Norman Board of Parks Commissioners SPECIAL MEETING September 29, 2022

The Norman Board of Parks Commissioners of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met on September 29, 2022, at 5:00 p.m., and notice and agenda of the meeting was posted at 201 West Gray Street, 24 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

ITEM 1, being:

ROLL CALL

Present:

Chair Wright and Commissioners Davison, Isacksen, Moxley, Ross and Salmond

Absent:

Commissioners Favors, May and Sallee

City Officials

Present:

Jason Olsen – Director of Parks and Recreation James Briggs, Park Development Manager

Bethany Grissom, Park Planner

Anthony Purinton, Assistant City Attorney

Veronica Tracy, Recreation Manager

Tiffany Vrska, Chief Communication Officer

Kathryn Walker, City Attorney

ITEM 2, being:

APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 1, 2022 - REGULAR PARK BOARD MINUTES

Commissioner Isacksen requested some changes be made to the minutes, to include changing the word "including" to "excluding" on Item #4, page 2, paragraph 1, to state "... excluding the Westwood Golf Course ..." and Item #4, page 3, paragraph 3, removing the verbiage golf course, to state "... smoking is not allowed at the Westwood golf clubhouse, tennis facility and swimming pool." Commissioner Isacksen made the motion, and Commissioner Ross seconded to approve the changes to the September 1, 2022, Regular Park Board minutes. The vote was taken with the following results:

YEAH:

Chair Wright and Commissioners Davison, Isacksen, Moxley, Ross and Salmond

NAY:

None

ITEM 3, being:

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Salmond made the motion, and Commissioner Davison seconded to approve the agenda. The vote was taken with the following results:

YEAH:

Chair Wright and Commissioners Davison, Isacksen, Moxley, Ross and Salmond

NAY:

None

ITEM 4, being:

PRESENTATION REGARDING CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR IN PARKS BY CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Mr. Anthony Purinton, Assistant City Attorney, said at a recent Park Board meeting, the Board requested more information regarding criminal behavior in public parks. He said his presentation today will go over what is and what is not currently allowed in public parks. Mr. Purinton said there are general rules for public parks that are pretty easy to follow stating the during the day generally applicable laws will govern City Parks to include no smoking, carrying weapons, and indecent exposure. He said during the night, parks are closed from dusk to dawn and all activity is essentially prohibited because no one is allowed to be on the property.

Mr. Purinton highlighted what is <u>not</u> illegal in public parks to include: sleeping/napping at the park during open hours and using curse words, unless the cursing is disturbing the peace. He said all language, including cursing, is expressive speech and protected under first amendment; however, there is a limit to everything. Mr. Purinton said while some question cursing is *morally* reprehensible; another question and something to keep in mind, is cursing *legally* reprehensible?

Mr. Purinton said park hours are enforced under the trespass ordinance by utilizing park signage. He said the trespassing provision states no one can enter onto private property or public property without the permission of the owner. Currently, park signage states the park hours are dusk to dawn; therefore, anyone entering the park after it has closed are subject to a criminal trespassing citation. Generally, trespassing citations are not issued since most people comply (which is the goal) after being asked to leave the park. Mr. Purinton said the City currently has issues in some city parks of people being in the parks after hours and he recommends using set hours, i.e., 12:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m., rather than dusk to dawn. He felt some City parks should have exceptions, to include Legacy Park, Griffin Park, Reaves Park and Ruby Grant Park since there are often events that occur after dark. Mr. Purinton said some people may assume a park is open if lights are on in the park after dark, rather than it being a security and/or safety issue, and he suggested dimming the lights a bit that so it does not convey that the park is open to the public.

Mr. Purinton said the City of Norman has a lease with the State of Oklahoma for the use of Sutton Wilderness Park and has specific prohititions to include the following:

- Littering
- Operating any motorized vehicles/bicycles
- Starting or maintaining a fire, camping, swimming, hunting or trapping
- Collecting biological or geological specimens or cutting/collecting wood
- Operating a boat or canoe or fishing by means of a trotline or jugline
- · Possessing a bow, slingshot, air gun, firearm, or any other such device to hurl projectiles
- Defacing or damaging any natural object or park facilities or appurtenances
- Introducing plant or animal species

Mr. Purinton highlighted some of the miscellaneous crimes/illegal behavior that are applicable to City Parks to include: smoking, except in parking lots or the Westwood Golf Course; drinking alcohol and/or being intoxicated; disturbing the peace; trespassing (after dark); littering; curfew for minors (12am-6am), and not picking up after your dog (waste).

Mr. Purinton said one example of trespassing in the park is a citizen rents a pavilion, but another party is present and refuses to leave the pavilion during the rented time period. He said the other party/citizen could be considered trespassing if they refuse to leave after being asked to leave; however, it is a

complicated issue. Commissioner Ross asked whether scheduled/paid reservation paperwork is posted at their respected park pavilion to inform the public if the space has been reserved and Staff said the citizen reserving any of the park pavilion can print off the reservation and take it with them to the park. Staff said pavilions are first come, first serve; however, if the pavilions are reserved then the reservation trumps the pavilion. Staff said citizens can go to the City website to check availability of pavilions and to see whether they are reserved or not. Commissioner Salmond asked what the violation would be if someone is sleeping or napping after 12am, and Mr. Purinton said that it would be trespassing because there is park signaged posted stating the hours (are dusk to dawn in this instance). Commissioner Moxley asked whether Staff was suggesting the same hours for neighborhood parks and the bigger city parks and Mr. Purinton said he thinks so; however, that is going to be a case by case determination. He said the City has many parks and felt like it would be best/easiest if all the parks were consistant and had the same open/close times; however, the City does utilize (some) parks later than others (with events, etc.) and Staff may choose to restrict those parks to a different timeframe. Possibly, have a standard timeframe for neighborhood parks and an extended timeframe for the larger parks that are utilized after dark and/or where City events are held (Andrews Park, Legacy Park, Ruby Grant Park and Reaves Park).

Mr. Purinton said sound/noise violations are very difficult to enforce since higher expected noise levels are not uncommon in public parks, but noise complaints can be enforced as a Disturbing the Peace violation.

Mr. Purinton said a few things can be done in parks to prevent crime to include: having adequate lighting, citizen reporting and cooperation, and consistant maintenance of park facilities and sightlines. Mr. Jason Olsen, Director of Parks and Recreation, said there have been instances when Staff has placed trail cameras in the parks to help prevent vandalism, i.e., vandalism and theft occurred at Vinyard Park while Staff was replacing the playground equipment so Staff installed a trail camera. He said another lesson learned was the trail camera dinged on one of the citizen's (who lived near the park) "Next Door" app and the citizen wondered who put the camera in the park; therefore, Staff will also place signage in the park that clearly states any camera installed belongs to the City of Norman, Parks and Recreation Department. Commissioner Ross asked how Staff would enforce odd/illegal behavior if it is caught on a trail camera and Mr. Olsen said most of the time, a trail camera does not/would not identify the individual, but Staff can request extra police patrol if cameras continully show vandalism and/or people in the area when the park is closed. He also felt standard park times (open/close) will help deter vandalism.

Commissioner Ross said in the past, hiring Park Rangers who could enforce park violations have been discussed and Mr. Olsen said yes, that is correct. He said requesting and having Park Rangers, using the Student Resource Officer (SRO) program as a model, could be a future possibility. Chair Wright asked how citizens need to report vandalism and Mr. Olsen said depending on the situation, if it is an emergency and vandalism is in the act, citizens should contact the police and/or dial 911; however, if a citizen notices graffiti or other vandalism, they can call the non-emergency police number or report it to the Parks Department or the City Action Center.

Commissioner Davison said if the goal is to head off crime or illegal behavior in the parks, he felt changing park hours from dawn to dusk to a set close time (12am to 6am), would invite more crime instead of deter crime. Mr. Olsen said the City would like the parks to have a more cut and dry time of operation while still being fair to our citizens who want to utilize the parks. He said dusk to dawn works in the summer; however, in the fall/winter, dusk comes very early. Mr. Olsen said closing parks from 12am to 6am not only follows the curfew ordinance but also the notion of "nothing good happens after midnight." He said standard park hours will be more clear for the public to follow and easier for the police to enforce. Mr. Purinton said park hours of operation is a delicate balance and needs to be paired with crime prevention techniques such as adequate lighting and consistent maintenance of facilities and sightlines. Commissioner Moxley felt midnight is too late for the neighborhood parks to be open to the public since they are next to residential homes.

Chair Wright said the next item on the agenda is discussing park hours and suggested moving to the next agenda item if no one had any more questions regarding criminal activitiy in parks.

ITEM 5, being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING CITY OF NORMAN PARKS HOURS

Mr. Jason Olsen, Director of Parks and Recreation, said Staff has discussed having a standard park hours of operation with the City Attorney's Office as well as the Police Department. He said Staff gathered park hours of operation from surrounding cities to see what they offered their citizens. Mr. Olsen said Staff suggests all city parks be closed daily from 12am to 6am. and asked the Board for feedback. He said once determined, Park signage will be installed in the parks reflecting the hours of operation.

Commissioner Ross asked if the new lighting at the Andrews Skate Park remain on after midnight and will they be a nuisance to surrounding residential property. Mr. Olsen said the lighting at the Skate Park can be put on a timer (and go off at 12am or what close time is determined) and it is directional lighting; therefore, it should not effect the surrounding residential properties. He said Staff is open to suggestions for different hours of operations for Community Parks versus Neighborhood Parks.

Commissioner Moxley said the parks are dark when the lighting is off, which can possibly encourage bad behavior and wondered if making lights (skate park, tennis and basketball areas) motion sensitive would help alleviate any issues during the night. Mr. Olsen said the lighting at the skate park, tennis and basketball courts are activated by a push button and only stay on until 11pm; however, the lights will give enough "low light" rather than going pitch dark, allowing citizens time to leave the park. He said there are common lights in Community parks and around walking trails that remain on during the night. Mr. Olsen said sensor lights can be installed but they are very expensive, stating two sensor lights (solar power) were recently installed at Vinyard Park due to the reoccurring vandalism at an approximate cost of \$13,000. Commissioner Moxley asked whether the skate park light will be extended to 12am, if the Board determines the park be closed from 12am to 6am and Staff said yes. The Board discussed and agreed that Staff should look at the possibility of installing sensor lights when upgrades or installations are being made at parks, providing funding is available.

Commissioner Moxley said a recent facebook comment stated when the Library closes there is not a bathroom open near Andrews Park after 9pm. He asked whether the park bathroom could remain open until the park closed and Staff said the bathrooms were permanently closed because they were vandalized and out of compliance; however, there are porta potties that are open 24/7 and serviced twice a week located in the southeast area of Andrews Park that the public can utilize. Mr. Olsen said other park bathrooms have automatic locks and can be adjusted to a specific open/close time that will sync with the park hours.

Commissioner Moxley asked whether the City will enforce (more) violations in City Parks if the hours are extended to 12am and Staff said yes. Mr. Olsen said the police department is checking Andrews Park to make sure no one is in the park after dark or staying overnight; but implementing specific park hours will help them enforce violations should they occur. Commissioner Moxley asked whether the City was looking at solutions for the old buildings in Andrews Park and Mr. Olsen said yes, stating Staff will be doing park master plan for Andrews Park very soon. He said some of the buildings are historic and will remain in some form or fashion.

Commissioner Salmond asked whether the park pavilions have lighting until a certain time every night and Staff said not all park pavilions have lighting in or around them, but if budgeted, lighting can be installed.

Commissioner Moxley asked if Andrews Park was the only park the City was having security issues with people staying past dark and/or overnight and Mr. Olsen said no, there have been issues in some other parks as well.

Staff said if the Board recommended City parks be closed from 12am to 6am, the recommendation would be for all City parks, therefore, it would also apply to Reaves Park and ballgames could not be played after 12am. Commissioner Salmond asked whether the ballfield lights at Reaves Park shut off automatically at midnight and Staff said no, the lights are turned off manually at this time.

Commissioner Moxley said the 12am closing time for Commuity Parks would be appropriate but felt Neighborhood Parks should close at 10pm rather since they are more generally located in or near residential areas. Staff said there is clear language that defines a Neighborhood Park as well as a Community Park. Mr. Olsen said some City parks would need to be designated from a Neighborhood Park to a Community Park, i.e., Lions Park is a Neighborhood Park, but events are held there after 10pm, such as Movies in the Park and Summer Breeze. Commissioner Moxely felt City events in City Parks should be granted a time exception and Staff said exceptions can be made; however, the City would want to follow its own rules/guidelines.

Comissioner Moxley made the motion, and Commissioner Salmond seconded the Neighborhood Parks be closed from 10pm to 6am and the Community Parks be closed from 12am to 6am. The vote was taken with the following results:

YEAH:

Chair Wright and Commissioners Davison, Isacksen, Moxley, Ross and Salmond

NAY:

None

Mr. Olsen said Staff will being working on park signage to reflect when the parks are closed. Chair Wright requested signage also be installed at park pavilions that clearly state the reservation procedures and Mr. Olsen said that particular signage will be a long(er) process due to the number of reservable park pavilions. He said the signage will also be more expensive; therefore, will likely need to be a Capital Project.

Mr. Olsen said Staff will bring an agenda item to a future Park Board meeting requesting the Board consider a recommendation changing Lions Park from a Neighborhood Park to a Community Park.

ITEM 6, being:

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMUNITY INTEREST AND OPINION SURVEY RESULTS

Mr. Jason Olsen, Director of Parks and Recreation, said it has been almost 15 years since a parks and recreation needs analysis has been done for the City of Norman. He said the survey is a roadmap for what programs should be offered as well as what we need to work on regarding capital park projects. Mr. Olsen said a needs analysis/community interest and opinion survey is very important to understand what our community wants and going forward, the goal is do a needs analysis every five years.

Mr. Ryan Murray, ETC Institute, said the survey's objective is to assess usage, satisfaction, and needs for a wide range of park and recreation facilities and programs. It also helps identify opportunities for the City to better serve the leisure and recreation needs of the community. Mr. Murray said a six-page

survey was sent out via mail and online to a random sample of households in the City and each survey took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. He said 417 surveys were completed, giving a margin of 95% level of confidence. Commissioner Ross asked if the surveys were sent to households in the City limits and Mr. Murray said the surveys were sent out to residential addresses within the City limits.

Mr. Murray said 85% of respondents indicated their household used parks or facilities during the last year; 35% indicated their household has participated in programs offered during the past year; and most respondents depend on the City (73%) or the University of Oklahoma (54%) for parks, recreation facilities, or recreation programs.

Mr. Murray said the top priorities are as follows:

Recreation Amenities

- 1. Trails, steps, pathways
- 2. Indoor swimming pool
- 3. Community gardens
- 4. Dedicated social space for active older adults
- 5. Park benches to relax, read, enjoy nature
- 6. Indoor fitness classes
- 7. Dog parks

Recreation Programs

- 1. Adult fitness and wellness programs
- 2. Community event programs
- 3. Nature/environment education programs
- 4. Fitness/exercise programs
- 5. Community garden programs
- 6. Outdoor hiking/walking clubs
- 7. Adult art/performing arts programs

Mr. Murray said the 85% of the households surveyed indicated they visited City parks and/or facilities offered by the City of Norman during the past year which is significantly higher than the National Average. He said the survey also reflected the overall quality of the City's parks and recreation programs and events were: 24% - Excellent, 58% - Good, 15% - Fair, and 3% - Poor. The City's "excellent" and "good" rating are much higher than the National Average. Mr. Murray said the survey also indicated that 35% of households participated in programs offered by the City which is aligned with the National Average and the overall quality of City parks and recreation programs were rated: 28% - Excellent and 61% - Good, which are significantly higher than the National Average.

Mr. Murray highlighted the satisfaction with various parks and recreation services and said the highest received level of importance were: How close parks are located to your home, Maintenance of parks, Number of parks, Quality of customer service received by City employees and Quality of programs for families with children. He said the items that should receive the most emphasis over the next five years are: Maintenance of parks; Security in parks; Availability of information about programs/facilities; Variety of programs offered by the City and the Quality of programs for adults.

The survey indicated that high priority improvements are security in City Parks and the availability of information about programs and facilities. Commissioner Salmond asked whether the survey indicated the ages of the respondents and Mr. Murray said he can re-run another analysis to capture the household age data, i.e., those households that have 1) under 10 year olds, 2) 10-19 year olds, and/or 3) households without children.

Mr. Murray said the improvements include: Upgrading existing parks; Preserve open and green space; Updated park facilities; Preserve and maintain historical significance of park property and Increased connectivity of hiking/biking trails and parks. He said the level of support for potential funding mechanisms include: Grants from states, federal and private sources; Corporate sponsorship and donations; Enterprise operations (concession stands); Bond issues approved by voters; and Existing sales tax revenues. Commissioner Salmond asked what the tax rate is for the Hotel/Motel Tax and Staff was not sure of the exact amount, but will get that information. Mr. Olsen said the amount of Hotel/Motel Tax collected is split three equal ways between the City of Norman, Visit Norman and the Art Council.

Mr. Murray said the survey indicated the communications and barriers preventing households from using parks, facilities and programs include: Lack of awareness of programs being offered; Inadequate parking at parks and facilities; Facilities not being well maintained and Programming offered does not meet needs. He said additional survey findings related to benefits of the Norman Parks and Recreation Department include: Programs/facilities are a valuable public resource for all residents; Enhances the quality of life in Norman; Enhances the appeal of living in Norman and Preserves green space and provides areas of natural beauty.

Commissioner Moxley asked about communication, specifically the City website and Mr. Murray suggested bringing in a stakeholders group to find out what is working and what is not. He said typically he has heard, that it is not the website that is difficult but the recreation programming sign-ups. He said if you want to invest in the website; he felt like the City needs to really promote and ask people to go on the website to check out all programming and events the City offers. Commissioner Moxely asked if the Parks and Recreation Department had a google page and Staff said no, not at this time. He felt like a lot of people use google and it would be a great tool to use, i.e., have a link on google that would take the user to the website. Mr. Murray said anything the City can do to "push" those to the City website is good, but he suggested the engagement by using other aspects that are going to be more useful, i.e., newspaper and social media. He also suggested doing exit surveys, if possible, with each and every one of the programs and/or events to gather input.

Mr. Murray felt like social media/facebook can promote programs and awareness by capturing an audience and keeping them engaged with thoughtful and intential posts versus responding to every comment posted by individuals. He said email list is another frequent and great way to engage citizens to create awareness. Chair Wright asked about utilizing texting as a tool to engage citizens and give information about programs and Mr. Murray said texting is a great tool; however, you need to give the option of "opting out" of receiving texts and most do.

Mr. Olsen said we received a lot of feedback from the survey and now we know what we need to focus on in the future. He said a lot of our trails are not necessarily in the park system and we need to address that. Mr. Olsen said the survey indicated that citizens would like more recreation programs, fitness programs and community gardens and we need to figure out how to implement those things. He said the City Forester is planning on starting some outdoor education which is part of the Urban Forest Master Plan. Mr. Olsen said he felt like the Parks and Recreation Department has made strides/differences since the last survey and with the most recent survey data, we plan to improve even more.

ITEM 7, being:

NORMAN FORWARD UPDATE

Reaves Park

Work continues in the park, with irrigation being installed and the construction of the concession building. All of the grading and pathways, internal park roads and parking lots are nearly complete. We are coordinating with the Public Works Department, while they are building a multi-modal path along Constitution Street, to include Reaves Park. Staff has been trimming trees in the area. The project should be completed by December; however, a ribbon-cutting will be scheduled in Spring 2023, closer to the beginning of baseball/softball season.

Griffin Park

Griffin Park Project Phase 5 is nearly complete and said the grass/springs are growing well on the three newly renovated fields which will be ready to use in the Fall. The contractors are currently working on

Phase 6, specifically the parking lot additions. They have the sub base work done and most of the curves. Phase 6 also includes eight fields, two concession/restroom buildings, one restroom-only building, and a new entry into the complex. Additional work at Griffin Park will include new traffic lights, one at 12th Avenue and High Meadows and another on Robinson Street and State Drive, along with "entrance only" and "exit only" signage, will help with traffic going into and out of the park/parking lots. This project is scheduled to be completed in the Spring of 2023.

YFAC

Progress continues at the Young Family Athletic Center (YFAC). Staff showed pictures depicting the newest rendering of the facility, the continued/on-going steel construction, the swimming pool/surge pit and duct work that has begun inside of the building. The next celebration will be when the street named Trae Young is completed. The YFAC is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2023.

Senior Wellness Center

Staff showed a picture reflecting the current construction at the Senior Wellness Center. Steel is onsight and will be going up soon. A steel-topping ceremony will be scheduled in the future for this project. The Senior Wellness Center project should be finished in the Summer of 2023.

Vinyard Park

The new two-level playground, which includes a family slide, was completed at Vinyard Park, and Staff hosted a dedication/ribbon cutting ceremony on September 16, 2022. This neighborhood park upgrade was funded through the Norman Forward program.

ITEM 8, being:

DIVISIONAL UPDATES

Ms. Veronica Tracy, Recreation Manager, said the last Outdoor Movie Night of the season is this month on October 14th and invited the Board to come out to Lions Park and enjoy "Hocus Pocus". She said events begin at 7pm and the movie starts at sundown.

Lee Hernan will be @Legacy Park for a celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month on October 7th at 8pm and Staff invited the Board out for a fun evening! A United Way of Norman fundraiser is scheduled for October 13th at Royal Bavaria. Ms. Tracy said the "Bavarian Games" start at 6pm with a City employee eating competition, stein holding contest and more! She said everyone is welcome to attend and the buffet is \$18 per person. The highly anticipated Zombie 5K, 1 mile dash and dance is scheduled at Ruby Grant Park on Saturday, October 29th at 6:30pm. The runs will end with a family dance at the park pavilion. The 4th Annual Calendar Contest is going on now! The deadline to submit "Norman Park" photos ends October 31st.

Mr. James Briggs, Park Development Planner, said Staff is finishing up design concepts for Bentley Park and will be an agenda item to the Board at the December meeting for review/recommendations. He said Staff will begin working on the playground renovation this winter at Cherry Creek Park and continues with beautification projects, public landscaping and tree replacement in various areas of the City. Mr. Briggs said the City Forester is working on an RFP for an Urban Forest Master Plan (UFMP) that the City funded this year. He said Davey Tree will likely be the contractor and will assist with the UFMP as well as a right-of-way street inventory. The Historic House will be getting a new roof soon and the RFP is out to bid. Chair Wright said she heard information regarding a trail from Oakhurst Park at a recent City Council meeting and Staff said there has been discussions to see if the City can acquire some land, that is currently not for sale, to help build a connecting path to allow public access to a commercial area, like Walmart Neighborhood Market.

Mr. Wade Thompson, Parks and Facilities Manager, said Staff has been removing the old playground structure and doing preliminary dirt work at Cherry Creek Park in order to get it ready for the new playground installation. He said Staff is also assisting with the new sound system that is being installed at the Andrews Skate Park, recently upgraded some of the lighting in the gym at the 12th Avenue Recreation Center, and will begin installing Christmas lights around City Hall soon.

ITEM 9, being:

MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS

Commissioner Isacksen requested Staff bring suggestions to a future meeting that we as a Board can assist the Parks and Recreation Department to improve communication.

Mr. Mark Nanny, Greenbelt Commissioner, said he came to the meeting to gather more information regarding the trails throughout urban and rural Norman. He said the Greenbelt Commission has been working yeas to create a network of trails and connecting points of interest. He said there are literally areas in Norman that are blocked in, i.e., a child living on the other side of a fence by his school may have to go to an artillery road, possibly all way around his neighborhood, just to get to his school. Mr. Nanny felt people have been saying for years that they want green space, walking trails, and places to ride their bikes and he said some developers in Norman have accomplished that within some of the Norman additions they have developed. He felt it would be very cool to reach out to these developers and see what it would take to incorporate this type of networking trails throughout Norman to connect developments and additions. Mr. Nanny said he has scheduled a meeting with Mr. Olsen, Director of Parks and Recreation, and Ms. Hudson, Planning and Community Development Director, to discuss and hopefully find innovative ways to make this connectivity work.

ITEM 10, being:

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Wright adjourned the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Passed and approved this

of

202

Kristi Wright, Chair