

**JOINT MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL AND THE PARKS ADVISORY
BOARD HELD ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2001 IN ROOM 202 OF LUFKIN
CITY HALL**

A joint meeting of the City Council and the Parks Advisory Board was held on Monday, October 1, 2001 in Room 202 of Lufkin City Hall with the following members present:

City Council:

Mayor Louis Bronaugh
Mayor pro tem Dennis Robertson
Councilmember R. L. Kuykendall
Councilmember Don Boyd
Councilmember Lynn Torres
Councilmember Bob Bowman
Councilmember Jack Gorden, Jr.

Parks Advisory Board:

Victor Bruce – Vice Chairman
Sumner Osgood
Pam Fletcher
Roy Reyes
Cathy Todd
Peggylu Watkins
Lela Simmons

Staff members:

City Manager C. G. Maclin
City Secretary Atha Martin
City Arborist Rachel Emrick
Parks & Recreation Director Don Hannabas
Parks Superintendent Scott DeGrant
Parks Mike Akridge

1. City Manager C. G. Maclin opened meeting with prayer. Mayor Bronaugh welcomed Roy Reyes as the newest member of the Parks Advisory Board.
2. **DISCUSSION OF PARK MAINTENANCE**

City Manager Maclin stated that back at the City Council Retreat in May, which is an event the Council holds annually immediately after the election each year, there was discussion about a joint meeting of the Parks Advisory Board and the City Council to discuss not only short range and long range planning but also the possibility of setting park maintenance standards. Mr. Maclin stated that he feels that the Council and Parks Board both recognize that we have more acreage in the parks and park equipment than we have the ability to maintain at a high level. Mr. Maclin stated that one of the issues that were discussed was the possibility that the Council and Parks Board could determine a maintenance standard for the parks. Mr. Maclin stated that there are some Councilmembers who might have some comments they want to pass on to the Parks Department and the Parks Board, and the Parks Board members have been asked to bring their ideas and suggestions to today's meeting. Mr. Maclin stated that since the City Council is hosting this meeting, we would begin by having the Councilmembers speak first. Mr. Maclin stated that when we all go away from this meeting hopefully we would have a better understanding

Dennis Robertson stated that after spending a couple of years on the Parks Board, he has a strong interest in how we manage the City parks. Mr. Robertson stated that after getting on the Council and realizing that there are a lot of priorities to deal with across the city other than parks it was difficult for him to give up any ground as to where he wanted the parks to be in the City program. Mr. Robertson stated that he spent a lot of time at the retreat talking about the parks systems and maintenance levels and showing some slides showing that we are not up to the standard that he would like us to be. Mr. Robertson stated that getting the money for this would be difficult.

Dennis Robertson stated that parks set the tone and character of the City. Mr. Robertson stated that the public gets the impression of the City based on the parks. Mr. Robertson stated that the City should do the best job we can with the highest standard in all of the parks. Mr. Robertson stated that he would like to see all the parks at a very high standard.

R. L. Kuykendall stated that Mr. Robertson had shown a video of the parks at the City Council Retreat earlier this year showing areas that were a liability to the City and needed attention.

Don Boyd stated that he remembered that the City had a Master Plan of the Parks several years ago and perhaps we should revisit that Plan. Mr. Boyd stated that the greatest need was money and perhaps grant funds were available.

Lynn Torres stated that she was concerned with the park maintenance in all areas. Mrs. Torres stated that, in her opinion, Jones Park might not get the attention it needs. Mrs. Torres stated that we needed to look at the parks that get the most use and prioritize them to bring them up to standard. Mrs. Torres stated that the City has made some good improvements with the spray/plays and parking in Chambers Park. Mrs. Torres stated that she agrees with Dennis Robertson that the parks are a reflection on our City.

Jack Gorden stated that he would like to have had this meeting closer to the Retreat. Mr. Gorden stated that he is concerned that we might outstrip our resources by creating new facilities. Mr. Gorden stated that the first priority is to take care of existing parks and making them first class.

Mayor Bronaugh stated that 12 years ago in a Council retreat parks were a big concern. Mayor Bronaugh stated that parks are a part of the quality of life in Lufkin. Mayor Bronaugh stated that we need to make the most of the \$'s available through the budget.

Victor Bruce, Vice Chairman of the Parks Advisory Board, stated that his concern is that we have more park acreage than we can maintain. Mr. Bruce stated that he would like to see the City sell some parks that are not being used. Mr. Bruce stated that the three parks that are not being used at this time are Ward Park, Four Seasons Parks and Gulf Park. Mr. Bruce stated that we could do away with these parks and have the money that is currently being used for other maintenance.

Mr. Bruce stated that one of the goals of the five-year Master Plan was to build a new swimming pool and there had been talk about co-coordinating with the School District. Mr. Bruce stated that Winston Pool is over 50 years old and does not meet the State standards. Mr. Bruce stated that he would like to have the Parks Board and City Council work together with LISD to build a new swimming facility.

Pam Fletcher stated that she had asked Don Hannabas to look into how some of the leasing is being done. Ms. Fletcher stated that she agrees with Mr. Gorden about making what we have first class. Ms. Fletcher stated that they need some direction on what standard of maintenance each park requires, and they need some direction from the City Council because whatever is done will need money. Ms. Fletcher stated that the Parks Advisory Board wanted to know what the City Council expects from them.

In response to question of the ratio that determines how many parks a city needs, Don Hannabas stated that it is one acre per 100 population.

Mr. Maclin stated that there are problems with the selling of a park. Mr. Maclin stated that Gulf Park has a pipeline running through the park and Ward Park is leased property and technically belongs to LISD. Mr. Maclin stated that Four Seasons Park was donated to the City in the early '80s and there are restrictions and deeds on the property that say it can only be used as a park. Mr. Maclin stated that it is his understanding that the residents do not want it developed into a park. Mr. Maclin stated that we need to see whether or not there is a clause that allows the property to be reverted back to the original property owner.

Ms. Fletcher stated that the Four Seasons Neighborhood Association has dissolved. She stated that parking is an issue and is very dangerous during baseball and soccer season.

Mayor Bronaugh asked how many neighborhoods take care of their own parks. Don Hannabas stated that at this time NERNA and Mantooth are the only neighborhood parks being taken care of by the residents. Don Hannabas stated that the Rotary Club has

adopted Chambers Park and the Kiwanis Club helps with the Kiwanis Park. Mr. Hannabas stated that one resident in Four Seasons Park does trim the trees. Mr. Robertson asked how much money is being spent on the maintenance of Four Seasons Park at this time.

In response to question by Mayor Bronaugh as to whether the City could sell any park they wanted to, City Manager Maclin stated that first we would have to determine which parks we have a clear title to and which parks have a "to be used for a park only" clause. Mr. Maclin stated then it would have to be taken to the voters.

Ms. Fletcher stated that there is a detention pond on Old Union Road down from the Four Seasons Subdivision and it would be a place for kids to play if Four Seasons Park is alleviated. Ms. Fletcher stated that the money used at Four Seasons then could go towards Kit McConnico Park.

In response to question by Mr. Gorden, Ms. Fletcher stated that she would be happy to talk with Elven McAdams about the City selling the park or reverting it back to him.

Ms. Watkins stated that the parks that have been discussed are low maintenance parks and she did not want to see the City take away the neighborhood parks. Ms. Watkins stated that there are people who do use Gulf Park. Ms. Watkins stated that we could keep the neighborhood parks mowed and remove the equipment and just leave an open space. Ms. Watkins stated that the things that make the parks high maintenance are the restrooms, bridges, pavilions, tennis courts and the most complaints she hears from the public is about the restrooms. Ms. Watkins stated that we need to figure out a way to keep the restrooms nice. Mayor Bronaugh stated that restrooms are a bad place for vandalism. Ms. Fletcher stated that the parks with the highest maintenance requirements are the parks that bring in money for the City.

In response to statement by Mr. Gorden that when there is an event at one of the parks the City needs to prepare for it, Mr. Hannabas stated that he provides an employee at the event and that the restroom facilities are checked on a regular basis. Mr. Hannabas stated that it is not always convenient for a male employee to clean a woman's restroom at these events because the public doesn't like to wait. Mr. Hannabas stated that Scott DeGrant is doing an excellent job in getting the parks "sparkling" and goes as far as painting over restroom graffiti.

Sumner Osgood stated that he would like to pose a philosophical question – if there is money to buy ten tennis courts, should we buy two at each site throughout the City or should we have ten tennis courts in a complex. Mr. Osgood stated that this needs to be addressed primarily because of the tennis tournaments. Mr. Osgood asked how Council would feel about "specialized" parks.

In response to question by Mayor Bronaugh, Mike Akridge stated that the City doesn't put on tennis matches but the school and the Lufkin Tennis Association do and sometimes use the City's courts.

Mr. Osgood stated on the issues of swimming pools, in his opinion, it would be better to have one big pool and close down some of the smaller ones. Mayor Bronaugh stated that ideally we would want to have them all over the City – one in every Councilmember's ward. Mr. Osgood stated that in a poll that was taken regarding recreational activities where 900 people registered their vote, 500 of them wanted better swimming facilities. Mr. Gorden stated that his preference would be to have a pool adjacent to the Middle School or High School. Ms. Todd stated that the swim team is very much interested in having a new pool in Lufkin and is willing to raise money towards that effort.

Mr. Hannabas stated that in a neighborhood association meeting recently at Garrett School the residents wanted a tennis court and a basketball court in their neighborhood and preferably a covered court.

Mr. Osgood stated that we need to balance what the neighborhoods want versus the greatest need of the City.

Mr. Robertson stated that the Tennis Association would like to have a complex for tournaments and Kiwanis Park has that now. Mayor Bronaugh stated that we might need to have less tennis courts but better courts and better maintenance.

Ms. Fletcher asked where do we go with the degree of maintenance. Mr. Bruce stated that Don, Mike and Scott have done some work on developing levels of maintenance in the specific parks. Mr. Hannabas stated that he had had Dora prepare a report on the usage of the pavilion reservations over the past five months and Chambers Park had twice as many reservations as Grace Dunn Richardson and Kiwanis. Mr. Robertson stated that the Parks Master Plan is the key, to go back and follow that direction. Mr. Robertson asked if we could maintain the parks at the standard we expect with the kind of budget we have. Mr. Robertson stated that he would be willing from a Council perspective to look putting street repairs on hold for two years and catching up in the parks. Mr. Robertson stated that this is not an easy issue. Mr. Robertson stated that some of the restrooms at City parks look like those in a third world country.

Ms. Fletcher stated that she appreciated how the Council approved so many of their requests for the budget. Ms. Fletcher stated that she hoped that they can continue to help the City, and she appreciated having the time to talk with Council this afternoon.

Ms. Watkins stated she was part of the original Master Plan group that recommended the Parks Advisory Board, and that the parks look much better now than when she started. Ms. Watkins stated that the playground equipment has come a long way but we still have a lot of work to do.

Mayor Bronaugh stated that we need to protect our parks from other government infringements, such as mowing the right-of-ways. Mayor Bronaugh stated that the neighborhood took back Brandon Park and Jones Park from criminals.

Ms. Simmons stated that she was inviting everyone in the room to Brandon Park on February 10th for an event that she would be providing information on at a later date. Ms. Simmons stated that she is concerned that we need more security at the parks and her main concern is for everyone's safety. Ms. Simmons stated that she wanted to see a spray/play in all the parks. Ms. Simmons stated that she feels like the Parks Board is doing a good job.

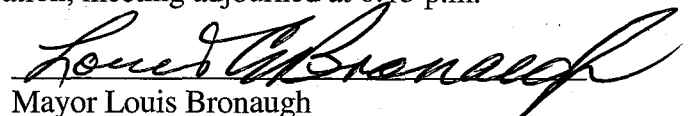
Mayor Bronaugh stated that if the Parks Board is willing, the City Council is willing to meet again.

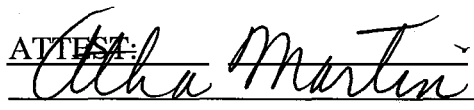
City Manager Maclin stated that he had seen a tremendous improvement in the parks since he came to Lufkin 10 1/2 years ago. Mr. Maclin stated that the Parks Board has been a very positive asset to the City. Mr. Maclin stated that if the Parks Board and the Parks Department can show that they are taking these new dollars and using them wisely, that is the ticket to get more money.

Dennis Robertson introduced Judy Maddux, Executive Director of Lufkin Youth Baseball, who is working with AB/C to get trees at Morris Frank Park and litter control.

Ms. Maddux stated that she is pleased to hear comments from the Parks Board and the Council about Morris Frank Park. Ms. Maddux stated that in her job with the Lufkin Youth Baseball she hears a lot of comments from citizens and is getting a good response from the public.

There being no further business for consideration, meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.


Mayor Louis Bronaugh

ATTEST:

Atha Martin, City Secretary