

Kern County Parks and Recreation Commission

East Bakersfield Veterans Building
2101 Ridge Rd.
Bakersfield, CA 93305

Wednesday, November 30, 2016
6:30 P.M.

MINUTES

A meeting of the Kern County Parks and Recreation Commission was held on Wednesday, November 30, 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; Bret Haney, Division Director, General Services Department

Others: There were 16 other people present including a reporter from Channel 29.

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 6:31 p.m. Flag Salute: Chairman Faull

1. Approval of the Minutes of October 26, 2016

The minutes need a very minor change on pages 4 and 6. Ja-Pa, all ayes. Minutes approved with noted changes.

2. Public Presentations

None

3. Correspondence

None

4. Old Business

Prior to presenting the Certification of Recognition recipients with their awards, Commissioner Faull thanked our volunteers and let them know how much they are appreciated. This year we have several groups to recognize:

a. Certificate of Recognition recipients.

1. Friends of Frazier Mountain Park – June Schmidt

These volunteers have filled in rodent burrows at the park. They have swept off sand from the sidewalks, picked up rocks, pulled weeds and picked up trash. The award was accepted by Kimberlee Doddard, Debbie Turner and some of her Law Enforcement Leadership Academy students from Frazier Mountain Park High School. One of the students, Kayla Derry, will be volunteering soon to paint a Frazier Mountain Park High School Falcon logo on the new basketball court. Commissioner Faull thanked the group for their volunteerism in the community.

2. Lamont Boys and Girls Club – Margarita Madera
Margarita and her group clean up Lamont park on a regular basis. Accepting the award was Marshall Johnson.
3. Greenfield Family Resource Center – Elizabeth Gutierrez
Elizabeth and her group have cleaned up Greenfield park including cigarette butts and trash and held a community health and safety fair. Accepting the award was Elizabeth Gutierrez.
4. The Cat People – Barbara Hayes
These volunteers have cared for the feral cats at Hart Park for over 20 years by feeding, establishing a spay/neuter program, adoption of cats/kittens, and educating the public. Bob Rutledge accepted the award on behalf of the Cat People.
5. Johnny Crabtree – Retired Area Park Supervisor
For his 28 years of dedication and service to the County and the residents of the Kern River Valley. Johnny was unable to attend the meeting. His award will be mailed to him. Director Lerude talked about what a dedicated employee Johnny was and how much he will be missed by all of his co-workers and the residents he served in the Kern River Valley.

Director Lerude mentioned how the Parks Department has over 100 groups who volunteer every year throughout the County.

Commissioner Faull announced that this would be the last meeting that Director Lerude will attend as he is retiring on December 9th. All of the Commissioners agreed that he has been the best Director that they have ever had and they thanked him for his years of service by presenting him with a plaque and a special golden rake award which was made by Commissioner Jamison.

Sergeant Wheeler, on behalf of the Sheriff's Office, also thanked Bob for his years of service by presenting him with a picture of a vehicle that the Parks Department helped the Sheriff's Office to fund.

Director Lerude thanked the Commissioners for the honors and compliments. He believes as a public servant it is our job to serve the public as best we can by working hard to address their concerns and make the improvements that the majority of the people would like in their communities, whenever possible. Many of the successes would not have been possible without the dedication of the Parks employees, the many volunteers, and the programs such as CalWorks, MAOF, work release crews, etc.

b. Hart Park – Potential Daily/Annual Permit Fee. DISCUSS AND RECEIVE PUBLIC INPUT, MAKE RECOMMENDATION

Many citizens have complained that Hart Park has been degrading. The Commission has been looking at the issue since April 2015 to possibly charge parking fees. This is the 12th meeting where the fees have been discussed. The Commission has not been in a rush to implement fees. The fees are needed due to County staff and budget cuts. We have asked if there are other alternatives. Having some sort of fee appears to be integral to helping to halt the decline of the park. We have looked at other comparable counties. We have talked multiple times about why this is happening. We are considering a daily fee of \$5 for parking and a \$50 annual fee. The fee will not apply to those who are just passing through the park either by car, motorcycle, bicycle, horseback, by foot, etc. We would like to make the transition as easy as possible. We are looking at electronic fee stations similar to what is at CSUB.

A very critical portion of the equation is that the public is supportive as long as the fees go into a special fund to be used for Hart Park exclusively. We need operating funds to maintain the park. There have been many budget cuts and the Parks staffing has been reduced by approximately 50% in the last 10 years. If we don't intervene now, then the park could degrade beyond a tipping point.

The Commission wishes to congratulate Bob Lerude and the Parks staff for their accomplishments in securing grants, getting corporate support, and support from other County departments and programs for manpower.

Director Lerude reminded the Commission that we would like to include some free use days for Hart Park. Some of the ideas have been: 1 free day per month, free days to coincide with the State free fishing days, free days to coincide with Monday holidays, etc.

Commissioner Faull stated that the Commission and Parks department do not want to exclude anyone from using Hart Park.

Director Lerude stated that the department frequently uses volunteers to do clean-up projects, etc. Also we have used other programs such as Work Release, etc. but most of the time those programs only provide assistance for 1 day at a time and we continually have to retrain people.

We have tracked the vehicles that park and use the facilities. There has been an average of 180 vehicles per day over the past 4 months. Some days there are less than 10 vehicles and other days (such as holidays) there are over 500 vehicles. It will cost approximately \$350,000 to put the park back into good maintenance order. Unfortunately, Hart Park is a regional park and we can't get grants for this type of park. Most of the government grants are for low income neighborhoods.

We have not had recreation programs since 1970 when Proposition 13 went into effect. The Parks department also has the oldest vehicle fleet in all the County departments.

The Commission asked the audience if anyone would like to comment. None were given.

Director Lerude stated that if the Commission makes a recommendation to charge

parking fees at Hart Park, then the recommendation will first go to County Counsel for Ordinance language, then there will be a public hearing, then the recommendation will go to the Board of Supervisors. Realistically it will take at least a couple of months to get final approval. After that, the equipment will need to be put in place.

The Commission reminded the audience that they make recommendations only; they do not implement any changes.

Commissioner Park stated that the Los Padres National Forest has 52 recreation sites that were handed over to private organizations to manage. This seems to be a sign of the times.

Director Lerude mentioned that the Parks Department has contracted out some parks and facilities in the west, north and southwest portions of the County. For example, we contracted out services in Lost Hills, Wasco, Shafter, McFarland, and Delano and spent approximately \$88,000. Those same services would have cost approximately \$450,000 if County staff performed the services. The difference is the higher cost of wages and benefits for County employees.

Commissioner Park stated that the Commission is not capable of designing the systems needed for our parks and facilities and they need to depend on the Parks and General Services staff.

Director Lerude stated that the Commission can only make recommendations to carry out any needed plans or decisions.

Commissioner Faull said that the State Parks has implemented for profit private contractors.

Commissioner McGiffney asked Director Lerude if there is a priority where the money from the parking fees would be spent?

Director Lerude stated that there is a long list of repairs and maintenance needed.

Commissioner McGiffney stated that we can't ignore the Hart Park issue any longer. He believes this would be the best path forward.

Commissioner Faull mentioned that for the past 18 months the Parks Department has suffered more budget cuts and they will continue for the next 3 years. The challenge is getting more difficult.

Commissioner Jamison believes we should move ahead with the fee proposal. The money is still less than the cuts that the department has sustained. It is important any funds received would be for Hart Park only and not go into the general fund. He feels we need a certain number of free days and thinks the Monday holidays would be best, along with the 4th of July and Veterans Day.

Commissioner McGiffney stated that the Commissioners can make a motion to vote for the free days.

Commissioner Faull reminded the Commission that they need to be as clear as possible.

Director Lerude said the free days can be listed on the signage.

Commissioner Barrera is in favor of 4 free holidays that are evenly spaced out over the year, President's Day, Memorial Day, Labor Day, and Veterans Day.

Commissioner Faull stated that we need to keep families in mind when we choose the free days.

Director Lerude emphasized that the free days need to be spelled out as clear as possible for the Board of Supervisors.

Audience member, E.J. Rutledge asked if we can add free fishing days also. Bob Rutledge mentioned that there may be unintended consequences to the parking fees at Hart Park, that more people may decide to go where they don't have to pay, like Lake Ming.

Director Lerude answered that it can go a myriad of ways and that we may not know the full impact for years.

Commissioner Faull stated that Lake Ming could be re-energized, as it is currently underused.

Commissioner Faull held a conversation with Director Lerude about the important elements previously discussed by the Commission, including more precise wording, that would best be included in a motion about Hart Park versus elements that were important for implementation, but were unnecessary for the motion.

Commissioner McGiffney made a motion to recommend to the Board of Supervisors the implementation of a "daily parking fee at \$5, annual parking fee of \$50 for Hart Park, with a special fund to be created for Hart Park for maintenance and improvements only inclusive to Hart Park, with four (4) free recommendation plus the four (4) free days per year – the celebrated days of President's Day, Memorial Day, Labor Day, and Veterans Day."

Commissioner Park seconded the motion. All ayes, motion passed.

Commissioner Faull summarized that the Supervisors should know because of the unfortunate decline in the park over some number of years, we see this as the best alternative out of a number of alternatives that we have looked at towards stopping the decline of Hart Park and improving the safety of the facilities that we have at that location. It is important for us to provide a safe, usable, and enjoyable park environment.

5. New Business

None.

6. Department Staff Report

Director Lerude stated that a report was sent to the Board of Supervisors on the Frazier Park Pond. General Services had a percolation study done to see if it would be feasible to line the pond or enlarge it.

A Frazier Park community meeting held on November 17th to discuss the results of a community survey on the possible restriction of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and e-cigarettes at Frazier Mountain Park. It was decided that there would not be any new restrictions.

It was decided not to restrict the fishing program at Buena Vista. There was an article about the Trout Derby in the Western Outdoor News.

We have a new operator for the North Kern Golf Course. The Sorensen Brothers signed a new agreement. They also operate Buena Vista Golf Course.

We have new agreements for Sam Lynn Ballpark with the Northwest League and the Pecos League.

Jeff Frapwell, General Services Director, will become a new board member at the Kern County Museum.

Bret Haney, General Services Division Director, will be the new director for the Parks & Recreation Commission, the Wildlife Resources Commission, and the Heritage Commission.

The Parks Department Administrative staff will relocate from the office on M Street to the Kern County Administrative building at 1115 Truxtun Avenue. Larry Swan, Parks Superintendent, will relocate to the General Services Maintenance shop on E. 18th Street, and Suzanne Boyd will be transferring to the Information Technology Services office on Mt. Vernon and Panorama. She will still be handling some of the Parks Department job functions for an interim period, including the 3 Commissions.

The new walking path at Potomac Park is nearly finished and is going to be very nice. There will be a new round of funding for low income housing.

7. Commission Comments

Commissioner Faull asked if the public phone numbers and website for the Parks Department would be changing. Director Lerude stated that for now everything will remain the same except the address.

Commissioner Park thanked Suzanne for organizing a surprise retirement dinner for Bob Lerude in early November. It turned out very nice.

Commissioner McGiffney thanked Director Lerude for his years of service and expressed his appreciation for all of his hard work. He will be greatly missed.

Commissioner Berrera thanked the Commission for moving forward on the Hart Park fees, this is the beginning of the process. He stated that it says a lot that everyone is sad to see Bob Lerude retire, it shows what an excellent Director he has been. Everyone always speaks very highly of him.

Commissioner Jamison said that Bob Lerude is a very humble person and never blows his own horn.

Commissioner Faull thanks all the volunteers who attended tonight's meeting. He welcomed Bret Haney and said the Commission looks forward to working with him and the General Services department.

Commissioner Faull asked if disabled patrons would be exempt from the new fees at Hart Park. Director Lerude said he will check on that.

Commissioner Faull announced that there will be a parade in California City on December 3rd. It should be a fun event and he invited everyone to attend.

Commissioner Faull stated that we will all miss Bob Lerude and he hopes their paths will cross again in the near future.

8. Dates and Locations of Future Meetings for 2017:

January 25, 2017, 6:30 p.m. at the Kern County Administrative building, 1115 Truxtun Avenue, General Services, 3rd floor multipurpose room.

Future meeting dates and locations (*subject to change*):

February 22 – To Be Decided

March 22

April 26

9. Adjournment

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

Chairman Faull adjourned the meeting at 8:32 p.m.