

Kern County Parks and Recreation Commission

**Kern County Administrative Building
General Services
3rd Floor Multipurpose Room
1115 Truxtun Avenue
Bakersfield, CA 93301**

**Wednesday, February 22, 2017
6:30 P.M.**

MINUTES

A meeting of the Kern County Parks and Recreation Commission was held on Wednesday, February 22, 2017. Chairman Faull presided.

Present: Bob Jamison, District I; Mark Faull, District II (Chairman); Carl Park, District III; Gregory McGiffney, District IV (Vice-Chairman); Manuel Barerra, District V.

Staff: Bret Haney, Division Chief, Kern County General Services Department;
Sandi Formhals, Division Chief, Kern County General Services Department;
Suzanne Boyd, Kern County Parks and Recreation Division

Others: There were 8 other people present

NOTE: Fa, Ja, Pa, Mc and Ba are abbreviations for Commissioners Faull, Jamison, Faull, Park, McGiffney and Barerra. As an example, Fa-Ja denotes Commissioner Faull made a motion and Commissioner Jamison seconded the motion.

Meeting called to order at 6:30 p.m. Flag Salute: Chairman Faull

1. Approval of the Minutes of November 30, 2016 & January 25, 2017

The minutes from November 30, 2016 needed clarification on the language on page 5, paragraphs 8 and 9. Suzanne transcribed the area in question verbatim and e-mailed to the Commissioners to better understand what was said.

Ba-Pa, motion to approve the amended Minutes from November 30, 2016. All ayes, motion carried.

Ja-Mc, motion to approve the Minutes from January 25, 2017. All ayes, motion carried.

2. Public Presentations

Lorraine Unger, audience member, asked why the Commission meeting minutes have not been available online recently. Bret Haney explained that the Parks division website is being updated and some of the links were broken. The updates should be completed soon. If anyone would like a copy of past minutes or agendas, they may contact our office.

Marion Vargas, audience member, informed the Commission that the phone numbers listed on

the Parks division website for the Park Rangers and the Maintenance Department at Hart Park ring but no one answers and it does not go to voice mail. Bret Haney will look into this situation to correct.

Harry Love, audience member, thanked Bret Haney and Ryan Alsop for coming to a community meeting at Hart Park, with very short notice, to discuss the many concerns of the park.

Kathleen Chambers, audience member, commented that she came to last month's Commission meeting and has loved seeing the community involvement regarding Hart Park. She believes our community can provide wonderful support and that there is great potential for the park. She asked how we can fill in the gap left by Director Lerude?

3. Correspondence

None

4. Old Business

a. Hart Park – Board of Supervisors referral to General Services – DISCUSSION

Commissioner Faull thanked everyone for their past participation in the Commission meetings and for bringing Hart Park to the forefront of the Board of Supervisors meetings lately.

Division Chief, Bret Haney, stated there is a challenge in General Services as they do not have a full history of the work that has been done since the Parks 2010 Master Plan. Due to the County budget there have been restrictions for moving forward with many areas of the plan. The Master Plan identified \$802 million worth of rehabilitation and needs for the parks by 2030. That was just for the parks and did not include anything for County owned buildings (Vets/recreation/senior, etc.).

Mr. Haney would like to get the right message out to the public. The media has distorted some of the facts. The proposed parking fees for Hart Park were only intended as a supplement to the park funds. The issues at the park are not just a trash problem.

Mr. Haney and Mr. Alsop received great input from the Ad Hoc Committee. After a few more meetings we will break the meetings down into some round table discussion groups. Next we plan to look into company and private sponsorships, grants, volunteers, social media, commercial opportunities, etc. not only for Hart Park but for all of the County parks in general.

We have been very blessed by some great volunteers in our County. Just to name some of the continuing volunteer groups: from an operational stand point, we have agreements with Little Leagues in Boron, Rosamond, Mojave & Delano who keep up our fields and make repairs to the facilities. Veterans, senior, and recreation buildings, if we have a lessee in place then they also maintain those buildings which is outside of the department's costs. Ongoing clean-up efforts in our parks by the Lamont Boys & Girls Club, Greenfield Walking Group, Keepers of the Kern, Building Healthy Communities, Friends of Frazier Mountain Park, Just Johnson's (specific to Hart Park and Lake Ming), Greenhorn Mountain Property Owners Association, Hermosa Neighborhood Association, the American Legion, and the Tree Foundation of Kern (tree plantings). The East Niles Senior Group helps take care of

scheduling and staffing of the buildings used for the summertime cooling centers. We have camp hosts at both of our campgrounds who, free of charge, help maintain the campsites at Kern River Park and Buena Vista Aquatic Recreation Area.

Some of the Kern County department and program volunteers have been: Juvenile Probation, Public Health, Work Release Program, CERT, CalWorks, Proteus, Sheriff's Inmate Crew, Fire department, and Public Works.

On the law enforcement side, we have eight (8) partner agencies for law enforcement on the parks heavy use days such as Easter Sunday and Mother's Day.

In addition, we have public and private partnerships of individual parks, such as in Lost Hills. Some of our facilities are being transferred to other jurisdictions. We have done that in Arvin, and we are currently looking at transferring Delano Memorial Park to the City of Delano. Our CAO, Ryan Alsop, is committed to the Parks efforts.

Bonds, parcel taxes, and sales taxes are outside of the department's control. We do have control of user fees but we do have limitations on implementing user fees. They will not entirely fix the problems but they do help supplement the funding. We are going to work hard to prioritize the parks needs. It will be a delicate balance with other County needs.

Commissioner Faull stated that the Board of Supervisors asked General Services to come up with a strategic plan for all of the County parks. He asked for comments from the audience.

Audience member, EJ Rutledge asked if the community meetings have started up yet?

Mr. Haney stated that this process has not yet started. We need to find a location large enough for the public to attend. The first few meetings will be open to the public, after that we will start smaller round table volunteer groups.

Harry Love, stated that the ad hoc committee will enhance the future plans for the parks. They hope to get involvement from a wide variety of people with a wide variety of interests throughout the county.

Commissioner McGiffney commented that the Parks & Recreation Commission is an oversight group. Things evolve with our parks and we need to decide what needs to happen at the parks. Our park users can tell us that. Concessions and corporate sponsorships are great but it won't solve all of the financial problems. There are legal and administrative things that need to happen as well. We need to consolidate wherever we can. New neighborhoods have tax funds from property owners. Not all of our parks have this sort of structure. We need long term solutions.

Lorraine Unger mentioned that some of the parks that have a history of working with the County Health Department and local walking groups have been very successful in resolving problems in the parks. They have done a very good job in bringing the community and other agencies together to resolve park issues.

Commissioner Faull thanked Ms. Unger for bringing up the subject. This can be a momentum for various healthy community groups to get involved with our parks.

Marion Vargas asked if Hart Park is completely in the County not the City? She asked if the Kern River portion near Hart Park will be part of the larger upcoming new County General Plan? She asked if the County owned any of the land across from Hart Park?

Bret Haney replied that the County owns some of the land across from Hart Park on Round Mountain Road. We will be putting up guard rails in some of the areas so that vehicles cannot park in the dirt areas across from Hart Park. He does not know if there is a plan to develop that land but it is the department's responsibility to maintain that parcel of land.

Marion asked if the public can donate funds to Hart Park?

Bret stated that there is a general donation fund and money can be specifically designated for certain parks or projects.

Barbara Long, audience member, asked if people can donate on the Parks website? Bret replied it is a very good suggestion and our department can look into setting that up, perhaps through the reservations system.

Bret Haney introduced Sandi Formhals, who is one of the four General Services Division Chiefs. She oversees the fiscal, administrative, and reservations staff. Bret oversees the grounds maintenance, Park Rangers, Security, building services, and operations. Bret will not be available for next month's Commission meeting so Sandi will attend on his behalf.

Kathleen Chambers stated that Hart Park needs a brand. Maybe the Parks website can also have a focus on each park. We need to build energy to focus on younger people through social media, etc.

Sandi stated that she met with two (2) CSUB interns that will be helping us with web updates and social media to help appeal to the younger audience.

Bret mentioned that General Services has grown quite a bit. They used to be in charge of 12 functions, now there are 18 distinct functions between 4 Chiefs. We have had a good record over the last 10 years of being very efficient with our budget and our operations. We are reducing staff where practical and condensing where necessary to save money. We are committed to doing what we can to increase our efficiencies and getting the right people and right equipment to do the right job.

Harry Love asked if the Sheriff's shooting range is a part of Hart Park and if they are on board with the potential user fees and possible parking problems?

Bret stated that the shooting range is on County owned property but he does not know if it is actually part of Hart Park. The range has been there for decades. Some people have brought up the noise issue from the gun range but this is something that will have to be addressed in later meetings. It is not very likely that the shooting range would be moved to another location.

Harry stated there currently seems to be many visions of Hart Park coming from the participants of the ad hoc committee. It runs the gamut of being nearly a theme park to being a peaceful tree filled sanctuary. How will these decisions be made?

Bret stated We have two (2) park planners on staff and they are going to work on the Hart

Park Master Plan. During the round table discussions, we will look at the challenges and public input then we will put together a plan for BOS approval. All is subject to funding.

Commissioner Park asked if \$750,000 per year is allotted to Hart Park? Bret stated the actual cost is closer to \$1.1 million which includes staffing, maintenance, supplies, utilities, everything. Part of the water for the park comes from the river and an irrigation tank. Commissioner Park stated that someone needs to take a hard look at the money that is being spent at Hart Park to see if any of that can be streamlined or if it could be operated more efficiently.

Bret stated that the department has many staff that move throughout the County to work in the various parks and facilities. There are over 700 square acres of parks that our staff needs to take care of. We are trying to streamline the operations and farm out some of the work to outside companies wherever feasible.

Commissioner Barrera asked if the \$802 million mentioned in the 2010 Master Plan is for all of the County parks? Bret answered that the Executive Summary of the Master Plan talked about not only the current park situation but what will most likely be the situation for a growing population by 2030. Commissioner Barrera continued to say that people need to keep that in mind since the Parks department budget gets cut year after year. These are old figures from the Master Plan and are conservative. There are many grants out there but they are usually for low income neighborhoods. Hart Park doesn't qualify based on the fact it is a regional park and because of where it is located. He would like to see all service agreements posted on the Parks website. He would like to see the same attention given to the other County parks as is given to Hart Park. We need to be fiscally responsible. We need to let the process take place, it is about a more comprehensive issue. He asked if Bret could let the Commission know when the Ad Hoc meetings will be?

Commissioner Jamison stated that Kern County has less than 2 acres of park land per 1,000 residents. The national average is 10 acres. 5 acres per 1,000 people was the recommendation in the 2010 Master Plan.

Bret Haney stated that the Master Plan also calculated the cost at a 3-acre standard and that cost is almost \$650 million.

Commission Jamison appreciates that everyone is working so hard to make this happen. We haven't been able to dream big in a long time.

Bret mentioned that the parks can benefit from the Quimby fees that come from subdivisions but they are only in the thousands of dollars rather than the hundred thousands of dollars.

Commissioner Jamison said we have more questions right now than answers.

Kathleen Chambers, audience member, stated that we need to take personal responsibility for not taking an active interest in our parks in the recent past. There is a whole new beginning here. She appreciates the learning opportunity before us now.

Bret said there are no fewer than a dozen parks in the City of Bakersfield or are in some other park district around the County, if we can make some agreements with them then it can save us money.

Marion Vargas asked what happens to the money for a particular park when that park is transferred to another jurisdiction?

Bret said it has made a minimal budget impact so far when we transfer some of the facilities to other districts.

Commissioner McGiffney said we are trying to find answers to complex problems at Hart Park.

Marion Vargas said she was looking at the horse trail system and said there is housing right above the hill near Hart Park and the river. There are some nice neighborhood houses near Hart Park, did these developers or builders pay any fees toward the park?

Bret Haney said a regional park has to do with size definition regarding fees.

Marion stated that perhaps we need a partnership with the City.

Bret mentioned that Darron Nilsson gave him a proposal for Hart Park. He owns River's End Rafting. He would like to make Hart Park his headquarters.

Commissioner Faull stated that we are at a point of opportunity now. We have a chance to look at the larger issues. The Master Plan has been reenergized and brought back to the forefront. He thanked everyone for their input. The BOS now has an idea of the problems in the whole system and will continue to be informed if we can keep up the momentum. Communication dynamics are more diverse than ever. Social media is where you reach the younger generation. It is complex. How can we utilize all the media? Outlets such as Periscope or Facebook Live are very good live streaming video apps that could be utilized.

Commissioner Jamison recommended that everyone should look up Hart Park on Wikipedia. One of the things mentioned on that website is that the shooting range was originally an area that was planned to be a very large amphitheater back in the late 1920's. But due to the Depression, the plan was shelved.

5. New Business

a. Choose tentative locations for future Commission meetings

The tentative locations for the next meetings are:

March 22 – County Admin building
April 26 – County Admin building – OHV grants discussion
May 24 – District 2, Rosamond – Hummel Hall
June 28 – District 4, Taft – Westside Recreation District
July 28 – Bakersfield
August 23 – District 5, Rexland Acres
September 24 – District 3, North of the River
October 25 – District 1, Shafter
November 29 – Bakersfield

Commissioner Jamison asked Bret and Sandi about Delano. Sandi stated that the City of Delano

is negotiating to take over Delano Memorial Park. They may move the park to a new location. County representatives will be going to their City Council Board meeting in March.

Commissioner Jamison asked if it would be possible to live stream some meetings in lieu of going to outlying communities as we typically have a very low attendance in these areas? Commissioner Faull responded that it definitely something we can look into.

6. Department Staff Report

Division Chief Bret Haney stated that Jeff Frapwell is retiring from the County on Friday, February 24. CAO, Ryan Alsop has decided to keep the position vacant for a period of time. He will allow the four (4) Division Chiefs to operate each of their areas. No immediate changes will be happening.

New security equipment in the County Admin building will be active next month. The standards will not be as strict as at the Courts building.

The BOS recommended a 3.5% budget reduction for the departments next fiscal year rather than the original 5.6%. We don't know yet if that will be across the board. General Services is not expecting any layoffs but we are not out of the woods yet for at least the next couple of years. The department has about 10 position requests to fill. We are low on permanent Park Rangers; we currently have 3 vacancies.

Commissioner Jamison asked how many patrol boats are at the lakes? Bret stated there are currently three (3) patrol boats.

Harry Love suggested we use PowerPoint presentations at the future meetings with maps of the districts and park locations along with photographs of the parks.

Commissioner Faull said we can reach out to the community to submit pictures for the website. This may be a way to engage our residents with the parks.

Barbara Long stated that pictures of the parks on the website may encourage groups to volunteer more often.

Commissioner Faull said Kern County has tremendous diversity.

Kathleen Chambers, audience member, asked where is the recreation part of Parks & Recreation? Bret replied that there haven't been any County recreation programs since 1978.

Bob Rutledge said since this is Carl Park's last Commission meeting that he would like to take the opportunity to thank him for all of his years of service and hard work.

7. Commission Comments

Commissioner Faull said everyone is going to miss Carl very much. We will miss his input and his perspective on the issues. We are all sad he is leaving.

Commissioner Park thanked everyone for their kind words. He wanted to mention that Bob & EJ Rutledge have been fantastic park supporters and they are greatly appreciated. He believes it

is time to step down and time for new blood. Bret and Sandi will be fine leaders. He has suggested to Supervisor Maggard that the BOS keep the Parks & Recreation Commission alive and strong. This is the strongest and most effective Commission that he has served on in the past 22 years. He complimented Commissioner McGiffney and Marion Vargas for their recent presentations to the BOS.

Commissioner Barrera is glad that the BOS and General Services are going to take a harder look at the Parks Department. Now more than ever we need the Commission to be involved, but they also need to be specific. We need to advocate for Hart Park and the other parks. The Commission needs to be kept in the loop. He reminded the public to keep the heat on us and on the BOS.

Commissioner Jamison thanked Commissioner Park for all of his years of service. He stated that in all his years on the Commission that Carl and Ted Hopkinson gave him the most guidance and assistance. Carl is an outstanding person and he will be greatly missed.

Commissioner McGiffney thanked Carl for his 22 years of service to the Commission and to the public. We need money for improvements. User fees have become a part of life. He would like to see our parks in nice condition for the residents and for the guests. You gave us your input and we will take action.

Commissioner Jamison asked if Commissioner Park could talk to Supervisor Maggard to make it a priority to find someone to replace him? It took a very long time to find our last Commissioner.

Commissioner Faull said we are all sad to lose Carl, he has been an immense asset to the Commission.

He thanked everyone for coming to tonight's meeting and asked for their help in getting the word out to get more of the community involved. At the last meeting it was mentioned that the State money for grants has really dwindled. Bill AB18 is moving through the State Legislature right now. This a bond act. The author is Eduardo Garcia, democrat from Chowchilla. If it passes it could provide some funds for some of the things we are looking at. You may want to take a look at the bill and in particular Articles 2, 3, and 6 which may provide a way to obtain grant monies for our regional parks and waterways.

8. Dates and Locations of Future Meetings for 2017:

See above

9. Adjournment

Mc-BJ Motion to Adjourn. All ayes, motion carried.

Chairman Faull adjourned the meeting at 9:12 p.m.