



MINUTES
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
COUNTY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
500 N Main Street, Summerville, SC 29483
January 23, 2024
6:00PM

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, the Dorchester Eagle Record, the Summerville Journal Scene and the Post and Courier were notified, and a notice was posted on the bulletin board 24 hours before the meeting.

PRESENT:

Commission Members

Mr. Jay Byars, Commission Chairman
Mr. Joe Debney, Commission Member
Mr. Jonathan Jones, Commission Member
Mr. Joe Craft, Commission Member

Staff

Mr. Austin Zuniga, Dorchester County Parks & Recreation Director
Ms. Dena Cone, Dorchester County Parks & Recreation Office Manager
Mr. Bryan Havir, Dorchester County Assistant Administrator

ABSENT:

Commission Members

Mr. Mike Montei, Commission Vice Chairman
Mr. Juan Santiago, Commission Member
Mr. Edward Tupper, Commission Member
Mr. Charles Brown, Commission Member

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Byars called to order the meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission at 6:04 P.M.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE:

The invocation was given by Mr. Debney, who also led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Craft made a motion to approve minutes from the September 26, 2023, and December 6, 2023, meetings. Mr. Jones seconded this motion. Three voted in favor, four were absent, and one abstained. Without a majority vote, acceptance of the minutes will be rescheduled for the March meeting.

TJ Rostin, Director of North Charleston Parks and Recreation Department, Presentation on the New Park Circle Playground and the Importance of Inclusiveness in Parks and Recreation:

Mr. Rostin presented drawings of the new Park Circle Park and Playground. The park is in a half mile circle, is 55,000 square feet, and is the largest inclusive playground in the world. It includes shade structures, Ninja Warrior Course, super slides, zip lines, tot lot, cozy zones, an open-air pavilion for a farmer's market, a community center for cultural arts, baseball/multipurpose field, and much more and is intended for everyone from ages 6 months to adults. Mr. Rostin explained when building the park, they set out to make the park not just an adaptive part, but an inclusive park. An adaptive park is one which is focused on the needs of those with disabilities or special needs. A public engagement component was part of the design process. Their goal was to ensure all individuals including those with special needs would be integrated into the population and not catered to. Being an inclusive park makes them a park which includes everyone to cover all facilities, all services, and all needs possible. The park is also among the first in the country to provide electric charging stations for those with special needs in wheelchairs. The two charging stations have an interactive gaming station available to provide entertainment until the charging process is complete. The park took ten months to complete and came in with a cost of \$20 million, with the playground costing approximately \$6 million. The first eight weeks of being open, the park experienced over 81,000 visitors, with 12% of these coming from over 200 miles away.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

No public comments were offered at this time.

MR. ZUNIGA PROVIDED A STATUS REPORT ON THE FOLLOWING:**ASHLEY RIVER PARK:**

Partnered with Eagle Scout Troop 725 to construct a boardwalk on the riverside trail. Revenue figures were presented to the Commission. Mr. Zuniga explained facility rentals decline this time of year bringing revenue totals down.

DAVIS-BAILEY PARK:

Continue to partner with the YMCA to host sports programs at the park. Revenue figures were presented to the Commission.

ROSEBROCK PARK:

A group of volunteers from Faith Hispania held their Community Service Day at the park. They painted bathrooms and water sealed picnic tables, fences, and the shelters.

TEXAS COMMUNITY PARK:

No updates to report.

PINE TRACE NATURAL AREA:

Site work is still in progress. Currently reviewing responses to the RFP for the playground. Mr. Zuniga hopes to see enough development to have pictures to present at the next Parks and Recreation Commission meeting.

EDISTO LAKES PARK:

The consultant is currently working on the requested revisions and clarifications made by the Parks and Recreation Commission during the December 6th meeting.

ASHLEY RIVER PARK PEDESTRIAN CONNECTOR:

Due to the complexity of this project, staff wanted to meet with all utilities involved to ensure proper coordination and to avoid unforeseen conditions. The current scope for the connector only connects the Ashley River Park to future Ashley River Park expansion property and the library. This scope does not include a connection bridge across the river to Rosebrock Park; which connection is contemplated as a future project. Chairman Byars would like to see us start the initial scope for the bridge connection to Rosebrock Park and also program passive recreation activities on newly County acquired adjacent land. Since this is pedestrian and transportation related, there may be a possibility of using local transportation funds. Mr. Zuniga mentioned a meeting that is scheduled with the County Administrator the first week in February to get clear direction on the project and scope on the newly acquired parcel next to the library tract. Mr. Debney questioned the possibility to use SCDOT grant funds for the project. Mr. Zuniga thinks we may be able to look at an LWCF grant for the purchased land.

ASHLEY RIVER PARK PHASE II:

The dog park was reopened to the public on January 5th. There are still a few punch items left to complete. Feedback from the public has been very positive. Entrance and exit signs have been ordered. The benches have not been installed in the dog park to date but will be scheduled. The shelter materials are scheduled to arrive mid-February.

OAKBROOK SPORTS COMPLEX:

Mr. Debney stated the DHEC review permitting process is still underway. Mr. Ward and Mr. Prentice are staying on top of this. Mr. Debney stated they hope to have an announcement in the Spring. This scope does not include the club, just the soccer fields. Chairman Byars asked about the status on extending the Sawmill Branch Trail to Dorchester Road. Mr. Zuniga added we are waiting on permits. Mr. Jones asked if there was a plan to repave the existing Sawmill Branch Trail. Mr. Byars added this will fall under the Town of Summerville.

SWAN DRIVE RIVER ACCESS:

Materials and supplies have been ordered. Mobilization is being coordinated. Once the construction activity starts, it should only take approximately 6 to 9 weeks to complete.

TRAILS:

A section of the Eagle Creek and Chandler Creek Trail was just completed between Ladson Road and Hummingbird Lane. The Sawmill Branch Trail Extension survey is complete, preliminary design is due February 12th. Chairman Byars understands a lot of this will fall under SCDOT review, but we need to discuss completing the section between Beverly Drive Crossing and Ladson Road and consider a pedestrian bridge to cross Ladson Road. Mr. Debney questioned if there was a plan for the Beverly Drive section and the section off Ladson Road by the new fire station to create a parking area for trail users. Mr. Zuniga stated there would be an opportunity for trail users to park at Pine Trace. Mr. Debney also asked if there was a plan to connect the neighborhoods to the trail. Mr. Zuniga stated there are opportunities for this.

EVENTS AND PROGRAMS:

Mr. Zuniga gave an update on the programs and events that have taken place at the parks. We have a fantastic Aide, Reeves Goethe, who has a master's in education and is great with the children. We have become very popular with the homeschool group since they can use some of these programs with their curriculum.

OPERATIONAL UPDATES:

We are honored with the recognition we have received with the Splash into Safety program. We just learned we received the Association of Counties Safety Award for the second year in a row. Mr. Jones asked if Parks and Recreation would be interested in coming to some of the area schools to promote the parks.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Jones made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Debney seconded the motion. No objections. Meeting adjourned at 7:12 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Dena Cone, Parks and Recreation Office Manager