

**Minutes**

The City Council of the City of Leawood, Kansas, met for a Special Call Meeting in the Oak Room at City Hall, 4800 Town Center Drive, at 6:00 P.M., on Monday, April 11, 2016. Mayor Peggy Dunn presided.

**Councilmembers Present:** Jim Rawlings, Lou Rasmussen, Andrew Osman, Carrie Rezac, Debra Filla, Julie Cain and Chuck Sipple

**Councilmembers Absent:** James Azeltine

**Staff Present:** Scott Lambers, City Administrator      Chris Claxton, Parks & Recreation Director  
Debra Harper, City Clerk                                      Brian Anderson, Parks Superintendent  
Cindy Jacobus, Assistant City Clerk

**Others Present:**

**Play 4 ALL**

Victoria Schmitt Babb, Community Resource Mgr.

**Cunningham Recreation**

Rodney Born, Sales Professional-Kansas

**Leawood Foundation**

Alice Hawk, Chair  
Susie Rawlings, Secretary  
Mike Best, Treasurer  
Kevin Jeffries  
Chuck Udell  
Debby Throckmorton  
Mary Ann Waldenmeyer  
Charles Lusk

**Parks & Recreation Advisory Board**

Karen Ward Reimer, Chair  
Lorrie Hamilton  
Steve McGurren  
Matthew Block

**MC Realty Group**

Dave Lovetere, Proposed Leawood Project Manager

**Presentation of “Play for All” Playground  
Equipment to be Placed at City Park, Located at  
10601 Lee Boulevard**

Mayor Dunn welcomed attendees and introductions were made. She asked Parks and Recreation Director Chris Claxton for opening remarks.

Ms. Claxton stated the City Park playground was last updated 16 years ago in 2000. The Leawood Foundation sought to partner with the City on a project and Parks & Recreation thought it was an opportunity to create an inclusive-for-all playground. The meeting was called to provide a project

update and additional information about inclusive play. A portion of the presentation would focus on the process, as well as address any questions.

Ms. Hawk stated the Mayor, Ms. Claxton, Mr. Anderson and she had been able to attend additional meetings and workshops, and have information on a grant opportunity. She wanted all present to be informed and understand inclusive play. This type of playground makes so much sense and we want to do it correctly. She thanked participants for their attendance.

Ms. Babb stated “Play 4 All” company is a division of Cunningham Recreation. Cunningham Recreation is a distributor of GameTime equipment. PlayCore is the parent company of GameTime.

GameTime was founded in 1929 and produces some industry-leading products, with research and development conducted in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and manufacturing located in Fort Payne, Alabama.

Play 4 ALL is a third generation, family-owned business in its 50<sup>th</sup> year that provides extensive project management. Play 4 ALL company helps mobilize philanthropic dollars to develop inclusive playgrounds, acting as a capital campaign that leads through the fundraising effort. Ms. Babb stated she had raised over \$7 Million in the last 10 years, her services are included through GameTime and her job would be to maintain project momentum

Ms. Babb stated research supports that every child worldwide needs to play, so playgrounds are essential. During free play children can lead their bodies the way they choose and this type of play is being lost because of heavily structured schedules and gaming systems. Mental, physical and emotional health all improve. If a child takes a calculated risk on a playground it helps build their confidence. PlayCore’s “me2 7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design™” brochure [copies available] outlines the principles of Be Fair, Be Included, Be Smart, Be Independent, Be Safe, Be Active and Be Comfortable. The brochure includes a “Get Started!” checklist as a guide to create universally designed play environments that implement best practices, as well as playground activity examples.

Ms. Babb stated accessibility goes beyond disability and age; only a small percentage of the population uses a mobility device. Others need access too, such as toddlers and grandparents, to enable multi-generational interaction and play. Mr. Born added that all-inclusive playground designs are fairly new and are not just about the one in one thousand children have a physical disability. The most common type of disability is cognitive, of which autism is a large portion.

In Ms. Babb’s experience, funding is the biggest challenge for cities and schools desiring inclusively designed playgrounds that go above Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA] compliance, which requires minimal transfer stations points [two in the example playground]. Ms. Babb gave examples why ADA compliant playgrounds may not be used by those with disabilities, due to lack of physical strength to get to a transfer station and plastic tube slides that will short-circuit a cochlear ear implant due to static charge build-up. Metal slides are preferred and can be shaded to help keep cool and landscaping berms and ramps provide access to more points.

Ms. Babb provided a brief overview of the process. She noted the Leawood Foundation is a tax-exempt nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that could tap into existing Kansas and Federal public grants, could set up a giving program, create a sponsorship program, conduct marketing initiatives, check community calendars and host awareness events. One of the first tasks would be to set up social media. Next step would be to solicit input from children, decide theme and develop a design. Fundraising is Ms. Babb's favorite project phase and she suggested creation of a signage for sponsorship program. Although she has an on-staff graphic artist, other local sign vendors could be utilized, perhaps on a gratis or name-mention basis. The next step would be a groundbreaking that focuses the public eyes on the project. The construction phase would be managed by Mr. Born and the work performed by his installation team, ending with dedication and opening day.

Ms. Babb suggested the following vendor selection criteria: ability to provide a unique or custom multi-generational design and amenities, follow the "7 Principles" [GameTime does at no cost], be a manufacturer with a proven track record and warranties, comply with various safety standards [International Association for Testing and Materials, ASTM, and the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission, CPSC] and provide pre-construction planning collaboration.

Councilmember Cain asked for the typical timeline of fundraising, design, production and installation. Ms. Babb estimated this would end with a spring 2017 installation.

Questions were addressed during the presentation. Highlights of questions, answers and discussion, as follows.

### **Local Examples**

Mr. Born stated there is typically no need to have two or three inclusive playgrounds in a community. He added the playground in Leavenworth, Kansas, is used by veterans and grandparents caring for children of active-duty military personnel. Ms. Babb added there is a playground behind the Young Men's Christian Association [YMCA] in north St. Joseph, Missouri; groundbreaking for construction of a pirate-mermaid theme playground at Tiffany Springs for Kansas City, Missouri; and a Phase 2 three trails theme playground in McCoy Park across from the library in Independence, Missouri.

### **Location, Population and Usage**

Mayor Dunn noted the Leawood playground would be a in central location between Olathe, Independence and St. Joseph. Mr. Born stated Grandview, Missouri, has a 25 to 30 acre park with some specialty play equipment.

Mr. Jeffries stated there may be platform swings at some Blue Valley schools and Ms. Claxton agreed there may be a few nearby locations with specialized equipment. Ms. Babb stated the wheelchair swing was a great invention, but because of safety, its area of use must be fenced and padlocked to help prevent collision injuries. If a key is required for access, this defeats inclusivity.

Councilmembers Sipple and Rasmussen noted the playground would likely attract visitors from the entire region. Councilmember Sipple asked for an estimate of the number of children in Leawood with special needs. Councilmember Rasmussen stated an estimate of population was needed in regard to parking. He expressed concern that current parking may become inadequate.

Ms. Babb stated the census bureau could provide an estimate of the number of children who had reached school age and diagnosed, but the estimate should also include the number of adults with both permanent and temporary injuries. She offered to review usage of installed playgrounds and agreed it would be appropriate to evaluate parking in case the current lot would need to be expanded. Mr. Born added that Jenny at Variety Children's Charity of Greater Kansas City can promptly provide this information.

Councilmember Filla suggested research into the number of overall visitors to City Park and that an alternate location at Ironwoods Park could be considered if parking at City Park was determined to be inadequate. Ms. Claxton stated that although the City Park is heavily used, especially on soccer Saturdays, she did not share the parking concern as parking lots and visitors generally segregate by usage. Access to the inclusive playground would be next to the maintenance building.

Ms. Babb stated most playgrounds consist of an area for children two to five years separated by a piece of land from an area for children five to 12 years. Mr. Born added that the same equipment typically cannot challenge both age groups and typically the cost is less for the play area for children two to five years.

Mr. Born stated that some users will go from park-to-park or pack a lunch and make an all-day visit to a playground. With inclusive play, populations of all abilities come together, celebrating differences and similarities. Ms. Babb's real-life experience with a family member is a visit is approximately one hour.

Councilmember Rasmussen inquired if Ms. Babb had experience working with local Children's Mercy hospital as the playground would be in close proximity. Ms. Babb stated she had not worked with the local hospital, but had worked with Children's Mercy Hospital-St. Louis on their inclusive playground in Cottleville, Missouri, and she had also worked with SSM Catholic Hospitals.

Councilmember Osman inquired if research had been with regards to Johnson County or VanTrust Real Estate redevelopment plans at Meadowbrook Golf and Country Club in Prairie Village, just three miles away. Meadowbrook is donating land for a Johnson County Park, so plans should be available. He encouraged ongoing communication to ensure efforts do not overlap. Mr. McGurren also asked for information in this regard.

Ms. Claxton stated she had been in contact with Johnson County, but not VanTrust, as the county is funding amenities related to the park at Meadowbrook. Draft plans are available on-line. Their plan includes a large amount of open space for trails and mixed-use. They are considering having the racquet sport pickle-ball and struggling with decisions related to the Community Center because of refurbishment cost. They have not shared if they are considering an all-inclusive playground, but there may be in working with the Foundation in this regard.

Mr. Lusk questioned if during construction some of the park would not be accessible. Ms. Babb confirmed and stated the area to be closed would be surrounded by a construction fence.

**Design, Cost and Funding**

Ms. Babb presented photographs of a portion of an inclusive playground in River Falls, Wisconsin, built for \$555,000. The playground features three custom shoe slides in tribute to three sisters whose lives were cut short [GameTime catalog Page 81]. The playground has three bays of swings of various types and also a music section.

Ms. Babb stated that custom designs are more costly. Typically, inclusive playgrounds cost \$350,000 at minimum, upwards to \$1 Million. A \$250,000 investment could include surface, bay of swings and ramping for one age group and without customization. Surfacing and ramping are major expenses, but the City Park site has an existing ramp and berm.

She suggested phased construction, first with area for children five to 12 years and then to conduct fundraising for the area for children two to five years. Also, if a cost of \$500,000 was set, but only \$380,000 was available by fall of this year, then project could be re-evaluated.

Mayor Dunn noted the City's funding commitment is \$50,000 and the land. The funding is a line-item in the current Capital Improvement Program [CIP]. Mr. Lambers added the \$50,000 is for construction without any in-kind labor or construction. Councilmember Filla inquired of the source of the City's \$50,000 and if this amount was already present for City Park maintenance, and what was the budget for the end-of-life of the current playground. Ms. Claxton stated the project came through the Foundation and was not part of the Parks Master Plan. Mayor Dunn added the City's \$50,000 contribution was not related to the existing playground or the \$22 Million Parks project queue. The amount was just the City's buy-in.

Ms. Claxton clarified for Councilmember Osman that the playground at Gezer Park cost \$120,000, including surfacing, but it is a very small area. Councilmember Filla noted that Gezer Park was built from scratch, while City Park has existing structure. In regard to refurbishment of City Park, Mr. Lambers estimated the cost to refurbish City Park would be \$50,000 to \$75,000, Ms. Claxton estimated \$100,000 to \$150,000 [double Mr. Lambers' estimate] and Mr. Born estimated refurbishment to cost at least \$200,000; \$100,000 for equipment and \$100,000 or more for surfacing. Mr. Lambers stated his disagreement with Mr. Born's estimate for the record.

Mr. Udell inquired of the amount of participation in funding efforts made by Rotary Clubs. Ms. Babb estimated the amount from Rotary, American Legions, Shriners and Kiwanis service organizations to be about \$2,500 to \$10,000. Mr. Born stated the Springfield, Missouri, Rotary Club donated \$25,000 and the Rotary Club logo was built into the playground equipment.

Mr. Best asked for an estimate of funding participation from external groups and also an estimate of the percentage of grants for a \$500,000 playground. Ms. Babb stated that funding participation can be impacted by many factors, but increases with a strong sponsorship program. Business will increase their marketing and brand recognition from signage. Another possibility is to utilize a purchase price "round-up" program at grocery stores. Ms. Babb is aware of a health organization that offers \$25,000 grants, and although she would not be responsible to submit grant applications, she would work with Ms. Hawk and Ms. Claxton in this regard. Her "four pillar" grants from three banks and a community group totaled \$200,000.

Mr. Block inquired the size of the footprint of a \$500,000 investment today. Ms. Babb stated that would depend upon the design and square footage. Mr. Born stated an average design costs about \$500,000 and any Glass Fiber Reinforced Concrete [GFRC] custom structures increase the cost. He gave the example that the custom, unique shoes at the River Falls, Wisconsin playground cost \$50,000 to \$60,000 each and weigh four tons. Mr. Born stated most playgrounds incorporate one or two GFRC pieces, but a simple theme could be selected with minimal customization.

Mr. Born stated that berms are already in place at the City Park site. Double-wide ramping is preferable to ensure passage and a double-wide ramp costs approximately \$15,000 to \$17,000. Ramps can only elevate 1 ft. for every 12 linear ft. To raise a child 4 ft. gives them a new perspective, but would require four ramps and all ramps require 69 inch wide radius turns.

Councilmember Filla suggested an expanded fundraising effort beyond the leadership of the Foundation, as the Foundation has other work to do. She stated the region has some major universities and groups that may like to be a part of the project. Mayor Dunn noted this project is the main focus and goal of the Foundation at the present time. Ms. Hawk stated the Foundation welcomes assistance, and desires to complete the project soon as possible.

Ms. Claxton started that Cunningham Recreation and GameTime has a grant opportunity offered for Kansas which she learned about at a workshop. They will award two matching dollar equipment cost grants in each of three regions covering the state, one recipient in a region with population of less than 5,000 and one in a region with population of greater than 5,000, for a maximum of \$1 Million. Leawood is located in the east region. Mr. Born stated there have been some regions without grant applications and Cunningham Recreation and GameTime have shifted region borders based on need. The grants were available in California last year and Kansas and another state will receive grants this year. He added the matching equipment cost grants do not include specialty pieces, installation, surfacing and freight. Ms. Babb stated that Play-Core offers a \$25,000 grant if the playground is installed prior to cold weather.

Councilmember Filla asked Mr. Born to estimate the cost of equipment for a \$200,000 playground. He estimated the cost of Game-Time equipment to be \$150,000 to \$200,000. Surfacing would cost approximately \$80,000. Any custom GFRC pieces would be an additional cost.

Ms. Babb stated to apply for a grant a design must be developed and submitted as part of the application. Grants will be awarded on June 15. Mr. Born stated design could be prepared in two to three weeks. Ms. Babb and Mr. Born confirmed the equipment would need to be ordered by July and installed by November. Mayor Dunn and Mr. Lambers confirmed the City's planning process would take 90 days; Mr. Lambers stated the City could revise the plan, but the process would still require 90 days.

Councilmember Filla suggested to have the design done in two weeks, complete the planning process in May-June-July, apply for the grant in parallel and conduct fundraising. If the City would not receive a grant, the planning process would continue. Ms. Claxton reminded that the project could be phased with a sidewalk between the age-specific play areas. Mr. Lovetere stated his agreement that the action plan suggested by Councilmember Filla was feasible.

**Surface**

Ms. Babb stated recycled tires are used to provide a spongy interlocking tile or poured-and-gel surface over a concrete sub-surface, and grants may be available for use of recycled tires. The concrete sub-surface allows for irrigation and prevents mold. Although surfacing is a major part, inclusivity is much more than surfacing.

Mr. Born stated the surface is not loose or gooey, and would not stain clothing. Tiles were the first to be used, but poured is now the most popular and considered best. He was uncertain as to when this type of surface was invented. Tiles are manufactured in a clean, controlled environment and are thicker, but tiles require precision cutting and result in waste; poured would have some seams and can also have dips. Required surface thickness is based on scale; taller equipment height, the thicker the surface in case of falls. An approximate tile thickness of 2.5 inches is needed for 6 ft. fall height and 3.5 inches needed for 8 ft. fall height. Warranty life is seven to 10 years with tiles lasting longer than poured, but life dependent on traffic pattern and use. Every three to four years a roll coat of polyurethane should be applied to keep particles tight and compressed.

Mr. Anderson added the City has poured surface at most of its playgrounds. The top of the surface contains smaller and more intricate particles, with larger particles underneath. In 1999 and 2000, the City resurfaced and made some minor repairs. He estimated the City had spent \$5,000 in maintenance cost twice and then \$34,000 for a major recap in 2015.

Councilmember Cain inquired if destruction of the current playground concrete sub-surface and top surface would be required. If not, this could save on cost. Mr. Born replied there are approximately 45 equipment posts that would need to be removed, each leaving a hole to be filled. Mr. Lambers advised that removal/fill of posts associated with the current equipment could be an alternate bid scenario.

**Miscellaneous**

Mr. Lambers clarified for Councilmember Sipple that the City's insurance cost would not be expected to increase. The City carries risk insurance and has climbing walls at Ironwoods Park.

Councilmember Cain inquired if the existing City Park playground equipment could be recycled. Mr. Born stated the equipment is obsolete and recirculation would be a liability issue. He agreed with Mr. Anderson that the metal could be recycled, but felt that the plastic could not be recycled.

Ms. Rawlings inquired who would be responsible to obtain vendor references, if required. Mr. Lambers stated this would be a Foundation project and when complete, the City would assume ownership and maintenance. The Foundation would be the project lead and Mr. Lovetere would assist as Project Manager. The Foundation would select the vendor and the design must go through the City's design process. The proposed plan would need to be reviewed by the Planning Commission and the Council.

Councilmember Osman requested to know the City's sign policy for donations. Councilmember Cain stated the Council has been very hesitant to inundate the City and residents with signage. Councilmember Rasmussen and Mayor Dunn stated that the policy should be part of City Code; Mayor Dunn added that Ms. Claxton is working on this. Ms. Babb suggested the policy be set before any fundraising efforts commence.

Ms. Hawk stated her desire to have an agreement on signage that includes signage levels. She stated that if a donor contributes \$100,000, the donor should be recognized for their generous gift; Mayor Dunn agreed and stated the City should have donor signage policy in place. Ms. Babb noted that signage is a maintenance issue and suggested the potential for a donor board listing placed to the side of the playground.

Mayor Dunn summarized by stating the meeting was scheduled working with the premise that \$250,000 would build an all-inclusive playground, with the Foundation close to \$200,000 in funds and the City contributing \$50,000. After vendor meetings and workshop attended by a few, it was determined that to go beyond ADA was much grander. As all Foundation and Parks & Recreation Advisory Board members did not have the latest information, she wanted all to meet and share information. There has to be a commitment that the Foundation feels the project is doable and embraces. If a consensus can be reached, then the project can move forward.

Mayor Dunn stated that the Governing Body could take no action in the Work Session meeting, just hope for a consensus. She stated she did not hear any negatives. A design would need to be developed to determine cost. Mr. Born stated a nice design could be developed and scaled back if necessary.

Mayor Dunn reminded the second year of the “7 Days: Make a Ripple, Change the World,” event begins tomorrow, April 12, 2016. This is the second year for the event that started following the tragedy at the Jewish Community Campus and Village Shalom in Overland Park, Kansas, to embrace diversity across races, religions and cultures. Additional information can be found at [www.giveseventdays.org](http://www.giveseventdays.org).

There being no further business, the Work Session was adjourned at 7:59 P.M.

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Debra Harper, CMC, City Clerk

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Cindy Jacobus, Assistant City Clerk