the junior high soccer games. We had the softball games. We had the baseball games. We had leagues going on. So it was just every evening, you had an activity. During the daytime, you're picking up, cleaning up and getting ready. So the activity was just constant even in this past week trying to get ready for everything. It was just continuous. You look at that one week, for us that is almost a normal week. Whether it's indoor or an outdoor activity, that is what we are doing. We are dealing with those different sports. And I think there were potentially some questions on numbers, things of that sort over the last few years. I brought quite a few numbers.

Some of the things I want to give some illustration of is, let's talk about junior high softball. That program has kind of continued to grow as a program that we started here in Jonesboro and has just continued to expand. You look at it over the last four years, it went from 21 teams, 23 teams, 25 teams, and this year we have 29 teams. That is teams from all around Northeast Arkansas that come to Jonesboro two or three days a week to play in games in the evenings. And those teams are getting prepped for their high school. The thing that I love about the junior high, when we started that program, there was a big gap. You saw young ladies at the 12 year old level, that was when the teams were starting to fall off. The girls were starting to fall out of the sport; and that was at the start of the junior high. Nothing was happening. And then they would hit the ninth grade. Coaches are starting out to try to pull them in to be high school, and they had to pick it back up. So they had a few years of just not playing, not training, unless somehow or another, you were just that one top player that was on a travel team and participating somewhere. And a lot of times it was either one top team here, or you were going somewhere else. Now we are providing 29 teams' worth of young ladies

playing on teams, getting ready for their high school. And it's just making softball that much better here in Jonesboro.

Same way with soccer. It's a continuous growth with the junior high program. As you look at it, in '21 it was 17, '22 was 21, in '23 it was 24; and this year it's 30. So those numbers continue to climb. And that reaches all the way up. We have a team from Poplar Bluff that continues to drive down every week for their games. They are not asking for people to come play them up there. They drive here to get their games because they know that this is where they are going to get competition; and their teams is just going to get better for that junior high program. Those add into, mostly everything I see here is a growth. I think some of the things I am seeing that are not as much growth right now, we are trying to evaluate what those are would kind of be your youth softball and adult softball. I am seeing a little bit of a downtick in those programs. I am hoping that with our new softball coordinator, that she is going to bring some different energy, maybe reach out to some other folks. She was a player over at Crowley's Ridge. She was a college player, so hopefully she will bring in some of that ability and just reconnecting with some Central Arkansas. I think that is another big piece we are seeing was coming out of Covid, you saw folks starting to stay home a little bit when it came to baseball and came to softball and play at their local fields. And then those local fields started doing what they saw. Whether it was us, Southaven, some of those other locations, what they were doing in bringing the quality of their facility up. If you go down to Central Arkansas, there are now a lot of quality facilities right there in Central Arkansas for folks where the large population of Arkansas is to travel. So just trying to find a way to entice them up here for a few extra events, a few extra activities is something that we are trying to figure out how to do just to continue to grow the program and get softball on a level that I think it should be in Jonesboro.

Chairman Chris Gibson said, what about the turf project, the soccer fields out at Joe Mack? Mr. Kapales said, yeah, so great question. That turf project is not quite complete; but with conversation with the contractor, they got it to a point where we can use it. That really helped out this weekend with the tournament and also with practices with the junior high league. Last Thursday, they allowed us to get on to the turf and start utilizing it. We had our first junior high games on one of the fields and our revolution travel soccer was on the other field for training. Like I said, not quite finished. There are some irrigation issues. I say issues, irrigation line that was on the fields that had to be removed and reconnected that they are finishing up, some wiring things of that sort that have to be finished. But we are right there at that finish line for them to be done on it. We did ask for a couple of changes in it where we moved some sidewalks, put some pads for the bleachers. So once they did it, you walked out there and saw our bleacher pads and you're staring at the wall of the turf; and you're going, hey, you can't really watch a game from here. So they made an adjustment, moved those bleacher pads up on the side, so you can set up on the side and watch the game. Once it was done, we saw some wet spots, some areas that were low lying after the concrete went in that we are looking at raising. So a couple little pieces we have asked them to make some adjustments on that added to that, but they are really close to being finished and that is going to be huge. They got to play on it this weekend in the tournament and people were just bragging. As I was driving around talking to folks at soccer and baseball, not that I was looking for just the ones to say all the positives, but that was what I was getting was positives from everybody that I was visiting with.

So to continue with the report on just different projects and activities, so the pool over in Northside, they were as of Thursday framing up for the concrete pad to get it poured. So we're at that point now where the above ground amenities, the play features, all those items are starting to get put into play with still the hopes that that pool will be

ready to go the week prior to Memorial Day. Fingers are crossed. Obviously when we deal with construction, you put a deadline in, you really hope you get there. So I am going to continue to hope and pray that we get to that point and be able to open up on Memorial Day weekend. Councilmember Ann Williams said, [inaudible] ...when that was announced last year, I thought, wow, that's pretty optimistic. But it may happen. Mr. Kapales said, it may. Our fingers are crossed. Construction and then the other side is hiring lifeguards. Obviously we've always had fun hiring plenty of lifeguards and now we have to hire double what we've always hired. So that is another piece is getting quality lifeguards in place and keep our kids that are in the pool protected. So we are in that process right now to get them in place. I know the pool we currently have, the Y pool, we are in the process of cleaning out the kiddie pool, getting it cleaned up and ready, redoing some wiring in it. Craig Light and I walked around and looked at some concrete issues that I feel like we have at that pool. We are going to see what we can do to amend those and then get them to come back out and respray some epoxy in those locations.

Chairman Chris Gibson said, are they going to stand behind that product, because from the feedback I've been getting, it is pretty rough? Mr. Kapales said, there are some areas, and those areas are where the thin set was close to the pole and weren't able to come up. We are trying to figure out if some water got underneath this winter and froze and caused that thin set to pop. But we are going to work together on how to put it back to what it looked like when we finished it first of the year. But, yes, pools, splash pads, I am trying to get those up and going at this point. Plenty of projects. You look at our soccer fields out at Joe Mack. All you have to do is go along the edge of the parking lot and walk any of the ones that have lights, and you will see how much activity we have had. I was walking them today, and right down the middle of every one of those fields, they are just, all the grass has been beat off every one of them. So now we are at a point to where we have got to go back and try to either mend them or potentially re-sod some spots; because they have taken so much wear and tear just early in the spring before the grass was growing. So those are decisions we are going to have to make; but it means that we have activity, and we have people on them.

Chairman Chris Gibson said, that kind of goes back to the conversation you and I had when we were touring those parks about rolling renovations on parks. I mean, they are going to see wear and tear; and we've got to get those on a rolling renovation. Mr. Kapales said, we do. We absolutely do; and just understand that we can't just keep fertilizing in the spring and hope the grass will continue to grow because it won't. There is a point where you have to strip a field down and completely rebuild it and start fresh again. I know there are probably some bigger questions that I am really happy to answer if you all have them.

Chairman Chris Gibson said, before we get into questions, I do want to go ahead. Danny and I talked earlier. I want to call a special called Public Services meeting for the 29th for the master parks plan presentation. We've allowed an hour and a half for that. We will start at four and go to 5:30. That way, we will allow plenty of time for the presentation and questions. Councilmember Joe Hafner said, what time on the 29th? Chairman Chris Gibson said, four o'clock. Anything else before we get into questions? Anything by the committee?

Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said, I do have a question. Thank you, Chairman. Assuming you getting out before it before I ask about the parks plan, so I appreciate it, but... Chairman Chris Gibson said, I was trying to get out in front of you. Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said, yes, I saw. I appreciate it. With that plan, will that be presented is what I am asking? Mr. Kapales said, yes, there will be a

presentation of the plan with Halff & Associates. Christian Lentz is the planner. He will be here to present that. The reason we did an hour and a half is so that he can go through the presentation and then give you all plenty of time to ask questions. Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said, second question, which is great on the increase with the numbers and all of that. It's great. I kind of referenced this a few times before, but with your extra coaches, concessions, employees, all of that that is needed, with the increase, is what we are having and who we have, is that commensurate of the increase right now? Are we able to take care of it? Are there issues in that regard? Mr. Kapales said, when you are dealing with players, coaches, volunteers, we do run into walls. We run into hiccups. We run into issues.

But I feel like I am starting to get a pretty good team in place in some different areas. For community centers, I have a young man coming in from Northwest Arkansas that has been a community center manager over there for many years, former college football coach, just a good guy; and he is supposed to be here May 6th to start. He is going to be managing all of our community centers. He is taking what he has learned over there. It's the first time we've had that. First time we've had somebody that is going to give me a layer between me and the part time staff at the community centers. You know, at this point, it has been, if we had an issue on Saturday or Sundays at the community center, I'm heading there. Two o'clock in the morning, we get an alarm call, I'm heading there. That has been the issue. So now we are going to be getting that layer. So yes, we are finding that part of the help that you all have given us as far as letting us be a little more flexible with the budget and with our organizational chart, we are getting some more help in places. Now when you start looking at dealing with the volunteers and concessions, we've got a young man in place right now. He is a school teacher from Marked Tree that is starting to manage our concessions as an overall manager. Part of the conversation I had with him today was I need you to start finding those people to be under you to be at each one of those facilities. Because, what, did I see him Saturday and Sunday? He was zigzagging between softball, soccer, all over the place himself. And it's like, I want you managing it. I don't want you burnt out. So, yes, we have those. We have those heavy, heavy burdens to make sure we run programs appropriately, and do it right for the numbers that we have. And I feel like we do a really good job. And I say we. It's really my staff. It's not me. I think they do a wonderful job carrying the load of the numbers that we have with a very small number of people that we operate with.

Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said, follow up. Do you think that maybe there needs to be some kind of push for more volunteers? Mr. Kapales said, yes. Good question. One of the things you will see, and I don't want to dip too far into the master parks plan; but that is actually one of the things that will be brought up is a volunteer coordinator. One of the things that we discussed is somebody that can actually be more on tune with getting volunteers, not just in our sports programs but overall in the parks system. I am with the EAST Lab groups all the time trying to work on plans and projects or Boy Scouts, Eagle Badges, and trying to help them through their projects. And a lot of times, I'm helping them plan their project from beginning to end, so I am doing an Eagle badge project for students where it really would be nice if we had a volunteer more involved in that. Does that eat up my time? It absolutely does. Does that put me in a position where tonight when we leave here, I'll be going back to the office to try to make up for that time period? So yes, stepping into the master parks plan, you will see an organizational chart that is going to be a bare minimum of what I need today to operate efficiently with where we need to be over the next ten years. Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said, thank you. That is all I had.

Councilmember LJ Bryant said, Chairman, a couple of random questions. Danny, how

is your deputy search going? So, part of the deputy search is actually waiting for the master parks plan to go through. That is another piece you will see is the potential discussion of where we would like to go with that, that deputy position after that plan comes out. Councilmember LJ Bryant said, I'll say, Danny and I were just chatting about this, as far as I know, stretching your resources. I mean, everybody at Craighead Forest does a really good job, but obviously there is not somebody there all the time. So we were talking about that. As the days are longer and you have a crowd at 7 PM at Craighead, and they have already done their last trash sweep, and then the trash is going to blow even if people are responsible as the trash cans get full. So I will be excited to see the master parks plan and see what resources we need to give you, because there could even be some savings. Because I think about a piece of trash and how much time a human has to walk with their little stick to get that piece of trash. So I think there are some efficiencies we will discover too in all of that. Mr. Kapales said, absolutely.

Councilmember LJ Bryant said, and last question for you. I noticed on Facebook, is there kind of a new logo that is different than the logo that you have on your shirt, or what was that image I saw today? Mr. Kapales said, so within Facebook, you're seeing some, let's just say, creative touches from the media coordinator. This is the logo. This is what we've adopted as our logo, but within Facebook, I think we are just being a little creative to bring some attention to the 400,000 touches that we've had on that Facebook page. And, with that being said, obviously I think you all know that Sloane has moved on. She has moved on to EAB with a promotion, and we were fortunate enough to be able to roll right into bringing Melody, used to be Melody Stotts, it's Melody Futrell now, and she has taken over that role as of Monday. So we just reloaded and brought somebody else right in. But, yes, to answer your question, that is just a little bit of creativity on our social media site. Councilmember LJ Bryant said, thanks, Danny.

Councilmember Ann Williams said, I want to point out, and a lot of people are amazed, you have the responsibility of the cemeteries also. And I was just saying to Chris that that stretches you thin, I know. Mr. Kapales said, it does. Councilmember Ann Williams said, is there any kind of problem with that? Or is there any kind of need you have with that? Mr. Kapales said, you know, really with the cemeteries, I am blessed to have a couple of pretty good folks that have some experience there that take care of it. Cemeteries, the part of the issue with it is what's about to happen, and that is the grass starts growing. If you ever went to a cemetery and saw all the grass growing around the headstones, they all have to be weed-eated. They all have to be trimmed; and that is time consuming. That is probably our biggest deal. And for me, I want to see our cemetery turf look as nice as any of our other parks. Councilmember Ann Williams said, I appreciate that, yeah. Mr. Kapales said, and so it's a pressure that I keep on them. And you know, this morning in our supervisors meeting, one of the questions I turned to the supervisor and said, where are we on our spray process? One of the things that I do require from my supervisors is that they get their chemical license so that they are able to be applicators and be able to spray and keep the weeds down. One of the things about keeping the weeds down in cemeteries, parks or anything else, is it helps you keep from having to mow as often. And even if the grass is grown a little bit higher, it looks so much better than if it's a bunch of weeds grown high. But to answer your question, getting enough part time staff during the summer months when it is really busy is probably our biggest challenge when it comes to cemeteries. Councilmember Ann Williams said, you all do a good job because I am always hearing people talk about how well maintained the city cemeteries are. Mr. Kapales said, I appreciate it. I am proud of those guys and what they do.

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7. PUBLIC COMMENTS

8. ADJOURNMENT

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

Aye: 6 - Joe Hafner; Ann Williams; Brian Emison; LJ Bryant; Anthony Coleman and Janice Porter