

Sherwood Parks & Recreation Meeting
January 9, 2023
6:00 pm

The Sherwood Parks and Recreation Committee met for the monthly meeting on Monday, January 9, 2023. Charlie Harmon called the meeting to order. Committee members present: Charlie Harmon, Mike Sanders, Shelby Thomas, Denny Tipton and Scott Gann. Absent: Bruce Mason. Also in attendance: Blake Calloway, Sean Pennington, Mayor Mary Jo Heye-Townsell, Austin Spears, Alex Dority, Tonya Bell and Dianna Price.

Minutes:

November 14, 2022 minutes were read for approval. The motion was made by Denny Tipton to approve the November 14th minutes. Mike Sanders seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by Charlie Harmon, Mike Sanders, Shelby Thomas, Denny Tipton and Scott Gann.

Mayor Mary Jo Heye-Townsell made the announcement that today was Darren Austin's last day as Parks Director. He has resigned. She introduced Blake Calloway as the new Parks Director and Sean Pennington as the new Assistant Parks Director. She's excited to work with them both. She's super passionate about parks and they have been underfunded for a long time. We have a lot of things to do. Charlie said he met with the mayor, Blake and Sean on Friday and he was blown away with the energy and ideas they both have. He and the mayor pitched problems at them and they were able to spitball ideas between them. They were able to come up with ideas for quick inhouse resolutions that should have been thought up a year ago.

Blake said there were a few staff members here, there will be more coming and see what ideas they have. Blake had the staff introduce themselves.

Alex Dority is our new Tennis Professional. He has been a certified tennis coach for seven years. He grew up in Sherwood. Blake said Alex has so many ideas and he is expecting great things to happen at the tennis center.

Tonya Bell is the Program Lead at the tennis center. She will be helping develop their programs. Blake said she had two Christmas events at the tennis center to bring people in. There wasn't a lot of people coming to play tennis. The first event was pictures with Santa, 42 children attended. The second event, Santa met the autistic children in a sensory environment, 16 children attended. Tonya said it was great watching the children meet Santa. It took some of the children a long time to just get in the door.

Austin Spears is the Manager at the sports complex. He has been in this position for a year and a half. He has been with the city ten years. He wants to see the complex do better than it is now. He's been trying for a year and a half. He wants to see the complex become what it used to be.

Sean Pennington is the new Assistant Director. He has worked for the city for eighteen years. He was the Parks Maintenance Superintendent. He said the maintenance department does it all, they basically float around the city. They put up the Trail of Lights, maintain swimming pools, maintain all the parks, all the buildings including city hall.

New Business: Projects

Indianhead renovation – Blake said they are looking at demoing the pool, building and taking down the fences. Sean said he has a guy coming to look at the project. His thought is to get rid of the building and take the pool completely out. The pool has reached its life span. They will fill the hole with dirt and compact the dirt until they get to the next steps. Blake said they are going to replace it with two

pickleball courts and a basketball half court. They are planning to put in bleachers between the courts and replace the building with restrooms. Indianhead Park will be a destination park. The mayor said it was originally proposed to have a splashpad at Indianhead. It did not make sense to her, this would only serve small children a couple of months out of the year. What we have planned will serve people all year long. Doing this, we will not have the ongoing maintenance and manning cost.

Blake said we need restrooms at all our parks. City hall received a call today asking for restrooms at the pond at city hall. People can use the restrooms at city hall during the week, but they have nowhere to go on the weekends. The pavilion also needs to be replaced. Sean said the pavilions at Don Hughes Park and Pickthorne were built by the maintenance crew from the ground up.

Charlie Harmon had a question for Sean. Charlie said Sean has directed the maintenance crew for a long time with woodworking and construction. Sean is moving up in a different job description that will not give him the time to do what he has done in the past as the city's prime skill construction, woodworking, design person. Do we have anyone ready to fill that position with that skill ability? Sean said he wasn't abandoning his crew. The mayor said they are on the lookout for someone with that skill ability. She said that Blake as an Assistant Director was highly underutilized.

Old Henson will also have pickleball courts and lighting. The lights will be on a timer that can be turned on at 5pm and will turn off at 10pm. The new restroom that was supposed to be installed last year was delayed and will be installed soon.

Splash Pad – Sean said the pad has two large slides. The original plan when it was installed was to have it unmanned. When it first opened it was free. The kids would get on the slide and start shoving each other and then the parents would get involved, then the police would have to come. After that the pad was fully staffed. We are talking about removing the slides, which are a liability, removing the trees and have it unmanned. We can put something in its place at ground level. The water will be on a timer that will be programmed to the hours of that day. Push the button and the water comes on. This will enable it to be unmanned and free to the public. Blake said we were understaffed last year. Indianhead pool was up and ready for the summer but was never opened due to a staff shortage. There were days last year that Fairway pool was closed to staff the splash pad. With removing Indianhead pool and the splash pad unmanned this should improve the lifeguard situation.

City Hall Trail and Lighting:

Blake said our new mayor has visions for our city. She's passionate about lighting the walking trail by city hall and extending the trail. She wants to extend the trail in the front area of city hall, put in benches and the ability to change the lighting for Christmas and other events. The mayor said she would like for it to look like a Christmas Wonder Land. There will be new down lighting in front of city hall and up lighting in the trees and install a new lighted pump in the pond. The mayor said if we create an evening park it would be the only one in central Arkansas.

The mayor said she does not have approval yet, but we spend so much money on Sherwood Fest and hardly anyone attends. So maybe Sherwood Fest doesn't work for the city anymore. What about doing a Winter Festival and partnership with the Trail of Lights. You could advertise them at the same time and cut down on advertising. We could put a portable stage in, utilize our school choirs, churches and food trucks. She's trying to think outside the box. Denny Tipton asked about having the Christmas Parade in the evening. The mayor said to do that we would need better lighting on Kiehl Avenue. She is wanting to look at smart lighting for this project. Blake said he would like to see the smart lighting at the ballpark due to cars being broken into. Sean said someone turned off the breakers to the press box and we had pipes burst.

Sports Complex – Blake said the complex needs to be the place people want to go. We want it to be what it use to be. We want people talking, we want people to use the facility like they used to. The committee discussed about turning the fields into turf fields and forming a committee that could come up with a plan. Turf fields are low maintenance but expensive to install. Denny Tipton said we need a plan even if it's three years down the road. Charlie said the turfing the fields would need to come back to the parks committee, then to city council to find the money before we start going in that direction.

The restrooms at the park are nasty and there is no hot water. There are septic issues that happens every year during the Busch Classic. With the pipes already busted this is the time to address the issue. We need to remodel and make everything ADA approved. Charlie said he agreed with Mike Sanders that the restrooms and concession need to be upgraded and up to code. Charlie asked them to come back with some plans for the committee to look at. The mayor said if the public and baseball community know we are genuinely trying to make improvements, she thinks they will be patient with us. The Mayor and Charlie told the committee that in the past at the budget meetings if the police or public works needed money, parks was the first one they would take money from.

Programming Changes:

Blake said they have run into some issues with several programs. Soccer and the SHAC are the ones we typically deal with. SHAC is the Sylvan Hills Athletic Club that handles baseball and softball. The Soccer Club handles soccer. We have had issues with the SHAC getting schedules on time, issues with them telling us they are going to be on a field, we get the lights ready and no one shows up. Issues with them telling us they are going to have x number of teams. They have taken liberties with tournaments. In our contract it says anything on baseball, they will open the concession stand. They have also started a thing called travel teams with the SHAC. This is kids that have a tournament team they pay to practice and utilize the blue building, which is not a bad thing. But they couldn't ever explain what it was for, what the teams were doing, whether they were going to play in this tournament or that tournament. There is no code of conduct for the coaches that are cussing and carrying on, it did not matter. Blake said they have run into a situation where they have two opposing programs that they want to put together. He thinks they are meeting Thursday, but it's a little late in the game, they started these meetings in August. We will have to figure out a way to get this season going and try to accommodate all the kids that they have had in the programs in the past. Blake said what some want to do is say absolutely no tournament ball for these teams and some of these teams have been inside the league for five years in this format and it doesn't make sense to him to say this 120 kids aren't allowed to play with anymore, you're out, you have to find somewhere else to go. At the end of the day these are our fields, our ballpark. She said having run the Shark program, they basically contracted for time. This organization is no different, its contracting for time, they don't control outside of everything else. They don't tell the city what we can and can't do with our own ball fields. That's not okay. Blake said we need to set parameters, it's a little late in the game to change things up. The problem is, there is no real structure, they don't know what the bylaws are, if they're on the board they'll have a vote on something and they are supposed to give a two week notice if they're changing stuff up. Blake said his stance is, proceed as you have, however, clearly defining the season what it is, a fall season and spring season. Austin has had four or five teams that have not scheduled their practices, they have had a hard time trying to make sure the fields are scheduled. Blake said Austin, to his credit, has outperformed maintaining the fields. At one point at the beginning of the season there was only three people. They don't have time to check the schedule and find out after they get the fields ready no one shows up. There is one board member that has a plan to present what they have and clearly define what is going on. Blake said in his opinion this gives the city the opportunity to decide how we want to proceed. The possibility that the city takes over the program and run it. The basketball program is extremely successful. Mike Sanders said the problem is you have people that don't have interest in the program, they have interest in their kid. Denny Tipton said the bottom line is, people whether they like it or not, when you spend all the money to upgrade the fields with turf, the city will have to take over. It's too much of an investment. He thinks when we put in the turf and all the money

that is invested then it's our house and not let a bunch of dads make the decisions. Charlie said it makes him more comfortable knowing that the city would take over when its updated, this is a perfect plan.

Soccer Update:

Blake said our maintenance staff was moving stuff around behind the soccer fields and discovered that the fencing that was put in, you can see the bottom of the concrete due to washout. Sean said the fields are formed to keep the water off and what they did was half of this field and half of that field comes to the center where it's filled in. All the water is collecting and going to one spot in the fence and it has taken it out. It is probably eight foot deep and cut a trench down the back and along the new back road. Sean said he knows where the water is going, put a basin in, pipe it down the hill underground across the road over in the creek. We know where it is, we need to capture it and get it out. Sean said it has only affected three poles so far.

Part 2 – Blake is setting up a meeting with Shane with the soccer club. They were allowed to get on the soccer fields last year and he is not sure what kind of impact this did or did not have. We brought in Mandel Brockinton who is our superintendent at the golf course. He is our greens keeper and agricultural guru who handles grass. If we let them play right now, the grass that is there will be gone and will probably not come back for a very long time. Mandel's recommendation is to keep them off the fields through the summer and ready to play this fall. The other option is to let them play and ruin the fields forever. Mandel is coming to the meeting to explain this to the soccer club. Charlie said we don't have anyone that knows grass more than Mandel. The mayor said at least the club will know we are trying to do it correctly.

Old Henson Park – Restroom & Pickleball:

Blake said the restrooms are still not here. Sean called RJR and according to them the manufacturer said it's not ready. RJR has been out checking the pad that the restroom will sit on. When it arrives, they will sit it down on the pad, plumb it and run electrical and its done. For an example of what it looks like, there is one at Two Rivers Park. Sean said he could send the link of the 3-D model of the restroom that they can view inside and out. Blake said they want to take the front courts and turn them into pickleball. Charlie said you don't want to run them east to west because of the sun. Charlie said the plan would be to have pickle ball in the front, resurfacing the courts and lighting. Alex Dority said to check with USTA for resurfacing prices.

Renaming New Henson Tennis Center:

Charlie Harmon said we need to come up with a name for the tennis center. Alex suggested Sherwood Forest Tennis Center. The mayor suggested Sherwood Tennis Center. Blake said people would drive to Sherwood Forest and there is no access to get to the center. The mayor said we are getting signage out there so people will know where to go. The committee agreed to name the new tennis center Sherwood Tennis Center. Charlie said this was good because the Henson family wanted the old park to stay Henson Tennis.

BHRC – Potential Upgrades:

Blake said they are working on getting a new pool deck. If the committee wanted to see how bad it is they were welcomed to go look at it. Mike Sanders asked what it would cost. Blake said it was budgeted in last year's budget at \$95,000 and was not added to the 2023 budget. Blake talked to coach Keith and he wanted the same kind of flooring as the original. Blake said they will call the company to see what the price would be for this year's budget. The net that divides the basketball courts is ripping and this was in this year's budget. Blake said the basketball court will eventually need to be replaced. Sean said there is a makeup air unit that's located right of breezeway in the fenced in area. They found out a couple of months ago that it has not worked in twenty years. It's a 30-ton unit made to push makeup air in the building. When the doors are open the ventilation pulls air out, its steadily pumping air in. Sean said he

is working on a price. Mike Sanders asked why it has sat there for twenty years. The mayor said that's why we have condensation in the gym. This is why we will have to wait to replace the gym floor. Sean said we have stagnant air and the gym gets humid. Denny Tipton asked about the condition of the gym floor. Blake said the floor has pitting, gaps and cuts in the floor. When the Rolling Razorbacks practice, they have tipped chairs and caused some damage. We have filled the bad places, but Blake did not know what they used. Denny asked if the floor was wood. Sean said it was a rubber flooring. Blake said they found out about the makeup air unit by accident. Northwest Controls was called out about the humidity and he used a reader and found out about the unit not working. The mayor said we would need to get a new unit before we put a new floor down. Sean said we need to get rid of the band aids and start doing things right.

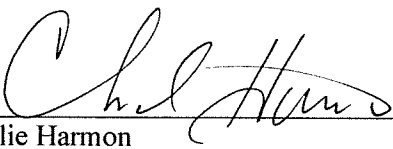
Cart Upgrades at the Greens:

Blake said they are working on a lease to upgrade the carts. They will have lithium batteries. This lease will be minimal cost compared to the old carts. It's already lined up and Dawn is expecting the new carts sometime in February.

Proposed North Sherwood Park Complex:

Charlie said the city has eighteen acres that has been slowly under construction for a proposed public works complex. The property is now level and is located on Cato Road. The mayor has an interesting idea to keep public works where it is, move the animal shelter where they can expand. She wants to turn the eighteen acres into a large park for the north side of the city. This would be a multi-use park. This would compare to the park in Greenbrier. There would be pavilions, skate park, splash pad, handicap accessible playground and lot of parking. Everything would be in one place. The mayor said with eighteen acres there is so much we can do. Scott Gann asked about Google maps, the mayor said it did not do it justice. She told the committee they should go and walk the area, it's massive. Denny Tipton said in the meeting when we were talking about new parks, the problem was land. This would answer the issue for the land. Charlie said public works could go anywhere. They are not required to be located in the city. We can find a place for public works if they outgrow where they are. The mayor said a new nice regional park would draw people to Sherwood and bring so much value to our community. She said a new housing development with three hundred homes will be across the street. This could be a show place for the city. The mayor said this park would be for all ages.

With no further business, made the motion to adjourn.



Charlie Harmon

Attest: Dianna Price