

A workshop meeting of the City Commission was held on July 2, 2013 in the Commission Chamber at the Municipal Administration Building. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Eugene Fultz at 4:02 p.m.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Betty Wojcik; Jonathan Thornhill; Michael S. Carter; and Mayor Gene Fultz

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Christopher Lutton

CITY REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT: Dorothy Ecklund, Interim City Manager; Clara VanBlargan, City Clerk; Jacquie Hawkins, Deputy City Clerk; Albert C. Galloway, City Attorney

[Meetings are recorded but not transcribed verbatim]

Agenda Item 1. Roll Call

Agenda Item 2. City of Lake Wales Parks Playground Systems

[Begin agenda memo]

SYNOPSIS

City staff is seeking direction from the City Commission on how to resolve the safety issues in the City's play parks.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Commission direct staff to go out to bid for the purchase of playground systems for Mobley Park, Stuart Park, Lincoln Park, Northwest Complex and Crystal Lake Park.

BACKGROUND

Over the years city staff was directed by previous city managers to repair play items in the parks that were considered a safety issue. Repairing these items would ensure that there would be play items in the parks since there was not a sufficient budget to replace these items. The play systems and equipment in the City's parks no longer promote a safe playground environment for our community. They have greatly deteriorated due to patching, removal of unsafe sections, age, weather, normal wear and tear and vandalism. The several of the play ground systems are beyond further patching.

The public playground safety handbook states that the general considerations for a safe playground environment are; selecting the sight, playground layout, type of equipment and materials and surfacing. Playground systems have an average life span of 15 years and all of the city's parks have play systems that have been in place beyond 15 years.

Staff has evaluated each park to determine what playground equipment can remain, what can be repaired and what needs to be removed.

Equipment that needs repair is already underway. If the City Commission wishes, staff can begin removing the playground equipment that has been identified for removal and begin working with the Recreation Commission and the Parks and Community Appearance Board to determine what type playground systems should replace the systems removed from the parks.

Items to remain in park

Walker Family Park:

- Train (after repair)
- Play system (after repair)

Mobley Park:

- Swing set

Northwest Complex:

- Play system for ages 2 to 5
- Swing set

Lincoln Park:

- Re-locate tot lot swing set within the large park, located across the alley way. Staff recommends removing all equipment from the tot lot, removing the fence and placing the tot lot parcel for sale. (Note – This is not the large park area but simple the single lot, located across the alley from the large play ground area. The tot lot is currently located between two residential homes.
- Swing set (2)
- Bouncing jack

Crystal Lake Park:

- Swing set
- Climbing sphere
- Climb on turtle

Stuart Park:

- All items to remain in Stuart Park, but items that need to be added have been identified

Items to be repaired in parks

Walker Family Park:

- Train floor and wheel
- Pressure wash cement slabs/grill/equipment
- Clear fence line
- Paint
- Re-connect large slide

Mobley Park:

- Power wash cement slabs/equipment

Northwest Complex:

- Paint
- Pressure wash equipment/picnic table

Lincoln Park:

- Paint
- Pressure wash
- Resurface concrete slab under pavilion
- Resurface basketball court

Crystal Lake Park:

- Pressure wash
- Paint

Items that need to be removed in parks

Walker Family Park:

- Old picnic tables
- Stumps
- Wooden deck near train

Mobley Park:

- Damaged play systems
- Old picnic tables
- Stumps
- Car spring rider
- Damaged concrete slabs (2)
- Wooden post

Northwest Complex:

- Damaged slide
- Play system for 5 to 12 years of age

Lincoln Park:

- Old picnic tables
- Damaged swing set
- Damaged play systems
- Fencing at tot lot

Crystal Lake Park:

- Damaged play systems
- Swing benches
- Swing set that is out of compliance due to height

Stuart Park:

- No play items to be removed

Items to consider for replacement

Walker Family Park:

- Picnic tables (2)
- Benches (2)
- Spring Rider (2)
- Grill (1)
- Surfacing (required for play equipment)
- Borders (required for play equipment)

Mobley Park:

- Play system
- Spring Rider (3)
- Picnic tables (2)
- Surfacing (required for play equipment)
- Borders (required for play equipment)
- Fencing
- Plant trees along front fence line

Northwest Complex:

- Play system
- Spring rider (3)

- Surfacing (required for play equipment)
- Borders (required for play equipment)
- Grill (1)

Lincoln Park:

- Play system
- Spring rider (2)
- Surfacing (required for play equipment)
- Borders (required for play equipment)
- Benches (6)
- Picnic tables (2)
- Re-locate Lincoln Park tot lot

Crystal Lake Park:

- Play system
- Swing benches (5)
- Spring rider (2)
- Surfacing (required for play equipment)
- Borders (required for play equipment)
- Benches (4)
- Fountain (1)
- Pavilion (2) create pavilions on slabs where damaged play systems are removed

Stuart Park:

- Play system
- Spring rider (3)
- Plant trees (1) (planted 6/25/2013)
- Fencing (for play system area)
- Surfacing (required for play equipment)
- Borders (required for play equipment)
- Benches (2)

FISCAL IMPACT

The funding source would be from the General Fund. Once staff is provided direction from the City Commission on how the Commission would like to proceed, staff will coordinate the administration and removal process.

OTHER OPTIONS

Do not take action at this time.

[End agenda memo]

Interim City Manager Dorothy Ecklund reviewed Agenda Item 2.

Sandra Davis, Risk Manager, explained that a representative from the city's insurance company was here on another issue and noted some liability issues at Crystal Lake Park. He asked the insurance company if he could return to inspect the parks, and it was approved. They covered the cost of more than \$1,000 because they thought it was serious enough. An inspection report was sent to the City with a list of issues that need to be addressed immediately.

Public Services Administrator Teresa Allen said the average lifespan of playground equipment is ten to fifteen years and most of the city's playground equipment is 19+ years old. For years the budget did not

allow funds to take care of the needs and they have been repairing and patching what they can for years and removing those deemed a safety hazard. She explained that they had plans to address the playground equipment issue in the next budget but it can't wait. She asked for direction from the Commission.

Ms. Ecklund said they visited all six parks and the pieces of equipment that need to be replaced are mostly the multi-piece play systems, though the benches also need to be replaced. There are swing sets that need only to be enhanced with paint, some pieces need to be moved to a more suitable location, stumps need to be removed and the picnic tables need to be power washed, all of which staff can do.

They would like to get recommendations from the Parks and Community Appearance Board and get input from the public because the large pieces are costly and they will have to live with the choice for the next fifteen years. Game Time has a total package deal for one system at \$23,200 but they can run as high as \$31,000 each. The total request is for about \$140,000.

City Attorney Chuck Galloway said the danger has been identified and those pieces need to be removed immediately because just putting the tape around them won't keep the city from being held liable if a child goes on it anyway and is hurt.

Other topics that were discussed:

Vandalism:

- Ms. Allen said vandalism was a big part of the problem with equipment being cut and burned and at Walker Family Park the sides of one piece of equipment has bolts missing, which disconnected the pieces.
- Citizens, staff and commissioners need to report vandalism that they see
- The police department needs to address vandalism. Suggestions were to start a community watch program or adopt-a-park program, or to provide a \$1,000 reward.
- If the parks were up to par more kids would use them and if the parks were made to be more appealing the community would take more pride in them which might cut down on the vandalism.
- Make parents pay for the vandalism their kids do

Systems to be put in place:

- **Staff Inspections:** daily and weekly inspections to report safety issues as soon as they are found
- **Supervisor Inspections:** monthly supervisor inspections to verify that the safety issues were addressed
- **Replacement Fund:** A replacement fund will be put in place to take care of replacing worn out pieces of equipment. \$10,000 a year should be put into reserves so in fifteen years when the large modules need to be replaced, the money will be there. They discussed selling a piece of property at Lincoln Park after moving the Tot Lot equipment to a more suitable area, and putting the sale money into the replacement fund.
- **Maintenance Schedule:** A regular maintenance schedule will be put into place.
- **Capital Improvement:** playground equipment will be placed in the Capital Improvement Plan and not cut because of budget issues.
- **Certification:** A staff person can become a certified park inspector and can address safety issues.

Equipment:

- Buy equipment geared to the age group that actually will use them, an example being the spring riders purchased for two to five year olds when children up to twelve enjoy them. Even if the spring riders wear out sooner they should purchase those geared for two through twelve year olds

- There was a discussion on the surface materials needed to cushion a fall that is ADA compliance

Quality of Life:

- Making use of shaded areas for picnic tables and benches
- Having a pavilion in the play area at Crystal Lake Park
- Using low maintenance plantings to make the parks more appealing

Funding and Alternatives:

- Ms. Ecklund said the funding would come from the General Fund and will require a budget amendment
- See if citizens or organizations can purchase benches and equipment in memory of a loved one or in the name of the organization
- Grants
- Partner with the high school for students needing volunteer hours
- Endowments
- Donations - Example: An individual put up \$500 seed money for the new dog park. Need someone to form an enhancement group like Friends of the Park. Example: A donor wants to either build an outdoor basketball court or refurbish and existing one. They have to determine the best place to put it and get prices

Community:

- The public needs to be made aware through the utility bills, fliers and the newspapers that though they will be seeing playground equipment removed, it will be replaced with new equipment
- Need input from the community and the Boards as to the types of pieces to replace those removed
- Get the community to buy in and help take care of the parks

PUBLIC COMMENT

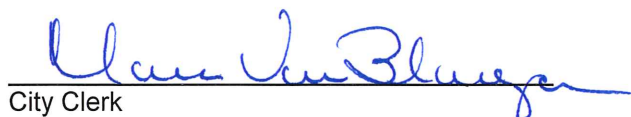
Jack Van Sickle, 4060 Aston Club Drive, asked the commission to consider putting a park in the far northern part of the city as there presently are none for the new developments that have gone in on that side of town. He suggested using some of the property that the Fire Substation will be built on.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:04 p.m.



Mayor/Commissioner

ATTEST:



City Clerk