

Kern County Parks and Recreation Commission

Public Services Building
2700 M Street
Bakersfield, CA 93301

April 27, 2016
6:30 P.M.

MINUTES

A meeting of the Kern County Parks and Recreation Commission was held on Wednesday, April 27, 2016. Chairman Faull presided.

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

Absent: Gregory McGiffney, District IV

Staff: Bob Lerude, Director, Kern County Parks and Recreation Department; Suzanne Boyd, Kern County Parks and Recreation Department.

Others: There were 10 others 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 March 23, 2016

Chairman Jamison noticed an error on the last page where it was stated that he adjourned the meeting. The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Faull.

Also on page 5 of last month's meeting Commissioner had recommended that we provide a Spanish speaking translator at future Commission meetings that will be held in predominantly Spanish speaking areas of the county.

Ja make a motion for approval of last month's minutes as amended; Pa seconded the motion. All ayes, motion carried

2. Public Presentations

Bruce Miller – Friends of Jawbone, gave a follow-up on a completion report on a grant from last year for the Cantil community regarding intrusions on private property by OHV riders. He provided a Balance Sheet for interested parties which shows a positive balance. Some attention is needed in a couple of areas such as a new solar project to sign an easement issue. They are filing for a 1 month extension. The group has been happy with the process so far.

3. New Business

OHV in lieu funds from State registration in the County where vehicle is registered. OHV funds are also available through the State, California Parks and Recreation, OHV Division. In lieu funds the BOS splits into 2 different pots. 60% of the funds are for a future OHV park/facility. 40% of the remaining funds from the split are available this year for OHV grants, \$62,000 total available. We usually have more requests than there is money available. We have received three (3) written requests so far. Now we can get verbal input from our applicants and our audience. We will hold off the decision making until the next month's meeting.

- a. Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) funding request – Friends of Jawbone. DISCUSS, RECEIVE PUBLIC INPUT AND MAKE RECOMMENDATION.

Bruce Miller is representing Ed Wilhelm, Friends of Jawbone. They have applied for a safety & education grant request to improve the maps and map stations.

Chris Horgan – Stewards of the Sequoia. They support the projects of Friends of Jawbone but want to verify that they will not be including detailed maps of the Sequoia National Forest Piutes area; that would be detrimental to their trails. They have many rescues due to the different type of OHV riders. The maps are helpful to law enforcement when they need to rescue people.

Fred Wheeler – KC Sheriff. He agreed with Chris that OHV riding in the Sequoias is very different from the terrain in other local areas. The maps help tremendously with rescues.

Commissioner Park inquired whether or not they are charging \$3 per map as that is the price marked on the map. Bruce Miller stated that many are distributed for free. They have a website where the maps can be ordered online.

Steve Williams – KC Sheriff, concurs with Chris Horgan. The Friends of Jawbone provide maps to the Sheriff's office.

Director Lerude stated that the grant money will not be spent until the new fiscal year which begins on July 1st. We are only one of two counties who have the green sticker funding thru the BOS, Kern and San Luis Obispo. The other counties get their funding through the State of California. \$69,000 will be available in 2017.

Commissioner Faull worked at Red Rock Canyon State Park for 20 years. He complimented Friends of Jawbone for producing such excellent maps and thought the comments on the Piutes were very interesting. There is a real need for maps with more detail. A new Onyx Ranch State vehicular recreation area opened up recently in the greater Jawbone area. State Parks is starting a presence and management out there.

Bruce Miller is not sure how often the maps will be updated. Ed was not involved in the OHV Commission tour of the area. Bruce expressed his concerns about the checkerboard map from the Bureau of Land Management of the Onyx Ranch area.

Chris Horgan stated that the OHV Commission Chair has been working with Stewards of the Sequoia and the State to lay out trails.

Commissioner Faull mentioned that the Red Rock Canyon State Park has hired a consulting firm to help with the general plan process which could affect route designation and preserve design. This may also influence mapping.

Bruce Miller mentioned that the Bureau of Land Management is in the implementation phase process of their resource management plan. The Sequoia National Forest is going through their forest plan revision. This is an ongoing process which never finishes.

b. OHV funding request – Stewards of the Sequoia. DISCUSS, RECEIVE PUBLIC INPUT AND MAKE RECOMMENDATION.

Chris Horgan sent a quarterly report to John Cove at the Parks Dept. The before and after pictures are quite telling. They have expanded their trail program from 200 miles to 300 miles per year. He applauds the County for the OHV grants. We have been clearing the dead/dying and downed trees and still need to clear the largest trees. We have increased our training in this work. In the elevations below 6,000 feet the tree mortality is approximately 50-75% due to the drought. On a national scale the number one challenge has been the inability to maintain existing trails. But the public continues to want more trails. Luckily we don't have that problem in our area because our Commission helps fund our programs. We hope to replicate our program nationwide with the Forest Service.

Steve Williams mentioned that when trees fall and block trails, the people will just go around them and create a new trail. This is a problem for the Forest Service as well as the rescue operations. It is important to maintain our trails. The money the Commission contribution goes a long way. Their proposal is the only one that addresses on the ground maintenance.

Commissioner Jamison asked Chris Horgan if they applied for an extension last year? Chris stated that they applied for an extension 2 years ago because BLM project had not completed the plan.

Commissioner Jamison asked what percentage of the dead or dying trees are due to bark beetle destruction? Chris Horgan responded that they don't know for sure but that the beetles appear when the trees and forest are sick. The trees have a natural sap that repels the bark beetle unless they are sick. They used to be able to log or thin out the dead and dying trees but now certain environmentalist groups will not allow that. The Sequoia Forest Keepers is against all logging. But we know from past experience that if you thin out the dead trees as needed that it helps prevent fires. Otherwise the forest will burn at some point.

Director Lerude stated that within the Tehachapi Mountain Park we do not have the problem with the bark beetles because we have had two timber harvests in the past twelve years and we have had less than a dozen trees dying from the bark beetle infestation because we worked with the Forest Service and the Fire Dept. to thin out the trees and then mulched the downed trees to spread on the forest floor and we have been able to keep up with the dead trees through the drought even though we are a small department.

Commissioner Berrera thanked Chris and the Stewards of the Sequoia for the detailed report. Commissioner Faull thanked them for doing the work they do at approximately 70% less than a paid agency. Steve Williams stated that he has volunteered with the Stewards of the Sequoia and has learned a great deal and is now much more conscious of environmental impacts. Their education is ongoing. 30% of their volunteers return repeatedly.

Commissioner Faull asked what the ratio is between volunteers and paid staff for the Stewards of the Sequoia? Chris stated that approximately 30-60% are volunteers.

Bruce Miller, Friends of Jawbone, mentioned that the State grants require a match. The Stewards of the Sequoia provide the U.S. Forest Service a \$50,000 match and a 58% match

from other funds that we have secured. We are leveraged many different ways.

- c. OHV funding request – Kern County Sheriff's Office. DISCUSS, RECEIVE PUBLIC INPUT AND MAKE RECOMMENDATION.

Sgt. Wheeler stated that the Sheriff's Office asked for a \$58,000 grant. He thanked the County Parks Dept. for their past support. He said if the Friends of Jawbone and the Stewards of the Sequoia receive the full grant amounts that they requested then the Sheriff's office would accept the remaining amount in the fund. This year they hope to rebuild some of the fleet equipment. Their goal is to keep fatalities down. Sgt. Wheeler said the Sheriff's office would like to help give back to the Parks Dept. by donating two (2) quads to the Park Ranger staff. These would help make them more accessible to the public. The Sheriff's Dept. is looking for better equipment. He also stated that they have a great working relationship with the Stewards of the Sequoia and the Friends of Jawbone and hopes that they continue to build the relationship.

Commissioner Jamison commended the Sheriff's Dept. on the outstanding job that they do. He stated that their helicopter is expensive but is definitely needed. Commissioners Park, Berrera, and McGaffney thanked the Sheriff's Dept. for their valuable service.

Tom Little from the Sheriff's office helps to administer the OHV program. He stated they could use this grant as a match for the OHV ROV program to the State. It all comes full circle.

Commissioner Faull asked if there is coordination between agencies? Sheriff Walker replied that they have coordinated with other agencies by getting on their communication channels. Steve from the Sheriff's office stated they have met with the Bureau of Land Management regarding the OHV programs.

Commissioner Faull mentioned that Red Rock Canyon State Park staff works with the Sheriff, CHP, BLM, and emergency responders, etc. for greater safety and enjoyment for the public. Hopefully when we meet again in May the OHV recommendations should be a quick process.

- d. Hart Park – Proposed parking fee. DISCUSS AND RECEIVE PUBLIC INPUT.

The idea of possible parking fees at Hart Park has been brought up at a few of the past Commission meetings. Director Lerude mentioned that some people just drive through Hart Park to reach other areas such as the Soccer Park, CALM, Lake Ming, Alfred Harrell Hwy., etc. Those drivers would not be subject to fees, nor would bicyclists, runners, walkers, etc., only the people who park a motor vehicle at Hart Park. In past meetings we have discussed possible annual fees and numerous other ways to charge fees. The simplest way would be to charge for a daily or annual fee similar to what they have at CSUB. Many parks in other counties charge a wide variety of fees. This revenue would go into a special fund just for Hart Park. The general public seems to like that idea more than having the revenue go into the County's general fund. Director Lerude can provide different fee structures to the Commission next month.

Commissioner Faull welcomed any comments regarding the possible fees at Hart Park.

Chris Horgan, Stewards of the Sequoia, stated that it would be helpful to have signs posted at Hart Park to let people know about the fees and that they would be used strictly for the park.

Tom Little, KC Sheriff, stated that the parking fees would probably be one of the most workable revenue sources.

Commissioner Berrera commented that he supports the idea of charging fees at Hart Park and he likes the idea of the Parks Dept. letting our community know that the funds will go directly to the park.

Commissioner Faull spoke of how parks increase our happiness and health. Our society has changed and we used to have ways to fund and expand our parks but today that no longer seems possible. We have difficulty just trying to maintain our current parks. He applauds the KC Parks Dept. for trying to solve so many problems with so little funding.

Automated kiosks may be the best financial solution for dispensing parking passes. We must be aware of the affordability to the public however.

Nick Waldrup, attendee, asked why feral cats are not removed from Hart Park? Bob Lerude stated that the Cat People organization catch the cats and have them spayed or neutered then work to get them adopted. If they are not able to be adopted then they are taken back to the park and released.

Nick asked if the paddle boats can be brought back for the lake at Hart Park? Director Lerude said that the concessionaire who had rented the boats in the past had a family business and there was a dispute regarding the boats with another family member. Because of the situation the Parks Dept. felt it was necessary to cancel their lease until the problems could be resolved. We are going to send it out for bid again. There may be another concessionaire who might be interested in bidding to bring paddle boats to Hart Park, Silverwood Lake Concessionaire. They have the paddle boat and jet ski concessions at BVARA.

Bob Rutledge, attendee, mentioned that the proposed fees would be difficult for low income people to enjoy the park. He understands that we need funds to help maintain the park. He believes the plan should be looked at very closely so that it won't cost more money to collect fees than what the Parks Dept. would gain in revenue. The fees need to be affordable and fair to all different groups of people.

Commissioner Jamison asked do we charge fees and how do we do that?

Commissioner Barrera is supportive of the fees. We have to invest in our parks. We need to ensure that the public knows that the revenue generated will be used specifically for Hart Park.

Director Lerude stated that one of the biggest issues identified when the last Master Plan was completed is cleanliness of public restrooms. Also surveys showed another priority is taking care of the parks and recreation areas that we already have.

We have planners who have been great at getting grants. But our community has objected to any sales tax increase to help pay for ongoing maintenance of roads, parks, etc.

Commissioner Park asked if any of the money could help with our Park Rangers or law enforcement staff? Director Lerude stated that possibly it could; they could do some law enforcement. Sometimes our Rangers can respond quicker than the law enforcement because of their location. It is difficult to recruit for Rangers because we do not have the safety retirement benefit that other law enforcement agencies offer even though they have to go through the same P.O.S.T. training, etc.

Commissioner Berrera suggested we also look at quarterly fees as well as daily and annual.

- e. Parks and Recreation Commission future meeting locations. DISCUSS SCHEDULE AND MAKE RECOMMENDATION.

It was decided to switch the September and October locations for the future meetings. We will meet in Rosamond in September and we will meet at the KC Museum in October. The meeting locations will be as follows:

May 25	– Bakersfield – Public Services Building – 2700 M Street
June 22	– Buena Vista Aquatic Recreation Area
July 27	– Greenhorn Mountain Park
August 24	– Bakersfield – Public Services Building – 2700 M Street
September 28	– Rosamond (Hummel Hall or Library)
October 26	– Bakersfield – Kern County Museum
November 23	– Bakersfield – Public Services Building – 2700 M Street
December 28	– Bakersfield – Public Services Building – 2700 M Street

4. **Department Staff Report**

Distributed a Projects List handout.

Director Lerude gave an update on the Park Bond. He spoke to Doug Houston, State Lobbyist about the bond. He indicated that Governor Brown will not support SB 317 due to the cost and other areas which are more important. Mr. Houston did state there is AB 2444 for park infrastructure that will not be put through until possible 2017 or 2018.

We use a number of program to supplement our funding. The department has never laid any employees off. We have eliminated positions through attrition. Phase 1 – privatization cost is approximately \$87,000 annually for 6 days per week of services at the parks and 1 day per week at the Administrative building vs. over \$450,000 for County employees to work the same number of days per week. Private contractors typically pay less per hour and offer fewer employee benefits.

We currently lease approximately 10 different buildings in Shafter, Arvin, Buttonwillow, Taft, Boron, North of the River, etc. The non-profits or government entities are no cost but they pay for operational cost. We have transferred ownership to some other entities, etc. Most recently this was done in Arvin, Wasco, & Taft.

Our department continues to apply for and obtain various grants to replace aging infrastructure. One of our goals is for some of the utility districts to eventually take on the role of the park districts. We have a very successful partnership with the Wonderful Company in Lost Hills.

The southern Kern community does not have a maintenance district and developer fees in place. Kern County doesn't have this either and is not currently able to set up these programs. These type of fees normally cover approximately 40% of the operational costs.

The County has had a number of budget cuts over the last 8-9 years. During this time we have had to cut staffing by approximately 50%. We have been asked to cut up to 5% from our budgets this year. We will have to endure another 7-9% cut next year if the County is not able to solve the Fire Dept. and Sheriff Dept. deficit. The following years are looking at another 2½% cut. The next 4 years are not anticipated to look good. Most of the grants we receive are for the infrastructure not for operations. We have really good employees who work very hard.

We have received used vehicles from a variety of departments because our vehicles are the

oldest and most worn out of all the other County departments.

Tom Little from the Sheriff's office thanked Bob Lerude for all the great work he has done with such a small budget.

5. Commission Comments

Commissioner Park thanked Director Lerude for all his hard work over the years and stated that he believes Bob has been the best Director of the Parks Dept. that he has seen so far and he has been around to see all of them. Commissioner Jamison agreed with Commissioner Park regarding the excellent work that Bob has done. He also thanked everyone for coming to tonight's meeting.

Commissioner Park notified Director Lerude that he received a message from Ruben Rosales that the horse trail at Hart Park is washed out from the recent rains that we have received. Bob will make sure it is taken care of.

Commissioner Park would like to get donations or pay for a solar observatory to be placed in Panorama Park. He recommended that 3 benches, on the point of land with a wide view, be placed so people can focus on the monument to see the equinox during the summer and winter solstice. This solar observatory was supposed to have been put in the park a long time ago. The Kern Astronomical Society is coming up with some ideas. The estimated cost is approximately \$5,000. Some trees in the proposed area may need to be relocated so there is a clear view for the observatory. The other Commissioners like this idea. Director Lerude stated that a Gratuitous Service Agreement would need to be completed and submitted to the Board of Supervisors before doing the work.

Commissioners Berrera and Faull thanked everyone for coming to tonight's meeting. Commissioner Faull reminded the OHV attendees that we will close the loop on the completion of the grant fund reports next month. Director Lerude will bring any other information he receives on the grants next month.

6. Date and Location of Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for May 25, 2016, 6:30 pm at the Public Services Building, 2700 M Street in Bakersfield.

7. Adjournment

Ja-Pa Motion to Adjourn:

Chairman Faull adjourned the meeting at 8:46 p.m.