

Parks, Recreation, and Forestry
Advisory Board
February 21, 2020 Minutes

Members in attendance were Chairperson Tom Rennick, Roman Jefferson, Kenneth Quigley, Councilmember Mike Lavey, and Director of Parks and Recreation Dean Palmquist.

James Alexander, Recreation Supervisor Rosa Dimon, Justin Vasterling, and Volunteer Intern Christy Franiak were guests in attendance.

Chairperson Tom Rennick brought the meeting to order at 7:03 AM and welcomed everyone to the Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Advisory Board Meeting.

Minutes from the January 17, 2020, advisory board meeting were approved.

Old Business

A. South Neighborhood Park Project Status & Park Naming Recommendation –

Dean shared the status of the south neighborhood park project with the advisory board members as follows. Dean was skeptical if the park project could get started in 2021 and thinking that 2022 may be more realistic at this time, due to the City financial audits getting completed at the end of this year, 2020. Mike brought up about the new City finance director, Ben Burkett, and how the city was restructuring the whole City finance department. With that said, the new City Council will not know their reserve funds in the different City accounts, and it would be difficult for the City Council to move forward on such a large project without knowing their fund balances during the City's budget process. Also, until the City financial audits are completed, the Conservation Trust Funds will not be released from the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA). Dean shared that the City is dependent on the Conservation Trust Fund monies as local match dollars for the new neighborhood park project. Dean mentioned that Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) awarded the City of Cortez a \$350,000 grant in March of 2019 for Phase 1 development of the new neighborhood park project. The deadline to complete the park project and expend those grant monies is March of 2021. If more time is needed, the GOCO staff can give a six month extension or a request needs to go before the GOCO board for longer than a six month extension. Dean also mentioned that a modification in the scope of the park project needs to be addressed with the GOCO staff in moving forward with the project. Dean said that the park project has changed in regard to no entity being willing at the present time to put in a housing development which impacts grant funding for the Elm Street extension and other infrastructure funding that DOLA may be able to help out with. The City has worked with our consulting group (DHM Design) to have a Phase 1A and a Phase 1B with Phase 1A focused on completing park amenities along the walkway and Phase 1B focused on the completion of the east parking lot and other park amenities, once the Elm Street extension is completed. Once the next steps of the neighborhood park project are determined, Dean suggested another neighborhood outreach meeting with food be

planned to keep the surrounding neighborhood and other community members abreast of our project status. Mike Lavey agreed with Dean to continue our outreach efforts to the neighborhood and alerting them to any changes that may happen, as we move forward with the project. Dean mentioned that other funding sources will be sought when the City's financial audits are completed. Also, Dean shared that he is working with Friends of Recreation for a Healthy Community on a local capital campaign effort for the new neighborhood park project.

Dean asked the advisory board members for any feedback or input about the naming of the new neighborhood park from reading the survey information from the last meeting. Dean mentioned that it is quite obvious that Panther Park has been the top vote getter and choice from both of the surveys and the public meeting process. Dean shared that he is open to the idea if the advisory board members wanted to consider a variation of the Panther Park name, as some variation of Panther Park was mentioned in the comments section of the last survey conducted. Ken Quigley asked about the possibility of naming the park after different people. Dean said that may be a difficult task to name the park after a certain person, due to so many people being deserving of that distinction, i.e. a teacher or principal that may have spent all of their career at the high school, military who have died in combat, police officers who have died in their line of duty, or a community member who has volunteered many years of service to the community. Roman Jefferson emphasized that whatever the name chosen that there should be unity with the community. Discussion then resumed back to the survey results and how high Panther Park rated in both surveys. Dean shared that the school district staff saved back some pieces from the old high school building that could be crafted into an art sculpture to acknowledge the old high school site. It is being considered to hire a local metal sculptor to create an art sculpture from the old high school building pieces. Following the discussion, Roman made a motion to name the new neighborhood park, Panther Park. Ken seconded the motion, and then, unanimously the other advisory board members approved the recommendation for naming the new neighborhood park, Panther Park. Dean shared that the advisory board's recommendation will go before the City Council at their first meeting in March for their review and approval.

B. Veterans Park Status Report - Dean announced that on January 3, 2020, the proof for the Veterans Park signs got the approval from him and now he is waiting for the signs to be completed. The signs were damaged in route to the recreation center this past week. Hopefully, we will be getting the new, undamaged signs in the coming days. Dean will contact the various media outlets, newspaper and local television station to make sure the Veterans Park dedication and unveiling of the signs is appropriately promoted and covered. Also, the Veterans groups are interested in forming a committee to add another memorial at this park. The Veterans groups will provide all the fundraising for this memorial and come up with a proposed memorial to be approved by the City staff and council members.

C. Establishing a Tree Commission - Mike Lavey stated that the last tree inventory of the City of Cortez was completed in 2009 by the Colorado State Forest Service. Roman

shared that he would like to establish a tree commission to assist the City of Cortez with the assessing and recommending tree care, primarily for the street trees. Roman also stated that Cortez is listed as a Tree City USA and along with that designation comes requirements, such as having a tree board or department. However, in order for the City to fulfil its obligation as a Tree City USA, the City of Cortez needs an arborist, which they have, but they need more resources and so far no one is willing to spear head this effort, due to limited time and other duties. Roman also discussed forming a small board of 4 or 5 members to help with the responsible of urban forestry and tree care in Cortez. Dean said that the current system for tree care in Cortez is reactionary and may be as simple as when the trash trucks brush the bottom of the tree branches as they drive under them for when tree trimming gets reported. Dean stated the problem with the tree care is that being a reactive system, when it should be a proactive system with assessments being conducted by a professional arborist. Dean also talked about the different management units that are identified in the 2009 City Tree Inventory and how that may be a starting point for the first management unit with the most major work identified to be the first one tackled. Dean shared that the City Manager John Dougherty would like to see the current Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Advisory Board system continuing to be used before establishing a Tree Commission with the thought that resources are limited and would anybody have the time to be the staff liaison for the new Tree Commission. Roman stated that he is very adamant about starting a Tree Commission and will follow up and schedule a meeting with City Manager John Dougherty to discuss further. Roman also feels that starting a social media page will bring more attention to this cause about better tree care in Cortez.

- D. Caukins Property Trees** – Dean shared that Councilmember Mike Lavey and he checked with the City Planning Department to see which entity is responsible for the trees within the Caukins Property. Dean shared that the Local Housing Authority is currently responsible for the trees within that property. Dean said that the Code Enforcement Officers were following up with the Local Housing Authority on addressing the care of the trees with them. Roman would like to talk to the owners about the many trees that are dying and have been severely neglected since the School District sold the property to the Local Housing Authority. Tom Rennick agreed that he has concern about the trees adjacent to where a resident may park along First Street, when checking your mail or conducting business at the post office.
- E. SCC (Youth Conservation Corp) Fundraiser Project** - Dean shared that the SCC may have found some funds to do at least a week of work this summer at the Carpenter Natural Area on some trail repair work in establishing more switchbacks and less vertical trails. Dean will keep the advisory board members posted, if more funds need to be raised.
- F. Other Old Business** – Dean shared that the City was unsuccessful in obtaining the GOCO School Yard Initiative Grant for the middle school playground structure. Dean mentioned that 17 grant applications were received by GOCO and only about 5 or 6 of them were awarded for funding. Recreation Supervisor Rosa Dimon, who helped out with the GOCO grant, stated that Middle School Principal Kate Ott will

continue fundraising for the playground structure, as not having secured matching funds was an identified weakness in the grant application.

New Business

- A. Arbor Day Celebration** – Rosa handed out a survey to get the following information on the Arbor Day Celebration: the theme and whether they should hand out bottled water or T-shirts for this year. Rosa also said that the Arbor Day Celebration would be for the 4th graders, and that next year, the City is considering to host a Water Fest for fifth graders, based on what Durango has been offering our students there. Rosa also said that Cortez used to have a Water Fest at the County Fairgrounds, so the Water Fest was conducted in Montezuma County years ago. Rosa shared that in past years the teachers requested if reusable water bottles could be used instead of plastic water bottles that would need to be recycled. So, last year she provided reusable water bottles instead of plastic water bottles. The Arbor Day celebration is scheduled for April 23rd with the actual Arbor Day observed on April 24th. Several schools have Fridays off, so it works better for all involved to have the Arbor Day Celebration on Thursday. Rosa mentioned that there will be live musical entertainment and a youth poster contest with prizes awarded to the top youth posters from each school participating.
- B. Other New Business** – In other new business, Tom Rennick mentioned that the concrete trail was repaired very nicely along the Carpenter Natural Area. Dean shared that the area adjacent to the where the concrete trail was repaired will be reseeded in the coming weeks with native grass seed to revegetate where the vehicular traffic drove to repair the concrete trail and the water main break that occurred this past summer.

The next regular meeting will be held on Friday, March 20, 2020, at 7:00 AM at the Cortez Recreation Center Child Watch Room.

Adjournment—8:20 AM