



RECREATION COMMISSION
WORK SESSION
UNOFFICIAL MINUTES
MARCH 27, 2024
ALPHARETTA CITY HALL
COMMUNITY ROOM | 2 PARK PLAZA | 5:30 PM

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I. CALL TO ORDER

- ❖ Chairman Mitchell called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

- Recreation Commissioners Present

- Dennis Mitchell (Chair)
- Jit Saha (Vice Chair)
- Derek Kaighin
- Paul Slavik
- John Norton
- Cheryl Rand
- Karla Piedrahita
- Shuntel Beach
- Brad Bowers

- Staff

- Morgan Rodgers, Director, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Services
- Christine Young, Recreation Services Manager, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Services
- Amber O'Dwyer, Administrative Office Coordinator, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Services

III. WORK SESSION ITEMS

a. Recreation Severe Weather & Refund Policies

- Christine Young, Recreation Services Manager for the Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Services Department introduced the item.
- Staff is proposing a few minor changes to the department's current severe weather and refund policies.
- The current policy for severe weather is based on the decisions set forth by Fulton County Schools. (If the schools are delayed or closed, City programs are as well.)

- Staff are introducing the following revisions to the department's current severe weather policy:
 - Inclusion of the word "delayed" within the policy to align with Fulton County School's delayed regular school openings *or* teacher workdays due to severe weather/road conditions. Currently the City's policy references closings only.
- Staff are introducing the following revisions to the department's refund policy:
 - Discontinuing the ability for registrants to call in by phone for camp cancellations, limiting cancellations to email only.
 - Often registrants will state they called and either did or did not leave a message leaving staff with no documentation to dispute.
 - The change would allow staff to have a written record of requests, eliminating any confusion that may occur with verbal notifications.

RECREATION COMMISSION Q&A:

RE: Recreation Severe Weather & Refund Policies

- Q What about unusual things, such as the eclipse, that are not severe weather, that are treated as excused absences. How does this policy apply? (Saha)
- A This policy applies to severe weather only. (Young)
- Q Would you reschedule programs if there is a delay or school closing? (Rand)
- A The policy specifies that programs will be rescheduled by the instructor. (Young)
- Q Is this revision initiated by staff to improve the policy or on account of complaints? (Kaighin)
- A Initiated by staff to clarify the current policy. The current policy does not specify "delays", so we are adding this into the verbiage. (Rodgers)
- Q Section 5 of the refund policy seems very specific as opposed to the general language of the rest of the document. Might I recommend trimming out the example to keep the document streamlined? (Saha)
- A The specific example in that section exists to specify that people can call in if the computer system is down for any reason. (Young)

b. Brooke Street Park Concert Series Update

- Morgan Rodgers, Director for the Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Services Department introduced the item.
- Originally there was a parameter on how often concerts could be allowed on the town green and at Brooke Street Park, however the popularity of concerts in Downtown Alpharetta has greatly increased and City Council seems to be approving of the increased usage.

- Last year, the Alpharetta Rotary Club hosted a concert in Brooke Street Park with several local non-profits benefiting from the sponsorships and tables sold.
- The Club has requested to host four (4) additional concerts in 2024 in Brooke Street Park.
- Events in Brooke Street Park must be city-sponsored events, so the Club's request was discussed as a work session item during the February 5, 2024, City Council Meeting.
 - Based on the comments from this work session, the Club's request to hold four (4) concerts in Brooke Street Park in 2024 was approved.
 - The City will work with the Club to ensure that all policies and park rules are followed during the set-up, the concert, and the cleanup.
 - The City will also determine if the weather conditions require the cancelation of the concerts at Brooke Street Park. If the concerts are canceled, the concerts will be held at Union Hill Park under the event venue pavilion.
 - The concert series will be called "Summer Evenings in the Park" and is currently scheduled for May 25th, June 22nd, August 24th, and September 28th.
 - In addition, the 7th Annual Home By Dark Concert Series will also be held in Brooke Street Park in 2024. Dates for 2024 are May 11th, June 8th, July 13th, August 10th, and September 14th.

RECREATION COMMISSION Q&A:

RE: Brooke Street Park Concert Series Update

- Q Home by Dark is also using Brooke Street Park? I thought all their concerts took place at Union Hill Park. (Rand)
- A There are two sets of concerts; one series at Brooke Street Park (which is a partnered event) and free to the public, and one series at Union Hill Park (managed privately by Home By Dark who only rent the space from the City) and those are ticketed events. (Rodgers)
- Q How is the City handling proper spacing of these event performances? (Rand)
- A Staff strategically works to make sure that the concerts do not conflict with each other and are designed to allow attendees to hop from one location one week to another the next to enjoy as many of the performances as possible. (Rodgers)
- Q How does the Alpharetta Rotary Club fundraise from the concerts? (Saha)
- A The Club sells tickets to reserve concert tables. (Rodgers)
- Q Is alcohol permitted at the concerts? (Saha)
- A The concert must be a permitted event which allows people to bring alcohol but does not permit the sale of alcohol during the event. (Rodgers)
- Q Is food able to be sold during concerts? (Mitchell)
- A No. (Rodgers)

Q What is the concern around the number of concerts permitted on the town green or at Brooke Street Park? (Piedrahita)

A The concern revolves around how many is *too* many. The space is still a public park, and it is vital to leave opportunities for park patrons to simply enjoy the park for leisure some weekends. (Rodgers)

Q What is the percentage of occupancy? As in, when does the town green or Brooke Street Park sit idle as compared to when hosting concerts? (Piedrahita)

A The City works hard to plan that a park hosting a concert on any given Friday night would not host an event on that same Saturday. This is intentional to allow for balance between entertainment and park leisure. (Rodgers)

c. **Recreation, Parks & Cultural Services - Fiscal Year 2025 Preliminary Outlook**

- Morgan Rodgers, Director for the Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Services Department introduced the item.
- Morgan Rodgers stated that when the item was added to the work session agenda, the hope was that the meeting with the City Administrator regarding the current status of the department's Fiscal Year 2025 budget would have taken place, however it is scheduled for tomorrow. That said, the current information available is as follows:

- All departments have been asked to "hold the line" in terms of Operating Fund and Capital Fund initiative requests.
- The Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Services Department did initially request additional funding and still hope to receive funding for the following initiatives:

Operating

- The replacement and purchase of AEDs for all parks.
- (5) additional employees including (1) Greenway supervisor, (2) parks maintenance workers, (1) community agriculture coordinator, and (1) administrative assistant.

Capital

- The replacement and upgrading of wooden light poles at various athletic fields to include led lighting.
 - Recurring park improvement and maintenance (Greenway, park security, facilities, etc.).
- Staff stated more details should be available for the Commission at the next meeting if the drafted budget has been reviewed by the mayor by that time.

RECREATION COMMISSION Q&A:

RE: Fiscal Year 2025 Preliminary Outlook

Q Is the Greenway supervisor's role 90% maintenance? (Bowers)

- A The supervisor's role is more likely 50% maintenance and 50% forward thinking. (Rodgers)
- Q Is the plan to hire from within? (Norton)
- A If the department gets the position, staff will determine if internal adjustments can be made to hire from within and then look externally for the lower-level position that would be vacated given the promotion. (Rodgers)
- Q Are all poles in downtown the City or GDOT's responsibility? (Slavik)
- A GDOT's. (Rodgers)
- Q Is the wall built along Hwy 9 remaining grey? (Mitchell)
- A Unfortunately, that question is outside of our scope, as again, that is a GDOT project. (Rodgers)
- Q Are we placing AEDs in all parks? (Mitchell)
- A Yes. Currently, while AEDs are at all parks, they are unfortunately not that accessible. The goal is to provide more *and* to make them more accessible. To add, there are three different types of AEDs currently in the parks, so the goal is to also make them all consistent. (Rodgers)
- Q Historically, when told to "hold the line" in terms of budget requests and a department asks for a slight deviation, what ends up becoming of that request? (Piedrahita)
- A Historically, we've been able to get the standard increases in our day-to-day operating funds, but the initiatives (both operating and capital) are tied to a specific pool from which all departments are vying for funding. In the end, the City Council decides what requests take priority. (Rodgers)
- Q How do you envision securing the AEDs in the parks given the equipment are high dollar items? (Saha)
- A The AED sends an automatic alert to Public Safety notifying them that the equipment has been accessed. In addition, staff plans to install the AEDs in high traffic areas. (Rodgers)

d. **Recreation Commission Review**

- Dennis Mitchell, Chairman of the Recreation Commission introduced the item.
- Chairman Mitchell asked for feedback from the commissioners regarding the current meeting process and whether a new approach should be introduced to better advance the commission's purpose for the City.

RECREATION COMMISSION Q&A, COMMENTS:

RE: Recreation Commission Review

- C Commissioner Beach stated she believed the current process was efficient.

- C Commissioner Norton stated the number of children participating in gymnastics and the number of boys coming to play basketball dumbfounded him.
- Q Would it be possible for the Commission to hear more from the supervisors (or those involved in the day-to-day operations) regarding programs and the number of program participants? (Norton)
- A Numbers for registration programs are easy to provide. Unfortunately, the number for those for open play activities is a little harder to track. (Young)
- C Commission Piedrahita stated that with such amazing leadership, the Commission would love to hear from the people who are truly the heartbeat of the department. Highlighting them also fosters a sense of community and support.
- A Staff can certainly bring supervisors before you. Perhaps that would be best in the work session setting so they feel comfortable and not on display. Rodgers believed it was a great idea to have the commission hear from the those who are actually running various programs. (Rodgers)
- Q Are there survey results that perhaps could be brought to the Commission's level for discussion and review? (Kaighin)
- A Staff can certainly bring the results from our camp surveys to commissioners for review. (Young)
- Q Does anyone want to go back to tour facilities, such as the Adult Activity Center, during the workday to see how the center operates? (Mitchell)
- A Staff can try to plan accordingly. If a date is selected than those who can attend can attend. (Rodgers)
- C Commissioner Rand stated she would still like to hear updates from those who partner or offer some service/program through our parks during a Commission meeting.
- Q Did anything come of the archery program at Innovation Academy? (Norton)
- A The program organizer opted not to follow through given the restraints set forth by Fulton County Schools. (Rodgers)
- Q Each commissioner was initially assigned to be a liaison for a specific interest group but when commissioners reached out, there was a struggle to align schedules with staff. Perhaps the Commission could explore that concept again? (Piedrahita)
- A If provided the list, staff would love to extend an invitation to the assigned commissioner to better include them in the details. (Young)
- C Commissioner Kaighin stated he was under the impression that as a commissioner the role would be more actively engaged in the planning process of programs, etc. and less of a passive role being informed of the department's functions in hindsight.
- C If commissioners are interested in being assigned as a liaison again, please provide a list of one or two top areas of interest to help pair commissioners

accordingly. This approach did exist at one time, but as commissioners came and went, the idea slowly dissolved. (Mitchell)

Q How do we know when a musician is City sanctioned or someone who just showed up to play? (Bowers)

A There are 5 specific locations around town, as sanctioned by the Cultural Arts Commission, and each artist must display a sign while performing. (Rodgers)

Q So we charge them to play? I thought we had a program with the Alpharetta Convention & Visitors Bureau (ACVB) for musicians. (Beach)

A The Park Performance Permit differs from the Wire & Wood event which is a partnership with the ACVB. And those two programs differ from Music Match in which the City partners with a local business to sponsor a performer. For the Park Performers, the musician must pay an application fee to perform. (Rodgers)

C I understand Councilmember Hipes is our City Council liaison. I would love to have an avenue where the Commission has visibility with him, as our advocate, and vice versa to ensure that recreation is top of mind. What are his goals, and priorities for recreation as compared to ours? (Piedrahita)

A I have two regularly scheduled meetings with Councilmember Hipes every month and he is always engaged and interested in hearing what we have to say. He definitely advocates for the department. (Rodgers)

Q What do we need to do more as a commission to help you with your programs, promote recreation, etc.? (Mitchell)

A I recommend smaller, two-on-one meetings to have more in-depth conversations to drill down to the level you wish to see. Formal meetings and work sessions can make it challenging to get into the details you desire. (Rodgers)

IV. ADJOURNMENT

❖ Chairman Mitchell adjourned the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Amber O'Dwyer
Administrative Office Coordinator
Recreation, Parks & Cultural Services