



Expanding Horizons

CITY OF CONVERSE
CITY ADMINISTRATION

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Minutes
PARKS AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
January 11, 2016
6:00 P.M.

The Parks and Environmental Commission of the City of Converse Met for a Regular Meeting at City Hall Conference Room Located at 405 S. Seguin Road to Discuss and Act on the Following Agenda Items:

1. Call To Order. (Chairman)

Called to order at 6:01 p.m.

2. Opening Ceremonies. (Chairman)

- a. Moment of silence.
- b. Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Roll Call, Establishment of Quorum & Recognition of Visitors. (Chairman)

Present:

Rick Smith, Chairman
Sam Perez Jr., Vice-Chairman
Irvin Hollowell, Member
Wenceslao Santiago, Member
Manuel Longoria, Public Works Director
Vanessa Limones, Secretary
Nancy Droneburg, City Council Liaison
Elizabeth Brown, Grants Administrator

Tardy, excused:

Alovyia Freelon, Member

Absent, excused:

Anthony Woods, Member

Absent:

Rodger Dennes, Member

4. Citizens to be heard: This time is provided for Citizens to address the Parks and Environmental Commission on any issues and concerns under the commission's purview. No Parks and Environmental Commission Discussion or Action can be taken if an item is not on the Agenda. Please state your name and address for the record. Remarks should be limited to three minutes (3 min.).

Gregory Alfaro, Converse Youth Advisory Committee: We would like to build a community garden.

5. Discussion and Appropriate Action of Consent Agenda. (Chairman)

- a. December 14, 2015 minutes

Motion to approve: Santiago **Second:** Perez

Motion passes.

6. Public Hearing and Presentation and Discussion of parks vision plan. (Mr. Moyer, consultant; Public Works Director; Chairman).
 - a. Presentation of parks vision plan, final version. (Mr. Moyer)
 - b. Public hearing on parks vision plan

PUBLIC HEARING OPEN AT 6:04 P.M.

Moyer gave presented the final draft of the parks vision/master plan. In summary:

- The project was to do an assessment of existing facility, as well as create a future vision plan and a tool for the city to use to secure funding.
- BACKGROUND ASSESSMENT
 - The age and gender cohort showed that the City of Converse had a large population of youth, indicating families are raising children in Converse but not necessarily retiring in Converse. This is important because the youth would use the parks the most.
 - Population projections through the year 2040 shows continued population growth in Converse.
 - City Park is centrally located, the most used, and is the largest park in Converse.
 - North Park has an existing walking loop
 - A facility inventory was done to see how many ballfields, facilities, pools, etc. were in the parks.
 - The Converse park acreage per 1,000 citizens is over the suggested minimum of 10 acre per 1,000 citizens. Note: This includes undeveloped East Park which is not used.
 - In 2040, if population project is accurate, there will be a deficit in park acreage per 1,000 citizens.
 - Converse is spending \$19.31 per resident in parks (last year), and a little under \$19 this year. Live Oak is doing \$31 - \$35 per resident, in comparison.
 - A level of service radius (LOS) is now used by national standards and not certain quantity of fields/courts per citizens. This measures how many people live within a certain radius of the park and facilities. City Park is centrally located and the 2-mile radius encompasses almost the entire city limits. North Park doesn't quite cover the entire city. If future development is based solely on LOS, the best place to build facilities is City Park; but many factors should be considered when developing future facilities.
- IMPROVEMENTS
 - A hike and bike trail can be done at minimal cost. The potential in Converse is huge. A park trail / bike trail can connect all parks together because most of the land needed to connect the parks are owned by the city or other public entities. Additionally, several smaller loops can be built within the larger loop to create shorter routes. The 100-year flood plain helps to create the loop; and because commercial and residential development can't be done on the flood plain, recreational use along the flood plain is appropriate.
 - Camp Grounds. There is no set place to do this and people are doing this on their own. Developing camp grounds is a possibility.
 - A bike trail in City Park could be possible.
 - A small amphitheater is a possible at City Park for small shows, concerts, Texas Park and Wildlife presentations, etc. There is also a large area to host larger concerts.
 - Locations of a dog park are identified, but there already could be one in the works with the future animal shelter. City Park is centrally located and would be the best place for a dog park.

- Parking lots will need to be developed if City Park improvements/developments are made.
- Improvements to softball fields at North Park. There are no back fences on ball fields at North Park. With improvements, there's the possibility of bringing recreational softball leagues to the park(s).
- Boating and Fishing. North Park Lake is used for fishing. Part of the lake is privately owned. There is a possibility of paddle boats or row boats, but no motorized or sail boats should not be in the lake. North Park is stocked with fish annually and people do fish there. For mixed use, there should be designated hours for boating and for fishing separately.
- Developing soccer fields. There are zero soccer fields in Converse short of what the school district has. There are various sizes of soccer fields. Identify who would be using the fields, survey the community, and you could create fields based on that. North Park has a flat topography, so it could be better based on cost to build at North Park. But City Park is centrally located.
- The city of Converse or the Parks commission should find a way to have statistics on how many people are using the parks, and what part of the parks.
- NEXT STEPS
 - Create a vision that is sustainable and could be changed (this is what was done).
 - Collect and analyze data.
 - Establish strategic framework. What is the role of the community? Could the city partner with private businesses to assist with costs?
 - Establish goals.
 - Implementation.
 - The vision plan can change over time.
 - Prioritize the recommendations based on money available and what makes sense.
 - Who is going to manage the projects to see them through? Identify someone or a group of people.

Smith: At this time, we open the floor for comments.

Derika Bailey: I am the advisor to the Converse Youth Advisory Committee and we have a group of high school students that want to build a community garden. The garden would grow vegetables and allow citizens to come and pick them when they are ripe for no cost.

Smith: Should we wait for the dog park to be built at the animal shelter and see if a future dog park is needed in the park(s)? Or should we build a simple one at one of the parks and use that to help develop the future park at the animal shelter?

Longoria: The bonds are structured in a very specific way as to what money can be used from the bonds for what projects. We would need to evaluate whether the park bond money can be used for a dog park. Elizabeth Brown says dog parks are inexpensive to build so it's possible the money could come from the operating budget and not a bond.

Brown: Dog parks are very inexpensive to build. Fencing and equipment (jumping structures, tables, etc.)

Longoria: We would be looking at around \$20,000 and Raising Cane is philanthropic towards dog parks.

Brown: Dog parks could be situated into a landscape budget.

Droneburg: The idea of the animal shelter was to put the dog park behind the future animal shelter. We may not want to use the park bond to build a dog park for something we know is already in the plans for development in the future.

Smith: Mr. Moyer, in your opinion, where is the best place to build a community garden?

Moyer: I don't know exactly, but I do have a contact person for you to work with. Angela Hartsail is with the Greenspace Alliances.

Smith: If not in one of the big parks, a small neighborhood park could be appropriate.

Moyer: Typically how these works, people come and work in the gardens and they have access to the vegetables.

Santiago: A good way to determine if there is interest or funding for a dog park is for Elizabeth Brown to call veterinarians around the city to see if there is a need for a dog park in the city. It's possible to have low-cost vaccinations as part of a partnership with a major donor.

Moyer: Usually dog parks serve areas where families have a need to walk or let their dogs run. Having the community input would be good.

Bob Rich, citizen: I'm interested in the bike path and the dog park. We have used the Universal City dog park (quite regularly about a year ago), and Converse should consider putting water in the park; also, issues would be people not bringing their own bags to pick up after their dogs. Is there another owner to City Park and/or another park?

Longoria: There is a piece of land adjacent to City Park is a small park owned by the City of San Antonio.

Moyer: There are files that show two different city limits.

Brown: The city of San Antonio is interested in opening a gate between the two parks.

Bob Rich: A lot of the people who come into the park are from the City of San Antonio. I heard about the public hearing through email notices from the city.

Alfaro: Are these improvements the only ones considered? A skate park may be a good addition.

Closing of public hearing

PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED AT 6:45 P.M.

7. Discussion and Appropriate Action to Recommend Parks Vision Plan to City Council for Approval
(Chairman)

Smith: At this point, we have a vision plan. It is my hope that we can recommend this vision plan, with or without additional revisions/amendments, to send to City Council for their approval to meet the deadline of Feb. 1 to apply for grants. At this time, does anyone have any changes or additions to the vision plan that we can add as a formal amendment at the end?

Perez: Full court, combination tennis and basketball courts for City Park (like the ones at North Park). Also lighting for the courts. Some kind of proposal for a new swimming pool at City Park or North Park.

Moyer: I can add to the narrative that there should be an assessment done to the pool as that is beyond our scope.

Longoria: This document is a living document and things can be added to it.

Brown: If this draft is approved tonight, I can use this draft to apply for grants.

Longoria: We should look closely at the need for a new pool. They are extremely expensive to build.

Droneburg: City Council will want to see what you want to do first; prioritize the list of wants.

Smith: I would like to add the assessment of a community garden either in one of the existing parks or a future neighborhood park.

Perez: East Park is a nice piece of land with a creek running through it.

Smith: A skate park was brought up tonight and also in the past. As a commission, how do we feel about a skate park? Should we word a suggestion such as asking for an assessment to be done to find out if a skate park is appropriate? It's more expensive and continued upkeep for a skate park and swimming pool.

Perez: It's been brought to the commission three times and it always falls when the subject of liability comes up.

Droneburg: Let's contact Schertz to find out how they accomplished it.

Longoria: The city where I was consulting previously was going through this process of building / assessing a skate park, and the conflict was liability. After studying it more closely, it seemed that liability wasn't a big of an issue as it seems to be. There seems to be a need.

Bailey: Youth is skateboarding in the Library parking lot and I'm worried about cars driving into the parking lot. They also use the book drop to skate on and jump off of.

Santiago: Our demographics speak to the youth possibly being interested in a skate park, but we should find out from the public if they want it.

Smith: We need to find out how many people would use the skate park. If there are other skate parks in the area, would building another one saturate the market? Or should we find something else to build?

Santiago: We had a public hearing and there is interest in a community garden. We should explore that, particularly a partnership.

Perez: Is there any interest for Frisbee/disc golf.

Moyer: I can look into that.

Perez: There is one in Live Oak and Converse has a team.

Droneburg: A lot of good ideas is for future development of East Park.

Smith: the ideas we have come up with are: tennis/basketball full court combination courts at City Park, lighting at the fields and parks, assess the idea of a new pool, community garden, and an assessment of a skate park. Is there anything else? Should we rank the top choices, not knowing the price tag? But it could give the City Council a sense of what we want to prioritize.

Longoria: We can add to the end of the vision plan a simple update that the commission added other items for consideration. In terms of a listing, we are headed towards a strategic plan where we can prioritize the items there. That's when we can discuss cost and allocate resources. You can tie it back to the bond money and potential matching funds. We can facilitate that as a staff. We can do a workshop to develop a plan. That could be the next step of the vision plan. The bond money is probably year 2017 bond money.

Santiago: We should develop a plan knowing what money is available or out there so that we don't pass up an opportunity.

Brown: For February 1 grant, the funding that is available is \$75,000 and can only be used for trails. For the upcoming deadline, I was hoping to get a sense of where the grant money investment to be made in a trail. Right now, we are looking at North Park. Once the money is awarded, we have one year to spend it after it's awarded in July.

Longoria: We are looking for guidance on where we can apply the grant money, if awarded.

Moyer: North of North Park to the existing sidewalk, we can develop that area first because Converse owns that area. This would be a good starting point. Doing this would create a linear park, but it's under the assumption that the parks will eventually be connected through a trail. Connecting them would put Converse leaps and bounds above anywhere else. It's a 17-mile loop.

Smith: Let's focus right now on the vision plan, and then during the director's report, we can talk about the grant. We have to take appropriate action on the vision plan.

Santiago: Motion to approve the vision plan with the amendments.

Perez: Second.

Smith: The amendments are:

- Adding full court / combination courts of basketball and tennis at City Park
- Adding lighting at the fields and courts
- Assessing the proposal for a new pool or redoing the current pool
- Community garden in an existing park or a future neighborhood park
- Assessing a skate park

MOTION PASSES.

8. Report from the Public Works Director (M. Longoria)

We are seeking guidance from the commission on the upcoming grant we talked about earlier.

Smith: Does anyone have a preference?

Brown: Playground equipment grant is upcoming October 1.

Santiago: I think we should tie some of our decision around the upcoming grant deadline dates.

Smith: I like the idea of connecting all parks together. If we think about the future of connecting the parks, we could use future grant money for playgrounds to put along the trail.

Hollowell: I think the commission should go with Mr. Moyer's suggestion of the improvement to the North Park trail.

Smith: Is that what we want to do?

Commission members: Yes.

Droneburg: We need a starting point. The vision plan is a living document that can change, so at the monthly meetings, continue to look at it and assess the progress. My understanding from the Mayor is that the parks will be the last part of the bonds that were approved. And the one million dollars will go fast.

Longoria: Public Works and some outsourced work can be done to build the trails.

Brown: Any kind of in-kind man power can be leveraged for matching dollars.

Longoria:

Financial Report

There is a \$1,500 encumbrance that hasn't been posted for the movies in the park event, but other than that, the financial report has been included in the packet.

Longoria:

Calendar of upcoming rentals (six-month view)

We are currently working on the contracts for rentals. Our goal is to free up some of the dates from rentals when they aren't being used.

Santiago: Is St. Monica's going to pay for the rentals?

Longoria: St. Monica's uses the fields during day time hours, so there is really no electricity or other charges. And they dedicate personnel and volunteers for city events. Judson Youth Foundation does financially pay for use since they use electricity, etc.

Santiago: Is there a way to know when the pavilions are available on the weekends?

Longoria: Once we get the contracts settled, we can post a calendar.

9. Report from City Council Liaison (Councilwoman N. Droneburg)

Nothing to report.

10. Discussion on any new updates or details for potential future events. (Chairman)

a. 25 Mile Bike Ride benefiting Veterans (R. Dennes)

No report.

b. Movies in the Park (R. Smith)

Advertising on water bills will begin. Other forms of advertising (website, flyers, billboards, etc.) will also begin soon.

April 9 movie, North Park, Inside Out

June 4 movie at City Park (near/at pool), Minions

Vanessa, thank you for your help.

Advertising will start. I will begin working on flyers, billboards, water bill blurb, website, etc.

There is about \$1,500 left in the budget for the movies in the park events to use on food, beverage, gifts, rafts/pool floats, advertising, etc. Mr. Smith reviewed his meeting with the newspaper and said they have come down on price significantly and supports advertising with them, with commission approval. The price is \$250 for a 1/8 page size ad in the April and May edition for a total expense of \$500. The commission agreed that the chairman will ask the newspaper to honor the \$250 price to run an ad in the March issue of the newspaper for both events. If the newspaper does not honor that price for one ad and insists on running the ad twice

for the \$250/ad price, then the commission agreed to allow the chairman to run the ad twice. For the June movie at the pool, we could buy floats for people to float in the pool and watch the movie.

11. Discussion and Appropriate Action on Chapter 30 and Chapter 2. (Chairman)

Smith: It's my understanding that Ch. 30 is where the Parks commission lived. Everything was moved to Ch. 2 where the other commissions are. Some of those changes have happened, others have not. And there are different versions of what is posted online, the hard copies, etc.

a. Proposed Amendment on Official Commission-Planned Events Following the Attendance Policy of Meetings

Smith: Our goal is to update Chapter 30 and Chapter 2, send it to the Code/Ordinance Committee, and then all of the changes will have to get approved by City Council.

The proposed amendment will make attendance at events of Parks and Environmental Commission, such as movies in the park, fall under the meeting attendance policy. The meeting policy currently states that if a commission member has three consecutive absences, they are resigned from the commission. The amendment updates the overall attendance to reflect three consecutive absences of meetings and/or events be an automatic resignation, or a total of five unexcused absences in a fiscal year. Finally, the current members of the commission are not subject to the new policy ("Grandfathered In") and will begin with their next term and/or the person who will succeed their current term.

Santiago: I recommend we vote to excuse absences before someone is automatically resigned.

Perez: We used to do that at the beginning of every meeting.

Freelon: Are you going to re-word it to vote at the beginning of every meeting?

Smith: No, that will not be in the amendment but will be included at the beginning of every meeting starting next meeting.

Smith: Okay, we will return to doing that starting next meeting.

Santiago: I like what we decided about voting at the beginning of each meeting.

Smith: Roll Call vote to recommend proposed amendment:

Perez: Yes

Santiago: I'd like to add "unexcused" to clarify the five absences.

Smith: Okay, let's re-do the vote, adding "unexcused" to clarify the absence.

Perez: Yes

Santiago: Yes

Freelon: Yes

Hollowell: Yes

Smith: Yes

Proposed amendment passes.

b. Other changes to chapter 30

Smith: In summary, the changes are:

- Grammatical
- Change "shall meet on the fourth Monday of each month" to "shall meet on the second Monday of each month"
- A question was raised by Droneburg about why the city manager would request an alternate to attend a meeting and not the vice chairman (since chairman can

also request an alternate attend). The question will be asked to the ordinance/code committee by Smith.

- Droneburg asked why the city council approves the chairman for the commission and not the commission itself. Smith will ask this question to the ordinance/code committee.
- Droneburg add "written" to clarify written notice of resignation of commission members.
- Adding a sub-section to Sec. 30-64, "Any new piece of land designated by the city council and/or city staff as park land."
- Removal of decision-making powers of Parks and Environmental Commission in the following areas:
 - Sec. 30-40, (c), "the commission shall be responsible for developing mutual support agreements with various organizations wishing to use city park facilities for youth and adult sports programs."
 - Sec. 30-65, (1), "...or park and recreation commission"
 - Sec 30-66, (e), "or the parks and recreation commission"
 - In "Agreement for usage" remove Parks and environmental commission" in all places it appears.
- Commission decided to add "hover boards" to Sec. 30-66 3 (General Policies), subsection e, to restrict hover boards from being in the parks.
- Removal of "nuisance" from Sec. 30-65, (3)
- Changing references from Parks and Recreational to Parks and Environmental throughout the document

c. Changes to parks and facilities rental fee

Santiago: Do we have outside groups that come to use our facilities? We should charge them more.

Smith: There are some rates for residents v. non-residents already posted in some areas.

Santiago: I think there should be a table that has residents and non-residents prices.

Smith: The pool area has differences, but not the ball fields or picnic areas.

Santiago: Not the pavilions either.

Longoria: I don't like putting non-resident prices to differentiate primarily because the citizens of Converse use other parks like San Antonio and Universal City too. I've never felt comfortable with that. But it's the pleasure of the committee to make the decision.

Smith: I am not against an upcharge, but I feel we should wait until the new fiscal year to implement it and discuss it over the next few months.

Santiago: I'm only one person, and I'm not saying do it right now, but we can think about it.

d. Changes to chapter 2

Smith: Change meeting day from fourth Monday to second Monday. We need an update copy of Ch. 2 from the city.

12. Park and Environmental Commission membership term expiring and two alternate spots open. (Chairman).

The chairman explained that Mr. Rodger Dennes' (member) term expires in February 2016 (two-year term). There are also two alternate commission positions available. The chairman does not know of any applications that have been submitted. The chairman mentioned that the upcoming cycle of water bills will have a blurb about the commission positions.

13. Discussion of Agenda Items for next meeting.

- Discussion of possible events
 - Arts/Crafts day in the summer (Droneburg)
 - Christmas Decoration competition (Droneburg)
- Absences
 - Smith: December and January absence from Mr. Dennes is unexcused unless voted otherwise at the meeting because there was no notice given. Mr. Woods did give notice that he is missing today's meeting and February's meeting
- Food and beverage at meetings
 - Santiago: To Manny, I've been to other meetings where there are food and beverage provided since we meet during dinner time. I propose that we talk about providing that and set a budget amount to that.
- Standing items
 - Calendar view
 - Finances
 - Movies in the park update

14. Set date and time for next meeting.

For the next four meetings, the meetings will begin at 6:30 p.m.

The next meeting will be February 8, 2016 at 6:30 p.m.

15. Adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

CERTIFICATION

Passed and approved by the Parks and Environmental Commission this 8 day of FEB, 2016.

Attest:



Rick Smith, Chairman