



Tulare County Parks Advisory Committee

**Committee
Members**
Mike Chrisman
Carol Finney
Nancy Hawkins
Neil Pilegard
Courtney Roche, Jr.

MINUTES

July 28, 2016

03:00 P.M. Committee Convenes

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

At this time, members of the public may comment on any item not appearing on the agenda. Under state law, matters presented under this item cannot be discussed or acted upon by the Board at this time. For items appearing on the agenda, the public is invited to make comments at the time the item comes up for Board consideration. Any person addressing the Board will be limited to a maximum of three (3) minutes so that all interested parties have an opportunity to speak. At all times, please use the microphone and state your name and address for the record.

Present Members: Mike Chrisman, Carol Finney, Nancy Hawkins, Neil Pilegard, Courtney Roche Jr.

Absent Members: None

Staff Present: John Hess, Amy King, Brooke Sisk, Victor Calderon

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 3:08 p.m. by Chairman Chrisman.
2. **Welcome:** Chairman Chrisman welcomed everyone in attendance.
3. **Approval of Minutes:** Committee member Pilegard made a motion to accept the minutes from the previous meeting as submitted and committee member Hawkins seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.
4. **Public Comment:** Maryanne Camin, John Rodgers' assistant, submitted a letter composed by John Rodgers to the committee for their review. This is entered as Exhibit A. Chairman Chrisman stated that this will be taken into consideration when setting priorities for the conceptual master plan.

Chairman Chrisman spoke about the Blacksmith Shop on the museum grounds. He stated that the Tulare County Historical Society is researching that project. Charles Iacono is a contractor and also on the Tulare County Historical Society board and he is looking in to what it would cost to get the Blacksmith Shop back in working order. Once an estimate is obtained it will be presented to the museum board and will go forward as one of the major fundraising projects for the Historical Society.

John Hess inquired about the abandoned pump stations that were mentioned on the first page of the letter from John Rodgers. Committee member Pilegard stated that one is abandoned and one is partially in use. He also indicated that there are specific standards used when abandoning a well and there are some new aspects that will need to be addressed in going forward.

5. Visalia Feral Cat Coalition Trap, Neuter, and Release – Follow Up: Agenda Item No. 5 has further information. The program is underway and a first meeting has been conducted. The next meeting is being set up for next month to keep everyone updated. The purpose of these meetings is to make sure that all of the obligations are being met and also to identify any problems early so that they can be addressed before becoming a crisis.

Committee member Pilegard stated that at the last meeting he and Brooke Sisk went over the contract with the VFCC. It is important to review their list/data monthly to keep everyone apprised of the progress with the cat colony. Committee member Pilegard brought to the attention of the VFCC that there were some of the areas, per the contract, that were not feeding sites, yet were still being used as such. The contract states that thirty feet from the museum grounds as well as radio communications is not to be accessed by the volunteers. Committee member Pilegard also reported that the museum was required to be closed for several days so that the grounds could be sprayed due to a flea infestation, which cost approximately \$600. The employee of the pest control service provided a written statement confirming that the fleas were the result of the cats, not the geese or other animals in the area. Chairman Chrisman asked for confirmation that the VFCC was still feeding on museum grounds after going through the process of setting up a contract. Committee member Pilegard confirmed. John Hess asked if there was a discussion with the VFCC regarding cost sharing in reference to the cost of having the museum grounds sprayed for fleas. Committee member Pilegard stated that the meeting with the VFCC was prior to having the museum grounds sprayed, but that it would be addressed at the upcoming meeting. Chairman Chrisman asked if there is anything that the committee can do to assist in this matter. Committee member Pilegard would like to continue to negotiate with the group and see the VFCC's reports and give them a chance to adhere to the contract guidelines. It is important that they are made aware that the actions of volunteers could put the program in jeopardy prior to taking action.

Committee member Roche suggested a map be given to the VFCC with the areas mapped out to determine the availability of feeding areas. Committee member Hawkins and committee member Finney agreed and also suggested giving the VFCC a map of the site/park and allowing the VFCC to indicate their preferred feeding areas that do not conflict with those already set up in the contract as "no feeding zones". Committee member Pilegard stated that the Radio Communications/Fire Dispatch building is not among the places they can feed the cats as that

has already been evacuated for several days due to fleas approximately a year ago. Chairman Chrisman suggested that it is important to meet with the same people from the VFCC each time.

6. Grant Opportunity: Agenda Item No. 6 has further information. John Hess stated this is an action item and that staff is seeking approval from the committee to go to the Board of Supervisors to apply for this grant. Based upon Fact Finder, which is an online tool that dictates the actual eligibility, Pixley and Woodville are the only parks that would likely be competitive for the funds. There are facts sheets included in the agenda item that list project selection criteria. Staff recommends applying for one million for Pixley and \$750,000 for Woodville in order to comply with the grant. At this time Resource Management Agency indicated that the cost for grant application, including CEQA and preliminary conceptual plan work, would be approximately \$10,000. This opportunity came up quickly and the application is due in the next three to four months. Due to the deadlines and the meeting with the Board of Supervisors, the staff is asking that this be voted on today so that they can move forward with Resource Management Agency to complete the application. Chairman Chrisman asked if this was funded by the State Parks Bond. John Hess confirmed it is. Chairman Chrisman asked if it is likely the parks would be funded with this grant and if committee member Pilegard had checked with State Parks Department. Committee member Pilegard stated that they are in a good place due to the new application requirements. Tulare County only qualified for Ledbetter Park under the previous requirements for the grant. The applications that were submitted statewide were not sufficient and the qualifications have been changed to be a bit more inclusive.

Committee member Pilegard stated that the demographics of the parks patrons and surrounding area is a qualifying factor. In writing the grant, the community challenges can be maximized and work on the community involvement. There are more active community groups in Pixley that can be contacted for participation than Woodville.

Chairman Chrisman asked if the wells at Pixley and Woodville parks are in working order and providing water. Committee member Pilegard stated that they are, but Pixley has some issues with arsenic. There is a shallow well in the park that provides about 300 gallons a minute, which is sufficient. Once there is a higher water flow is when arsenic will be a problem in the water. The water is high quality, but when you go below the depth of the well even another 20 feet you get increased levels of arsenic. Committee member Pilegard stated that one of the difficulties is the jurisdiction requirements of water use.

Chairman Chrisman suggested that Committee member Pilegard should ask certain questions when meeting with the water conservation group. Also, inquire as to what are the priorities for grant. The matching funds are surprisingly low at only 5%.

Committee member Finney made a motion to send a request for approval to the Board of Supervisors to submit grant applications for Pixley and Woodville Parks. Committee member Hawkins seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

7. Park Well Status Report: Committee member Pilegard stated that the new well is running for irrigation in Mooney Grove Park. The domestic well is still not online because it is awaiting inspection by the state water board. Since the water samples provided failed, Mooney Grove

Park is required to do five tests monthly for the next three months. The Cutler Park well was approved by the Board of Supervisors. Tomorrow at 10:00 a.m. there will be a mandatory walk through for all interested contractors at Cutler Park to see the site and what will need to be done. This was publicly noticed.. Any questions are addressed with all interested parties. Then eligible bidders will have the opportunity to submit a bid within 30 days. Committee member Hawkins inquired as to how long this process takes. Committee member Pilegard stated that John Hess has been able to expedite the process so that the well can be installed quickly.

Committee member Pilegard stated that the St. John's River has been running and he has been able to purchase water and has been watering 24 hours a day every day. This emergency situation has diverted resources from other parks. The County's Purchasing department denied the request to rent a high pressure pump. A pump from Roads was provided but was not high pressure (less than 50 gallons a minute). Thus staff from other parks were needed to monitor the pump and water the grounds 24 hours a day, every day. Chairman Chrisman asked if that park is conducive to flood irrigation. Committee member Pilegard responded that it does not lend itself to that, but there is a ditch that runs through the middle of the park that they were able to use with the low pressure pump. Later, approval for the high pressure pump was granted and that is used to run water through the quick coupler system. Committee member Pilegard stated that his crew of workers have been working 20 hour shifts in addition to their 40 hour weeks for about three months. With the increased watering schedules park workers have fallen behind on other duties, such as mowing the grass in Mooney Grove Park.

Committee member Roche asked if Committee member Pilegard put water in the basin at Mooney Grove Park. Committee member Pilegard stated that he did not during the most recent time that Cameron Creek was running since the water was in high demand for the farmers and there is not much extra water to go around. Committee member Pilegard did put water in the basin earlier in the year when the cost was lower for \$25/per acre foot. Right now it costs \$35/per acre foot. He has been using the needed amounts to irrigate and over irrigate the trees to try and get some trees to recover.

8. Mooney Grove 20 Year Conceptual Master Plan – Implementation Strategy: John Hess stated that this is a follow up item from the last meeting and it will be addressed over a longer period of time. This meeting's goal will be to familiarize the committee with the plan through the worksheets provided. The next meeting will focus on setting priorities.

Committee member Pilegard called everyone's attention to a handout labeled "Tulare County Parks Top 10 List" that was included in the packet. The one thing not specifically addressed in the master plan is making the dance pavilion into a gazebo for weddings. It can be repurposed to be a feature that will be used more often. The costs listed on the handout are rough estimates. The list indicates a good working order of tasks set forth by staff. Chairman Chrisman asked if these tasks were prioritized and Committee member Pilegard confirmed, yes they are prioritized. He also pointed out that the roman numerals on the left hand column are the top ten priorities taking into account all ten County parks. Additionally, each of the parks has items listed in a suggested order of completion. Input is encouraged if there are opposing views of this list. Depending on the funding available, these projects can be completed in a different order.

Chairman Chrisman inquired as to what the estimates are based on. Committee member Pilegard stated the estimates are based on similar projects of a comparable scale that have been done at the parks..

John Hess stated that in addition to the list Committee member Pilegard has compiled, there is also a list that Kleinfelder provided that is included in the packet. Mr. Hess indicated that it is broken down into categories that directly link the items to the master plan. Committee member Hawkins stated that the list provided by Kleinfelder does not seem to have any sort of priorities listed. John Hess confirmed, stating that was one of the plan's shortcomings. It is helpful on a factual basis but not a decision making basis.

Chairman Chrisman requested to be informed of what the public response was to the 20 Year Master Plan at the previous meetings that were held. John Hess stated that the master plan is a product of an extensive public input process. Going forward, the items in the plan need to be prioritized and suggestions made to present to the Board of Supervisors. Committee member Finney asked for clarification whether the committee would be making recommendations on just Mooney Grove Park or all park priorities. Committee member Pilegard stated that the list on Mooney Grove Park is what will be addressed in the 20 Year Master Plan. The other parks are just for reference, to keep things in perspective from a global standpoint.

John Hess stated that a helpful question that should be asked is what do you think you would want the park to look like 10-20 years from now? That question requires the knowledge of who uses the park and what would they like to see/use at the park. Something else to think about is, do the certain aspects of the park meet the needs of the current visitors of the park? The future use/needs of the park need to be determined.

Chairman Chrisman stated that there needs to a process for public input that people can participate in so that there is sufficient feedback. He would like to see the public involved so that when decisions are made and the Parks Advisory Committee presents those to the Board of Supervisors, there is support from the community there rather than feeling left out of the process.

John Hess said that the committee needs to confine the input to prioritizing the projects so that there is not movement backwards. The Master Plan has already been approved and we are moving forward with that, so that needs to be made clear to have productive public input sessions. Committee member Pilegard suggested having a public meeting for input based on making priorities and then meet with the committee and then have a second meeting for public input to present the results of the first meeting in an organized manner and then finalize those results.

Committee member Hawkins stated that she has a concern that the public will attend the meetings and try to address topics that have already been finalized and it could become unproductive. She believes the public needs to be aware of where the committee is in the process so that there is not wasted time. Chairman Chrisman stated that the structure of the meetings is important and everyone will be reminded of what was already agreed upon and how we are moving forward.

Amy King suggested that realistic expectations be set for the public input meetings stating what has already been agreed upon, where the committee is in the process being specific about what items are to be prioritized. Then provide a list of ways that people can help and be involved whether that is helping to raise money or bring awareness to certain projects. Chairman Chrisman agreed and added that the committee needs to have a conversation with those in attendance about the funding that is available for these projects so that everyone can be realistic about the possibility of projects getting completed.

Maryanne Camin asked if there were certain projects that would need to be completed prior to others getting done. Chairman Chrisman stated that there are some infrastructure projects that would need to be completed before other projects would be able to move forward. That is something that the committee needs to assess since they will be the ones giving the recommendation to the Board of Supervisors. Committee member Finney stated that some people may not recognize that the paving of parking areas needs to be something done after other projects that may require digging in that area to install underground lines, for instance, that really needs to be made clear.

Chairman Chrisman asked who was in attendance at these public meetings before that were representative of the different community groups in addition to members of the public. John Hess listed Visalia Arts Commission, Master Gardeners, Tulare Irrigation District, Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District, The Real Mooney Grove Project, Visalia Police Department, City Council members, Board of Supervisors, and the Boy Scouts.

Committee member Hawkins stated that Luis Hernandez from the Visalia Times Delta would possibly write an article about the committee and the upcoming meetings. It was agreed upon to write a press release and do more with publicity to get more involvement. John Hess stated that they can reach out to the groups that were in attendance before as well.

Chairman Chrisman stated that there needs to be a condensed version of the master plan to hand out to people that attend the working meetings and the meetings should be held at Café 210. The first meeting should be on October 3 and the second meeting on November 3 at 6:00 p.m.

9. Committee Member Matters: Two members have resigned and the vacancies will be posted next week. It will be posted for two weeks and then someone will be selected to fill those two spaces. Mike Chrisman suggested Ann Paregien to fill one of the vacancies. Amy King will reach out to her to have her fill out an application if she is interested.

10. Next Meeting Date: September 29 at 3:00 p.m. at theater in AG museum.

11. Parks Manager Update: Committee member Pilegard reported that there were some trees that died as a result of the drought. He is removing dead trees that are a hazard and planting new trees in the park. Some are Valley Oak, Chinese Pistache trees, Chinese Flames, and a few Eastern Redbuds and have been donated by Southern California Edison.

12. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 4:53 p.m.