

# Kern County Parks and Recreation Commission

Public Services Building  
2700 M Street  
Bakersfield, CA 93301

June 22, 2016  
6:30 P.M.

## MINUTES

A meeting of the Kern County Parks and Recreation Commission was held on Wednesday, June 22, 2016. Chairman Faull presided.

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

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

**Others:** There were 4 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 May 25, 2016**

Mc-Ba motion to approve the Minutes. All ayes, motion carried.

### **2. Public Presentations**

Ryan Schultz, Field Representative from the Board of Supervisors District 4, Supervisor David Couch's office was in attendance. He stated that the Buena Vista Aquatic Recreation Area is very important to their office and they want to enhance the surrounding area.

Ryan complimented Director Lerude on the development of an agreement with the homeless center in Frazier Park to help beautify that area. It is being modeled after the Kern COG project.

Commissioner McGiffney stated it would be helpful to have funding for OHV and other development in the BVARA region and near the raceway. He would hope that it can eventually be as nice as the Lost Hills area.

Bob Rutledge, from Bob's Bait Bucket, mentioned that he talked to several people he knows who are concerned about the interests of the County parks to persuade them to come to tonight's meeting and the general consensus is that they felt it was pointless to attend the meeting because they believe the County will override their concerns and do what they want to

do anyway. We need to change the status quo.

### **3. Correspondence – Receive and File**

- a. Notice of Availability from the U.S. Forest Service regarding the Federal Register for the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) and draft land management plans (forest plans) for the Inyo, Sequoia and Sierra National. RECEIVE AND FILE.
- b. Notice from the U.S. Forest Service regarding the future implementation of the 2012 Planning Rule. RECEIVE AND FILE.

Regarding the revision of the forest plan, there is a 90 day window for public comment.

Commissioner Faull asked Director Lerude if this is related to in-lieu OHV money for the Stewards of the Sequoia and is in limbo because of planning efforts to be approved. Director said it is related to some of the red tape. Chris Horgan's reply to the US Forest Service was regarding the over professionalization of volunteers. Director Lerude stated that the Sheriff's office is running into the same issue with their reserves. Some of the other Commissioners mentioned that the Fire Department has the same issue. Volunteers are a great asset but the Issues of liability are very real and can be a complex concern. Every business entity has to have rules and organization. Some of the issues are just common sense. Even regular full time government employees cost a great deal of money with a multitude of medical and legal issues.

Ba-Pa Motion to receive and file. All ayes, motion carried.

### **4. Old Business**

- a. Hart Park – Potential Daily/Annual Permit Fee. DISCUSS AND RECEIVE PUBLIC INPUT.

Daily and annual fees are a critical issue. We need to resolve some of the difficult economic issue. Director Lerude commented on the County budget process and said the Parks Department and the Library have taken big hits. The Board of Supervisors has been presented with the concern of the safety departments taking the same across the board cuts as the other County departments. We need to look back approximately 10 years to get the full picture. The Parks staffing has been cut approximately 50% during this time. Certain departments staffing is going up even with the budget cuts. County pension costs will continue to rise until approximately 2021. Oil and property tax revenues have gone down.

If we can set up a fund to be used at Hart Park only, then it won't be able to be used in the County's general fund. The fees would only be for the people who park a vehicle in Hart Park. A \$5 daily and \$50 annual fee per vehicle has been suggested. That seems to be very reasonable. We still need to work out the details of how the fees would be enforced. We don't have full time security and rangers at Hart Park. But our rangers are really good at citing law breakers. The organization MADD has recognized the rangers for the last 3 years for DUI enforcement in the County parks.

We will review this issue over the summer. We have sent the Commissioners samples of fees that are charged for other California county regional parks. We are the only county that doesn't charge non-profits for usage at our County buildings. Commissioner McGiffney commented that our options for parks funding are very limited.

Bob Rutledge has been opposed to park fees from the beginning. He is not sure how it will work. He believes that \$50 is too high of an annual fee. He stated that it is very sad that our community won't even vote in favor of a 1¢ sales tax increase for the Libraries. Mr. Rutledge was at Hart Park the day after Mother's Day weekend and said it looked like a war zone with all the trash that was left behind by the people who visited the park. Because of that sort of lack of concern from the public he is going to withdraw his opposition to user fees at Hart Park.

Commissioner McGiffney asked if the annual pass would be made of sturdy material and he also asked if disabled patrons will receive a discount. Director Lerude said we would need to research whether there are any laws about this. We will have to take into consideration any discount issues.

Commissioner McGiffney asked if people from out of state will be charged a fee also. Commissioner Park believes that discounts on already small fees are not worth the trouble to implement. He does feel an RV should pay more than a regular car to park at the park.

Director Lerude said Hart Park fees will be separate from the ones charged at Lake Ming and Camp Okihi.

Commissioner Park asked if it would be possible to get a car count on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Director Lerude stated that we are already doing car counts.

Mrs. E. J. Rutledge asked if the fee process at Hart Park goes well, will fees be charged at Lake Ming also (not the campground, which already charges fees). She reiterated the fact that the Parks Dept. will need to let the public know, in every possible way, that the fees collected will stay in the Hart Park fund.

Commissioner Barrera asked if we can check with County Counsel to make sure we can legally use the funds for just Hart Park.

Bob Rutledge believes we should give Veterans a discount on the fees, but no other groups.

Mr. Rutledge asked if California Fish & Game will still do a fish plant at the lake if we start charging a fee. Director Lerude will check into it.

Commissioner Jamison asked if the BOS wants to put the funds from Hart Park into the general fund, then what would the Commission recommend. Director Lerude has talked to Supervisor Gleason and he knows the issue is being discussed and he doesn't think there will be a problem. Commissioner Faull stated that it would not be popular with the public if the fees went to the general fund. We are going into some uncharted territory but we hope to find new solutions. There are questions as to how the public treats free parks vs. parks with user fees. It does seem to help in most cases.

Commissioner McGiffney stated that putting fees in place, along with policing, should help decrease the litter problems. Commissioner Faull said that litter begets litter. We need to find methods to effectively deal with this problem.

## **5. New Business**

### **a. Buena Vista Aquatic Recreation Area – DISCUSS AND RECEIVE PUBLIC INPUT.**

Commissioner Faull thanked Director Lerude and Suzanne Boyd for coordinating the tour of BVARA. He believes this area could be a nucleus for tourism in Kern County.

Ryan Schultz mentioned that Public Works got a grant to extend the bike path ride away on Hwy. 43 on the west side. CalTrans agreed to give up some of their right of way. A roundabout is being constructed near the racetrack. This will enhance the traffic to BVARA. It should be completed in the next two (2) years. It is mapped out to Taft.

Commissioner Faull mentioned that in the Tehachapi area they are installing more bike paths and mountain bike trails. There would be multiple benefits for the County if this is planned well. There is a connection between parks and health. Volunteering brings about camaraderie and can transform a community. If something similar is done in the Taft/BVARA area of the County that would be wonderful.

## **6. Department Staff Report**

Director Lerude stated that we increased our fees in 2015, which has helped with the revenue. We selectively picked the fees. There have been no issues from the public.

We have had more people fishing this year because of the fish plant and plus we had more rain this past season. Director Lerude expects that Fish & Wildlife will continue to do fish plants.

We received a low income housing grant sometime next year will fund a basketball court and soccer standards at BVARA.

We have possible funding for a bird sanctuary on the SE end of the BVARA. There are environmental issues that still need to be addressed before the project can move forward.

The eradication of raccoons and skunks at BVARA is continuing. It has been a very successful program and the population is being kept under control.

Bob Rutledge asked if the County plans to eradicate feral cats at Hart Park, he would like to know about it first. Director Lerude assured him that the Cat People organization trap the feral cats to vaccinate, spay or neuter, and adopt to people who can care for them properly. If a cat is too wild to be adopted, but is healthy, it is released back into Hart Park. The cats will only be euthanized if they are sick and cannot be treated by a veterinarian successfully.

Supervisor Couch has set up a special fund for incentives for businesses to grow near the BVARA region. State restrictions will end in 2023, then it will be less cumbersome.

There was a ribbon cutting ceremony this morning at Pioneer Park to invite the public to see the the new spray park. The improvements were made possible by a low income housing grant. We plan to keep applying for as many grants as possible.

There was a Board of Supervisors budget meeting yesterday. If anyone is interested in watching it or reading the minutes, they can find the information online at the County website.

All of the County departments also received an e-mail directive today to look at ways to cut up to 25% of their budget so that the safety divisions do not have to be cut as much.

We are very thankful for the volunteers in the community who are willing to help keep our parks clean and enjoyable. We receive requests nearly every day from people who would like to volunteer.

In Frazier Mountain Park we have installed new tables and trash receptacles. Supervisor Couch's office has agreed to pay for resurfacing the basketball court and painting. Painting bottom half of building in Frazier Park. General Services will paint the top half later. We have been working with the Supervisor's office to accomplish the work. This came out of the Master Plan. Ryan Schultz coordinates a great deal of behind the scenes work with volunteers.

Building Healthy Communities and Greenfield Walking Group met recently. Members went to a conference in Long Beach. They are also working with CalTrans. Walking Via in Greenfield will hold a big event soon where they will shut down some area streets so people can walk, bike, or run through the area. There will be street vendors also.

The Greenfield/Rexland Acres community will soon host a Cooking with Cops (and Rangers) event.

Commissioner Faull asked how the media handles these events. Director Lerude stated the three (3) local TV stations were reporting at the park. It was very successful.

Tomorrow there will be a ribbon cutting ceremony in Ridgecrest in the Leroy Jackson Park to open the relocated dog park section of the park.

We have two (2) more grants in with Kaiser. One will be used for Riverside Park in Kernville for exercise equipment and the other will be used for some water fountains at Heritage Park in East Bakersfield.

We are looking are more privatization of some of our buildings and parks to save County money.

## **7. Commission Comments**

Commissioner Park stated that he really enjoyed the tour this afternoon of BVARA and that meeting at the Buena Vista Golf Course club house was a good idea. Parks are very beneficial to society. He does feel there is still some excesses in the County budget that could be trimmed. For instances some of the small Fire stations in the outlying areas get very few calls, yet they are staffed and budgeted similar to the larger Fire stations in Bakersfield.

Commissioner Jamison commented that with all the County budget cuts over the past decade that the "Recreation" part of Parks & Recreation disappeared a long time ago. He fears that in the very near future the entire department will collapse. He believes the Board of Supervisors generally think in the short term, not the long term. Commissioner Faull agreed that this is a very real concern. He said there has to be a tipping point.

Commissioner McGiffney thanked everyone for coming to the meeting tonight. Regarding the County budget, there are things that plague us and cost the County millions of dollars. He feels

our Park Rangers should be commended for all the work they manage to do even though they are very short staffed. He hopes since KMC (Kern Medical) has become a hospital authority that this will help the County meet their budget needs. The County should begin to see pension costs go down in a few years. He mentioned that the golf courses are financially stable because of the golfers who utilize the courses not because of public funds. He thinks it is a great idea regarding the bike paths in the BVARA region. It should help with tourism. The race track is helping too.

Commissioner Barrera stated that there is only so much that can be cut from the County budget until you hit bare bone. He expressed his appreciation for Director Lerude and the Parks staff for all they have managed to accomplish in such stressful budget situations.

Commissioner Faull applauded Director Lerude and his department in being able to do so much with so little money. We need to find ways to fund our parks. There are many mental and physical health benefits and economic sides to this issue. The State, County, and City parks need to work together to help one another. Businesses also see the benefit of a vital park system. The businesses can put pressure on the government to expand our parks. We have seen great things happen when companies and communities work together. The Wonderful Company and Lost Hills Park is a great example!

**8. Date and Location of Next Meeting:**

July 27, 2016, 6:30 p.m. at Greenhorn Mountain Park, Camp Yenis Hante building.

**9. Adjournment**

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

Chairman Faull adjourned the meeting at 8:09 p.m.