

Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission Work Session Meeting

September 22, 2021
Crooked Creek Park
6:30 PM

Members Attending: Bill Harmon, Gary Boyd, Tim Stewart, Laura Huggins

Members Absent: Akil Ross

Non-Members Attending: Mark Smyers, Eve Mittendorf

Mr. Smyers shared an overview of the agenda; John Cantey will present a staff report on recreation. Mark Smyers reviewed the annual report for Commission adoption; the anticipated operating budget for FY 20/21 was \$12M; the year ended at \$7M due to COVID. Discussion occurred regarding revenue sources and funding of operations. Mr. Smyers shared staff is submitting a recreational and trails program (RTP) grant for resurfacing and repairing trails at Mungo Park; the installation of the bridges at Mungo Park has begun; pylons are being placed and bridges will be delivered soon.

Mark Smyers stated that the short term bond was presented to County Council; there are three readings and a public meeting; the bond request is for \$6.5M over the next eight years with no tax increase. Mr. Smyers shared that Michael Cromer was nominated by the Lexington Delegation as an ICRC Commissioner. Commissioner Stewart added that Michael Cromer will be a good person to be on the Commission; he has served on the Saluda Shoals Foundation and has had an interest to be on the Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission.

Mr. Smyers shared that a member of the public approached staff about ICRC buying a 50 acre tract. Discussion occurred regarding Gardendale property and boat ramp, floodway, waster water plant, River's Edge, access to the property, long term leases with Dominion, the Greenway and revenue generating opportunities. Mark Smyers communicated that phase II of the playground is in progress and that the audit will be on the January 2022 agenda for approval. Mr. Smyers shared that the agency is having staffing challenges in front line roles; both full-time and part-time; staff have upped the recruiting efforts. Mark Smyers stated that the afternoon safari (ANS) program is hovering around 60%-65% of capacity; staffing is the struggle.

Commissioner Boyd asked how is staff communicating to families regarding COVID protocols. Mr. Smyers stated that communication regarding COVID protocols is sent out by email and is part of the registration process. Chairman Harmon inquired on the status of updating the agency's policies. Mr. Smyers shared that an early draft will begin in October. Commissioner Boyd stated that it is challenging and hard, but encouraged to hear that the policy review is moving forward. Mr. Smyers shared that the management team is committed to hiring and maintaining good staff. Discussion occurred regarding updating salary ranges, bringing staff to market midpoint, and performance reviews. Chairman Harmon stated that retention is important and taking the necessary steps to avoid losing good people is essential.

There being no further discussion, the Commission and staff moved to the General Session.

Respectfully submitted,
Eve Mittendorf
Recording Secretary
IRMO CHAPIN RECREATION COMMISSION

Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission
GENERAL SESSION

September 22, 2021
Crooked Creek Park
7:00 PM

Members Attending: Bill Harmon, Gary Boyd, Tim Stewart, Laura Huggins

Members Absent: Akil Ross

Non-Members Attending: Mark Smyers, Eve Mittendorf, Jay Downs, John Cantey, Alfred Comfort, Jason White, Christina Bickley

Bill Harmon called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. Chairman Harmon delivered the invocation. Guests were welcomed.

I. REQUIREMENTS OF THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

The news media was notified of the meeting; it was posted on the website and a notice and agenda was posted at the park sites one week prior to the meeting.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A MOTION WAS MADE BY LAURA HUGGINS TO ACCEPT THE MAY 26, 2021 AND AUGUST 25, 2021 MINUTES AS PRESENTED. SECONDED BY TIM STEWART. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

III. STAFF REPORTS

John Cantey presented an overview of the recreation departments; summer basketball was the first traditional program offered since COVID; the season went well, and the number of participants were similar to 2019. Mr. Cantey shared that the summer program camps were offered over eight weeks; there were 118 camps and over 2000 participants; all the camps were full with waiting lists across the agency and additional camps added at Saluda Shoals Park. Summer Safari added a third camp and partnered with USC for a three year grant; USC focuses on fitness levels of students who are needs based at three different elementary schools; currently there are 81 participants. John Cantey stated that Saluda Shoals Park had a busy summer; boats, tubes, bikes and shelters were successful; June – August there were 285,000 visitors. Mr. Cantey shared that staff targeted days and hours of splash pad operation that was most cost effective. Mr. Cantey stated that River Center is an important part of the revenue at Saluda Shoals Park; weddings are still going strong; however, staff have seen a dip in sales due to an increase in COVID cases. John Cantey also shared that Crooked Creek Park has a new slip and slide event; this was a very successful event and staff look forward to next year. The Afternoon Safari program for fall of 2021 has opened up; staffing shortages resulted in 60% capacity. Mr. Cantey complimented Zakiya Howell, Director of ANS and Summer Safari; she has done a fantastic job keeping everything balanced. John Cantey shared that staff are experiencing tournament and rental cancellations due to COVID; the congregate meals and meals on wheels have opened back up to serving seniors and senior trips have been very successful. Commissioner Huggins asked what the minimum hiring age is at ICRC. Eve Mittendorf replied 16 years old.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. FY 20/21 Annual Report

Mark Smyers shared that the information in the annual report come from each of the parks; Lori Shaffer consolidates and formats the information. Chairman Harmon complimented Lori Shaffer on the presentation of the annual report.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY TIM STEWART TO ACCEPT THE FY 20/21 ANNUAL REPORT AS PRESENTED. SECONDED BY GARY BOYD. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

B. RTP Grant

A MOTION WAS MADE BY TIM STEWART TO APPROVE THE APPLICATION FOR THE RTP GRANT AS PRESENTED. SECONDED BY LAURA HUGGINS. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mark Smyers thanked John Cantey for sharing his report. Mr. Smyers communicated that the agency's current struggle is staffing; the entry level roles in the agency are hard to fill and in some cases actively recruited away; program limitations go hand-in-hand with staffing levels. Mark Smyers shared that staff have increased recruiting efforts, which have helped, but some areas of the agency are still short; at some point the market will normalize, but it is currently putting a strain on existing staff. Mr. Smyers stated that staff will continue to lean on the agency culture, benefits, opportunities, competitive compensation and community minded mission as key elements in sustaining a quality workforce. Mark Smyers communicated that staff will need to stay diligent in paying attention to the ever-shifting situation that is going on nationwide.

Mark Smyers communicated that the annual report reflects a year of operating amongst the COVID-19 virus. Mr. Smyers stated that considering the environment staff had to operate within, he was proud of the numbers shown in the annual report compared to previous years. Mr. Smyers stated that the underlying theme that is not apparent to the naked eye was an extreme focus on efficiency while still trying to achieve agency goals; staff needed to be strategic in everything, from not only a health standpoint, but a financial standpoint as well. Mark Smyers shared that staff had limited options last summer. Mr. Smyers complimented staff and gave staff credit for what the annual report represents.

V. COMMISSION RESPONSE

Commissioner Huggins thanked John Cantey for the recreation department update and is encouraged by the number of participants. Commissioner Huggins thanked staff for all their hard work and also thanked staff for the effort and time taken to prepare for the Commission meetings. Commissioner Stewart echoed Commissioner Huggins comments; problems that are presented are always coupled with a proposed solution; which is a good example of strong leadership. Commissioner Stewart thanked John Cantey for his report and welcomed Christina Bickley to the team. Vice Chairman Boyd thanked staff for their service to the community and asked that staff recognize the positive impact they have on community members. Chairman Harmon echoed the same sentiments and stated that it never goes unnoticed. Chairman Harmon complimented Mark Smyers and stated that Mr. Smyers represents the agency well, building relationships and continuing to do incredible things behind the scenes.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY TIM STEWART TO ADJOURN. SECONDED BY GARY BOYD. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted,
Eve Mittendorf
Recording Secretary
IRMO CHAPIN RECREATION COMMISSION