

**Pre-Council Meeting - Final
September 17, 2018
6:00 PM**

*Present: Mayor Max Bacon Charles "Corkey" Welch Tim Gould
Maryline Blackburn Ron Fennel
Andrea Blustein Susan Wilkinson*

Absent: Derek Norton

Also Present: Tammi Saddler Jones (City Administrator), Scott Cochran (City Attorney), Terri Graham (City Clerk), Scott Andrews (Assistant City Administrator), Ken Suddreth (Director of Community Development), Rusty Martin (Senior Planner), Richard Garland (Director of Parks and Rec.), Ashley Youmans (Management Fellow), Christy Ullman (Executive Assistant to the Mayor and Council), and Tina Monaghan (Deputy City Clerk), Tyler Addison (Athletics and Aqua, Parks and Rec)

Mayor Max Bacon called the Pre-Council Meeting to Order at 6:00 PM.

Mayor Bacon called on Tammi Saddler Jones to begin with the City Administrator's Report, she advised that her report would be comprised of a review of the Park's Master Plan and she would turn the report over to Mr. Richard Garland.

Mr. Richard Garland, Director of Parks and Rec, introduced Mr. Carlos Perez of Perez Planning and Design, LLC and Mr. Neelay Bhatt of PROS Consulting who were there to present the information from Phase Three of Recreate Smyrna.

The process of the project is a typical comprehensive plan process where several stages are involved. The City has a very diverse population in age, cultural and economic areas. Excellence in service, memorable activities,

Excellence in service is the first item of focus. Taylor Brawner Park was used as the benchmark park for the City as it is viewed as the best that the City currently has to offer. Operations and management key findings are that we need to maintain and improve what we currently have as well as continue to spend wisely, but spend more on parks and recreation.

There is a need to update organizational structure. It is important for employees to think of the City first and a functionally aligned organizational structure promotes this. Maximize programs and events and then focus on the facilities needed to allow these things. Focus on volunteers and explore sponsorships in order to save money but still offer the things that people want.

Marketing and communications is key in successful parks and recreation departments. One of the top reasons that people don't use facilities and parks is because they do not know what is offered. They also don't know the location of the parks and facilities. This is not just a City

problem but a national problem. Ways to get this information out there include maps with QR codes and apps that bring the information to the people.

Councilmember Ron Fennel commented on how he recently had trouble finding a specific soccer field due to poor signage.

Next piece of the puzzle is memorable activities. A core list of programs needs to be identified and groups such as the High School age group need to be a focus since they are one of the hardest groups to create programs for. Parks and recreation is often the gateway to programs and events.

In terms of outdoor activities, the number one priority of those interviewed is dog parks.

The analysis of signature places reveals that there is good park coverage in the north part of the City but are lacking in the southern part of the City.

Councilmember Susan Wilkinson spoke of some of the existing parks in the northern part of the City that do not benefit or serve all citizens.

Research reveals that high priorities include indoor pools and indoor fitness centers. Examples of a redesign of parks to include indoor facilities were shown with a sketch of Tolleson Park but this is just a concept which would need to be vetted through the public for approval.

Nature trails are something that people highly desire and there could be a nature center on the south side of the City to complete these kinds of trails.

The next step is to test these ideas through a feasibility process.

High quality linkage between parks and facilities including on street and off street facilities for walking and biking are key to the success of parks and recreation programs across the nation.

The next step is to hear feedback from the Council, City Administrator's Office, and the Finance Department to discuss possible funding options.

Mayor Bacon asked about improving what the City already has without adding additional property. The answer to this was that CIP dollars are available but that this should be vetted with the community.

Mr. Fennel spoke of Chuck Camp Park where the City could explore options. There is also Riverview Park which is an additional 12 acres of park property that can be taken into consideration.

The Mayor inquired about how much use the baseball park received since some feel that it is isolated and needs a better footprint.

Councilmember Tim Gould asked what strategies other cities are using that have been successful especially with getting land. The answer from Mr. Neelay Bhatt was impact fees from developers. Cities are encouraging developers to build parks and recreation spaces.

Ms. Wilkinson spoke of ways of creating parks such as going over or under and making use of connectors and tops of buildings. She also mentioned adding a splash pad. These are things that she had seen other cities with high density issues use to create more space.

Mr. Bhatt explained that the key to park areas is using space creatively. An area can be used for multiple purposes as long as it is planned and laid out correctly. This enables the City to make the most of what it has.

Ms. Wilkinson asked for a larger map so that the details can be better viewed and studied. She also reiterated that the areas in the northern part of the city that are considered parks are not ideal, as the dog park does not allow children and there is no playground either.

Mayor Bacon liked the idea of sponsorships and upgrading what the city already has including changing use of existing parks.

City Administrator Saddler Jones introduced Ms. Blackburn and Mr. Gould to Mr. Perez and Mr. Bhatt as they are new to the Council since the last presentation.

Review of the Agenda for the September 17, 2018 Council Meeting

Mayor Bacon announced that Item A on the agenda will be tabled indefinitely.

The Mayor asked if there were any questions or concerns regarding the annexation and rezoning of the Old Concord Road property.

Ms. Wilkinson expressed concern about the shared driveway on the Old Concord Road project.

Councilmember Andrea Blustein spoke of the difficulty of keeping people on the tree board since Wednesday is a busy night for many people.

Ms. Tammi Saddler Jones clarified the item on the consent agenda pertaining to road closing on Oak Drive and stated that the staff recommendation was the City stick with the ordinance which is 9am until 4pm.

Ms. Blustein is concerned about how often the same streets are being closed.

Ms. Wilkinson agreed with Ms. Blustein that it seemed like the same streets are always being closed and that maybe alternatives should be looked into.

Mayor Bacon inquired about a presentation that Mr. Norton was going to do but was not present.

Councilmember Charles (Corky) Welch said that he didn't know much about it but that he would do the presentation during the Mayor's Report.

Mr. Fennel announced that the City of Stonecrest would be visiting the City on Monday, September 24, 2018 and invited the other Council members to participate.

Assistant City Administrator Scott Andrews spoke about the Youth Council and how he hopes that they could be recognized at a future meeting.

Ms. Wilkinson talked about a story that she wished to share at a future meeting regarding a homeless man who was helped and it ended with a positive outcome.

Mayor Bacon adjourned the Pre-Council Meeting at 6:58 PM.