

**CITY OF WHEAT RIDGE
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION**

MINUTES

**Wednesday, April 21, 2021
6:30 p.m.**

(Via Zoom Virtual Meeting)

Commissioners Present: Pat Cervera, Nikki Larsen, Guy Nahmiach, Cambria Rollo, Chris Schilling, and Karen Stanley

Commissioners Absent: Kathy Koniz and John Route

Guests: None

Staff Present: Karen O'Donnell, Director
Parks and Recreation Department

Item 1 – Determination of Quorum & Call to Order

Chairman Nahmiach called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

Item 2 – Introductions – Members and Guests

Item 3 – Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Cervera pointed out a few small errors in the March minutes that needed corrections. Director O'Donnell made note of the changes and will update before the next meeting. Commissioner Larsen made a motion to accept the minutes from March 17, 2021, as amended. Commissioner Cervera seconded the motion, all accepted and approved.

Item 4 – Unfinished Business

CAPRA Reaccreditation Update

Director O'Donnell mentioned that CAPRA reaccreditation is happening this week (virtual visit with 3 individuals). Brandon Altenburg is leading the process, and staff members are doing an incredible job. We will learn what we've done well and what we can improve upon during our Friday meeting with the visitors, but will have to wait a few weeks to learn whether we officially pass.

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Tree Challenge

Director O'Donnell gave the update that the Tree Challenge (previously discussed during a meeting) is live on the website and on Facebook.

Chairman Nahmiach asked if Brandon Altenburg is contractual or city staff. He also asked if Brandon could attend the next meeting. Director O'Donnell mentioned that the Sustainability Committee would like to attend our next meeting.

Commissioner Rollo asked if she could share the Tree Challenge on Instagram and Next Door. Director O'Donnell confirmed that this is okay (and encouraged).

Item 5 – New Business

Discussion: The Future of Public Parks & Recreation...crisis or prosperity?

Commissioners were asked to read a paper prior to this meeting, in order to contribute to the conversation.

Commissioner Nahmiach felt that the paper was somewhat alarmist. It is our job as commissioners to remind our neighbors how lucky we are to have the parks and recreation opportunities that we do in Wheat Ridge.

Part 1:

Commissioner Cervera talked about the “new normal” and how sanitation efforts should continue beyond the pandemic. She commented about the differences between cities and parks and recreation districts. She asked if we have stats on usage of the recreation facility – who is using it? Are all programs still being offered? Is now the time to eliminate programs, add new ones, etc.? Usage by demographic? Don't want to eliminate programs that serve those who don't have anything else.

Director O'Donnell mentioned the connection with the cost recovery/service sustainability process that we recently completed. She will facilitate a separate meeting with the new members to review this. Commissioner Schilling asked to be invited as well.

Chairman Nahmiach stated that now is a good time for outdoor fitness, as people feel safer outdoors.

Commissioner Cervera shared that it doesn't seem like there are a lot of Silver Sneakers programs (or similar – those with different insurance providers).

Chairman Nahmiach asked about current usage at the Active Adult Center. Director O'Donnell explained that the facility is reservation-only at this point but will re-open to drop-in as of May 16th (Level Clear statewide).

Commissioner Rollo asked about the additional costs associated with increased cleaning/sanitation, in the event that we want to continue with this level of cleanliness post-pandemic. Chairman Nahmiach suggested that we're now cleaning how we always should have.

Commissioner Cervera suggested maintaining virtual recreation center.

Commissioner Larsen – initial reaction to Chapter 1 is that I often overlook the impact that parks and recreation has on lives – social justice, equity, health, culture. The definition/understanding needs to be expanded. It is important to acknowledge/highlight the department's role in the community.

Commissioners Cervera and Larsen - educating the community is important – maybe there are community members that aren't aware (especially new residents and those who rent)? Director O'Donnell confirmed that pre-pandemic, the recreation program guide went to every household (now virtual, temporarily). We could work with economic development to pass literature out to new businesses. Chairman Nahmiach mentioned bus tours for realtors twice per year. Commissioner Stanley shared that we need to make sure everyone is aware (equity) and Commissioner Cervera mentioned access (needs to be affordable). Commissioner Rollo would like to make sure we're getting the information out there – not just to those who are purchasing a home. Creating a sense of community is important. Idea – refrigerator magnets work great (info at your fingertips)!

Part II:

Commissioner Cervera - how do we compare to adjacent cities (e.g., fees)?

Chairman Nahmiach – might have a hard time getting people to say “yes” to more taxes. Property taxes are increasing, still paying for projects that keep stalling, school taxes, etc.

Commissioner Larsen – fees are in your face, where taxes are more hidden. People get more upset about increased fees, and this can result in more access issues.

Chairman Nahmiach – how can they ask for more taxes when they don't deliver the full package (e.g., ran out of money and didn't add playground at Anderson that was promised)?

Commissioner Schilling – may need to do a fee study. Looking at revenue generators - how much would we need to increase to accomplish our goals?

Commissioner Rollo – looking at the recreation center, is it operating like a business (paying for itself) vs. a passive park (free)? Parks are open and accessible to everyone; we're looking at two different things.

Chairman Nahmiach – you should be asking more from the people using the services (fees), not everyone, unless you're funding something for everyone (e.g., parks/open space). Important to educate citizens about the amount of money we're receiving in grants.

Director will share 2020 Annual Report very soon.

Part III:

Commissioner Cervera inquired about other funding sources. Director O'Donnell shared information on the Conservation Trust Fund and Open Space Fund. Commissioner Cervera asked what percentage of our revenue is fees/charges?

Chairman Nahmiach mentioned the upcoming clean-up projects with Localworks. Commissioner Schilling talked about opportunities for those who can't afford programs/services – volunteering in exchange for access to recreation facilities/programs. Also, there are opportunities for Eagle Scout projects. Commissioner Rollo said she'd love to see more opportunities for teens to get involved in the community.

Commissioner Schilling - we don't have to have every program for every person in Wheat Ridge.

Commissioner Rollo – as things shift, the most successful businesses were able to shift their business model. She asked Director O'Donnell about her thoughts on this. While we haven't met revenue goals, we have definitely adapted to new ways of serving the community. Chairman Nahmiach added that revenue isn't and shouldn't be the primary concern and gave the example that we have more parks than many other communities.

Part IV:

Commissioner Cervera referred to the Let's Talk project – did they ask questions about parks & recreation? Director O'Donnell mentioned the crossover – bike/ped access, forestry, etc. She also shared the information collected through the biannual citizen survey.

Commissioner Schilling talked about Parties on the Parkway (where he's from) – every Friday, live music, vendors, etc. This would be a good way to introduce people to our various parks and facilities and bring in revenue. Commissioner Nahmiach mentioned Localworks' Porches and Patios events (similar). Love the idea of highlighting underutilized parks (maybe parks of the month in the Gazette). The ideas are great, but the problem is staffing. We can team up with Localworks and volunteers, Commissioner Rollo mentioned.

The group agreed to table the last two chapters until the next meeting.

Thoughts on virtual vs. in-person meetings?

The group agreed to meet in-person next month. Director O'Donnell will try to reserve a room larger than the conference room.

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Item 6 – Staff Updates

Director O'Donnell shared that the outdoor pool at Anderson Park will be open this summer, but we may operate with altered hours and/or reservations due to a lifeguard shortage. Chairman Nahmiach expressed concerns and stated that he wanted to go to City Council and request lifeguard pay increases.

Item 7 – Future Agenda Items

- Prospect Lake Water Quality
- Vape Pen Exchange
- Alternate Use - Barn Building (between Kipling & Recreation Center)
- Land Acknowledgement

No updates were provided regarding the above topics.

Chairman Nahmiach mentioned that we should pick a park for a summer meeting with dinner.

Item 8 – Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Larsen: I don't want a playground at Founders Park – Panorama is super close! Nothing to report.

Commissioner Stanley: Lots of discussion on I-70/Kipling area. What to do, who to call when you come across drug paraphernalia. Director O'Donnell mentioned people can call parks staff and can call PD non-emergency number.

Commissioner Cervera: Issues with people experiencing homelessness at Fruitdale Park. People are out walking and using the trails.

Cambria Rollo: Biggest thing I'm hearing about is people experiencing homelessness, increase in vandalism, break-ins and car thefts – impacts parks and utilization of parks. Would like to learn what role parks and recreation plays in this. Director O'Donnell shared information on the 5/11 City meeting and What's Up Wheat Ridge page regarding PEH.

Commissioner Schilling: 45th & Everitt St. – duplexes have filled the dumpster and pushed it into the park. Need to check it out.

Chairman Nahmiach: The owls are still here and they're pretty loud, but we like them.

Item 9 – Adjournment

With no further business, Chairman Nahmiach adjourned the meeting at 8:19 p.m.