I. Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order by Acting Chair Jon Dyson at 6:05 p.m. on Thursday, August 13, 2015, at Spenard Recreation Center.

II. Roll Call

Roll call was taken by John Rodda, Director of Parks and Recreation

Commissioners present:
  Commissioner Jim Balamaci
  Commissioner Joey Caterinichio
  Commissioner Jon Dyson
  Commissioner Richard Mystrom
  Commissioner Carl Propes
  Commissioner James Winchester

Commissioners absent/excused:
  Commissioner Peter Murphy
  Commissioner Harlow Robinson

A quorum was present.

Staff present:
  John Rodda
  Josh Durand
  Taylor Keegan
  Diana Cramer
III. Consent Agenda

A. Agenda

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Agenda for the August 13, 2015 meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was unanimously approved.

B. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Upon motion duly and seconded, the Minutes of the April 9, 2015 meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission were unanimously approved.

IV. Director’s Comments

John Rodda, Director of Parks and Recreation, provided the Commission with an update on the following matters:

  Transition to Berkowitz Administration:  Mr. Rodda reported that probably the biggest change is that Parks and Recreation will be reporting directly to Community and Economic Development as it did under the Begich administration. More changes and reorganization are expected by October 1.

  Anchorage Football Stadium:  Rebuilding of the new locker room facility is not going as expected due to problems with the contractor and there is a strong likelihood that it will not be completed this year.

  Sullivan Arena:  This major project – new refrigeration system, slab, seating, painting and exterior signage – is expected to be completed by October 1. This is the second facility to receive a new refrigeration system (the first being the McDonald Center). New systems will also be installed at Boeke and Dempsey in due course.

  Homeless problem:  The Department continues to work on issues specific to the homeless problem. It has been requested that the legal department revise the municipal code to give Parks and Recreation authority to enforce park regulations, so when people are trespassing, camping or dumping garbage, Parks and Recreation will be able to issue citations. In addition, the new administration has given approval for the use of security cameras in the parks. These will be used in known problem areas. Another part of the homeless problem is the prevalence of intravenous drug use, which results in lots of dirty needles on the ground and in the trash in our parks. This is a health and safety hazard not only for park users, but also for park maintenance employees. It is hoped use of the cameras will help identify problems so that citations can be issued and will also act as a deterrent to illegal activities.
Town Square: The Administration and Parks and Recreation are continuing to work on improving the safety of Town Square Park. The Department will be thinning trees and shrubs to open up sightlines in the park so that APD officers are able to see people in the park without having to exit their vehicles.

Waldron Lake: The details of transfer of ownership of this property to the Boys and Girls Club are still being worked out.

Pena Park: Municipal Light & Power is still using Pena Park, which is part of Centennial Park, for building its new power station. That project will be over by June 2016, and Pena Park will be returned to us with improved and expanded parking, and lighted parking and play area.

V. Appearance Requests

There were no appearance requests for non-agenda items.

VI. Anchorage Park Foundation Report

Beth Nordlund, Executive Director of the Anchorage Park Foundation, provided a report to the Commission on Foundation activities for summer and fall 2015. In August three park fix-its are scheduled: Pop Carr on August 15 from 9:00 a.m. to noon, David Green on August 22 9:00 a.m. to noon, and Moen Park on August 29 9:00 a.m. to noon. In addition, a time capsule burial on the Park Strip is scheduled for August 26 at 11:30 a.m. Activities in September and October include the United Way Day of Caring, Girls Scouts at Kiwanis Fish Creek Park, Dave Rose Fix-it, National Public Lands Day, Balto Seppala Iditarod ribbon cutting, Chester Creek Trail event, and Westchester Lagoon bridge party. Ms. Nordlund also talked about the Trails Initiative and how it is working on connecting the missing links in our trail system, resurfacing trails and rebuilding bridges, adding way finding signs, promotional activities, and the Schools on Trails program.

VII. Information Items

A. PRC 15-14: YEP End-of Season Update

Josh Durand, Park Superintendent, introduced Keegan Taylor, Parks and Recreation’s new Landscape Architect and Park Planner, who began working with the Department in June 2015. Ms. Taylor is a recent graduate with a Master’s Degree in Landscape Architecture.

Ms. Taylor, using a PowerPoint presentation, provided the Commissioner with a recap of the 2015 Youth Employment in Parks (YEP) achievements. YEP is a youth summer employment program that promotes leadership, conservation, job training, employment...
and education. There were 24 crew members this year. Projects included constructing a 650-foot gravel trail at Balto Seppala Park, planting trees and shrubs at Westchester Lagoon, restoring Valley of the Moon’s stone stairway water access area, helping with the Park Founder’s Day celebration, shrub garden and picnic area improvements at Centennial Park Campground, trail improvements and sign installation at Earthquake Park, trail maintenance and improvements at Far North Bicentennial Park, improvements and laying trail gravel on the Mt. Baldy trail, and building a new soft-surface sustainable trail at Kincaid to provide access to Kincaid beach. The crew also took part in an educational tour of the Hernandez Hatchery, Far North Bicentennial Park trails and habitat, salmon habitat lessons, and other educational activities.

B. PRC 15-15: P&R Summer Construction Update

Josh Durand, Park Superintendent, provided commissioners with a status report on this season’s construction projects.

Muldoon Park: The Assembly has made Muldoon Park dedicated park land. The master planning process is beginning, selection of a contractor has been made, with the goal being that by June 2016 priorities for park improvements will be identified and the project ready to move forward for construction in 2017.

Park Master Plans: Other master plans being worked on are Davis Park, Elderberry Park, University Lake Park, and Nunaka Valley South Park. It is possible that, in the near future, the master plan process will also start for Taku Campbell Park and Tikishla Park.

Coastal Trail Bridge at Westchester: The new bridge is currently being fabricated in Montana, and is scheduled to arrive here in mid-September. Pursuant to the agreement with the contractor, it is to be they completed by October 18.

Chester Creek Trail: This project has gone very smoothly. Everything from the Arc of Anchorage near Tikishla and Nichols Street, all the way to the Sullivan Arena, has been completed. This area is now open. Next week construction starts from Sullivan Arena to Valley of the Moon Park. In summer 2017, a really small segment just in front of the playground area at Westchester will be finished, and then the project will be complete. The trail is wider with dual shoulders on it, like was done on the Coastal Trail. Two vandal-proof bike repair stations have been donated – one will be installed at Hillstrand and one near Pt. Woronzof.

Train on Delaney Park Strip: The landscaping around the train engine on the Park Strip has been completed.

Artificial turf: Artificial turf has been installed on the ball fields at Kosinski, Mulcahy, Bartlett, Chugiak and Eagle river.
VIII. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Caterinichio requested an update on the Coastal Trail/Airport land swap. Mr. Rodda reports that things are currently on hold.

Commissioner Caterinichio suggested that improvements be made to the deck at Lidia Selkregg Chalet, which can be rented for parties. She feels the deck approach and surfacing material are unsafe. Mr. Rodda stated that he will check with Facility Maintenance to see what can be done. Mr. Durand said that there are a number of things on the list to be updated at the Chalet.

Commissioner Caterinichio stated that she would like a yellow line painted down the center of the trails to encourage people to stay to the right. Mr. Durand reports that this is part of the Coastal Trail project and will be done in the near future.

Commissioner Mystrom asked how far one million dollars would go toward developing Muldoon Park. Mr. Durand listed these items: parking lot, playground, plaza, soft surface trails, community garden, lighting, landscaping. Mr. Rodda explained that priorities would established by the community, values placed on desired amenities, then we would move forward from there, and also explained that any parking lot required for a park of that size would cost a lot to build.

Commissioner Mystrom also asked the status of the South Anchorage Sports Park project. Mr. Durand responded that the utilities will be going out for bid very soon and this fall the community will be re-engaged to begin the development process.

Commissioner Propes inquired about the status of projects for which funding is susceptible to re-appropriate by the Legislature. Mr. Rodda replied that the Department is aggressively moving forward on those projects, such as Muldoon Park, and Ms. Nordlund stated the Anchorage Park Foundation is on track to spend all of its legislative funding.

Commissioner Caterinichio inquired as to the status of snow making equipment at Kincaid. Mr. Rodda explained that the snow making equipment is not what was intended or anticipated. It is operating, though at about 1/3 of the expected capacity, and utilities are costing more than double what was projected. The Department is working on ways to defray operating costs.

Mr. Rodda stated that while the Department has benefitted greatly from legislative capital funding in the past, it cannot expect that funding for the foreseeable future and must continue to pursue other funding arrangements, partnerships and sponsorships for the parks and park projects.
IX.  Upcoming Meetings

The next meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission is scheduled for 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, September 10, 2015, at Spenard Recreation Center.

Mr. Durand reported that the Bob Robertson Naming Committee will be on the Agenda in September, as well as full construction project reports.

X.  Adjournment

Upon motion duly made, seconded and unanimously approved, the meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

MINUTES APPROVED this ___ day of __________, 2015:

___________________________________________   _______________________________
Chair       Director
Parks & Recreation Commission   Parks & Recreation