

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE
MAY 15, 2012
3:30 P.M.

Councilman Gilbert, Chairman, called the meeting of the Parks and Recreation Committee to order with Councilpersons Ladd, Scott, Murphy, Robinson, Benson, Berz, Rico and McGary present. City Attorney Phil Noblett and Shirley Crownover, Assistant Clerk to the Council, were also present.

Others present included Mayor Littlefield, Johnny Feagans, Dan Johnson, Chief Parker, Karen Rennich, Bryan Shults, Larry Zehnder, Greta Hayes, Brian Smith, Barbara Readnowar, Richard Beeland, Steve Leach, Alice Cannella, Dennis Malone, Jim Templeton, Lee Norris, Valerie Malueg, Ron Swafford, Mike Patrick, John Van Winkle, Daisy Madison, David Johnson, and Kathie Fulgham.

Chairman Gilbert turned the meeting over to Adm. Zehnder, who thanked the Council, and outlined three topics—Summer Program Highlights; Sculpture Garden w/John Henry; and MTAS Report. He then turned the meeting over to Greta Hayes to go over what is happening this summer.

Ms. Hayes presented a power point, stating that they were very successful with their summer programs last years and were introducing new programs; that they would capitalize on what they had been successful with and see what they could improve on; that they had held a Pre-Planning Meeting and Program Evaluation on ways to be more creative. One thing was more certified instructors in dance, art and music. She noted that there would be an Internship Program this summer—that they had hired 40 kids to work within their program and 14 had been hired that were part of the Internship last year; that they encouraged them to get jobs with the City or other agencies; that Brian Smith focused on marketing and utilizing the development of the people they served.

She went on to talk about Kids Camp, to be held at 11 community centers with a variety of programs, including sports and a free lunch; that they tried to get these kids to other parts of town that they never experienced. She mentioned two new PILOT Programs with Teen centers for ages 13-16 at several community centers. She noted a different focus with these programs and a CSI Camp and teaching job and career readiness. She again touched on the Internship Program, noting 45 people last year and 100 this year for ages 13-16, where mock job interviews are conducted, also resumes and work ethics. She stated that this had been very successful and they had good feedback.

Ms. Hayes went on to talk about critical trends across the United States—that Parks and Recreation partnerships were good—that we were developing strong partnerships from the ground up, working with the Gang Task Force, Girls' Inc. and UTC and finding out more creative

ways of providing services. She talked about the GED Program at Brainerd and partnering with UTC, that provided 40-60 college mentors. She mentioned Girls' Inc. and successful camps; that through these partnerships we see what we can do to help our youth; that we are pulling our resources together; that Girls' Inc. do camps and camp clean-ups, along with the Gang Task Force and retreats—she stated that all of this had a positive influence on their Staff members, as well. She mentioned an event at Carver Center on June 2nd and also an event on August 11th. She went on to talk about Late Night Hoops for ages 15-18, which has been a most popular event for 18 years and is supported by the Police Dept. She talked about the RBI Baseball League for ages 5-15 with 70 mentors and now we have 93. She mentioned the Girls' Softball League in June, where we bring rural areas to the inner city. She mentioned the First Tee Golf Program and Hershey Track and Field. She mentioned Senior Olympics and Adult Leagues and the Youth Softball League at Warner Park. One of the new things in Aquatics is the "Ribbet"; there is also "Spray and Play". She noted that rents are up for the month of May and birthday parties and family gatherings are popular.

Councilman Benson stated that the GED Program is a great program; that it helps people to be self-sufficient. He mentioned how expensive this could be. Ms. Hayes responded that there are Grants out there; that Chattanooga State is chipping in, and we have great certified teachers. Councilman Benson noted that the School System used to provide this and asked if Parks and Recreation was the only provider now? Ms. Hayes responded that "Re-Start" and Chattanooga State have GED programs; that Councilwoman Berz had spearheaded this. Councilman Benson asked if we had had anyone to graduate yet and was told "no".

Councilman Murphy asked if the obstacle course that had been introduced helped rentals at the pool? It was noted that this is just at Warner Park, in his district, and he requested that the next one be at Carver Center.

Councilwoman Berz addressed the GED Program, explaining that it is a PILOT Program that is co-sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce; that the Mid-Town Chamber is partnering with Parks and Recreation, including all the local colleges, junior colleges, Parks and Recreation, Chamber of Commerce, and the Department of Labor; that there will be a report coming in the fall; that this is a one-of-a-kind program in the State.

Adm. Zehnder stated that Ms. Hayes and her Staff do an excellent job with summer programs and over 1,000 kids are involved and engaged. He noted that on the first day of summer, June 21st, there will be the opening of the Hixson Recreation Center.

SCULPTURE FIELDS AT MONTAGUE PARK

The next topic to be covered was the Sculpture fields at Montague Park. John Henry was present at the meeting.

Councilman McGary noted that Exhibit B, Item (4) mentioned Private Events. He stated that he would like a better understanding of Private Events. John Henry stated that this was in reference to fundraising events for the Park and various kinds of closures for certain sponsors; that they would not be leasing the Park for private events.

Councilwoman Scott asked if these events would be around the regular hours of the opening of Montague Park? Mr. Henry responded that they had not thought this through, but it would be during regular hours. Councilwoman Scott mentioned the Walnut Street Bridge, where weddings are sometimes held, but the public can still get on the bridge—that it is not closed down to the public. She wanted to know how Montague Park would differ from this? Mr. Henry responded that there would be no restricted access.

MTAS REPORT

The third topic was the Report from MTAS. **Ron Darden and Bob Saylor**s from MTAS were present for this topic.

Mr. Darden stated that he was asked by the City to assist in preparing a Study using partnerships; that Bob Saylor was co-author on this Study and was hired by MTAS five months ago to assist with this project. He noted contributions from Larry Zehnder, Brian Smith and Kathie Fulham. He stated that Councilmembers should have received a copy of their Report discussing the contract with small cities in Hamilton County and partnering in this also. Even though Hamilton County is not a part of this, their survey data is included.

He stated that one of the first things was the Inventory of Recreational Park facilities; that they took this Inventory and compared it to the national standard, and there were gaps in Hamilton County—not as many as in other places, but there were gaps to be addressed.

Mr. Darden talked about the benefit of partnerships with a professional, certified recreation staff available; that they looked at successful use of combined services with school services, emergency services, and wastewater; that there is a record of local governments working together in partnerships. He stated that he was talking about consolidation of recreational services and not consolidation of government; that they tried to consider why small cities such as Red Bank and East Ridge would want to assist in partnerships with Chattanooga and why Chattanooga would want to be included in a partnership with them.

He talked about alternatives for financing recreational services' partnerships, resulting in more points on Grant applications, noting several avenues for financing.

Mr. Darden stated that Tennessee Law provides for consolidated organization; that one of the main things is that small cities benefit with availability to certified professional staffs in larger cities; that many times smaller cities can have a piece of equipment that could be used by the City of Chattanooga and vice versa; that one of the main things in looking at recreation for the whole area is that it allows for governments to come together for area-wide planning in places where it is needed and is the most economical. Delivery of services is important with continuity in leadership; large cities have a high level of recreational services for areas and large cities present a better way for the city to take advantage of tourists that bring in money for the economy—tourism is important, and it was determined in the Study that recreational investments bring in dollars for Chattanooga.

He stated that the benefit of working with other governments, and Hamilton County may be interested later, is that it improves security at recreation centers.

Mr. Darden then went over a series of recommendations based on their Study: Establish dialogue with other governments; Appoint a Steering Committee; Organize an Advisory Council; Expand partnerships; Centralize recreational planning; Expand present facilities and fill gaps; Request PARTAS assistance; Upgrade existing recreational facilities; Involve schools in planning and services; Develop a user fee financing system.

In summary, he said that more could be accomplished by working together through partnerships; that the MTAS partnership could be expanded, and this is outlined in the report.

Councilwoman Scott stated that she remembered the survey to get the data for this; that it was an interesting report, but she did not remember getting a copy; that she would like to read this.

Chairman Gilbert stated that the report was sent by e-mail.

Councilman Murphy thanked Mr. Darden for this exciting presentation and detailed report; that in talking about the Inventory, we have so much to offer to Chattanooga and the community as a whole; that the gaps will help us build partnerships—that one “gap” is no archery or shooting sports, speaking of a publicly available location with a Range Master being part of the recreational offerings, stating that he thought this would be a huge hit. Another “gap”, which might be too expensive is that we have no ice in this community; that more Europeans are moving into this area, and this is a “gap” that we have that might only could be addressed collectively with partnerships. He stated that we were very blessed with what we are doing and have a lot of bases covered.

At this point, Chairman Gilbert asked Councilman Murphy to chair the meeting so that he could speak.

Chairman Gilbert stated that he thought it was proven that partnerships help, but he was concerned about recreation centers—that we have a lot to offer; that Hamilton County is lacking a lot in this field; that if we partner, the inner city will suffer more if we spread the money out; that when it comes to police services, the Sheriff's Office could help because Chattanooga is in the county, too, and they should do this automatically. He stated that he was concerned that recreation will be spread out too far; that we have a lot to offer, and the County will not join in and spend their time and money; that we need to look at this more closely because we have separate identities.

Mr. Darden stated that he thought this could be addressed by the Council or a committee; that it has been successful in Alcoa and Maryville; that the City of Nashville has a Recreation Commission—that this can be addressed by the Council.

Chairman Gilbert asked him if the cities that he mentioned had recreation centers that would compare to ours and also if the City-County relationship was the same?

Mr. Darden questioned if he could give examples of a City and a County; that he thought it would be more effective for the Council to address these issues for planning and finances and operation of programs. He went on to say that recreational programming is fast-growing in the community and takes a lot of money; that he thought we should work together—that small cities do not always have the resources to do this; that he is not talking about taking Chattanooga assets and spreading them all over the county—that everyone will contribute.

Mayor Littlefield thanked Mr. Darden and MTAS, stating that MTAS is a good, objective source of information; that he had known Mr. Darden for a long time, and he understands small cities and large cities and the relationship they should have. He added to Councilman Murphy that we did address an ice rink a few years ago; that we had struggled with this a long time—that this had been an important element for a long time. He went on to say that before MTAS became involved, we had some representatives from small communities, and they struggled; that we had been successful at attracting tournaments such as Softball, which brought visitors to the city that pays back in “real” cash; that we can do a better job with small communities that have unique resources; that we can all work together in bringing in tourists; that this could be a small step—to recruit local people and take this out of the realm of politics.

Councilwoman Robinson added that she would like to remind Mayor Littlefield that back in the 1990's, when she was involved with Downtown Partnership, that we actually had an ice rink; that a lot of Chattanoogans ice skate, and it is a wonderful thing—that she would like to see some ice skating.

This meeting adjourned at 4:20 P.M.

