

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Minutes  
August 3, 2004

Members Present: Jerry Wilinski, Larry Haley, Patricia Klein

Guests Present: Terri Thomas, Christy Abruzzi, Brian Fraaza, Frances Jewell, Mary Ann Ampersee

Vice Chair Patricia Klein called the meeting to order at 5:10 pm and asked those present to introduce themselves.

Ms. Ampersee distributed an event request which had been received after packets had been mailed.

Jerry Wilinski motioned approval of the minutes of the July 6, 2004 meeting. Larry Haley seconded his motion which was unanimously approved by those present. By telephone poll, the minutes were approved by the Board.

Ms. Jewell then turned the meeting over to representatives from the Kalamazoo Deacon's Conference, (KDC). Christie stated that the organization had been involved in several special projects this past year to encourage area residents and youth to participate in activities in LaCrone Park. Ms. Stated that a group of neighborhood residents had formed a group entitled Comm-Unity Responders with the intent to develop and sponsor positive programs and activities within the neighborhood and the park. She also stated that this group had received grant funding to accomplish a portion of their initiatives as well as partnerships with the City of Kalamazoo and KDC.

The 2004 activities included planting flowers in the park through the City's Adopt-a-Park program, staging a tennis and a basketball tournament, holding a community picnic and painting a large mural for placement on the restroom facility in the park.

Ms. Thomas stated that the group was working with a Detroit based organization entitled "Art of Leadership" who had worked with area youth and representatives to design the mural. She then distributed drawings depicting the draft design. She also stated that the mural would be painted on sign quality board using sign quality paint and that a protective coating would be applied.

Ms. Jewell stated that the Comm-Unity Responders had signed a memorandum of understanding with the City of Kalamazoo to provide maintenance and restoration of the mural should it become necessary.

Ms. Thomas and Ms. [redacted] invited the group to attend the August 20, 2004 event which also included a Back to School Picnic, backpack and school supply give away.

The Board thanked Ms. Thomas and Ms. [redacted] for their involvement and positive influence and expressed the desire that similar efforts be expended in other neighborhoods. Both women agreed to share their experience with any interested parties and thanked the City for their support and assistance. Ms. Jewell encouraged the KDC representatives to keep the City informed of upcoming events and activities so that they could be included in the City Parks and Recreation Brochure.

Commissioner Cooney thanked the KDC representatives as well and expressed his desire for expanded similar efforts throughout the City.

The group then briefly discussed the Hail Kalamazoo project and the placement of "cabs" within Bronson Park, West Main Park, and Mayors' Riverfront Park.

Jerry Wilinski motioned a recommendation that the City Manager approve the following event:

- Black Males of Kalamazoo – Community Festival, LaCrone Park, September 25, 2004

His motion was seconded by Larry Haley and approved by those present. By telephone poll, this motion was unanimously approved.

Patricia Klein questioned the number of telephone polls that had been necessary due to the lateness of requests. The Board agreed that this was of concern and asked that an effort be made to discourage this practice.

Ms. Klein also asked for an update on the 2005 budget proposal. Ms. Jewell stated that 2004 year end estimates had been submitted, but that no directives had yet been received for preparation of the 2005 budget.

Commissioner Cooney reminded the group that the City was facing serious budget constraints and encouraged the Board to encourage the City Commission to support Parks and Recreation activities and programs. He reminded the group that six shootings had taken place within the City this year involving youth and stated that, in his opinion, more opportunities for positive recreation would result in less crime involving youth. He also stated that he felt cooperative partnering was key.

The group discussed a variety of related issues including the deteriorating play equipment, playing field conditions and the potential reductions in funding for 2005.

Larry Haley asked about expanding the sports activities to include baseball, softball, and soccer. He also indicated that he knew of a source for equipment donation and questioned whether or not he or another individual or group would be allowed to utilize park facilities should they develop a sports training program for one of the City Parks. Ms. Jewell stated that she continuously received requests for City "sponsorship", (i.e. fee waivers) for various park events and activities, but that the City was unable to provide funding, staffing, etc., given current budget constraints. She reminded the group that currently there were seven block grant neighborhoods within the City, all with at risk youth, and all requesting partnering opportunities with the City, (i.e. free use of parks, sports fields, and staff assistance).

Ms. Jewell reminded the group that no fees were assessed for "passive" use of parks, however, if volunteers and sponsors advertised specific dates and times for sport related activities, they may want to pay to reserve associated fields. Commissioner Cooney stated that the Community Foundation often funded Good Neighbor Grants for such activities.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:20 pm.