

**IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE OKLAHOMA OPEN MEETING LAW
THE AGENDA WAS POSTED AUGUST 21, 2024 AT 8:00 A.M.
AT THE MUNICIPAL BUILDING, 723 SOUTH LEWIS, STILLWATER, OKLAHOMA**

**MINUTES
STILLWATER CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
COMMUNITY CENTER
315 W. 8TH
AUGUST 26, 2024**

**PRESENT: MAYOR WILLIAM H. JOYCE, VICE MAYOR AMY DZIALOWSKI,
COUNCILORS CHRISTIE HAWKINS, KEVIN CLARK AND TIM HARDIN**
ABSENT: NONE

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Mayor Joyce called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. GENERAL ORDERS

- a. A study session of the City Council to discuss, consider, and provide possible direction to staff on long-term strategic planning for Parks & Community Resources of the City of Stillwater including a discussion of all parks assets, the Parks & Community Resources budget, the Stillwater Parks Master Plan that was completed in 2022, the municipal pool, aquatics, facilities including the Community Center, Senior Center, Armory Recreation Center, and administration of all city parks, open spaces, and trails including possible discussion of operation, maintenance, acquisition or possible disposal of parks assets.

Assistant City Manager Christy Driskel presented an overview of the Parks System, the previously commissioned Parks and Community Resources Master Plan, staffing and maintenance concerns, inventory of City properties, information updates and options to moving the system forward for the community. She presented a partial timeline of the master plan beginning with the funding allocated to commission the plan in 2021. At the beginning of 2024, staff started focusing more on these community assets and began to dig into the maintenance concerns. Ms. Driskel reported that the sheer volume of the properties and amenities that are city-owned, staffed and maintained is daunting. It is difficult to prioritize funding and staffing so that all properties received the needed care for public enjoyment. She stated that this concern is heightened by new items coming online that will also require attention, focus, future determinations and dollars. Ms. Driskel stated that the purpose of this meeting is to allow open conversation regarding next steps for our parks system, community needs and prioritization of funding and staffing. Ms. Driskel presented an overview of the Master Park & Community Resources Plan. Recommendations included site-specific priorities and needs and overall community best practices and also identified paths forward with operations, staffing, possible funding sources and methods to enhance properties for the community.

Parks and Community Resources Director Barbara Bliss explained the detailed parks inventory as of 2021 and the actions by staff in 2024. Ms. Bliss reported that a pool inspection was done by an external consultant and major concerns and deficiencies were found in both the main pool and children's pool. The consultant highly recommended that both pools be put back in sound condition prior to allowing citizen use. She explained the process and survey of the area of a park where people live and use the park. This approach allows staff to focus on citizen input, data points, costs comparisons, future uses needed in a specific area while still allowing consideration for the entire system needs.

Ms. Driskel stated that it is obvious that great steps must be taken to address the future of the parks system. Without adoption of the master plan or a new direction being provided by Council, staff feels the City is currently ineffective in meeting community needs.

Discussion was held amongst Council.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Cathy Bird, 1121 E. Camden, stated she really appreciates all the work being done now because for years the parks have been neglected. She would like for this to continue and not be one study then go away again for another 15-20 years.

Julie Couch, 901 S. Gray, stated that the neglect of parks and recreation has been going on for years and that is what has caused all the maintenance issues now especially with swimming pool. Ms. Couch expressed her concern about a sub-committee with community members not ever being established and her concern about the YMCA taking over the pool.

Roger Gose, 1120 E. Connell Avenue, stated that there used to be a really good Parks & Recreation program but over time Councilors or management did not take care of it. He reported that he was disappointed to hear that funding was taken away from Public Works to Parks because streets need to be fixed as well. He asked if the report states which parks have Land Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) involved because that can cause problems and also if the report contained the utilization rate of the parks. He asked for verification of the cost to repair the swimming pool.

Ms. Driskel addressed Mr. Gose's concern about the funds being taken from Public Works to fund Parks and the discrepancy on the swimming pool repair costs. She also reported that staff does have a list of the inventory for the LWCF and what caveats that were put on those properties.

Jeremy Upshaw, 2213 W. 10th, stated the major thing he has noticed is that there is a disconnect between the people and applying that manpower or volunteer time with the City. He suggested getting community groups or people needing community service hours to be funneled through the parks to help with cleanup and other repairs.

Kathryn Ross, 1015 S. Orchard Street, stated that there are many people that would love to volunteer to help with the cleanup and other things that the parks need. She encouraged staff to find a way to reach out to the community. She expressed her concern over the deterioration of Teal Ridge.

Parks Manager Jim Scott stated that Teal Ridge is privately owned.

Ms. Driskel said it is easier to maintain properties that are closer together for a primary use so there are wins in consolidation. Staff has been looking at the budget gap for a Parks & Recreation department, but it is hard to identify that gap when staff does not know which facilities the City wants to maintain and in what condition.

Discussion was held amongst Council.

Councilor Hardin stated that he understands establishing a vision for the parks system, but there are some immediate issues that need action now.

Mayor Joyce suggested that staff come back to Council with an action plan of five or six things that can be done now and prioritize those things whether funding is available or not and in conjunction with that assuming there will be future funding follow up with a plan for real park planning, vision and improvements.

Vice Mayor Dzialowski stated that it is important to not assume what the people want from the parks system. She also asked staff to follow up and make sure the Senior Center is not funded with Title III funds as those are restricted and any other areas like donations that might be restrictive.

Ms. Bliss clarified that no restricted funds are involved with the Senior Center.

Ms. Driskel stated that she does want citizens to realize that this is an intentional time out for staff to look at what the Comprehensive Plan needs to be for the City's Park system. She stated that 2024 has been a big change for Parks and she thanked Councilor Clark and Vice Mayor Dzialowski for their time to this conversation. Ms. Driskel reported that staff believes this Master Plan is an inventory with guidelines, but it is not the firm direction. Staff requests time to continue with citizen input and the sub-committee to continue working on prioritization of next steps and for the community to understand that this is a work in progress.

Erin Jacoby, 210 S. Husband Street, Apt. 7, asked that staff please remember the people with disabilities and the sidewalk maintenance around these areas when making decisions on the park system.

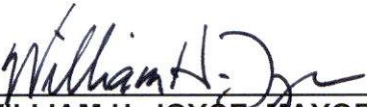
Councilor Hawkins stated a couple years ago when the lodging tax was increased part of that revenue stream was to come back to the City to go towards tourism and visitor type services and she wondered if that revenue could go to Parks & Recreation.

4. ADJOURN

MOTION BY COUNCILOR CLARK, SECOND BY VICE MAYOR DZIALOWSKI TO ADJOURN THE AUGUST 26, 2024 SPECIAL MEETING OF THE STILLWATER CITY COUNCIL.

ROLL CALL VOTE: JOYCE-YEA, DZIALOWSKI-YEA, HAWKINS-YEA, CLARK-YEA, HARDIN-YEA. NAY-NONE. MOTION CARRIED WITH FIVE YEA VOTES.

The August 26, 2024 special meeting of the Stillwater City Council adjourned at 7:06 p.m.



WILLIAM H. JOYCE, MAYOR
STILLWATER CITY COUNCIL



TERESA KADAVY
CITY CLERK