

Parks, Recreation + Tree Commission

November 2024 Minutes - DRAFT

Monday, November 18, 2024

The Parks, Recreation + Tree (PRT) Commission met at the Sylvester Powell, Jr. Community Center (PCC) on Monday, November 18, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.

In attendance: Chair Nicole Sullivan (Ward I), Vice-Chair Sarah Emanuels (Ward III). Commission Members Katie Anderson (Ward I), Dustin Wolfe (Ward I), Sarah Grittmann (Ward II), Sam Komosa (Ward II), Angela Vandegrift (Ward II), Dylon Sease (Ward III), Jacque Gameson (Ward IV), Cindy Long (Ward IV).

Council Liaisons: Councilmember Debbie Kring and Brian Schmid.

Staff: Penn Almoney, Parks and Recreation Director.

Guest: Parks and Recreation Coordinator Will Hann, Sustainability Commissioner Ellen Parker, Mission resident Chris Schlenker.

Call To Order. Chair Nicole Sullivan called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. Since we had three guests, attendees took a few seconds to introduce themselves.

Approval of Minutes. The Minutes from the October 14, 2024, Parks, Recreation + Tree Commission Meeting were reviewed. **Jacque** requested a change to clarify that she is not a Milhaven resident.

Katie motioned to approve the amended minutes; **Cindy** seconded. **Amended Minutes were approved 9-0.**¹

Introductions. **Penn** introduced new Parks and Recreation Coordinator **Will Hann**. A recent Emporia State graduate, **Will** recently completed an internship with the City of Shawnee before “blowing Penn away at his interview”. Will thanked Penn for the introduction and shared that he was excited to join Mission.

Positive Improvements:

Dylon and **Sarah E.** each noted that the playground resurfacing had been completed at Water Works Park. Penn shared that the contractors used significantly more glue to strengthen the protruding surface areas.

Ellen commended the new native grass on Johnson Drive.

Katie shared that the Spooky Walk was a success and said that the complimentary little flashlights were enormously popular. **Penn** agreed, sharing that the additional bus improved the flow of traffic as the longest wait for a bus was 15 minutes, which was a 30-minute improvement from last year.

November Sustainability Liaison:

¹ Dustin arrived after the amended minutes were approved.

Angela attended the November 4 Sustainability Commission meeting. She shared that the Sustainability Commission is looking for volunteers for Adopt-A-Street clean up. **Ellen** added that the Sustainability Commission adopted a stretch of Shawnee Mission Parkway between Roeland Drive and Squibb Road. They are looking for volunteers to assist with the quarterly road clean up, noting that it seemed natural to include the PRT Commission in the program.

Additionally, **Ellen** thanked the PRT Commission for the inclusion of Sustainability Commission on the Tree Drive.

Maintenance:

Nicole noticed that there was a significant number of leaves – potentially blocking the pathway – at the southeast entrance to Water Works Park near the utility area.

Action Items & Work Session Feasibility Study:

Penn shared that the Parks and Recreation Department is presenting feasibility study updates at the City Council work session on Wednesday, November 20 at 6:00pm. He and Business Manager, Brian LaRette, will provide key performance indicators and patron feedback to aid City Council in decision-making for 2025.

Membership Coordinator, Janet Moore, is retiring. **Penn** shared that the department hosted a surprise retirement party with more than 70 attendees, including her family and past employees. She was presented with a bronze plaque commemorating her 22 years of service that will accompany a tree in her honor at Mohawk Park. In response to a staff vacancy question from **Cindy**, **Penn** shared that Brian LaRette will evaluate the Membership Coordinator position and the existing needs of the PCC entry desk.

Jacque commended the Parks and Recreation “Shout Out” of Kathy Lockhard on Facebook. **Penn** shared that each month we are “shouting out” two employees or patrons who have worked or attended the PCC for its entire 25-year history.

Penn reached out to Markis Hill – Dennis Patton’s replacement with the JoCo Master Gardeners group. He recommended that the PRT Commission invite Markis Hill to present at the December 9 meeting. A consensus of PRT Commissioners voiced their approval.

Angela connected **Penn** with Daniel Lassman, a restoration ecologist. Restoration ecology is the scientific study of restoring damaged ecosystems through human intervention. He recommended that the PRT Commission invite Daniel Lassman to present at our January 13 meeting. A consensus of PRT Commissioners voiced their approval.

Tree Care Basics Training:

Jacque gave a ten-minute presentation on tree care basics. Among the many things discussed were tips on tree selection, planting, pruning, maintenance, and watering. She said that this was information provided in the Tree Keepers course and endorsed it for PRT Commissioners to attend in the future.

Champion Tree Nominations:

Penn said we have yet to receive a 2024 Championship Tree nomination. He challenged PRT Commissioners to talk to friends and neighbors to identify worthy trees for a vote at the December meeting.

Chair/Vice-Chair Nominations:

Nicole announced that we must elect a new Chair and Vice-Chair for 2025. We will deliberate nominations at the December meeting with a vote at the January meeting.

Family Adoption & Holiday Light & Festive Sights Volunteers:

Penn announced that the annual Holiday Family Adoption program is ongoing with the giving tree in the south corridor of the PCC. This year the program will provide Thanksgiving dinner and Christmas gifts to 60 families. The deadline for Thanksgiving donations is Friday, November 22 and the deadline for Christmas donations is December 16. In a response to a question from **Katie**, **Penn** shared that families are selected based upon needs after discussions with Shawnee Mission School District social workers.

Holiday Lights and Festive Sights is Friday, December 6 from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Mission Market site. **Penn** invited Commissioners to reach out to Jenny Smith to volunteer as at least five are needed.

Upcoming Notes and Meetings:

The Mohawk Park Ribbon Cutting is Thursday, November 21 at 4:00 p.m. with Grounded Coffee providing complimentary hot beverages. **Penn** advised that there may be a portion of the playground that still needs to be completed, but he is hopeful that it will be resolved by the ribbon cutting. All PRT Commissioners are welcome to join.

Adjournment:

Cindy moved to adjourn the meeting; **Sarah G** seconded the motion. **Motion passed 10-0.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

Faithfully submitted by Sam Komosa, secretary pro tempore.