**Taxation, Revenue, and Utilization**



**of Expenditures (TRUE) Commission**

**Niki Brunson – Chair**

**PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

**October 24, 2018**

**1:00 p.m.**

**City Council Conference Room B**

**Suite 425, City Hall**

**Attendance:** Commissioners John Roberts (Chair) and Niki Brunson

**Also**: Jeff Clements – Council Research Division; Daryl Joseph and Keith Meyerl – Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department

See attached sign-in sheet for additional attendees.

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m. and the attendees introduced themselves for the record

Daryl Joseph, Director of the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department, distributed and discussed several documents outlining the number and type of parks, the number and types of maintenance workers, 4 park modes based on intensity of use of the facilities, etc. The department has divided the city into 5 maintenance districts with dedicated staff per district.

Keith Meyerl, Chief of Recreation and Community Programming, provided answers to the list of 20+ questions posed to the department by Chairman Roberts (see attached). Park maintenance is directly overseen by a manager in each of the 5 maintenance districts and a grounds maintenance working foreman oversees work crews for groups of parks (15-25) within the district. Each district has a maintenance yard, typically located at a large park. Athletic associations that run activities in parks under license agreements also share in the maintenance responsibilities. Specialized building trades (plumbing, electrical, carpentry) are performed by centralized Parks and Rec crews working citywide. Mr. Joseph described the functions provided by Parks and Rec maintenance versus the Public Building Division of the Public Works Department. Mowing is split among Parks and Rec employees (for Bermuda grass playing fields) and contractors (all other areas). Decisions about using contractors versus in-house employees for jobs are made based on the size, complexity and length of the job needing to be done. It can be more cost effective to use contractors for some jobs that could be done in-house if the size of the job would take the responsible crew considerable time (more than 1 or 2 days) and prevent work from being done at the rest of the crew’s assigned parks. Restroom maintenance at parks is done by contractors. Work on community and senior centers is primarily done by the Public Buildings Division, particularly larger jobs such as roof replacement. Parks and Rec evaluates each job to determine the best way to handle it, based on time, cost and availability of manpower.

Grounds maintenance working foremen do quick evaluations of parks each time they visit (i.e. to empty trash containers) and report any noticeable issues to the district maintenance supervisor. All parks are inspected more in-depth on a monthly basis using an inspection check sheet. Monthly meetings are held among the maintenance supervisors to discuss citywide issues and trends and review performance. Maintenance issues are reported in several ways – by Parks and Rec employees, by athletic associations using the parks, and by citizens using the CARE complaint system (online and telephone). All issues, however they are initially reported, should be put into the CARE system for tracking. New signage is going to go into all parks with information about how to report problems and complaints via the CARE system, the department’s Facebook page, by phone, etc. There is a Parks District Manager who oversees the issues on a citywide basis, supervising the 5 District Maintenance Supervisors. That manager is responsible for making the connections between the park maintenance districts and the department’s centralized trade workers (plumbing, electrical) or the Public Works Department to get larger projects done.

The group discussed the department’s recruitment and retention of employees and the difficulty in retaining entry level employees. Entry level jobs don’t pay particularly well and the work is often physically challenging, particularly outdoor work in the heat and humidity of Jacksonville’s long summers.

In response to Chairman Roberts’ submission of condition inspection reports on parks in the Greater Arlington/Beaches CPAC area, Mr. Joseph said that the department has a large backlog of maintenance needs that accumulated over a period of years when maintenance budgets were very slim that are now being addressed. City Council passed an ordinance mandating an allocation of at least $2 million per year for park capital maintenance purposes citywide.

Mr. Joseph distributed a Jax Parks Amenities Catalog describing opportunities for interested donors to make large or small donations to donate park facilities and amenities (picnic tables, gazebos, etc.). Several companies have made substantial donations in the last year and have been granted naming rights to particular parks in return.

After the departure of the Parks and Rec Department epresentatives from the meeting, the commissioners discussed the maintenance backlog and the magnitude of the needs. They speculated about how quickly the issues could be resolved if additional funding was available. They expressed interest in seeing the department’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP) project list for the next 5 years to see how many projects are planned and the amount of funding needed.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:05 pm.

Jeff Clements, City Council Research Division

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Posted 10.25.18 5:00 p.m.

Tape – 10.24.18 TRUE Parks and Recreation Committee – Legislative Services Division