

# Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission Budget Work Session Meeting

April 28, 2021  
Saluda Shoals Park  
6:00 PM

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

Non-Members Attending: Mark Smyers, Eve Mittendorf, Jay Downs, John Cantey, Alfred Comfort, Jason White, Mark Baker, Andrea Harris, Lori Shaffer, Ashley Smith, Mike Hudson

Mr. Smyers welcomed the Commission and management to the budget work session and introduced the new Finance Director, Alfred Comfort. Mark Smyers presented the FY 21/22 budget including both operating and special revenue funds; the capital budget was presented in the March 24, 2021 Commission meeting for \$698,000. The fiscal year runs from July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022; the operating budget is made up of both the general and special revenue budgets and is a zero balanced budget. Mark Smyers shared that the five year short term bond program ends December 31, 2021; this has been a very successful program for the agency and capital needs have been reached as a result. Mr. Smyers communicated that the program is beginning to be adopted by various agencies across the state. Mr. Smyers stated that the large general obligation bond is recognized under fund 40, the general fund is recognized under fund 10 and the special revenue fund is recognized under fund 20.

Mark Smyers shared that the general budget is a balanced budget; meaning the expense and revenues match to zero; in 2021 the amended budget was presented in March for a total of \$8.7M and the FY 21/22 budget reflects a total of \$11.9M; this budget is less than in previous years; a typical year is around \$12.5M. Mr. Smyers communicated that the agency continues to scale out from COVID.

Mr. Smyers communicated that staff do a good job accessing grant related revenues; accommodations tax has changed from \$30K this year to an expected amount of \$10K for FY 21/22. Mark Smyers communicated that CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) has been wonderful; the funds are Federal funds which are distributed by Lexington County; the grant monies will be used to fund Crooked Creek Park therapeutic recreation afterschool program as well as \$20K towards athletic scholarships. Mark Smyers shared that the Older Americans Act grant is for \$20K; these grant dollars are Federal resources and distributed by the COG; ICRC is the council on aging for the district. Mr. Smyers also communicated that the Saluda Shoals Park Foundation grants total \$35,800; the PARD (Parks and Recreational Development) grant and the LWCF (Land Water Conservation Fund) have been lumped together to renovate the Saluda Shoals Park splash pad. Vice Chairman Boyd inquired how the public schedules the medical transport van. John Cantey shared that the public can call and make an appointment.

Mark Smyers presented the projected percent of revenue sources; the anticipated revenue sources include 37.4% property tax and 62.6% in user fees, grants, donations, sponsorships, interest and miscellaneous revenues. Mr. Smyers also presented highlights of the budget which reflects a 3% merit pool for staff, \$0 being forwarded from the previous year's fund balance, \$250,000 renovation of the Saluda Shoals Park splash pad and the budget continues to provide a \$129,000 contingency fund. Chairman Harmon inquired about OPEB. Mark Smyers shared that OPEB is the retiree liability that continues to mature the longer it is not addressed; staff have investigated how the actuary determines the amount needed for future retiree liability; OPEB requires the agency to develop a trust; the obligation is \$5.2M and

matures at a rate of \$400K per year. Mr. Smyers shared that if the agency establishes a trust and begins to submit monies, it will create some certainty for future obligations; additionally, staff will begin to look at current retiree benefit policies with the target to grandfather current staff and apply a new policy to future staff.

Commissioner Stewart communicated that the tax vs. user fees revenue source is significant; what are other park services doing across the State. Mr. Smyers replied that ICRC is one of the top 3 agencies in the State; the other two are Charleston County and Rock Hill; no other Midlands agency operates with a 62% / 38% tax to cost recovery split. Commissioner Stewart commented that 2/3rds of the revenue budget is programs developed by staff. Chairman Harmon shared that Saluda Shoals Park is self-sustaining. Vice Chairman Boyd inquired about the largest revenue areas. Mr. Smyers replied afterschool, Holiday Lights and Saluda Shoals Park rentals; discussion occurred regarding River Center rentals and Meech House opportunities. Commissioner Huggins inquired on the size of the River Center. Mark Smyers replied approximately 5000 sqft. Mr. Smyers inquired if the Commission had any questions. Commissioner Stewart inquired if there were any anomalies. John Cantey shared that park rentals moved from parks to tourism; you will also see a dip in River Center rentals. Chairman Harmon inquired on the insurance premium difference. Mr. Smyers communicated that the old software system applied staff and retiree contributions to revenues collected and the new system is equipped to track insurance contributions correctly. Discussion occurred regarding how the system should fiscally hold and then remit to the vendor for the total amount; creating an in and out of the system and not counting it as revenues. Commissioner Huggins inquired on interest earned for the year. Mr. Smyers stated that the agency typically earns some level interest and is recognized in miscellaneous revenue. Commissioner Huggins inquired on the appeal letter decrease amount. John Cantey stated that every four to five years staff buy a large mailing list to mail to the general public; FY 21/22 a large list will not be purchased. Discussion occurred regarding the reduction in therapeutic recreation programs and camps due to ramping up from COVID. Discussion occurred regarding retiree expenses and anticipated increases. Commissioner Ross inquired on the capacity of the Safari program. Andrea Harris replied that the program is currently at 50% capacity; the budget is anticipating 75% capacity for FY 21/22. John Cantey shared that the agency is adding two additional sites: Leaphart Elementary in Irmo and Pineywoods in Chapin. Andrea Harris stated that the goal is to have 10 sites.

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**

April 28, 2021  
Saluda Shoals Park  
7:00 PM

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

Non-Members Attending: Mark Smyers, Eve Mittendorf, Jay Downs, John Cantey, Meredith Bugenske, Adam Bugenske, John Farley, Dolly Patton

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 COMMISSIONER HUGGINS TO ACCEPT THE APRIL 28, 2021 MINUTES AS PRESENTED. COMMISSIONER ROSS SECONDED. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**III. PUBLIC PRESENTATION**

**A. Leo's Pride – Meredith Bugenske**

Mrs. Bugenske presented an update on fundraising and expansion plans for Leo's Landing Inclusive Playground at Saluda Shoals Park. Meredith Bugenske shared conceptual drawings that included three primary plays spaces and a walking/rolling perimeter loop; the three play spaces are Mogul Village, Zip Krooz and Connection Park. Mrs. Bugenske stated that Mogul Village will include an ADA path and gradual grades, climbing net, tunnel, bridge and mushroom steppers; the Zip Krooz is a higher thrill amenity that includes 3 zipline bays with two recumbent seats; the Connection Park or decompression space includes a musical entry, magical tree, arbor seating, hammock park, hobbit village, fountain, and reading/kindness corner. Meredith Bugenske also shared that Leo's Pride is at 50% of the 1.6 million dollar goal, construction will begin at 70-80% of the fundraising goal; fund raising will continue to reach 100% by completion; the timeline to build is approximately 6 months. Chairman Harmon inquired if the greenspace includes a safe fall surface. Meredith Bugenske stated yes, the greenspace will be artificial turf and fall surface will be placed under the pieces of play equipment. Mr. John Farley with Contract Construction committed to the Commission that all construction costs will be raised through donations and as the contractor, guarantees that Contract Construction will cover any remaining costs to 100%. Commissioner Harmon thanked Meredith Bugenske and family for everything they have done for the community and their past contributions are a testament to the future. Commissioner Ross stated that Mrs. Bugenske's passion is clear; there is opportunity to education the public by including QR codes with information regarding the benefits of pieces equipment, the benefits of play and why this kind of space is

important. Mrs. Bugenske stated she wasn't sure how to do that but will investigate opportunities. Commissioner Stewart communicated that it might be helpful to have a site visit; additionally, it would be helpful to take the new conceptual drawing and overlay with the current playground drawings. Commissioner Stewart shared appreciation and gratitude for the Bugenske's drive and for sharing the presentation. Vice Chairman Boyd thanked Meredith Bugenske for her courage and compassion and shared appreciation for all that has been done with the inclusive playground.

#### **IV. STAFF REPORTS**

Staff reports were submitted as presented.

#### **V. NEW BUSINESS**

##### **A. Adoption of Leo's Landing Expansion Construction Plan**

A MOTION WAS MADE BY TIM STEWART TO ACCEPT THE ADOPTION OF LEO'S LANDING EXPANSION CONSTRUCTION PLAN AS PRESENTED. SECONDED BY AKIL ROSS. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

##### **B. Adoption of the Lower Saluda Greenway Feasibility Study**

A MOTION WAS MADE BY AKIL ROSS TO ADOPT STAFF'S RECOMMENDATION ON THE LOWER SALUDA GREENWAY FEASIBILITY STUDY. SECONDED BY LAURA HUGGINS. VOTE TAKE. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

#### **VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Mr. Smyers thanked Meredith and Adam Bugenske and John Farley for presenting on Leo's Landing expansion and the progress made since their last presentation; Leo's Landing is already a tremendous success, and it is meeting the needs of so many in the community. Mr. Smyers stated that the new additions will expand the experiences for guests and further the mission of encouraging play together.

Mark Smyers stated that the parks conducted Easter Egg hunt events for the community; the staff at Crooked Creek Park hosted 504 children at Melvin Park over four baseball fields; due to the demand a second event was added the next afternoon for an additional 104 children. Mr. Smyers also shared that Saluda Shoals Park held the Egg-Cessible Egg Hunt at Leo's Landing; 50 children were registered, but only 20 were able to attend due to poor weather; however, staff hosted an additional 580 kids for their traditional egg hunt on the The Fields at Saluda Shoals Park. Mr. Smyers stated that 1,208 children were able to enjoy the Easter egg hunt.

Mr. Smyers thanked the Commission and staff for the budget process; staff spend an extensive amount of time building every number in the budget from the ground up. Mark Smyers shared that the budget process is an important practice and is one of the keys to the agency's success; once approved, the budget becomes the plan of execution and an agreement amongst staff. Mr. Smyers communicated that building the budget is not a small project, and requires a lot of focus, but the result is a stronger organization and healthy practice. Mr. Smyers thanked staff for taking the time to contribute to this vital process.

## VII. COMMISSION RESPONSE

Commissioner Huggins inquired on how to donate to the inclusive playground expansion. Mark Smyers communicated that a donor would want to give to Leo's Pride; the public fundraising timeline is planned for the summer of 2021. Commissioner Huggins commended the staff on an excellent job with the budget; this is a great team. Commissioner Ross thanked the staff regarding the budget and thanked staff for answering the questions. Commissioner Ross shared appreciation for the successful fundraising events: Shuckin on the Shoals and the Chase Loveless Memorial Golf Tournament; each of these events give children access to educational and athletic opportunities and is part of ICRC's mission and vision. Vice Chairman Boyd shared appreciation to the Bugenske family; nothing compares to the effort and compassion of Leo's Landing and there is full support from the Commission and staff. Commissioner Stewart welcomed Alfred Comfort and thanked him for participating in the budget work session; you're coming to a great place; the team approach and unity is unmatched and a testament to staff. Commissioner Stewart communicated that the partnership with the park system and community is reflected in the large donations received such as Mungo Park, Melvin Park and Leo's Landing. Chairman Harmon echoed Commissioner Stewart; staff are incredible and great stewards. Chairman Harmon thanked staff for all their efforts and for completing a successful budget.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY LAURA HUGGINS TO ADJOURN. SECONDED BY AKIL ROSS. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted,  
Eve Mittendorf  
Recording Secretary  
IRMO CHAPIN RECREATION COMMISSION