

Recreation Committee
8:30 a.m., Tuesday, March 6, 2018

The regular meeting of the Recreation Committee was held at 8:30 a.m., Tuesday, March 6, 2018 in the City Hall Conference Room, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the meeting were Councilmembers Moye and Smith, Chair Buckhannon, Administrator Tucker, Assistant Administrator Fragoso, Director Page, Assistant Director Ferrell and Clerk Copeland; a quorum was present to conduct business.

1. Chair Buckhannon called the meeting to order and acknowledged that the press and public were duly notified of the meeting in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

2. Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes

Councilmember Smith directed attention the first paragraph on page 2 of the February 5, 2018 minutes; she stated that the one-day (1 day) self-defense class was only a suggestion, not a request.

MOTION: Councilmember Smith moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of February 5, 2018 as changed; Chair Buckhannon seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. Citizens' Comments

Lavonne Settimio, 25 – 24th Avenue, recalled that, when the Bark Park originally opened, it was “nice and grassy,” but, after several years of use, it is all sand. Ms. Settimio suggested putting down mulch, which she thought might be acquired free of charge from a tree cutting company. From chatting with dog owners at the Bark Park, she has learned that many of them bring their dogs from Mount Pleasant to enjoy it. She also mentioned that her husband had spoken to City Council at the February meeting about aggressive dogs at the Bark Park. She repeated his request for the City to consider requiring non-resident dogs to have an IOP dog license. She also said that she would like for the Animal Control Officer to come by the park more often and to stop for a few minutes to see what is going on; his presence might encourage people to monitor their dogs' activities closer.

Mic Smith, 20 – 23rd Avenue, said that he regularly plays basketball with ten to fifteen (10-15) other island men every Saturday morning, and that they have been very pleased with the new goals. During the winter and summer months, the weather is not conducive to playing outdoors, and he was requesting a way for this group to reserve court time on Sunday afternoons. He indicated that his group was willing to pay fifty dollars (\$50) for about an hour and a half of court time.

Rebecca Stephenson, 18 – 26th Avenue, introduced herself as one (1) of the organizers off the Isle of Palms' Farmers' Market.

4. Departmental Report

Spring softball, table tennis league and 6-v-6 soccer will be starting up soon, and 3-on-3 basketball has been postponed due to the installation of the new basketball goals. In youth sports, basketball has wrapped up and the baseball program is beginning; the Director told the

Committee that, without the non-resident participants, the Rec Department could not host youth leagues. She also noted that, in youth sports, no child from the Isle of Palms or Sullivan's Island is put on a waiting list; only non-residents children are on the waiting lists. The Keenagers remain very active; fifty (50) senior attended the last potluck lunch. In March, the Wellness Committee is holding a step challenge to see which Department can get from here to Disneyland in California first. Doggie Day at the Rec was again a very successful event; the setup was different from prior years with Dr. Jose and the City being more visible. As a result of the changes, the City sold ninety-two (92) dog licenses compared to last year when sixty (60) or so were sold; in addition, Dr. Jose ran out of chips, and he gave more than seventy (70) vaccinations. The Director was also very pleased with the size of the crowd at the Front Beach Fest, and it was a big success.

Councilmember Smith noted that the event received rave reviews on Facebook.

Upcoming events include the Easter Egg Hunt on March 31st and the annual Yard Sale on Saturday, April 14th from 10:00 a.m. to noon. Fifty (50) booths are set up for the Yard Sale, and registration has begun.

5. Old Business

A. Discussion of potential Farmers' Market changes for 2018

Assistant Fragoso reported that she met with Rebecca Stephenson and Jessica Blaszcak, co-managers of the 2017 Farmers' Market, and Cynthia Wilson, Manager of the IOP County Park in an after-action meeting; an information sheet from the meeting was sent to Committee members that included the results of a brief survey of the vendors and recommendations for improvement and changes to the 2018 Farmers' Market. (A copy of the information sheet is attached to the historical record of the meeting.) Opportunities for improvements noted were offering free parking at the County Park, reducing the number of vendors and food trucks, selling beer and wine, providing the vendors with flyers they could distribute at other markets and providing more marketing. The recommendation is to hold the market again on the eight (8) Thursdays in September and October and to hold them at the County Park due to the amenities offered and the availability of electricity. The City has asked to establish some type of agreement with the County Park for free parking to people attending the markets. Since the County Park does not allow free parking for any event, the request was for the City to pay a flat fee per market, and an application has been submitted to Charleston County Parks and Recreation including the parking fee request. Other recommendations were to reduce the number of vendors to twenty or twenty-five (20 – 25), to advertise the Farmers' Market as a Boutique Market and to allow the sale of beer and wine either by the County Park, who asked for the first right of refusal, or an island food and beverage business; in addition to the music, the recommendation was made to provide some kids' activities, i.e. jump castle, face painter, etc., and to seek sponsors to pay for the entertainment. The last item for consideration was to compensate Ms. Stephenson and Ms. Blaszcak for their services.

When Councilmember Moye suggested tying entertainment sponsorship to the beer and wine vendor, Chair Buckhannon thought that some local businesses might be turned off by the idea.

Assistant Fragoso also told the Committee that the City had been "overly generous" when it came to paying the musicians; the City paid two hundred dollars (\$200) for each market, but the standard practice by other local farmers' markets was to pay seventy-five to one hundred dollars (\$75 – 100).

Ms. Stephenson added that the discussion had been to offer tiers of sponsorships.

Assistant Fragoso said that the expenses for the market included the Animal Control Officers who lined off the vendor spaces, police officers who set out signs and approximately eight hundred dollars (\$800) for materials, posters and signage; the cost for the Assistant Administrator's time has not been calculated. The revenue from the vendor applications was approximately ten thousand dollars (\$10,000); this figure will be less in 2018 due to the reduction in the number of vendors allowed for each market. The budget for advertising would be increased for 2018 to include pamphlets or flyers as well.

According to Ms. Stephenson, the average number of vendors at the Farmers' Markets was thirty-five (35), but a total of seventy (70) vendors paid some amount of application fees.

On the subject of paying the co-managers, Assistant Fragoso attested to the many hours of work they put in for last year's markets and indicated that they have not talked in detail about this request. She suggested either a per hour rate or a per market rate to be paid from the proceeds of the markets.

Chair Buckhannon pointed out that the City has several volunteer groups, including the Board of Zoning Appeals, the Planning Commission, and Accommodations Tax Committee, that receive no compensation for their services to the community, and he thought that to pay the farmers' market volunteers would create an issue.

Councilmember Moyer noted that, unlike the other volunteer committees, this initiative generates revenue for the City.

Chair Buckhannon indicated that, to make an informed decision, the Recreation Committee would need to see the final revenue and expenses attributed to last year's markets.

Ms. Stephenson commented that the market had been a lot of work and that the goal was to have a successful farmer's market on the island.

In defining a successful market, Councilmember Moyer said that his first thought was getting residents to engage with one another and build better community engagement and the second was to buy locally and the third was to support local businesses.

Mr. Stephenson added that another goal was to encourage healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle.

Since residents perceive the Rec Center as the hub of the island, for Councilmember Moyer, it was the natural place to hold the farmers' market; he, therefore, asked Director Page to generate a hypothetical plan for the farmers' market to be at the Rec Center for the April meeting. This would give the Committee and Council the option.

Director Page opined that a farmers' market could be set up similarly to the Yard Sale because the trucks and vans could not be the athletic fields; a drawback to holding the markets at the Rec would be that to do so would eliminate the ability to sell beer and wine. She also voiced concern that the farmers' markets would become another City-sponsored event and the responsibility of the Recreation Department; she stated that the Rec Department did not have the personnel to take on the project.

On the other hand, Ms. Stephenson said that her concern was that, in moving the markets to the Rec Center, the farmers' market would be taken away from her and Jessica.

Councilmember Moye added that the goal of the island's farmers' market was not to bring people to the island; it was a service for the residents.

Councilmember Smith countered that people from off-island would be necessary for the market to be sustainable.

Chair Buckhannon recapped that, for the April meeting, the Committee would be looking for the financial spreadsheet for the 2017 market and a concept for holding the market at the Rec Center with the pros and cons.

B. Discussion of opening the Rec Center on Sunday afternoon

The Chair recalled that opening on Sunday afternoons has been tried before and that attendance appeared to be somewhat weather driven.

Director Page reported that she was unsuccessful in looking for attendance data from the time when the Rec Center was open on Sundays in the past. When the time came that no one was coming in on Sunday, the Department moved the volleyball games to Sunday afternoons. She said that she has received a phone call from a resident mother who was adamantly opposed to opening on Sunday afternoons, and she distributed copies of the email to the Committee members. She also reminded the Committee of the staffing challenges.

Councilmember Smith asked what could be done to encourage attendance on Sunday afternoons since at least one (1) group has expressed a strong desire to use the facilities. In her opinion, Sunday afternoon was a prime time that people wanted to recreate, since they were not working or going to school.

A real challenge for the Director was how to reserve the gym for an hour on a Sunday afternoon and then not allow another group to reserve the facility.

Councilmember Moye indicated that he, too, was hearing from residents that they want the Rec Center open on Sunday afternoons.

Chair Buckhannon stated that he thought the comments Council was hearing were a reaction to the harsh weather conditions over the winter. He was interested in knowing what hours the Committee members thought the Rec should be open.

Councilmember Smith opined that noon to 5:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m. would be good.

In Councilmember Moye's opinion, to open the Rec for a trial period and to monitor the numbers would tell the residents that they have been heard and efforts were being made to provide what they are asking for.

Administrator Tucker asked Director Page if she thought it would be easier to have staffing if the Rec Center were open for a full day as opposed to a half day, and the Director responded that she did not think it would make a difference. She added that she would have to hire an additional person.

Members of the Committee were confident that the Director could find people who would be willing to work on Sunday afternoons.

The Administrator noted that money was not budgeted for the Rec Center to be open seven (7) days a week, so she asked the Director to prepare some cost estimates before a final decision was made. The Administrator thought that, if needed, money could be found in the budget for FY18.

6. New Business

A. Consideration of user fee changes and opportunities to put residents first

Director Page reiterated that the Rec Department charges non-residents of the Isle of Palms an additional five dollars (\$5) to participate in athletics and for the summer camps.

Councilmember Moye stated that Mount Pleasant adds thirty dollars (\$30) to their fees for non-residents.

Explaining why the non-resident fee was only five dollars (\$5) higher, the Director said that she had approached the Recreation Committee about raising non-resident fees, and the Committee agreed to the increase to include Sullivan's Island children. If the fees were increased more, they would have to apply residents of Sullivan's Island as well as elsewhere.

The Chair opined that the fact that the Isle of Palms and Sullivan's Island are neighboring islands should be a consideration when debating an increase to fees at the Recreation Center; he felt that they should not be afforded the same rates as the island's tax base. They would still be given the opportunity to register alongside IOP residents.

Councilmember Moye suggested marketing any increase in non-resident fees as a residents' discount.

Director Page asked for clarification on whether the Committee supported such an increase to apply to all programs offered by the Recreation Department.

Councilmember Moye asked if the Director had the numbers for resident versus non-resident participation in the classes, and the Director said that they could compile them.

Chair Buckhannon commented that, if a class were composed of six (6) regular participants and half were from off-island, to increase the class fee from five dollars (\$5) to thirty-five dollars (\$35) could decimate the class.

The Director noted that for classes, like Total Body Challenge, a participant can pay for four (4) classes at "x" rate or for eight (8) classes at "y" rate; in this case, how would a non-resident rate be applied? She said that the current rate system was to encourage visitors to participate in the Department's exercise programs and was program-based rather than people-based. Mount Pleasant has more than enough people to fill its programs and athletics; they do not need visitors to participate, but the same cannot be said for the Isle of Palms Rec Department.

According to Councilmember Moye, residents did not necessarily want non-residents taking classes at the Rec Center. He has heard from the community that they want some activities at the Rec Center to be "resident centric or resident focused."

The Director explained that the software package used by the Rec Department will automatically add a non-resident fee if the zip code keyed in at registration was not the Isle of Palms' zip code; to do what the Committee was suggesting, non-resident fees would have to be established for each program based on the program's demand. She also noted that the instructors establish the rates for the classes/programs they teach.

In an attempt to keep things as simple as possible, Director Page suggested focusing on youth athletics and, possibly, summer camps; she opined that classes and programs was going to be complicated.

Administrator Tucker stated that, if instructors could not make enough money to teach at the Isle of Palms due to participation, they will stop coming to the island, and the residents would suffer.

The consensus of the Committee was that to add five dollars (\$5) to a per-class program was sufficient, but that activities like athletics and summer camps should be looked at differently.

The Administrator suggested that the Director review the activities and associated fee schedule to come back to the Committee with recommendations at the April meeting.

B. Discussion of potential amendments to the Code related to the name and duties of the Committee

Administrator Tucker stated that if the Committee did not want to make any changes, no action was needed. If they did want to make changes, she recommended that the members consider what changes they would like to make and to present them at the next meeting.

Councilmember Moye indicated that he would like to wait until after the Special Council Meeting of March 21st.

C. Discussion of policies related to the Bark Park

Director Page distributed a copy of the Bark Park rules to the members of the Committee.

As a nearby resident, Chair Buckhannon stated that he frequently sees the Animal Control Officer driving by the Bark Park checking on what is going on.

As to the digging and waste disposal, the Director thought that the residents did a pretty good job at policing the park and insisting that owners fill in holes and clean up after their dogs.

Chair Buckhannon recalled that Council did decide to require that all dogs, resident and non-resident, have IOP dog licenses; the action caused such an outcry that Council reversed its action at the next month.

After hearing Mr. Settimo at City Council, Councilmember Smith wanted to know if the City should more clearly define what dog owners should do if they encounter an aggressive dog in the Bark Park.

The Administrator and the Director pointed to the signage that clearly shows the numbers for the Police Department and the Recreation Department to call about a problem in the Bark Park.

Administrator Tucker noted that the Police Department has surveillance cameras as well.

Since currently there is no way to know if a dog in the Bark Park has had his vaccinations; the Chair suggested a collar policy for dogs at the Bark Park or some other means of quickly identifying whether the dog has had its shots.

According to the Administrator, the plan Council adopted then reversed was to require collars for all dogs that could be purchased at the PSB, and island dogs versus non-island dogs were distinguished by the color of the collar. This was the mechanism used by Sullivan's Island, and the proposed cost was twenty-five dollars (\$25).

Councilmember Moye suggested adding the statement that to use the Bark Park, all dogs must have the five dollar (\$5) City-issued dog license.

Chair Buckhannon stated that the five dollar (\$5) dog license fee for non-island dogs using the Bark Park would help to offset some of the cost to maintain it and verify that the dog has had its vaccinations. He also suggested different tags for residents versus non-residents, and charging ten dollars (\$10) for the non-resident dog tags. He noted that to do this would probably mean a change to the City's ordinances, but he thought that to do this would eliminate the kind of problems that have been described by residents.

Since one (1) of the Bark Park rules is that "all dogs must have current rabies vaccinations to use park" and "tag must be worn at all times," the need for a separate tag as further proof of vaccinations would be unnecessary in the Director's opinion; she commented that, possibly, what was needed was for Rec staff to check more frequently.

Both the Chair and Councilmember Moye thought that a non-resident dog tag issued by the City should become a requirement for the use of the Bark Park.

Administrator Tucker summarized that the Committee wanted staff to provide more information on the ability to distinguish resident and non-resident dogs, the ability to sell the tags, whether or not the Police Department was willing to take that on and any ordinance changes that would be required.

Councilmember Moye asked that staff also investigate the ability for dog licenses to be sold at the Rec Center.

Director Page stated that she saw the dog licenses as a public safety issue, and the Chair noted that the database and other information was stored by the Police Department.

D. Discussion of policies related to the message boards

The Administrator noted that currently the City did not have a written policy regarding the content of the message boards, and, at times, the notice of other community events, such as the VFW Fish Fry or the Methodist Church Tea Room, are displayed on them. She thought the City should have a written policy about what could and what could not be posted on the message boards, and she asked that the members of the Committee think about it for the next meeting. The Administrator stated that the policy could be to post only City meetings and events. If the policy was established to allow events outside the purview of the City, the City would not have the ability to post what it likes and not post what it does not like.

Chair Buckhannon compared the policy not to rent out the Rec Center to not allow anyone or organization to post non-City events on the message boards. He asked that the Administrator send the Committee members the information she has gathered so the Committee would be prepared at the April meeting to establish a written policy.

7. Miscellaneous Business

Next Meeting Date: 5:00 p.m., Tuesday, April 3rd in the Conference Room.

8. Adjournment

MOTION: Councilmember Moyer moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:11 a.m.; Chair Buckhannon seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland
City Clerk