

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES

November 12, 2014

Members present: Larry Dennis, Charles Maynard, Char Rios, Connor Lange, Bette Lang and David Enquist
 Members absent: Tiffany Quilter
 Staff present: Spencer Grigg, Lori Moholt-Phillips, Roland Gonzales and Kerri Smoot
 Guests present: Mayor Dick Deane, City Councilman Todd Voth and Moses Lake High School student

2014 MEETING ATTENDANCE RECORD

Name	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dennis, L	X	C	X	C	X	C	C	X	C	X	X	
Quilter, T	X	C	X	C	X	C	C	X	C	X	E	
Lang, B	X	C	X	C	E	C	C	X	C	X	X	
Maynard, C	X	C	X	C	X	C	C	X	C	X	X	
Rios, C	E	C	X	C	X	C	C	X	C	X	X	
Enquist, D	X	C	E	C	O	C	C	E	C	X	X	
Lange, C	X	C	E	C	X	C	C	X	C	X	X	

C=Meeting Cancelled X=Present O=Absent E=Excused R=Resigned

Call Meeting to Order

The regular meeting was called to order by Chair Larry Dennis at 7:03 p.m.

Introduction of Guests/Visitors

Mayor Dick Deane, City Councilman Todd Voth and a Moses Lake High School student present.

Approval of Minutes of Prior Meeting

Ms. Lang moved the draft minutes of October 8, 2014, be approved as submitted, seconded by Ms. Rios. Unanimously approved and passed.

Communication/Correspondence

Mr. Grigg explained that he has had a few inquiries, both written and verbal, from other cities wanting to buy the Ice Rink. He has explained to them we are not selling our facility, it is just going to be shut down until further notice due to the City’s budget issues.

Plat Reviews/Dedication, or Fee in Lieu of Land - Monthly Update

None.

Director’s Report

Budget Impacts for 2015 –

Mr. Grigg passed out two letters from the City Manager and City Council members regarding the 2015 budget, as well as a few articles regarding REC’s operations and expansions.

Mr. Grigg gave a summary of the cuts made to the Parks and Recreation Department by the City Council due to the City’s budget issues. Included in the cuts is the Larson Recreation Center being completely shut down, which includes the Ice Rink, BMX Track, RC Track, Batting Cages, and the LOFT; Concession stands will be shut down at all facilities except the Surf ‘n Slide Water Park; Our full-time Concession Manager was laid off; The 4th of July picnic and fireworks display has been discontinued; The Free Summer Concert and Movie Series has been discontinued, including the annual Blue Grass Festival; All tourism marketing and advertising has been discontinued; and we have two maintenance positions that are open and cannot be filled due to the City’s hiring freeze. As a result of the lack of resources in our Maintenance Department, the regular maintenance duties such as bathroom cleaning, garbage dumping, grounds upkeep, tree trimming, etc. is going to suffer. We are even considering discontinuing the Brush Chipping program because we simply don’t have enough staff to run it.

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Commission members asked about the Larson Recreation Center and Ice Rink possibly being run by the hockey association or another entity. Mr. Grigg explained that the hockey association decided it could not afford the insurance costs to run the facility themselves. In addition, it has taken our staff years to learn and master all of the complex and costly equipment at the Ice Rink. If someone not familiar with it attempts to run it and ends up damaging the equipment or the rink itself, we will not have the funds to repair or replace it. We would love to see the Ice Rink utilized and enjoyed instead of just sitting empty, but any decisions about letting another entity attempt to run it or purchase it would have to be made by the City Manager and City Council members.

Significant discussion held regarding the long-term ramifications all the closures could have on our community, from the children and adults who participate in our programs and visit our facilities, to the hoteliers, business owners and restaurant owners who are going to lose money because we are going to lose the out-of-towners who participate in the hockey tournaments and attend our summer concerts and events. The loss of revenue to the hotel industry is going to affect other organizations as well, because we will no longer be able to provide Lodging Tax grants to organizations that need them. It is clear that the closures we are faced with are going to have far reaching and long-term negative effects on the community, and it may prove to be very hard to bounce back from some of them.

Commission members asked numerous questions regarding the budget issues being caused by the Fire Department ambulance service consistently losing money and having to be subsidized by the City every year. Commission members also expressed their concerns about the rumors that in addition to the City once again subsidizing the failing ambulance service this year, the City Council is also now considering taking out an additional loan of \$500,000 to further subsidize the ambulance service, despite all the budget cuts that have been made. Councilman Voth and Mayor Deane answered questions and explained the issues. They expressed that the City Council is looking into the facts regarding the ambulance service and is still discussing the matter. Significant discussion held.

Brief discussion held regarding the Blue Heron Bluff Trail, the Yonezawa Park exercise equipment and the cuts made to this year's Holiday Show.

Ms. Moholt-Phillips' Report

Ms. Moholt-Phillips expressed that the public may not be aware that most of our individual recreation classes and programs are still continuing as usual because they are pay-as-you-go programs that pay for themselves. She asked that everyone please spread the word. She also went over a few upcoming programs.

Mr. Gonzales' Report

Mr. Gonzales explained that because the Maintenance Department is so short staffed, daily decisions have to be made regarding which maintenance issues have the highest priority and which have to wait to be addressed as resources allow. A lot of the esthetic cleanup of facilities and parks is going to suffer because staff has to deal with more critical equipment maintenance. We anticipate complaints from the public.

Commission Questions/Comments

Commission members asked numerous questions regarding the City's budget issues. Mr. Grigg, Councilman Voth and Mayor Deane attempted to answer all of the questions. Significant discussions held regarding multiple budget issues.

Adjournment

Ms. Rios moved to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Lang. Meeting adjourned at 8:32 pm.