

# Park Advisory Commission

## Meeting Minutes

*January 11, 2021*

*Meeting by Zoom Conference*

**Members Present:** Ken Kwantes, Susan Wrasmann, Sue Arnold, Larry Thomas, Mike Fleischhauer, Andrew Meggitt

**Others Present:** Floyd Jernigan, Stan Busch

### 1. Call to Order

Ken Kwantes called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

### 2. Approval of Minutes

Larry Thomas made a motion to approve the November 18, 2020, minutes. Sue Arnold seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

### 3. Discussion of the options for an All Inclusive Playground at Ber Juan

The Director noted that the City received 23 proposals from 8 companies with a project range of \$150,000-\$200,000 for an inclusive playground in Ber Juan Park. Three of those proposals did not meet that range.

We do not have any inclusive playgrounds among the 17 in city parks. Inclusive welcomes all ages and abilities and supports movement and balance, body position, touch, hearing, visual approaches, and quiet spaces that supports children on the autism spectrum.

The playground will be above Splash Zone and below the pavilion at Ber Juan. City crews will do the concrete sub base and the site finishing work and will also do the ADA sidewalk to the playground at a cost of \$14,000 for materials.

We will add an ADA accessible fence (est. \$9000) for safety upon completion and prior to opening.

Superintendent Stan Busch noted the cost was figured at \$25 a foot.

All the remaining 20 proposals were within budget, and included installation, shipping, and ADA safety surface and also meet our requirements specified in our proposal.

The age range given was for 2-12. Elements were distinguished by elevated, accessible by ramp or transfer, and ground, with the numbers of different ground activities noted.

Funding for the playground will come from Prop P (\$150,000) and Parkland Reserve (\$50,000).

When the Parkland ordinance was rewritten in 2018, those fees collected for providing adequate park facilities and services to new development during the course of the subdivision process would be spent within five years of deposit and used for one of three specific purposes. Purpose C, acquisition or improvement of larger regional or community-wide parks, would apply in this case as Ber Juan is considered the city's signature, Regional Park.

Staff narrowed the choices to two – Option A from Hutchinson Recreation/Miracle and Option 1 from All Inclusive Rec. Both companies' playgrounds are made in Missouri.

Superintendent Busch noted that there was some flexibility in changing out options if so desired.

Director Jernigan pointed out unique features of both options.

Board members discussed differences and number of activities in relation to cost between the options. Each option's specific activities were listed as were the sizes of the area.

Board members Larry Thomas and Andrew Meggitt pointed out to the commission that even though Hutchinson had a higher cost, there was more value per feature for the money due to the greater number and variety of the activities.

Thomas then recommended the board propose the recommendation of Hutchinson to City Council. Susan Wrasmann seconded. The vote was unanimous.

#### 4. Discussion of management options for Splash Zone

Director Jernigan reviewed a spreadsheet outlining the various proposals from five difference companies. He explained the rationale behind seeking such an option.

As part of the discussion, the spreadsheet detailed the past three years of operational costs and revenues. The past year numbers illustrated the Covid impact (higher personnel costs due to repeated daily cleanings, lower revenue due to a 25 % capacity limit designed to help mitigate any potential for viral spread. The two prior years were averages for comparison.

The director provided some historical context.

Over the past two searches for a seasonal part-time pool manager with the necessary pool qualifications relating to safety, chemical and aquatic operations, the city received only one applicant. Last year's pool was overseen by the director, with mechanical help from the parks superintendent, and some technical aid by former pool managers now employed elsewhere.

An onsite manager is needed to ensure the best level of safety, the primary responsibility, while also coordinating programming and daily pool operational efficiencies.

Director Jernigan noted that a full-time pool manager, similar to what other cities the size of Rolla provide, has not been possible in the budget priorities.

Director Jernigan then took the group through each management company's proposal and presented the commonalities and differences between them.

All five companies presented their rationale for their management fee and what that paid for. All also stated they believed that Covid will still be a factor and that the more realized benefits of a management company would come more in years 2 and beyond.

Four were selected for zoom presentations to a committee made up of parks management, City Administrator John Butz and Parks Advisory Commission Ken Kwantes.

Three of those four provided costs that included options for all personnel, lifeguards, concessions, admissions and cleaning.

Those three were questioned on programming options and their impact on the financial picture, with one providing the more numerous and creative activities.

Another difference among the three were noted by the committee relative to revenue generation and overall financial performance.

Commission members asked if other options were considered, as well as possible competition with the indoor pool and their programs, and how Splash Zone's rates compare with those competitors.

The director noted that options such as not opening this year and leasing were also discussed, in addition to hiring a full-time manager or engaging a management company.

Not opening was not considered optional, given that it's believed that most all pools in Missouri will be open this year. Further, Prop P funds were earmarked for the continuing operation of existing facilities.

Two of the companies were asked if they were interested in a leasing operation and said they were just wasn't enough volume to do that due to the short term life of an outdoor seasonal pool.

There might be some overlaps with the indoor pool but due to the inherent differences of an outdoor pool vs an indoor pool, each has its own niche, said Director Jernigan.

Rates are either in line with neighboring communities or, depending on the competitor, significantly less. There are some differences in the audience demographics that each of these water options attract.

Member Larry Thomas asked about bottom line impact by having a management company.

Financially, we will essentially add the cost of the management fee, said the director, since the other costs would be there regardless.

That management fee can be offset in time, with greater potential revenue gains, he said.

With the ever increasing competition to SZ, the pool needs its own dedicated management team that isn't having to juggle this area along with 30 parks, a 40-acre cemetery, and a host of recreation programming, to move forward rather than "tread water," which the pool has been doing due to this lack of direct, dedicated involvement.

Most importantly, going this route should improve direct supervision as it relates to pool safety.

Staff detailed their rationale for recommending USA Pools.

Superintendent Busch said that he liked USA's plan for selling passes during the current season for next year and its sales incentives for staff.

Director Jernigan pointed to USA's emphasis on safety, particularly as it relates to voluntary swim testing of youth; more fully realized programming; an examination of existing rates and membership tiers; the opportunity for more locker and space rentals; and a diversity of revenue generating ideas.

Commission chair Ken Kwantes pointed out a number of factors that weigh in to the financial picture – the vagaries of the weather on a daily basis, Covid's continuing impact, and the mandated yearly minimum wage increases.

Kwantes noted that it "getting later in the timetable to determine a director for the pool." He added that he believed USA Pools or Midwest Pools provided the best options for Splash Zone, with the emphasis on safety, fun and attendance. "USA Pools appears to be hungry and wants to get in the market."

Sue Arnold made the motion to recommend USA Pools as the management company for Splash Zone. Andrew Meggitt seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

5. Next meeting will tentatively be in February, the fourth Wednesday, the 24<sup>th</sup>, at 5:30.

## 6. Adjournment

Sue Arnold moved to adjourn, with Susan Wrasmann providing the second. The meeting adjourned at 6:42 p.m.