

CITY OF MERRIAM PARK AND RECREATION
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, March 28th, 2017
6:00PM

Roll Call

The March meeting of the Merriam Parks & Recreation Advisory Board was called to order at 6:05 pm, by Chairperson Tom Heffron. Board members in attendance included: Kathy Stull, Thelma Fowler, Suzanne Downey, Katie Leary and Grant Getzlow. LaVera Howard, was excused. Staff members in attendance included: Anna Slocum, Director; Dave Smothers, Assistant Director; Sara Thompson, Recreation Supervisor, and Ingrid Berg, Assistant Program Coordinator.

Public Comments

Public in attendees were: Billy Crook of Timber Ridge Home Owners Association; Rosy and Bill Jennemann. No comments were offered.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Thelma Fowler made a motion to accept the February meeting minutes and Kathy Stull seconded the motion; motion was approved unanimously.

Staff Reports

Director's Report

Facility Master Plan Update

Since the last Park Board meeting there have been two City Council meetings. A presentation was made at both meetings that focused on education of funding opportunities and capacity to complete a build new project. The first question to answer was could the City fund a project of this nature? This was presented by Cindy Ehart, Finance Director and focused on bond capacity.

From 2013 until 2016 sales tax has risen from \$7.6 million to \$9.9 million. For every \$1 spent by a Merriam resident, a non-resident is spending approximately \$4.21 in sales tax. Recognizing the significance of having others help pay for services was evident in the Master Plan survey where residents indicated that a ¼-cent sales tax would be the most desired funding source if new facilities were built. Currently, a ¼-cent sales tax is used to fund street improvements and generates approximately \$2.04 million/year. If a facility is built, staff would anticipate having to bond \$25 million. With the help of outside experts, using today's economy, staff explored the cost of a 10-year bond and a 20-year bond. Debt service for a 10-year bond would be approximately \$2.8 million / year, 20-year bond would be \$1.67 million/ year. The 20-year bond, although more affordable annually, would end up costing over \$5 million more in debt service over the life of the bond. Although a 10-year bond payment is more than what is generated in a ¼-cent sales tax by approximately \$770,000/year, there are ways this could be managed by using available Capital Improvement Project budgets. Historically, \$2.7 million is transferred from General Fund to CIP. The balance of debt service not funded by the ¼-cent could be funded through this CIP leaving \$2 million for other projects. This option would require a reprioritization of CIP and potentially eliminates the flexibility to absorb fluctuations in economy. Fortunately, the reprioritization comes at a time when there is some level of saturation in large projects. A 10-year bond matches the life of a special sales tax, which by statute, is restricted to 10 years. The information used was based on current day retail and does not take into consideration any new sales tax from potential development.

At Monday's meeting, Chris Engel presented information on surrounding communities sales tax rates compared to Merriam. This conversation was not to focus on appropriate levels of taxation but would an increase impact sales tax

revenues negatively if comparing sales tax rate to “competition”. The review started with all Johnson County Cities with a close eye on the I-35 corridor for comparison. In the first round, cities were eliminated that are not deemed “competitors” to what Merriam offers. This included smaller cities in NE JOCO such as Lake Quivera, Mission Woods, Edgerton, Mission Hills, Westwood, Westwood Hills. Second round eliminated cities on the border of Johnson County such as Spring Hill, DeSoto, Bonner Springs and Gardner, primarily due to distance but also what retail they provide. As of April 1, Merriam’s sales tax will increase to 9.225%. In order to ensure the comparisons are fair to surrounding cities, the sales tax rate for the conversation needs to include the additional ¼-cent being discussed taking the rate to 9.480%. This created a third-round elimination of cities that would still be higher than Merriam if this rate was approved – so Mission, Shawnee, and Fairway were cut. The remaining cities, although their base rate of sales tax is lower than what the base at Merriam sales tax might be, they have CID and TDD districts which adds additional rates to the base. In areas of Olathe, Roeland Park, Overland Park, Leawood, Prairie Village – the overall rates where the majority of people shop for goods and services are all higher than Merriam’s rate with the added ¼-cent. In Overland Park, two successful car dealerships are located in these districts. If someone is seeking out a lower sales tax rate they would already be shopping in areas not included in CID or TDD districts since the base rate of these cities is currently lower than Merriam’s. Based on staff’s analysis of various rates, with Merriam not having CID/TDD districts, it is unlikely that a ¼-cent sales tax increase, if approved, would scare people off from retail purchases in Merriam.

Based on this analysis there is capacity to complete the build new option – the question remains – should we? This discussion will continue as part of the April 25th joint meeting – 7 pm – Jenks Gym.

Assistant Director’s Report

Updates

2017 Farmers’ Market

There are three open stalls for the Saturday Market which will be filled with daily vendors. There are quite a few vendors plus the food trucks for Wednesdays. The pre-season vendor meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 30th at 6 pm.

Heartland Program Evaluation

This year the Heartland had the most participants ever with 103 (25 of which were in the new category of photography) and it is the first time the event covered the expense of prize money. There were 350 people in attendance. The show runs through Saturday, April 1st.

Upcoming Events

Bits and Pieces Opening Night Reception

The opening reception for next exhibit-Bits & Pieces (featuring Charlene Pryor and Candi Ayres Phillips) will be Thursday, April 6th from 7:00-8:30 pm. The menu is jalapeno popper spread served with Fritos scoops, raspberry shortbread thumbprint cookies and buttery herbed nut mix.

Recreation Supervisor's Report

Updates

Turkey Creek Festival Report

The festival is scheduled for Saturday, May 20th. JCPRD has put in new bathrooms by Shelter #1 where the Lion's Pancake Breakfast is held. They have also been doing a lot of tree trimming so the view of most of the event will be less obstructed. Possibilities Pediatric Therapy is a new sponsor. Concessions spots are full with 15 vendors (listing in your packet). A volunteer signup sheet was passed around. Please contact Sara Thompson if you are interested in helping out that day.

Hats off to Dr. Seuss Evaluation

We had 26 participants, the theme was fun and easy to work with and there was great volunteerism.

Upcoming Events

Brunch with the Bunny

This event is scheduled for Saturday, April 8th from 10:00-11:30 am in Jenk's Gym. This the fourth year this event has been done and each year participation has increased.

Hanging Basket Workshop

This workshop is scheduled for Friday, April 21st from 1:00-2:00 pm at Public Works (6901 Knox). \$40 for the class and all supplies are included. Kathy Stull commented that it would be good to have a cart of some kind to transport the finished pots to people's cars. Sara will coordinate with Public Works.

Rain Barrel Workshop

This workshop is scheduled for Saturday, April 29th 10:00-11:00 am at Merriam Marketplace (5740 Merriam Dr). \$65 for the class and all supplies are included. Merriam residents can fill out a rebate application through Community Development.

Old Business

Discovery Soccer

Discovery Soccer Academy is moving forward with the 24-hour soccer benefit with proceeds going to SPCA.

New Business

No new business.

Other Business

The spring/summer brochure with the insert about the Facilities Master Plan Update should be in mailboxes early next week. Anna will share a PDF of the update pamphlet with Park Board members. The sewer line running from the sewage ejector in the basement was replaced last week. The cost was about \$7,800 for parts and three days of labor. Currently the recirculating pump is acting up. Anna has already used her the entire Building Maintenance budget for 2017. Therefore, all other repairs will have to come out of the contingency fund.

Adjournment

Katie Leary moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:05 pm and Suzanne Downey seconded; motion was approved unanimously.