

## Minutes

Audio Tape No. 655

The City Council of the City of Leawood, Kansas, met for a Joint Special Call Meeting with the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board at City Hall, 4800 Town Center Drive, at 6:00 P.M., on Tuesday, January 3, 2006. Mayor Peggy Dunn presided.

**Councilmembers present:** Debra Filla, Jim Rawlings, Gary Bussing, Louis Rasmussen, James E. Taylor, Sr., Gregory Peppes, and Mike Gill.

**Councilmembers absent:** Scott Gullede.

**Staff present:** Scott Lambers, City Administrator  
Chris Claxton, Parks & Recreation Director  
Brian Anderson, Superintendent of Parks  
Kim Curran, Superintendent of Recreation  
Deb Harper, City Clerk  
Christy Wise, Deputy City Clerk

**Parks & Recreation Advisory Board members present:**

Steve Martens, Chair  
Dick Fuller  
Amy Vlasic  
Jacquie McKinney  
Mark Mergen  
Karen Reimer

**1. Opening Remarks**

Mayor Dunn called the meeting to order at 6:10 P.M. She welcomed Councilmembers, Parks & Recreation Advisory Board members, and Staff to the meeting. Introductions were made by those present.

Parks & Recreation Director Chris Claxton extended appreciation to the Governing Body for scheduling the joint meeting with the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board. The primary reason for the work session is to discuss obtaining a Needs Assessment and subsequent updated Master Park Plan in 2007. The last Master Park Plan was created in 1990.

Councilmember Peppes arrived at 6:15 P.M.

Ms. Claxton distributed material outlining the purpose of a Needs Assessment and Master Park Plan, potential consultants to perform the work, and estimated costs. She explained the Needs Assessment would determine goals, identify gaps in services, and assess currently provided services for efficiency. The consultant will use the assessment as a tool in developing an updated plan, which should occur every 10-15 years.

**2. Discuss Revisions to the City's Parks and Recreation Master Park Plan**

Mayor Dunn confirmed with Ms. Claxton that the Needs Assessment will be conducted in advance of a new Master Park Plan.

Steve Martens, Chair of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, emphasized the importance of having a Needs Assessment performed due to the 15 year span since the last Master Park Plan was acquired. Mayor Dunn and Mr. Martens discussed how the assessment will incorporate dialogue from citizens to determine what new programs will be most beneficial to the City, i.e., the community center. The plan will allow the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board to be proactive in terms of planning land acquisitions and changing staff needs.

Parks & Recreation Advisory Board member Jacquie McKinney arrived at 6:25 P.M.

Councilmember Gill stated community center planning should take priority as all of the parklands have undergone improvements within the last 5-6 years. Future needs regarding the baby-boomer generation should also be evaluated. He questioned whether a Master Park Plan was needed in order to accomplish programming goals.

Ms. Claxton responded that an updated plan is needed for the Parks & Recreation Department as a whole, however will encompass the full potential of the community center. The programming element for seniors will be predetermined by the Needs Assessment.

Councilmember Gill also stressed the importance of making the parks fully operational. He requested to hear opinions from board members regarding departmental needs.

Dick Fuller stated the City has undergone tremendous changes over the years and has been very successful in providing outlets for residents. Most of the changes were a result of residents' requests. A long-range plan is needed to determine the future needs of citizens and to allow preparation time in meeting them. He noted that residents south of I-435 may have different desires than northern Leawood residents. He agreed that a Needs Assessment and Master Park Plan is needed to address issues of the future community center such as programming.

Mayor Dunn acknowledged that the community center will take more planning efforts than past endeavors. She announced that public-private partnerships have been offered to the City by private owners who would be willing to build the facility. Further discussion regarding this possibility can take place after determinations of citizens' requests are made with the Needs Assessment.

Mark Mergen relayed information gleaned from attending the National Parks & Recreation Conference. He stated planning was continually stressed in order to give staff direction and provide a well-defined path to follow in meeting community needs.

Councilmember Peppes, Council Liaison to the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, commented that a Master Park Plan is needed in order to budget funding for specific improvements.

Councilmember Rawlings commended the Staff and Board members for their dedication. He stated the document prepared by Ms. Claxton, "Roadmap to the Future," is very clearly calculated and could serve as the Needs Assessment.

Ms. Claxton stated the document could serve as a short-term plan, however a Master Park Plan is still needed for long-term goals rather than making reactionary improvements.

Mr. Mergen added that "Roadmap to the Future" includes the expertise of Staff but does not contain important input from citizens.

Ms. Claxton explained that Staff does not reach every citizen in the City although are in touch with a small percentage. She stated it would be an unrealistic goal to meet all residential needs. A plan is needed in order to deliver wanted services in an efficient and effective manner for the next 10-15 years with a review occurring every 5 years. Ms. Claxton distributed examples of Needs Assessments from other cities.

Councilmember Bussing also questioned the necessity of the Needs Assessment and Master Park Plan. The majority of items identified on the 1-2 year list such as the lake at Ironwoods Park and amphitheater can be duly executed through the budget and Capital Improvement Program [CIP] processes. He stated he is unconvinced that Leawood needs a community center. A Needs Assessment would be valuable to the extent of gathering reliable, credible information from the people of Leawood with regard to their expectations of service as it relates to the Parks and Recreation Department as well as their willingness to pay for the services. Similar services are offered in other areas of the County. Councilmember Bussing stated it is incumbent upon the City Council to evaluate the reality of needs before imposing costs upon citizens.

Mayor Dunn noted that questions regarding whether a community center is warranted by residents would be answered with the Needs Assessment.

Mr. Fuller restated that a long-term plan is needed.

Councilmember Filla voiced support for the Needs Assessment in order to plan adequate programming for changing residential dynamics. It will also be of benefit given the unique geographic layout of Leawood. She also agreed to hiring consultants to perform the time-consuming research and analysis due to Staff's numerous existing commitments.

Regarding duplication of services, Ms. Claxton informed that she is sensitive to Council's concerns. She is in constant contact with other cities in Johnson County and feels that their facilities are different from what is envisioned for Leawood. Partnerships between Leawood and Johnson County have been discussed. Ms. Claxton stated that relationships and partnerships with the business community should be developed and suggested keeping an open mind to potential opportunities.

Mayor Dunn and Ms. Claxton discussed selecting a consultant to perform the Needs Assessment and who will determine the information that is to be gathered. Staff will interview agencies with specific questions before making a selection. If the Needs Assessment is performed in 2007, the Master Park Plan can be postponed until 2008 in order to fully analyze the results. Ms. Claxton mentioned there is strong citizen support for a Dog Park.

City Administrator Scott Lambers stated the Needs Assessment will be discussed for the 2007 budget. He informed that if consideration is to be given for a community center with extensive facilities, approximately 10 acres of land will be needed. A tract of this size is not available with land evaporating quickly. He suggested targeting a site for the community center before the Needs Assessment is performed. This will also allow consideration for traffic/parking demands, possible opposition from neighbors, and the issuance of bonds if needed. With land costs most likely prohibiting a 135<sup>th</sup> Street location, it may be necessary to look south of 143<sup>rd</sup> Street.

Councilmember Gill recommended postponing the Needs Assessment until the possibility of a private partnership is determined.

Councilmember Filla stated the Needs Assessment should be performed sooner rather than later given the low estimated cost of \$25,000. Perhaps programs could be placed in different facilities rather than one large center.

Mr. Lambers stated a piecemeal approach to acquiring needs would reduce the return of operational costs due to double staffing. The community center should be the primary focus of the Needs Assessment as it will be a major undertaking with significant costs. The increased costs associated with possibly staggering facilities around the City should be communicated to citizens.

Mr. Fuller noted discussion heard tonight emphasizes the point that a Needs Assessment should have been obtained five years ago in order to determine the size of the community center and obtain land. The money used on the Needs Assessment will be well spent.

On behalf of the Parks and Recreation Department, Ms. Claxton voiced willingness to cut the 2006 budget in order to fund the Needs Assessment. The department feels it is very important to have some direction.

Mayor Dunn acknowledged Ms. Claxton's offer and suggesting evaluating which cuts are to be made in order to place the item on a future Council agenda.

Ms. Claxton reported that some budgeted programs for 2006 will not be continued based upon poor attendance and response. This could be a source of which to ascertain partial funding for the Needs Assessment.

Councilmember Rasmussen recommended making an evaluation of available land to be used for the Parks & Recreation Department prior to the Needs Assessment. There is no purpose to ascertain needs if land cannot be accommodated. He expressed concern that improvements to Ironwoods Park and the amphitheater as well as other goals would not be accomplished in 2006-2007 due to budgetary and staffing problems if this new endeavor is undertaken. Input from the Planning Department Staff regarding the scope of building possible should be obtained before a consultant is hired.

Mayor Dunn emphasized that lack of discussion this evening regarding the “Roadmap to the Future” document did not indicate lack of interest. She stated current goals could be accomplished through precise planning. Questions on the Needs Assessment should be perfectly tailored to obtain expectations from citizens.

Councilmember Taylor stated his position was well-known as evidenced on the January 17, 2005, memorandum regarding the wish list.

The meeting adjourned at 7:25 P.M.

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Christy Wise, Recording Deputy City Clerk