



City of Farmers Branch

Minutes

Parks & Recreation Board

Farmers Branch
Community Recreation Center
14050 Heartside
Farmers Branch, TX 75234

Thursday, October 17, 2024

6:30 PM

Pecan Room

Meeting held at 6:30 PM

PRESIDING: David Jones

PRESENT: Stephen Stremel
Barbara Leedy
Jennifer Nelson-Smith
Jan Wooldridge
Adriane Young
Oscar Briseno
Margaret Young, Emeritus

STAFF: Robert Diaz, Director, Parks & Recreation
Jessica Alvarado, Recreation Superintendent
Ashley Munoz, Recreation Manager
Paul Macias, Aquatics Manager
Linda Gaucin, Sr. Administrative Assistant

A. CALL TO ORDER.

David Jones called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM on Thursday, October 17, 2024.

B. CITIZEN COMMENTS

None.

C. AGENDA ITEMS

C.1 CONSIDER APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR THE SEPTEMBER 19, 2024 MEETING; AND TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION.

Stephen Stremel made a motion to approve the September 19, 2024 minutes, with the following amendments:

- Under GUESTS add the last name of Dimijian to Mary Beth;
- Under item C.2 add that Adriane Young seconded and the motion carried;
- Under item C.5 change "down" to "done."

The motion was seconded by Jan Wooldridge. Motion carried.

C.2 CONSIDER APPROVAL OF THE 2025 MEETING DATES; AND TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION.

Robert Diaz presented tentative meeting dates for the Parks and Recreation Board for the 2025 calendar year.

Jan Wooldridge made a motion to approve the 2025 meeting dates as presented. The motion was seconded by Adriane Young. Motion carried.

C.3 DISCUSS ARBOR DAY ACTIVITIES.

Robert Diaz presented Arbor Day Activities and the criteria the department must go through to maintain the Tree City status. The formation of Texas Arbor Day in the fall helps trees sustain planting with the extreme weather Texas experiences. Robert Diaz discussed activities in Farmers Branch that currently occur around Texas Arbor Day, like the 200 trees given away by the City of Farmers Branch.

Robert invited the board to attend a recurring tree-planting ceremony beginning November 1 that moved around to different park locations each year. Robert Diaz reported he is open to the time of day. The board agreed that an afternoon event on Friday, November 1 was the best for overall attendance from Park and Recreation Board Members.

The following location were discussed as possibilities:

- Jennifer Nelson-Smith suggested Rawhide Park due to tree loss. Jessica Alvarado commented that Rawhide is an active project.
- Stephen Stremel suggested Dutch Village due to the park getting upgraded after the fire.
- Barbara Leedy suggested that Park staff might have ideas of parks in need due to all the work they are completing around the city.
- Jan Wooldridge suggested Barney Wood Bark Park as she has heard about citizens asking for more tree cover. Jennifer Nelson-Smith responded that there would be a built-in audience at the dog park.
- Robert Diaz commented that we need to make sure the tree has access to irrigation.
- Margaret Young suggested one that is colorful in the fall.

Robert Diaz commented that this event could be on the same Friday every year resulting in the City having three Texas Arbor Day activities.

C.4 RECEIVE AQUATICS CENTER 3rd QUARTER REPORT.

Paul Macias presented the third quarter report, with the following highlights:

- Revenue increased 7% compared to same time last year in the summer.
- A small storm on May 28th closed the center for several days which lost revenue and rental revenue.
- Programs revenue down from previous years as the lifeguard training course cost was reduced this summer.
- First Junior Lifeguard Program was held in June with 10 participants.
- Revenue for this quarter did not include concession revenue, which will be on the fourth quarter report.
- Costs for the facility included:
 - Rising chemical costs.
 - Maintenance for this aging facility per the life cycle plan, including replaced drain covers on lazy river; repainted the bucket on activity pool; and general maintenance on the slide.
 - Part-time staff pay adjusted to bring starting pay up to the DFW area rates.
- NPS Score of 90 with 60 responses, which demonstrated a successful start to summer season.

In reference to discounts for senior citizens and if there was an impact on the overall aquatics revenue, Paul reported that the new structure helped him with membership because previously senior citizens used The Branch Connection. It was an opportunity to market to people who had not previously come.

Paul reported that a punch card was for 10 daily visits instead of membership.

Paul stated the rental volume was high and public complaints about the frog pond being full for daily use. Rentals in June were sold out, including afterhours with some cancellation for weather.

Stephen Stremel asked about resident rentals vs. non-residents. Paul Macias responded that about half were residents.

Stephen Stremel asked if the Aquatics Center asked if residents are unable to rent because of non-resident rentals. Paul Macias responded that residents typically come to the facility Monday through Friday and non-residents typically come on the weekends.

Jan Wooldridge asked if rentals are first come, first serve. Paul Macias responded that was the process this quarter and this system is being discussed internally.

Jan Wooldridge ask if any major updates are coming for the Aquatics Center. Paul Macias responded that there is a life cycle of repairs they go through with general repairs and maintenance all the time.

David Jones asked about the Point of Sale, specifically on alcohol sales. Paul Macias responded that he will have that for the board in the next quarter's report as the vendor payment for concessions (food, non-alcoholic beverages, alcoholic beverages) was received in July. Robert Diaz responded that this was the second year with alcohol and a comparison of last year vs. this year's sales would be interesting.

Barbara Leedy asked if we sell sunscreen. Paul Macias reported that the facility does not but they have looked into that. Right now, they offer community sunscreen.

Jessica Alvarado commented that based on Listen 360 reviews, Paul Macias and the aquatics staff provide top-tier customer service, which is the best type of marketing for this facility.

No action taken.

C.5 RECEIVE COMMUNITY EVENTS 3RD QUARTER REPORT.

Jessica Alvarado presented the Special Events Quarterly report.

- May had to be canceled due to rain part way into the event.
- June had to be completely canceled due to rain.
- 2,000 attendees in April.
- This quarter transitioned in a new Special Events team.

David Jones commented that the big event in April was the Elton Johns and Beatles and it was packed. He then asked to clarify that Denton Drive Live is going away. Jessica Alvarado responded that they are looking to reinstate the task force to hear from the community, get feedback, and get a proposal in place to propose to the council for the next fiscal year. She also noted that Halloween in the Park has been reinstated for 2025 per City Council.

Jennifer Nelson-Smith asked how the task force is formed. Jessica Alvarado responded that City Council provides that direction. Robert Diaz commented that in the November 12, 2024 Council Meeting, Omar Roman, Mayor Pro Tem, District 1, has an agenda item for reforming multicultural task force. He said the former task force was sunset at the end of April and potentially the task force could broaden its event focus. Robert said the board might be able to be updated in November based on this agenda item.

A. BOARD VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES.

Jessica Alvarado presented volunteer information for the A Christmas Carnival event. Jan Wooldridge mentioned it took multiple board members on different shifts to man the gazebo for Pictures with Santa.

David Jones discussed getting the sign-up sheet to the board at a meeting like last year. Jennifer Nelson-Smith asked about providing a QR code for donations and a stroller parking sign for a safe area for strollers to be parked while families are in line as feedback from last year. She commented that those notes were due to donations being lower than expected in 2023.

Jan Wooldridge suggested having a bucket in the mailbox to help catch money and a sign that mentions donations and what they are for. Jessica Alvarado responded that staff would look into implementing these suggestions.

No action taken.

C.6 RECREATION DIVISION UPDATE.

A. RECREATION CENTER AND ATHLETICS 3RD QUARTER REPORT.

Jessica Alvarado presented an update to the board on the Recreation Division. Farmers Branch received an IBMA Distinguished Achievement Award. Jessica Alvarado, Jocelyn Avina, and Mayor Terry Lynne attended. Jessica Alvarado and Jocelyn Avina got to experience what our guests will get to experience attending Bluegrass at a hotel.

Recreation Center is wrapping up fall holiday craze. CFBISD had the entire week off this year. Team offered the childcare to residents. 33 kids attended. Activities included a field trip and outdoor/indoor recreation.

Ashley Muñoz presented the Recreation Center quarterly update, with the following highlights:

- Revenue increased 14% compared to last year. Attribute this to membership costs and a couple programs.
- Program revenue increased 35%.
- Youth revenue went down 13%. Many families took time off in late June/early July for vacation.
- Day Pass revenue was down 22%. Attribute this to the closure of the gymnasium for April.
- 111% cost recovery.
- NPS score of 80 and a google rating of 4.7.

David Jones asked how they were able to cut costs. Ashely Muñoz responded that they were creative with materials on hand. Jessica Alvarado responded that they proactively watch staffing levels to fit needs at the recreation center, using staff where they are most needed. Ashley Muñoz responded that staff member Celeste was good at watching numbers to support this activity.

Stephen Stremel asked about the impact of senior citizens due to being a year into the new pricing structure. Ashley Muñoz commented that she has seen a similar impact as Paul Macias at the Aquatics Center. She said Branch Connection members are also at the Recreation Center right now using their membership with their building being renovated and a lot of their members like the track and equipment.

Paul Macias responded that he completes the Silver Sneaker Program reporting and has seen a significant increase in Silver Sneaker scans at the Recreation Center, a decline when The Branch Connection moved to the local church, and an increase in August again with The Branch Connection activities were back at the Recreation Center.

Barbara Leedy asked about day passes as she thought these sales would drop off due to cost. Ashley Muñoz and her team have tried to explain membership benefits to day pass purchasers, but they would prefer to continue purchasing day passes. Jennifer Nelson-Smith commented that high schoolers tend to spend money based on the present, not long-term thinking. Robert Diaz responded that he has seen this recurring day pass purchase situation in all the communities he has served.

No action taken.

C.7 RECEIVE PARKS DEPARTMENT PROJECT UPDATE.

Robert Diaz presented the project update with the following highlights:

- New Park Planner Tara Bradley, coming from Rowlett, starts Monday and will be engaged in these park projects.
- Dutch Village:
 - Going to do some public feedback with the community end of year/early next year, which will push the date they propose a plan to council.
 - In the winter, they will prep Dutch Village and get signage up letting them know work is coming soon potentially with a QR code to the project website.
- John Burke:
 - Still working towards finalizing the septic system.
 - Overlook is in progress.
- Joya at Oran Good Park:
 - New Fence – The vendor is setup, fence materials are being ordered, and they will begin installation in the next week. Completion in 2-3 weeks from beginning the work, pending weather.
 - Network vendor being reviewed, likely Spectrum.
 - Staffing – There is no current plan to staff again. Hoping the no street parking and new fence will aid crowd control and safety measures.
- The Branch Connection:
 - Contractor has the Phase 2 demolition completed and they are beginning installations. They are on target. They hold weekly meetings with the Contractor. There is one month left to complete the roof.
- Mercer Park:
 - The City owns the property now. The developer paid the city for tree installation.
 - The developer has 6 months to install the artwork within the amended agreement. Art base is already there.
 - To complete Phase 1 of the project, the city will complete the irrigation and install the trees to get turf established, providing townhome residents usable park space. This will buy time to do Phase 2 with pickleball courts and other discussed amenities.
- Squire Park:
 - New budget year added the remainder of the funding.
 - Want to conduct outreach in the neighborhood. Recent feedback from residents note concerns over those outside of the neighborhood coming to use a splash pad in this local park.

- The park is a great space, good trees. It's going to be some minor tweaks and updates to equipment and connections to trail. Basketball is popular, so want to keep that there. Talked about a parking lot, but it's a neighborhood park. Do we need a parking lot?

Jennifer Nelson-Smith commented that she's glad that we're getting public feedback on Dutch Village.

Jan Wooldridge commented that Joya Park was packed with adults and children on the first Saturday of October around 9 p.m. and asked if there was an event that night. Robert Diaz responded that there was no event that he knew of. Jan commented that she received positive feedback from her guests about the park.

David Jones asked how much it costs to put a roof on The Branch Connection. Robert Diaz responded with half a million dollars. He said that the contractor will complete The Branch Connection then move to City Hall, which may have helped cost completing both simultaneously.

Stephen Stremel said he thinks having meetings with the public is great to hear what they think about Squire Park. He completed the park audit last year and it was difficult to see what was park and what wasn't. Robert Diaz responded that it is difficult to see the front door of Squire Park and if a parking lot was included, it might make more sense at Ridgeland rather than at Squire.

Jennifer Nelson-Smith commented that she was asked about the dog park concessions by residents at National Night Out. They were curious if that would be staffed by a vendor so residents could purchase items locally. Jessica Alvarado reported the following updates:

- They had issues with the cold in the winter and heat in the summer for vendors, so they invested in an A/C and heater for that concession area.
- There were issues with the glass in the front being see through, now it is a wrapped glass.
- They are looking for a concessions partner, not a standalone restaurant.
- The city is currently going out to bid for the Aquatics concession stand.
- They hope by spring to have someone in there.
- Currently, Sister Sips sometimes uses the space.

Jessica Alvarado discussed food laws changing over time, making it more difficult for youth organizations to use concessions spaces. The Barney Wood Bark Park concession area is more up-to-grade and meets minimum standards per health and permitting department.

C.8 PARKS DIVISION UPDATE.

This item was combined with the parks project update.

No action taken.

C.9 DISCUSS THE PARK BOARD BI-ANNUAL UPDATE TO CITY COUNCIL.

Robert Diaz discussed using the prior presentation as a base and updating it with new information before the presentation to council. Group discussion included:

- Mission & Vision – See how the city's strategic mission corresponds to last year's slide.
- Events – Look at events that fit the fiscal year, with last fall through this fall. Speak about how Halloween in the Park will come back for FY25 and add the multi-cultural event.
- Examples of Success – Include membership numbers.
 - Stephen Stremel suggested putting real numbers to note how much revenue these facilities generate and the revenue contributions. He also mentioned including the great customer service numbers demonstrating the residents enjoy the facilities and give positive feedback.
 - Barbara Leedy suggested mentioning the extensive reach of our facilities.
- Updates & Future – Include Park projects – Joya, Burke, Mercer, Events center, Branch connection

Robert Diaz commented that fee increases started in January and some revenue increased due to this. He said initially residents commented on the fee increase, but the city seemed to get through this. Stephen Stremel commented that the customer service scores remaining high is why.

Robert Diaz said fees went up with facility upgrade and it would have been tough to increase costs without the update.

Robert Diaz commented that his team will get this updated for a board meeting practice prior to presenting to City Council on December 10, 2024.

C.10 RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM BOARD MEMBERS ON PARKS, PROGRAMS, EVENTS, OR FACILITIES ATTENDED IN THE CITY OF FARMERS BRANCH.

David Jones said he attended the Special Olympics Event on September 20, 2024 and was impressed. He noted:

- Attendees come from all over, not just DFW.
- Amber Sotelo threw out the first pitch.
- This was his first exposure.
- Bocce Ball was interesting.
- Having an event like this reflects well on Farmers Branch.

Jan Wooldridge commented that a lot of families keep coming each year to Special Olympics. Barbara Leedy commented that there is Bocce Ball at Gussie Field Waterworth Park near Rose Garden.

Oscar Briseno asked if the City still sponsors Premier Baseball. Jessica Alvarado responded that it moved to a different state now. Oscar Briseno asked if girls softball was still hosted at the Farmers Branch fields. Jessica Alvarado reported that it did not come back.

Oscar Briseno asked about the Pickleball Championships and if the city or Brookhaven was hosting. Richard Diaz responded that a couple of pickleball associations as well as Brookhaven are hosting. The city helps link the hotels with the event. Our tourism team went after grant money to help with some of the expenses. P&R and hospitality teams staff tents at the event.

Barbara Leedy asked about homeless people in the parks and paths. Discussion about calling the police when you notice to have them check on the area. Robert Diaz responded that Metrocrest is aware too and they do outreach in Farmers Branch about once a week.

C.11 DISCUSS POTENTIAL AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS.

Jennifer Nelson-Smith requested to have Barney Park Concessions added to a future meeting when updates are available.

Adriane Young requested to have all the normal updates.

D. ADJOURNMENT.

Jan Wooldridge made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Stephen Stremel. The motion carried. The October 17, 2024 meeting adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Note: A full video of the meeting is available on the YouTube FBTV channel.

David Jones, Chair

Jennifer Nelson-Smith, Secretary