

**THE CITY OF SAN ANGELO, TEXAS
MINUTE RECORD OF A REGULAR MEETING OF
THE PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD**

Following notice and publication, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board convened in a regular meeting at 3:30 p.m., **September 28, 2023** in the Station 618 Office Suite Conference Room, 618 S. Chadbourne St, San Angelo, Texas.

Board Members Present were Mark Davis, Suzi Marshall, Cie Rangel, Emily Jane Cowen, Alicia Olshanski and Dee Jay Wilde. **Staff Members Present** were Al Torres, Mario De La O, Roger Havlak, and Carl White. Guests present Laurie Dicello, Council Member Karen Hesse Smith and Chase Twombly. The minutes were recorded by Barbara Stallworth.

I. OPEN SESSION (3:30 P.M.)

A. Call to Order

Mr. Davis called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

B. Public Comment

No public comment.

II. CONSENT AGENDA

1. Consider approving the July 27, 2023 minutes. Mr. Wilde motioned to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Ms. Rangel and passed unanimously.

III. REGULAR AGENDA: PUBLIC HEARING AND COMMENT

2. Discuss natural playgrounds, how one, or more, could be incorporated into San Angelo's park system and recommend any related matters. Mr. White introduced Ms. Emily Jane Cowen and explained that she will be speaking about this topic, he went on to explain what is considered a natural play space and options on creating that type of environment. Emily Jane discussed the popularity and benefits of a natural learning environment. She offered suggestions of literature on the topic and discussed her personal experiences on the benefits of being in a natural learning environment. She identified some areas around San Angelo that have an environment similar to a natural learning environment and gave ideas on what we could do to add one to an already established park that coincides with the idea of a natural play space. Emily Jane explained the different materials that could be used to create this type of environment as well as showing examples of natural learning environments that have been created and that are in use currently. Emily Jane showed different companies that provide play equipment for natural play spaces and discussed the vast amount of information that is available to consumers to assist them in creating this type of environment in the community. Emily Jane discussed funding for these types of environment and discussed that many things we can do in house to minimize costs, but also funding could be available through green grants and fundraising efforts. Mr. Davis asked a question about the age range these types of environments would benefit. Emily Jane explained that these environments can be tailored to accommodate any age range. She referenced the Natural Play Guidelines that will assist communities in creating the type of environment desired by giving examples on how to construct various types of play equipment with safety in mind. Mr. Wilde stated that the splash pad will give the water element needed in a park area that already has some natural elements. He also offered a suggestion on developing the Concho Mail Station area with this concept in mind. Mr. White suggested a few areas that are already established park spaces or play areas that we can incorporate more natural play features. Mr. White made a suggestion to create a natural playground subcommittee to further the conversation on creating a natural play space. The volunteers for this subcommittee are Emily Jane Cowen, Dee Jay Wilde, Laurie Dicello, Roger Havlak, Mario De La O and Al Torres. Mr. White recommended that the subcommittee meets at least one time before the next Board meeting

3. Discuss the Hemisfair Park idea for San Angelo and recommend any related matters. Mr. White presented pictures of the Hemisfair Park in San Antonio. Mr. White discussed the concept of

having a recreational area similar to the Hemisfair Park and being able to provide recreation and entertainment for people of all ages in San Angelo. He outlined the many types of entertainment at the Hemisfair Park. Mr. White made some recommendations of where he thought we could put this type of environment and encouraged others to offer suggestions as well. Ms. Cowen showed the Hemisfair Park link and discussed her experience with attending the Hemisfair Park and explained how this park came to existence through 3 different organizations and how the park is continued to be supported through retail activity and entertainment. Ms. Cowen discussed the support the Hemisfair Park has financially and how that was created, outlining that rent for the buildings goes back to the operations of the park. Ms. Cowen mentioned the Bosque area being similar to the Hemisfair Park concept. Mr. White spoke briefly on the history of the Bosque and how that area became developed. Mr. Wilde inquired about the Santa Fe Park and if it was being financially funded by any organization. Mr. White explained that the Santa Fe Park has a deed that allows the park to be used for specific things and a Commission was created to manage the Santa Fe Park area with no financial backing by any organization, other than the city. Mr. White reiterated Ms. Cowen's discussion to the group and mentioned the question of if the idea of an area similar to the Hemisfair would be plausible in San Angelo. He also mentioned Ms. Cowen's suggestion of having a citizen organization created to assist in funding some of the park ideas. Mr. Torres suggested that the historical elements of San Angelo be connected with this idea of a Hemisfair type environment. Ms. Dicello and Ms. Olshanski expressed their concern with not having the support needed for this idea to be successful and maintained. Mr. Havlak used the Texas Bank Sports Complex as an example of the structure similar to the supports of the Hemisfair Park by explaining that the Complex has a separate budget and has its own park staff assigned to maintain that area only and has been a success. Mr. Havlak stated that he was in support of combining all these areas together along the river for an environment similar to the Hemisfair Park but feels we would have more success if we were to concentrate on building up smaller areas along the river together to start off with. Mr. Davis asked the group to give some thought to all that was discussed and possibly have some ideas for the next meeting. Mr. White mentioned that we could work toward having an organization that is citizen based that can assist with funds for park projects like this.

4. Hear and discuss several updates in Parks and Recreation to include: park maintenance and projects, events and activities, items that have gone to City Council for consideration (or soon will), splash pad fundraising efforts, skate park fundraising efforts, Lily Fest and other events. Ms. Olshanski discussed the progress made in fundraising for the Splash pads. She explained that ASCO is still willing to match funds up to \$100,000.00 and currently we have raised \$69,000.00. Ms. Olshanski reported that \$40,000.00 has been donated through private donors and that amount will be put towards the \$69,000.00 to be matched by ASCO. Ms. Olshanski stated that she has received more support from the community due to the advertisement the project has received. Ms. Olshanski stated that she is positive that by the end of this year, she will have the money to put down to start the Unidad Park Splash Pad. She also stated that the San Angelo Foundation is assisting in applying for a grant that she feels will be beneficial. The overall budget is \$895,000.00 for two splash pads with all expenses. Mr. Twombly reported on the results of the Lily Fest. Mr. Twombly stated it was a great family event and everyone seemed to have fun. Mr. Twombly stated that a quilting club at the Tom Green County Library was wanting to raffle off quilts that were lily themed and those proceeds will go to the water lily fund. Mr. Havlak gave an update on park maintenance, projects and events. Mr. Havlak reported that the Dog Park Pavilion is completed and in the spring sod will be laid. Mr. Havlak reported that the updates to the Brown Park have been completed and that all playground installations are in house projects. We got approval to purchase 4 autonomous mowers and Mr. Havlak described how they work and the benefits they will provide. Mr. Havlak reported on some updates to some areas made possible by Keep San Angelo Beautiful. Mr. Havlak reported on some upcoming projects by mentioning that we have obtained funds to replace the playgrounds at Bell Park by March of 2024 and Mountain View Park will be replaced by October of 2024. Mr. Havlak stated that the department is assisting in helping with building a retaining wall with large rocks at the convention center along with landscaping, reseeding the parade grounds at Fort Concho and the landscaping at the Buffalo Soldier Monument. He reported on the MLK restroom and that project is moving right along and should be completed by the end of October. During the winter time, the department will be making irrigation

upgrades along the river from Central to the YMCA area. Mr. White announced a dedication event for the Dog Park Pavilion on October 27, 2023. He also mentioned the murals that have been established by Art in Uncommon Places and described them as augmented reality and are interactive. He described how to interact with the murals and will send information out to the members about the murals and how to access that feature. Mr. White discussed updates on the Skate Park fundraising. At this time the funds are not available to purchase more equipment so fundraising is ongoing. Mr. White gave an update on the activities in Recreation. He stated the Youth Flag Football is active and we will be hosting the TAAF Flag Football State Tournament in November. He briefly discussed the vacancies in the Recreation Department and updated the group on the possible future hire for the Recreation Manager position.

5. Discuss future agenda items and upcoming meeting date. Mr. White restated the topic of the Natural Playgrounds will continue to be followed up on as well as the result of the subcommittee for the natural playgrounds. Ms. Smith, Council Member expressed her support for the natural playground idea and will be trying to gather citizens for support.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Wilde motioned for the meeting to be adjourned at 4:52pm. This motion was seconded by Ms. Marshall.



Approved