

Recreation Advisory Board Meeting

October 22, 2020

Board Members Present-Mark Ferguson, Alan Swank, Daniel Brown, Terri Moore, Councilwoman Beth Clodfelter, Brandon Thompson, Shauna Switzer.

Mark Ferguson asked group to vote to approve September meeting minutes. Alan voted to approve and Daniel second the vote.

No Introductions

Old Business

ArtsWest

- Terri informed board that APRD is moving towards opening ArtsWest when Emily Beveridge returns. There's currently no new information about senior center reopening at this time. APRD has been following Covid guidelines set by the Governor and the Health Department and plan to continue following them as we are able to open more areas of the department.

Board Responsibilities and Assessment

- Mark compiled the responses from the board members with feedback. Mark gave a brief overview of results stating that there wasn't anything mentioned that wasn't too surprising. There was some emphasis on identifying board responsibilities and structure along with the interest in creating an annual calendar. There's some need to do better with onboarding new members and that the board meetings need to either fall within the assigned hour or be adjusted. Mark asked the group if there was anything else that should be added or considered.
- Alan agreed that the board needs to do better with onboarding. He suggested providing a document that has the history of the board and the department. He also agreed that the meeting time needed to be adjusted to go from 5:30pm to 7pm monthly.
- Mark suggested that the board go over these ideas at the board retreat next month and plan to put changes in place for next year.
- Alan suggested that the board focuses on prioritizing a few of the ideas.
- Daniel recommended that the department create a calendar of projects that way the board can see the plan the department has for getting things done. Could help as a way of setting goals for the year.
- Mark agreed that the creation of a calendar will help board see the flow of how projects are going or being implemented. Could be used as a point of reference for the group to know when and how projects are going for updates.
- Daniel would like the group to consider having each board member working on projects that could assist the department or possibly utilize committees to help complete projects in the department.
- Alan stated he would have interest in working on a committee and/or helping on projects the department is planning to complete.
- Mark informed the board that he would bring a compiled list of information from the assessment to the retreat next month. He did mention that there may be some concerns that the request for certain changes in the feedback may need to get council approval.
- Councilwoman Clodfelter didn't believe that approval would be needed but stated that she would check.
- Mark added that some feedback stemmed from board member meeting attendance
- Alan suggested the group look at how the visitor's bureau rules on meeting attendance. He also said it would be a good idea if as the board gets new members the group reminds them of the commitment they are offering and the importance to attend meetings.
- Mark mentioned that the last major comment he saw in the assessments was that there is no current information on the process of selecting board members
- Alan recommended that this be discussed at length at the board retreat next month.

- Councilwoman Clodfelter made a suggestion that when forming the process for selection that including a way to offer confidential voting may be a good addition.
- Terri asked to go back and discuss Daniel's comment about a calendar. She has invited other city officials to attend the board meetings to go over certain areas of the city. With creating a calendar with strategy it may help the board identify certain needs for information that they may develop.

Board Retreat

- Planned to have retreat on November 19, 2020 at 4pm
- Terri informed board that she will be having knee surgery on November 10 but feels like she should be able to attend.
- Councilwoman Clodfelter mentioned that she would not be able to attend unless it was scheduled for after 4:30pm that day.
- Mark decided to move meeting time of retreat to 4:30pm to help board members be able to attend. He asked the board if it should be virtual or in-person.
- Alan suggested it may make more sense to meet in person but also to offer it virtually to the public
- Scott Thompson (government channel) suggested having this idea run through Patty Witmore in the Mayor's Office. He felt like if board business is being reviewed and decided on that it does need to be open to the public to attend.
- Terri said she would contact Patty on Monday for approval.
- Mark asked the board what content they would like to discuss at the retreat. His suggestion was to hear the Mayor's vision for 2021, talk about the departments mission/vision, department budget for 2021, goals, board structure/operation. Mark asked the group if they thought there was more to add and if there was a need for any preparation prior to the retreat that board members can do. Mark mentioned that doing the retreat in a virtual sense may cause some challenges for some conversations that may require work before.
- Alan emphasized the need to make sure the budget was on the agenda for the retreat.
- Terri responded that she has invited Kathy Hecht (City Auditor) to the retreat so she could give some insight on the budget moving into 2021. The plan is that there is some direction for where the city foresees the budget falling. Terri did mention that currently city administration has advised that there will not be any capital improvement items allowed in 2021, per the auditors suggestion. Terri plans to submit a 2021 budget with the best recommendations possible but still unsure of how it will pan out. Is hoping that if Ms. Hecht can attend the retreat that she could answer some questions. It seems that the department will be in covid prep for all of 2021 and that the department could use the boards input on how we can combat the challenges that covid has given out. It's well known that the 2021 budget and revenue is going to look different than years past because of the impact covid has made. There's a lot of uncertainty moving forward. One thing Terri believes the department and board can continue moving on is the master plan. It will engage the board, city administration, staff, and the community.
- Brandon asked if the format of the retreat will be the same as the past
- Mark responded that that information is being worked out. Mark then asked Terri if staff will be present at the retreat
- Terri said that likely due to the state guidelines for meetings that that might not be able to happen but she plans to talk thru this with Patty.

Chat Question-from Cindy asking how fees are reviewed for services, specifically pickleball?

- Terri informed the chat questioner that she has talked to staff about pickleball and the reservation fees are there to help cover costs of cleaning materials and equipment. Pickleball does have outdoor options that are free and indoor options with a fee while basketball does not an outdoor option to play. The reason for the charges for pickleball and not basketball is due to the inability to offer space outside at this time for basketball.

New Business

ArtsWest Update

- Terri informed the board that she was asked to present to council on an update about ArtsWest. Terri asked the Mayor that she have time to talk to the Recreation Advisory Board about it before reporting to council. Terri

plans to present to council on October 26 about bring back Program Specialist, Emily Beveridge and opening of ArtsWest. Terri plans to make a recommendation to council that Emily be brought back on part time status on November 2 and be part time until January 5th with the assumption that if the workload increases and there is a need that she be returned to full time status prior to the January 5th date. The biggest guide on workload will be the installation of fiber at ArtsWest but there is still no definite time line for that project to be completed. Things that Terri has suggested that Emily work on when she returns is virtual programming offerings, reviewing of policies and fees of ArtsWest, events, in-person programs, art bench project, and art in city spaces outside of ArtsWest. Terri plans to give council a comprehensive reason for why and how we are where we are with ArtsWest and also to inform council of projects ArtsWest has had over the past couple of years to show the department's commitment to Arts in the community. Terri then asked the board if there is more that she should address or provide to council regarding this matter.

- Alan stated that he had some points of interest and concerns. Alan has had discussion with other similar venues to ArtsWest and at the time they are not able to do much of anything. Alan praised the department on obtaining fiber at ArtsWest but voiced concerns of the actual revenue potential that streaming could bring. He mentioned that other venues are only offering virtual programs that aren't bringing in revenue. He's concerned that there are going to be many challenges on ArtsWest to create virtual programming. Alan suggested getting an update in the December meeting with how the virtual piece is going.
- Alan then shared a spreadsheet with the board laying out years past revenue of ArtsWest. He said it's very interesting. Income tax has increased, rentals have decreased, grants seem to be staying the same, special events are about the same, youth programs and memberships have increased. By taking away income tax the revenue for ArtsWest is showing around \$45,000 which doesn't seem to be very much revenue. Alan pointed out that ArtsWest has been operating in a deficit for at least the last 3 years and it continues to trend in that way. Alan suggested that when the doors open at ArtsWest that there needs to be a great emphasis on revenue. Alan also implied that the membership fees and rental fees are extremely low and need adjusted.
- Alan recommended that a committee be formed to help ArtsWest review the fee structure and come up with a plan to make needed adjustments. Alan volunteered to sit on the committee sense he has experience working with and on a professional budget. Alan added that it's important that the board supports the ArtsWest staff so the department isn't in the same situation again.
- Brandon inquired to Terri for clarification of part time and full time status for program specialist when they return.
- Terri clarified that her recommendation is to bring Emily back part time until the end of 2020 and return her to full time at the start of 2021, however, if the workload grows then she would be able to bring Emily back on full time status sooner. Terri mentioned that it's very likely that Emily will have to work along with other areas of the department. The department is trying to work as a team thru all the challenges and deficiencies. Emily may need to fill in more at the Athens Community Center. Terri said the plan is to offer more arts in other areas of the city but wants to include Emily in these conversations. The plan is to find ways to expand art programming but really needs to focus on revenue building as a priority.
- Brandon stated that he has some fear that the workload may not show an increase due to fiber not being installed in enough time to plan programs for use. Brandon is also worried that if Emily is helping on other areas of the department that may take away from what she can plan and implement at ArtsWest or programs under her guidance. Brandon asked where the line is drawn for revenue and service. Brandon stated the arts tend to operate in a different fashion compared to other areas. He asked if there are metrics used to decide the programs that are subsidized and ones that aren't.
- Terri stated that doing cost recovery is set up to put certain metrics into consideration when identifying programs that need subsidized. Terri suggested that we need to do a thorough fee assessment on all programs and classes.
- Alan pointed out that in 2019 44% of ArtsWest's expenditures were covered by income tax. Showing a significant support from tax payer money
- Mark suggested that it might be a good idea for the board to identify areas of the department that are successful with revenue and see if there are other ways the department can maximize on that. He suggested reviewing this at the retreat. He feels like this may make more sense to understand areas that the board is more comfortable having some programs operating in a deficit.
- Terri noted that the department needs to do a better job with finding sponsorships and grants.

Department Staff Report

- Terri gave updates on the following...
 - o Job posting will be posted for the part time groundskeeper position
 - o She is revising the job description for the head landscaper position
 - o New dance classes are being offered and bootcamp is being offered. There is a new instructor eager to teach these classes
 - o Start smart programs were being well received.
 - o Spoken and heard virtual reading still moving forward
 - o Storybook trail is complete at Sells park
 - o Memorial tree has been installed at the Athens Community Center in memory of Ted Rose. A dedication is planned for this in the Spring
 - o Parade in place with Passion works is happening at the end of the month in West State park. We are partnering on this program along with Passion Works.

Mark will send out an updated feedback compilation for the retreat.

Mark addressed a chat concern that would like for meeting dates and times to be posted more in advanced and he said a better effort would be made.

Alan moved to adjourn the meeting. Mark second the adjournment.