

**TOWN OF MOUNT PLEASANT, SOUTH CAROLINA
RECREATION COMMITTEE
Monday, May 6, 2019
Municipal Complex, Committee Meeting Room, 3rd Floor
100 Ann Edwards Lane, Mount Pleasant, SC 29464**

Minutes

Members Present: Gary Santos, Chair, Tom O'Rourke, G. M. Whitley

Staff Present: Eric DeMoura, Steve Gergick

Mr. Santos called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.

1. Approval of Minutes from the April 1, 2019 meeting

Mr. O'Rourke made a motion to approve the April 1, 2019 minutes. Ms. Whitley seconded the motion. All were in favor.

2. Public Comments

None

3. Employee years of service recognition

Ms. Gergick recognized Ms. Jackie Lawson for five years of service to the Town. He said that Ms. Lawson started working part time 2011 at the front desk at the Park West Pool and served as a mail courier for the department. He said she then began working at the Senior Center as a customer service representative and working there full time since 2014. He said she had done a good job and was always welcoming everyone coming in there.

Mr. Santos said he wanted to recognize the principal of Oceanside, Ms. Brenda Corley, and Coach Chad Grier as being present.

4. Review of Arts Inventory Study

Mr. Gergick said Arts Inventory Study was conducted by the College of Charleston and said Assistant Professor at the College of Charleston, Dr. Kate Keeney, was going to present it.

Dr. Keeney said they conducted the research at the Riley Center at the College of Charleston. She said that scope of inquiry was to assess the unique assets and needs of the arts community in Mount Pleasant. She said the report comments on what is here and what some of the deficits are and they also examined the support structures for artist and what they need to be successful in their work. Dr. Keeney said they know that artist do not work or exist in isolation. She said it was important to think about the entire community in Mount Pleasant and how they are supporting artists and the art community. She said there were many ways that artist need to be supported through validation of their work, having a level of some sort of audience demand if people are interested in the arts. She said there was material support such as funding or facilities and training opportunities and having some sort of network or community and having access to information about their profession. She said these were all things that artists need. She said it was not just grants or buildings as artist rely on the support of their community. Dr. Keeney said there are some opportunities and challenges that artist may be facing in Mount Pleasant. She said there was some existing stakeholder groups that are interested in advancing the arts in the community including some very active new members of Town Council. She said they also see communities outside of Mount Pleasant that are nearby that could be friends of the arts or audience members particularly the islands East of the Cooper. She said there are a lot of private resources with financial and non-financial resources. She said that the demographic makeup was right for supporting the arts. She said a couple of challenges that artists or art organizations was the cost of development. She said a common problem was whether artist can afford to live and work here. She said there are no higher education institutions in Mount Pleasant to serve as a place where artists are employed or have facilities or support structures for an opportunity for partnership. Dr. Keeney said they took two approaches to finding information around the arts. She said that the first was an arts inventory to see what the existing art organizations exist or prominate artists and they looked at facilities. She said they completed phone interviews with community leaders in order to develop and implement a community

questionnaire. She said they distributed the questionnaire to 161 people and received a 52 percent response rate. She said they used the inventory and the community questionnaire to come up with some major findings and recommendations. Dr. Keeney said that some of the findings of the inventory was the profile of the artist or art organizations here they found a lot of entries were individual artists and the majority were working or teaching in the visual arts. She said it could be explained in some of the communities that already exist here with people with networks or connections to artists. She said that cultural organizations were second, and educational groups were the third largest type of group in the arts community. She said they tried to understand where the organizations are located and if there was a high concentration of art activity happening in Mount Pleasant. She shared a list of existing recreational facilities which included parks and public places for an art performance or installation. She said she knew the Recreation Department was open to providing these facilities and learning more about how they could exhibit the arts or have performances. She said that the inventory did not include school or churches. She said they examined the profile of Mount Pleasant artists with full time and part time artists. She said they saw a lot of amateur artist and received a lot of comments about seniors who are interested. She said that 75 percent of the survey respondents reported that their income from art related activity was under \$50,000 a year. She said some of the information that they found about how much they work, how much they derive from their work, and income levels helped to describe this community as a semi-professional art community. She said many of the respondents say they work and live and work in the Town of Mount Pleasant. She said that only half of them consider Mount Pleasant to be their primary arts community. She said that the artists are moving around and working in other places. She said artist do consider organizations, collaborators, or audiences outside of the immediate Mount Pleasant area. She said the survey asked how often they engage in art related work outside of Mount Pleasant and it gave an understanding of the artist mobility. Dr. Keeney shared some support mechanisms. She said they asked the artists to rank what was the most important mechanism to

them. She said they were asked to rank the top five support mechanisms. She said that performance or exhibition space received the highest ranking, followed by events, and then rehearsal, studio, or work space. She said they then asked the artists to share their level of satisfaction with those same 11 items. She said the participants ranked the performance or exhibition space as the top support mechanism but also expressed the highest level of dissatisfaction with that. She said that was a gap that they probably need to think about closing moving forward as one of major findings of this study. She said they did ask a couple of questions specifically about art facilities as residents have asked for more space to do their work or perform. She said they saw some satisfaction with existing arts facilities on the dimensions of availability, affordability, suitability, and quality. She said they did show dissatisfaction with what exists here. She said a lot of residents have asked about the need for facilities prior to the study. She said there were a couple of questions about how residents would support an arts facility and how would they support it as an artist. She asked if it was something that they would use as an artist. She said they learned about the profile of the arts community, what support mechanism they have and what were some of the deficiencies, and the desire for more arts opportunities. She said that the demographics suggest that this community should have a larger art presence. She said they would describe this as a semiprofessional arts community. She said 36 percent of respondents said they work as full-time and 53 percent described themselves as part time or amateur. She said that 62 percent noted they derive less than 25 percent of their income from arts related activity. She said there was a lot of comments from seniors around desire for the arts as well. She said the support mechanisms there are numerous instances of art activities happening but only a few would be suitable for some other type of performance. She says they need to improve access points to existing facilities. She said that the desire for more with the appetite here all signal that the community could support. She said on recommendations on leadership would be how the Town can better support arts organizations. She said that public, nonprofit, and private entities can collaborate. Secondly, facility report

there was a gap and a need for facilities and the Town should consider some collaborative effort in a mixed-use facility as they saw a demand for visual and performing arts. She said it was surprising that this community at this time was feeling this need and was an area to develop and partnership with private and non-profit sectors as well.

Mr. Santos said that art was great. He said Bennett Hospitality was getting ready to build a 3,000 feet amphitheater by the Yorktown. He said he thought they had somethings that were coming but a little slower than what they would like to see. He said they all agree that the arts are very important and would like to see more such a dinner type theatre to have dinner and see a play. He said he wanted to see the arts grow.

Mr. O'Rourke asked what they were to do.

Mr. Santos said they had been talking and he knows Ms. Whitley had been involved as well. He said they talked about being able to do more at the high schools since they have the facilities there to put on plays. He said they could find some restaurants that have outdoor facilities where they could put on plays or do some things.

Mr. O'Rourke said they did a really good job, but it looks as if the largest need was facility support. He said there are art organizations that if they had a facility in which they could do things it would flourish. He the Town would benefit from a good art program. He said the Town was going to have decide whether they want to be in this or not. He could mean being creative with leasable space. He said the Town needs to figure out what they want to do. He said in the next agenda item they are going to talk about spending \$3.9 million dollars for something else in recreation.

Ms. Whitley said the Town has some broad recreational facilities where the focus has been on athletics with so many ball fields which was fantastic. She said the arts and the art community was one area they have been lacking, but they could have more offerings in that space. She said as they move forward, they could look at that area in the future to have an arts facility with mixed use that has performance and studio with rental

able space that artist could use and create a thriving center for the arts in Mount Pleasant.

Mr. Santos said the Town has the land on Rifle Range Road that he thought there was a conceptual plan, but it does not mean they could not make some changes into it. He said they did plan to have a room there where they could do some arts.

Mr. Gergick said it was a program room scheduled in a facility. It said it was similar to what they would find in a program room at the Jones Center or Park West. He said it was not necessarily a theatre for a performing arts presentation. He said it was more so for children who are taking a camp to be able to put on a presentation to their parents at the end of the camp.

Mr. O'Rourke said he felt like they have had the conversation they are having right now, and they did not know what to do so they hired the experts. He said that they said the Town had interest and they need to have facility support. He said they got their answer.

Ms. Keeney said the arts requires a subsidy and it would come from somewhere. She said she would encourage them to move forward and partner with other entities to figure out a spot, or mixed-use facility, or who would be interested in supporting this. She said they did not do a financial analysis of level of income. She said it was the trend in facility development as a partnership approach.

Ms. Whitley said that if they had a location and they had a plan then they could go out into the community and look for partners to join in and have a large donor wall or naming rights where they could have a robust facility. She said that the Town subsidizes the Recreation Department, and this was one more component of that.

Mr. Santos said it was going to be good with the amphitheater and that maybe the Town could partner with Bennet Hospitality and be able to work with them on that. He said he thought the Town's best opportunity was going to be Rifle Range Road and being able to redesign it where they could do what they want to do with the camps and also have some arts. He said it was a great discussion and thanked Dr. Keeney for coming.

5. Carolina Park Phase 3 update

Mr. Gergick said they had been in discussion with Oceanside Collegiate Academy and Seamon Whiteside for design. He said they have been taking a look at Carolina Park with a change to the master plan over there to include a stadium and artificial turf field. He said that Mr. Lee Gastley was going to be presenting on that.

Mr. Lee Gastley with Seamon Whiteside and Associates said that they had been coordinating on the next phase of Carolina Park for several months now. He shared an image of the impact area of Phase 3 because all of the elements that they currently see within that area will not necessarily be built in Phase 3 but parts of them may be depending on how they decide to allocate dollars and do different value engineering options. He said they are going to have a new addition to the existing parking and there were future softball fields, basketball exterior courts, and a linkage road that comes from existing and new parking to the far side of a new synthetic, full size rectangular sports field. He said that part of the coordination they had been having with Oceanside Academy was the addition of a 2,000 seat, plus or minus, stadium with approximately 1,500 home side seats and 500 or so for visitors on the far side. Mr. Gastley shared an image of the items that they have to have. He said have to have the additional parking both in the expansion of the existing parking lot as well as a new parking lot to satisfy parking requirements for the stadium and for the overall facility. He said there was a linkage road that connects the two. He said they have the synthetic field which is a requirement and the infrastructure necessary for the grandstands. He said that the site was very low. He said that they had filled a lot of it with what presently was existing out there, and they are going to have to fill more. He said they were not going to build the fields at this time as they did not have the budget for it. He said that they would probably fill them in some manner in order to make sure they do not have any potential for wetlands in the future and to make sure that they have positive drainage. He said they would have some drainage in place so when they come back in future phases, they could tie into that and raise the fields up to their proper height or their final height. He showed where

some existing ponds were located and said they would probably need a new pond in order to satisfy the stormwater requirements for the additional development and possibly some modification of those. He said they would conduct a new drainage study in order to determine that. He said they want additional parking, a stadium or a grandstand area, and also want a synthetic field. He said that the conversations that they had with Oceanside was that they are going to cover the cost associated with the grandstands. He said that the rest of the infrastructure and the synthetic field are going to be the responsibility of the Town. Mr. Gastley said that in September they did an in-depth cost analysis of some different development options. He said while it was not final it was detailed enough to give a magnitude of what they are looking at. He said that the preconstruction and overall earthwork component of that phase was approximately \$1.9 million. He said that was over \$800,000 worth of fill that would have to be brought on to the site in order to elevate it. He said that roads and access isles and parking was \$335,000. He said that the parking spaces themselves are \$208,000-\$209,000 and drainage was in the area of \$394,000 for around \$2.9 million. He said that the synthetic field itself was going to be approximately \$1 million and that would include lighting as it would be a lighted field. He said that puts them at \$3.9 million. He said he understood there was \$4 million that was available to do the project. He said that that number does not include the grandstand as that would be the responsibility of Oceanside Academy. He said that as far as the Town was concerned, they have got \$3.9 million basically already expended and they only have a \$4 million budget. He said there were two more components that they have to add to that number. He said that ideally, they want to have contingency on that because as much as they would like everything to be perfect from day one with the drawings, there was always going to be things that pop up. He said that a good rule of thumb was about ten percent of that number so that was in the range of \$400,000. He said there was also soft cost and those are consultant's fees, additional surveys, third party testing that was required, geotechnical studies, and closeout surveys and that would be in the range of ten percent, or \$400,000. He said that are looking at approximately \$4.8 to \$5

million to construct the level he had shown plus some level of grading in the other areas. He said they are at the point that they are ready to start construction and they had submitted a proposal for professional services to the Town. He said that still has to go through the Bids and Purchases process for approval. He said there are currently 190 parking spaces in the existing parking lot. He said that the new addition would add another 107 and in an isolated part there would be an additional 150. He said that would bring the total to 447 spaces. Mr. Gastley said that should be enough for the parking. He said that if they look at the Town's parking requirements there was a warrant which means they have to prove what they are looking at. He said that most stadium sports complexes they park at one to four seats or one to five seats so they are in line with respect to the parking numbers that they are looking at. He said that schedule wise if they were to go forward in a well manner pace they would start construction documents soon and they would be finished by the end of this calendar year. He said they would have permitting and start construction in June of 2020 and the project would be complete in the summer of 2021 or earlier.

Mr. Santos said that he and Mr. Gastley had a conversation and he had said that there were some opportunities for them to have some savings.

Mr. Gastley said that there are always things that they could take a look at. He said that the \$1.9 million he mentioned earlier was if they had raised everything that was shown previously be two and a half feet. He said that depending on as they get into the design how much they actually decide to fill within some areas, the number could come down because they would not fill them at 100 percent. He said they may decide that 40 percent is enough to get drainage to do what they want it to do at that phase.

Mr. O'Rourke said for them not to do that yet. He said he did not think they should start looking at what they are cutting.

Mr. Santos said he wanted to make sure that they understand that those numbers are not set in stone and there are opportunities to save some money.

Mr. O'Rourke said that if Mr. Gastley saves money it hurts the project some. He said that if they decrease the elevation there was an effect to that. He said that in athletic fields saving the money in the room does not help one on Friday night after a bad rainstorm. He said he thought they needed to figure out what this cost to do it the right way and then they need to figure out where they are going to find the money to do it.

Mr. Santos said he thought they had that there.

Mr. Gastley said that in their packet there was a breakdown from September that shows some more detailed cost. He said that was based on the master plan as they currently knew it. He said he thought that they were in a reasonable magnitude of cost. He said he did not see what they are talking about coming in at \$6 million but thought \$4.8-\$5 million was probably what they are looking at.

Mr. DeMoura said perhaps in order to keep the schedule on track they proceed with design development and give them another 30 days and at next month's Committee bring them back options for funding the remaining balance.

Mr. O'Rourke said that was a good idea.

Mr. DeMoura said they are considerably short today but not to jeopardize the timeframe, he thought everyone's interest was to have the project completed before the 2021 football season. He said if the Committee was agreeable to that, he asked for approval to move forward on design and they would come back with money options.

Mr. O'Rourke said that was a good idea. He said that when they look at the stadium they should look at in terms of controlled access. He said that they have Park West which is a great facility but there was not controlled access. He said they set up a table and hope people pay, or they stand on the other side to watch. He said that not only could the school use it, but the Town could use it. He said that really looking at controlled access and it being something like that they should make sure those elements are in there.

Mr. Chad Grier said Oceanside was a very appreciative partner of the Town and they enjoy a great relationship. He said they work very closely with Public Services and Mr. Matt Hansen in Recreation. He said the Town has basketball needs and probably uses their gym more than they use their gym. He said it has been a great partnership. He said he thought they were on the upside-down part of that because they have done their math. He said it was not about keeping score as much as it was making sure they maintain a healthy partnership. He said that the Town had been very accommodating to them. He said for example this week they have their girls playing for lower state, state championship in soccer that night at Charleston Southern. He said that their boys are playing for lower state, state championship the next night at Charleston Southern. He said that their baseball team was playing for lower state, state championship on Wednesday night at Shipyard. He said it was an opportunity to keep more of their students off the highways and on campus. He said that not just the 650 Oceanside families of which 92 percent live in Mount Pleasant, but the community at large comes out to support their events and it would be wonderful to have them on their campus. He said that they still have 8.2 acres that they have had conversations about willing to build whatever was a benefit and effective use for the whole community. He said they are very proud of the partnership and want to continue it at whatever level possible.

Mr. Santos asked if there needed to be a motion.

Mr. DeMoura answered in the affirmative. He said that if they are comfortable with the latest conceptual plan, they would proceed with getting bid information for design.

Mr. O'Rourke made a motion for approval of the conceptual plan and instruct staff to come back in 30 days with recommendations for funding.

Ms. Whitley seconded the motion. All were in favor.

6. Discussion regarding the future of the Recreation Department

Mr. DeMoura said that Council decides limits to government and over the last several years the feeling from the majority of Committee and Council

had been to provide limits on the Recreation Department. He said that resources are finite and many times those resources that are available have gone to what prior elected officials have considered to be higher priorities. He said whether it was the police department, road construction, and other things. He said he thought there was a different feeling today and it seems appropriate to have these conversations about what they would like the future of public recreation in Mount Pleasant to look like going forward. He said they added this agenda item to generate conversation with the understanding that it may take longer than one meeting and may take several meetings. He said it was with the hope long-term based on their comments and working with them they could come back with a plan for the future and what they would like to see.

Mr. O'Rourke thanked Mr. DeMoura and Mr. Gergick. He said it was a great way to access a situation as the resources are finite. He said that he was not so sure that the Committee decides how much recreation the Town has or gets as he thought that the citizens, they serve decide that. He said that one thing he learned at his last job for 17 years was that if people value the service they will pay. He said he did not think they should handle it at that meeting, and he did not think they should hire a consultant and pay a \$100,000. He said they should have the discussions with staff, with the people that know as they know this game. He said then they could have some type of direction on it. He said it was pretty sure they do not have a Council that was just going to start putting money on the Recreation Department's table. He said it was not going to happen. He said that was fine. He said that they can figure out ways to pay for these things. He said that he welcomes the discussion and thought it was good. He said he did not think it was expanding upon the things they are doing now. He thought it was about other things. He said that they have to have the arts discussion. He said they have to have all discussions. He said there was some philosophical things they have to decide first. He said he thought they did an amazing job at satisfying the things that the public does that the department was in charge of. He said the philosophical question was are they serving the things they are doing or are they serving everybody that lives in the Town of Mount Pleasant because that was two

different things. He said he was not sure what the answer was. He said he thought they should have those discussions and then once they have those guiding principles then they could build it. He said that he welcomes it and thinks they should do more than talking about. He said the experts should decide what that was going to be and asked was it going to be 30 minutes out of a Recreation Committee meeting or are they going to set aside some staff people and maybe five citizens and the Committee to walk through it together. He said whatever that was he was fine with it.

Ms. Whitley said it was clear how popular the Recreation Department was and how quickly the camps and classes fill up and there are waitlist and then people are frustrated but that was a good problem to have but it was a problem they should not have. She said they should have enough offerings for the citizens to be able to sign their children for summer camps. She said a small thing would be to have a window of time where the Recreation Department was only open to the residents of Mount Pleasant because she thought it was currently a free for all and she knew a lot of people outside of the Town take advantage of the Town's Recreation. She said if it could be a week or a first day where it was just Town residents that have the opportunity to do that. She said she also thought they should consider the revenue collected through the camps but said they need to know how much it cost to put on the camp and asked if they were breaking even or losing money. She said if they are renting out the fields for \$50 the first hour and \$25 the second are, they are breaking even, making money or losing money. She said they should take a look at trying to help the Recreation Department be subsidized a little less so it could be more self-sufficient so when future Council's come on or if the focus was more on drainage or the police or fire department that the Recreation Department does not get left in the dust. She said they have extensive plans that are unfunded and they need to find a way to fund them. She said she thought the Recreation Department does have a plan and does have a vision. She said in reading the Comprehensive Plan and seeing what those are they know the Mount Pleasant Way and Rifle Range Road Park are all things that need a funding source.

Mr. Santos said that he was glad Ms. Whitley said that because starting January 1 they would get seven of their fields back.

Mr. Gergick said that it would be June 2 they would get five of the fields back.

Mr. Santos said that was going to help them tremendously because they will be able to utilize those fields. He said that they were going to make somewhere in the vicinity of \$200,000 this year in leasing the facilities out.

Mr. Gergick said that they were on track for that right now and it was part of the program report.

Mr. O'Rourke said that if it cost them \$400,000 to do that, they have gone backward.

Mr. Santos said he did not know if it cost that much.

Mr. O'Rourke said he did not know either.

Mr. Santos said they are getting seven fields back and if it was going to be around \$200,000 it was going to be a lot more once they get to where they could lease some of these fields after the Department's programs. He said the Department would use them for their programs and then anytime it was not being used such as Sunday's that would be an opportunity to lease and they could make revenue out of that to help support themselves. He said he thought there were opportunities for them to help support themselves. He said they have to be able to find that mix and make that work. He said that right now approximately \$200,000 from being able to lease those fields out and getting seven more fields that figure was going to go up. He said they are already paying Public Services to do what they do now so that cost should not go up because they are already taking care of them. He said it seemed like it was going to be more and more revenue. He said they would have to have personnel out there but seems like it would be a lot more revenue once they get those fields going and are leasing them. He said they have good opportunities. He said he mentioned the arts and said Alhambra Hall used to have a stage and they used to have concerts and plays. He said it was the focus point of Mount Pleasant where everything was done such as baseball, but they did have a

stage. He said it would be great if that was still there today. He said that there was light at the end of the tunnel, and it was going to be a good opportunity for them as soon as they get the fields opened up to see what kind of revenue, they would be able to get and may help support themselves.

Mr. O'Rourke asked if maybe at the next Recreation Committee meeting, they could lay out a methodology of how they would get there, and they could discuss that.

Mr. DeMoura responded in the affirmative. He said he thought for consideration either at the next meeting or at a special meeting of the Committee they could develop, as they know so much of the information already, all the base information for the Recreation Department. He said from the number of participants, to revenue being brought in, to what was in higher demand and so forth. He said they would review the base line information and then have that visioning session afterward. He said it could be at a regular meeting or a special Recreation meeting.

Mr. Santos said that whatever was good with the staff. He said he would like to include those five fields and estimated revenue. He said he thought they got two back from Carolina Park and five out there.

Mr. Gergick said that have two at Cheryl Woods-Flowers and three at Carolina Park.

Mr. Santos said if they could include that as they are going to get them back so that was going to be potential revenue.

7. Program/projects update

Mr. Gergick said they are doing well in youth and adult sports. He said on the rental revenue their year to date was \$52,000 between rental, staffing, and lighting thru the end of April. He said in 2018 they had \$114,000 total so they are doing very well in renting a number of fields and facilities and will be renting more with the fields they are getting back.

Mr. Santos said that he asked Mr. Gergick to put the revenue on the report so they could keep track of that.

Mr. Gergick said they do expect it to continue to grow. He said in April they had the Blessing of the Fleet with tremendous support from all the departments of fire, police, public services, and Town support of all of the employees. He said they had volunteers all day long and they are to be commended for that and did a wonderful job. He said they had Easter Egg Hunts at Alhambra and Park West and the Spring Carnival. He said they had the Farmers Market and with all the sports it was a very active April. Mr. Gergick introduced Ms. Bethany Laven as the new Recreation Department's Marketing Coordinator.

8. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:22 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Bedenbaugh, 5/6/19