

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

**Wednesday, January 15, 2020  
6:30 p.m.**

**WHEAT RIDGE RECREATION CENTER  
4005 Kipling Street, Conference Room**

**MINUTES**

Commissioners Present: Sally Banghart, Scott DeJong, Trish Ennis, Kathy Koniz, Nikki Larsen, Dylan Nahmiach, Guy Nahmiach, Andy Rasmussen, and Liz Veeder

Commissioners Absent: None

Guests: Kelli Barker, Regional Homeless Coordinator

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

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**Item 1 – Determination of Quorum & Welcome Newly Appointed Commission Members**

Chairman Guy Nahmiach called the meeting to order at 6:28 p.m.

Chairman Nahmiach welcomed the newly appointed Commissioners, Scott DeJong (District II, term expires 3/2/21) and Andy Rasmussen (District IV, term expires 3/2/20). Both introduced themselves and shared a little information about their involvement in the Wheat Ridge community. Commissioner Rasmussen informed the group that he already completed the application to serve beyond his term expiration date. Both have been sworn in by the City Clerk.

**Item 2 – Introductions – Members and Guests**

Commissioner Nahmiach welcomed everyone to the meeting. Director Karen O'Donnell introduced Kelli Barker, Regional Homeless Coordinator. Commissioner Guy Nahmiach shared that Commissioner Ruth Baranowski had a family emergency and will not be able to present this evening. She is planning to present at the February meeting.

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**Item 3 – Approval of Minutes**

Commissioner Banghart asked if October's minutes were corrected regarding letters sent to Charles and Christine. Director O'Donnell ensured her that they were corrected, so it's possible that the unedited minutes were attached to the email. Commissioner Koniz made a motion to

accept the minutes as presented for November 20, 2019. Commissioner Ennis seconded the motion, all accepted and approved.

#### **Item 4 – Unfinished Business**

##### **People Experiencing Homelessness Update**

Kelli Barker, Regional Homeless Navigator, discussed the Homeless Navigator program in Jefferson County. Comprehensive count results will come out at the end of the month. Ms. Barker offered to come back and report and/or share the information electronically with the Commission. Interviews for the Wheat Ridge position will take place on January 30<sup>th</sup> (0.5 FTE position).

Commissioner Veeder: People are being paid through each individual City?

Ms. Barker: Yes.

Commissioner Guy Nahmiach: Who will supervise the Wheat Ridge employee? Are the goals common goals?

Ms. Barker: Someone in the Police Department will supervise the position. I just got the name, but don't recall. Yes, there are definitely common goals.

Commissioner Banghart: Are there resources for these people to live in every municipality?

Ms. Barker: Not enough, but one of our jobs is to find more resources. There are many grants available for this issue.

Commissioner Guy Nahmiach: A lot of the homeless population sits along the Greenbelt. Many of the complaints that we receive are from walkers/bikers, as the path might be blocked by individuals experiencing homelessness. How do we communicate with those that live along the Greenbelt and park/trail users?

Ms. Barker: That's one of the reasons that a WR homeless navigator will be a great resource. He/she will be a direct contact for parks staff.

Commissioner Guy Nahmiach: Will 0.5 position be working ½ a day or 2.5 days a week?

Ms. Barker: I'm not sure if that has been determined yet. If you want to get more involved, check out Heading Home.

Commissioner Guy Nahmiach: Do we track where people have come from?

Ms. Barker: Not currently. When we've asked in the past, they typically state that they came from the same county or Denver.

#### **Item 5 – New Business**

##### **Presentation on Urban Prairie Project with the Butterfly Pavilion (Ruth Baranowski)**

Due to a family emergency, Ruth has rescheduled for February 19, 2020.

#### **Item 6 – Staff Updates**

##### **Prospect Park – Phase II**

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Director O'Donnell shared that the Department will begin working on Phase II of Prospect Park this year. There is \$500,000 budgeted in 2020, and the plan is to demo the existing pavilion and build a new one. Some concrete work will be included in the project. Staff will take pavilion reservations through July 4<sup>th</sup> and will plan to begin work after that. Once work begins, that portion of the park will be closed to visitors. We will share other trailhead options for those who use the parking area near the pavilion for trail access.

Commissioner Banghart inquired about the Prospect Lake water quality project. Director O'Donnell shared that the RFP (Request for Proposals) was delayed, and it should be issued soon.

Commissioner Guy Nahmiach asked if the road will still be changed near the pavilion. Director O'Donnell shared that the plans still include changes to the roadway, but those changes will not be funded in 2020.

### **Vape Pen Exchange**

Director O'Donnell shared information about the vape pen exchange program initiated by the City and County of Broomfield. She indicated that the Wheat Ridge Recreation Center plans to replicate the program near the end of the school year. Individuals will be able to trade a vape pen for a 10-punch card to the Recreation Center or possibly the outdoor pool (to be determined).

When asked if he thought his peers would be interested, Youth Commissioner Dylan Nahmiach said he thought some might be concerned that it would be a set-up and police would be present. Director O'Donnell stated that staff would be sure to clarify the details, to alleviate that concern.

Commissioner Larson wondered if tickets for rides at the Carnation Festival might be a better incentive.

### **GameTime/PlayCore Grant Update & CPW Grant Update**

Director O'Donnell shared that the City was awarded grant funding for Bonnie's Park and Kullerstrand Elementary through GameTime/PlayCore. She shared that the City also applied for a GOCO (Great Outdoors Colorado) Schoolyard Initiative grant, and should hear back in March. Director O'Donnell shared that the City applied for a CPW (Colorado Parks & Wildlife) grant for a trail connection from 49<sup>th</sup> Place to the I-70 Frontage Road, which will provide a connection to the Ward Road Station via a new pedestrian bridge. She presented the information to the CPW non-motorized trail subcommittee on Monday.

Director O'Donnell will provide more information, graphics and drone footage at the next meeting.

### **NRPA Gold Medal Application**

Director O'Donnell shared the application questions for the National Recreation and Park Association's Gold Medal Award to the group, and requested their assistance with brainstorming.

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### Initial Ideas:

Commissioner Guy Nahmiach - getting the 'no smoking' rule in parks turned into law.

Commissioner Veeder - having a youth commissioner.

### **Happiness Gardens Update**

Director O'Donnell provided the following update:

Happiness Community Gardens occupies a space that is a little over an acre.

- We have room for over one hundred 10' x 20' plots.
- The past couple years have seen about 30 - 40 participants gardening these plots, utilizing about half of this acreage.
- This has been a patchwork of plots worked here and there throughout the garden.
- These are plots leased annually and only for the growing season.
- This less than robust participation at the garden has resulted in the need to maintain the remaining over half acre of land by City staff. This requires intensive weeding (without chemicals used) and maintenance completed by City staff.
- The majority of participants have not adequately maintained their plots during the growing season or followed the rules requiring gardeners to clean-up their plots thoroughly at the end of the season. This end of season clean up involves removing all plant material/vegetation and any items brought in. Unfortunately, at the end of the season, most plots are just left without too much attention paid to clean-up, with a lot of items abandoned and left behind. As a result, the end of season clean-up has fallen on staff (clean up and disposal of items left behind).

Due to lack of participation, we are interested in putting more of this arable land in production, thus hopefully decreasing some of the area and time staff will need to spend on labor intensive weeding. The plan this year is to have the traditional 10' x 20' plot gardeners consolidated to the south end of the property and the market gardeners will work their tract to the north.

Consolidating growing areas will make it easier to manage unused land.

- A pilot program for market garden tracts will be added to the Happiness Community Garden this year.
- This will:
  - Allow tracts of 1/16 and 1/8 of an acre to be put under production
  - Allow larger scale urban gardeners and small scale farmers to grow flowers and produce
  - Result in more attention paid to soil health
  - Decrease the amount of land that is going unused

- We will continue to provide facility maintenance, ADA accessible raised beds, a portable toilet, green composting, mulch, water, shade, shelter, some tools, a plant giveaway and onsite Master gardener visits throughout the growing season.
- Additionally, we maintain the facilities on-site, tend to two hives of honeybees on-site, and a selection of fruit trees were planted over the past two years. Happiness has provided several on-site educational and volunteer opportunities for students ranging from grade school to college-aged pupils, and has been the site for our past two Arbor Day celebrations. Also, we offer a way to channel abundant produce to area food banks.

Commissioner Banghart asked how Happiness Gardens is advertised. She shared that it is always good to list information in the newspaper.

Commissioner DeJong asked if we could partner with Denver Urban Gardens.

### **Responses to Questions from Last Month’s Meeting**

Director O’Donnell answered Commissioner Larsen’s questions from the November meeting regarding the Treekeeper software. Staff needs to learn the software before sharing with the public, and at this time volunteers are not needed. Parks, Forestry and Open Space Manager, Zach Lovato, told Director O’Donnell that volunteers could provide assistance with watering trees in areas without irrigation.

Director O’Donnell addressed Commissioner Banghart’s question regarding maintenance schedules in the parks.

### **Item 7 – Future Agenda Items**

Commissioner Guy Nahmiach would like an update on the tree information event in the spring. He stated that he has an arborist and other vendors who are interested in participating.

Commissioner Banghart would like an update on water quality at Prospect Park, when available.

### **Item 8 – Commissioner Comments**

Commissioner Ennis: Indicated that there are a lot of foxes in her district.

Commissioner Veeder: Shared that there are coyotes (tails don’t look great) and some deer in her district.

Commissioner Larsen: Commented on the new pavilion roof at Panorama Park – looks great. She shared that there is a dog poop minefield after the snow. She reported that after the last snow, there was a trash bag next to the can for over a week at Founders Park and it was not plowed for a long time. Kudos to staff who got balloons out of tree at Founders.

Commissioner Rasmussen: Shared that he thinks the Greenbelt is gorgeous and filled with wildlife – turtles, a beaver, water snake, eagles, etc. He added that he is happy to be here and will be starting conversations with neighbors.

Commissioner DeJong: Shared that he rode the bike path with his son on Monday and Tuesday. They saw an eagle and heard a deer – nice to see the wildlife. Someone scrawled the president's name along the bike path.

**Item 9 – Adjournment**

With no further business, Chairman Guy Nahmiach adjourned the meeting at 7:45 p.m.