

Minutes
PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD
December 11, 1978

The Parks and Recreation Board met for its regular meeting at 12:00 noon, Monday, December 11, 1978, at the Austin Parks and Recreation Department. Present were Mr. Garrison, Chairman; Mr. Hall, Vice Chairman; Mr. Bray, Secretary; and members Mrs. Arnold, Miss Dominguez, Mr. Coffee, Mr. Nalle, Mrs. Isely, Mr. Ramos, Mr. Rose, Mr. Shaw and Ms. Stockard. Mr. Britton was absent. Members Emeritus absent were Mr. Coates and Mrs. Crenshaw. Staff members present were Leonard Ehrler, Mike Segrest, Roy Guerrero, Dorothy Nan McLean, Dick Martin, Crystal Stewart, Jo Bright, Bob Delaney, Jim Jacksits, Dan Whitworth and Louise Nivison. Visitors included Mr. Clay Strange from the Legal Department and Mr. Lannis Kircus representing the Zilker Park Railroad, Inc.

The meeting was called to order at 12:22 p.m., by Mr. Garrison, Chairman.

Mr. Garrison asked for approval of the minutes of November 28, 1978. Mrs. Arnold asked that the minutes be corrected on page 7, line 9, beginning with word 9 to read, "the Capital Improvements Program for the Parks and Recreation bond election" It was moved by Mr. Bray and seconded by Mr. Hall that the minutes be approved as corrected.

Under Items from Board Members, Mr. Bray stated that the Little Dribblers Program was starting this week. This was the basketball program through the Capital City Youth Basketball Program. Also, the Board would like to welcome Mark Rose back, who had been ill.

ZILKER PARK RAILROAD PROPOSAL

Mr. Garrison stated the first item for action was consideration of the Zilker Park Railroad proposal. Mr. Lannis Kircus was present to answer any questions the Board might have. Mr. Kircus explained that the primary buyer, Mr. Gregory L. Daily, bidding at \$180,000 should be present shortly. Since the last Board meeting the secondary buyer, Mr. Jeffery S. Gunter, has raised his bid from \$175,000 to \$180,000. Mr. Kircus stated their request was still permission to renegotiate the contract with the present owners. Mr. Ramos asked if the prospective buyer intended to run the business. Mr. Kircus stated this was correct. Mr. Bray stated that he appreciated the information furnished in the agenda. It was moved by Mr. Bray and seconded by Mr. Hall that the Parks and Recreation Board recommend extension of the present contract for 15 years under terms and conditions to be carefully reviewed and negotiated by the City Attorney's Office; that the Parks and Recreation Board have an opportunity to review before final acceptance and with a view toward having assurances, (1) that the renegotiated contract be very carefully structured to assure proper maintenance and proper replacement with respect to the improvements that are there; (2) that any future transfers either of assets or stock be subject to approval of the City of Austin; that the City of Austin receive a fair share from the concession; and that the contract be renegotiated at the current 35¢ per ride fare. Mr. Garrison stated that Mr. Clay Strange, Assistant City Attorney, was present to speak on the matter. Mr. Strange stated that the motion before the Board was

appropriate and he would be working with the owners of the Zilker Park Railroad, Inc., in renegotiating the contract. Mr. Ehrler asked if City Council approval be secured first or could the Parks and Recreation Board give permission for the Parks and Recreation Department to proceed with renegotiating the contract. Mr. Strange stated that it was not necessary to go to the City Council first, the department could proceed with negotiations and when a final document was prepared then it could go to City Council for approval. Mr. Kircus stated that they would work very closely with the Legal Department on the contract. Mr. Ehrler stated that if permission was asked to extend the contract he felt the City Council should be made aware of why. Mr. Daily was present and Mr. Garrison asked if he planned to operate the concession himself. Mr. Daily stated that he would when necessary but would hire two drivers. Mr. Hall asked if this was his main source of livelihood. Mr. Daily stated that he was also in the real estate business. Miss Dominguez asked if Mr. Daily saw a need to increase the present fare of 35¢. Mr. Daily stated that he did foresee an increase in the future as costs increased. Mr. Kircus stated that there could not be an increase in fare without the approval of the City Council. Mr. Bray stated that he felt the Board would be against any increase in fare. The motion carried. Mr. Bray asked Mr. Strange to allow the Board to review the contract before it is formally accepted. Mr. Garrison thanked everyone for attending.

MABEL DAVIS PARK POOL

Mr. Garrison stated that the next item for action was consideration of approval of preliminary design and environmental considerations report for Mabel Davis District Park Olympic Swimming Pool Facilities. Mr. Ehrler stated that in order to keep within the \$700,000 amount there had to be some changes in the bathhouse, the filter system and a smaller parking lot, none of which were of major importance. There was further discussion. Ms. Stockard asked if there had been neighborhood input. Mr. Segrest stated there had been at a number of meetings during the development of the master plan for the park. Mr. Coffee asked if the water from the pool would drain into the lake there. Mr. Segrest stated that it would, but the water would not affect the marine life in the lake. After further discussion, it was moved by Mr. Coffee and seconded by Mrs. Isely that the Parks and Recreation Board recommend approval of the Preliminary Design and Environmental Considerations Report for Mabel Davis District Park Olympic Swimming Pool Facilities with the Parks and Recreation Department requesting a change in the design to maintain a one foot drop (from 4' to 5') from the shallow end of the pool to the beginning of the diving area. The motion carried unanimously.

BARTON CREEK GREENBELT

Mr. Garrison stated that the next item for action was consideration of approval of acceptance of land adjacent to the Barton Creek Greenbelt. Ms. Stockard asked if this was the land that she had inquired about in an earlier Board meeting. Mr. Garrison stated that it was not. Mr. Segrest stated that Dan Wilson was checking to see if Jaggar and Associates were on City property. Jaggar and Associates had been given an easement to work in, but it was possible that they were infringing on City property. After further discussion, it was moved by Mr. Hall and seconded by Mr. Shaw that the Parks and Recreation Board recommend to the Mayor and City Council that the City of Austin accept the donation from Mr. Bill Milburn of 3.716 acres of land in the Horse-shoe Bend area and adjacent to the Barton Creek Greenbelt in the Gus Fruh District Park. The motion carried unanimously. It was suggested that a

letter of appreciation from the Board be sent to Mr. Bill Milburn.

RECREATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Mr. Garrison stated that the next item for action was consideration of a Recreational Transportation System for Downtown Revitalization Program. Mr. Garrison stated that this was a recommendation from the Urban Transportation Department. The Urban Transportation Department was suggesting either rubber tired trolleys or rubber tired vehicles along the lines of English Double-Decker Buses to link with a ferry boat system. The system could highlight the cultural and historical attractions that make our city so unique. Mr. Bray stated that the proposal looked good in concept. Mrs. Arnold stated that she was not in favor of the double-decker buses. Mr. Joe Ternus, Director of the Urban Transportation Department, was to develop a transit system for downtown Austin. Some of the persons involved in transportation and City planning had requested in the summer that they be allowed to review whatever plan Mr. Ternus developed. Mr. Ternus had stated that he would be happy to do this but to date nothing had been reviewed by the group. Perhaps Mr. Ternus planned to reveal plans as he goes along. Mr. Bray asked about the concept of the plan. Mr. Coffee stated that perhaps the Board could endorse the concept and stay away from the particulars of the plan. After further discussion, it was moved by Mr. Coffee that the Parks and Recreation Board are enthusiastic about the concept of the proposed Downtown Revitalization Program Recreational Transportation System and recommends that a Citizens Review Committee be formed to work with the Urban Transportation Department in reviewing the details of such a plan prior to presentation to the public, and that two members from the Parks and Recreation Board be appointed to serve on this committee. The motion was seconded by Mr. Rose and unanimously carried.

LOWERING OF LAKE AUSTIN

Mr. Garrison stated that the next item for action was consideration of a request to lower Lake Austin. Mr. Segrest stated that he had talked with Mr. Peterson from the Electric Utility and he had indicated the Lower Colorado River Authority was not receptive to lowering the lake at this time for two reasons: (1) All lake levels are low and if Lake Austin was lowered they were afraid they would not be able to refill it to the proper level; (2) They now have one steam generating unit down for repairs and another will be down for repairs within the next two months, thus forcing the L. C. R. A. to rely heavily on hydro-electric units. Last year it cost the Electric Utility \$4,000 to lower the lake. They could not project what the cost would be for this year. If it should be \$40,000 to \$50,000 a special appropriation would have to be approved by the City Council. Mr. Nalle stated that the Lower Colorado River Authority was always against lowering Lake Austin because the duckweed did not bother them at all. When Mr. Nalle was on the Navigation Board, the L.C.R.A. would always give an estimate of a minimum of \$20,000 to one-half million dollars. Last year the lake was lowered in November and it was not cold enough to kill the duckweed. After further discussion, it was moved by Mr. Hall and seconded by Ms. Stockard that the Parks and Recreation Board recommend to the City Council that Lake Austin be lowered during the months of January or February, 1979. The motion carried unanimously.

WALNUT CREEK PARK

Mr. Ehrler stated that the next item for action was consideration of submitting a grant for the development of Walnut Creek Park. The Parks and Recreation Department would like permission from the Board to apply for Land and Water Conservation funds through the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service (formerly B.O.R.), in the smount of \$437,675. In order for the City to come up with the matching funds it would be necessary to transfer approximately \$10,000 from Land Acquisition funds for enlarging Walnut Creek Park. The application needs to be in by December 31, 1978. These figures would be based on the success of the bond election. After further discussion, it was moved by Mr. Shaw and seconded by Mr. Bray that the Parks and Recreation Board recommend to the City Council permission for the Parks and Recreation Department to apply for a grant in the amount of \$437,675 for the Walnut Creek Park through the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service. The motion carried unanimously.

LEARN-TO-SWIM PROGRAM

Ms. Stockard stated that she noticed on this week's City Council agenda that a fee of \$3.50 for the learn-to-swim program was to be considered. She asked if this has previously been brought before the Board. Mr. Ehrler stated that when the City Council cut the Parks and Recreation Department budget, they had cut the seasonal help. This eliminated the personnel needed to teach the learn-to-swim classes. The charge of \$3.50 was an effort to reinstate the program and would be to pay for the instructors only. Ms. Stockard stated that she was opposed to charging a fee for this program. She felt there were many East Austin children who could not afford to pay for the lessons. Mr. Ehrler stated that there would have to be a charge or there would be no program. Mrs. Arnold asked if anyone had contacted the Red Cross for volunteers. Mr. Ehrler stated that he was quite sure that Mr. Warrick, Superintendent of Athletics and Aquatics, had explored every possibility to carry on the program without charging. Ms. Stockard asked if the Board could pass a policy that if someone wanted to take swimming lessons and could not afford to pay that the fee would be waived. Mr. Ehrler stated that fees were set by City Council and could not be waived. A moderate revenue program was something they would have to look at in the future. Mr. Segrest stated that in many instances in low income areas, advisory boards for various recreation centers would raise funds to help. There was also a difference in the number of children registering for the learn-to-swim program and the number completing the program. He felt if a fee were charged the number of children completing the program would be higher. Mr. Bray stated that he personally applauded the efforts of the staff in trying to keep the programs going and personally supported a nominal charge, so long as a provision was made for persons who truly could not afford the charge. Mr. Rose stated that if we are moving toward a fee structure for recreation services, what do they do when fees come before the Board in the future. Mr. Ehrler stated that the Parks and Recreation Department at the present time was working on a set of policies that would come before the Board in the next few months. Right now the staff is trying to set guidelines for policies that would be coming before the Board and the City Council for approval. It would give guidelines where if fees were to be charged, these are the ones we do charge and these are the ones we do not charge and for this reason. Ms. Stockard stated that she realized this was not the fault

of the Parks and Recreation Department, but perhaps someone could be found from the University of Texas who would volunteer to teach. She would like to see some provision made before next summer. Mr. Coffee stated that all the fee structures needed to be reviewed. Mr. Ehrler stated that he felt all questions would be answered when the Parks and Recreation Department policies are reviewed by the Board. Ms. Stockard stated that she as a citizen, not as a Parks and Recreation Board member, planned to attend the City Council meeting to protest the charge. Mr. Coffee stated that if Parks and Recreation Department policies were to be reviewed after the first of the year, why not send a letter to the Mayor and City Council explaining the situation and let them decide what they want to do. Mr. Ehrler stated that a decision needed to be made now so that preparations could begin to implement the program. There was further discussion, and it was agreed that Mr. Garrison would send a letter to the Mayor and City Council advising them that the Parks and Recreation Board would in the near future be reviewing fees and policies for the Parks and Recreation Department and would at that time make a recommendation concerning the proposed \$3.50 charge for the learn-to-swim program. Several Board members stated that they did not feel the charge was too much.

FESTIVAL BEACH

Mr. Coffee asked about the \$60,000 for improvements on Festival Beach for the East Town Lake Neighborhood Association. Mr. Ehrler stated that this was the group that had appeared before the Board at an earlier meeting and they still had not made their decision for all of the improvements. The Parks and Recreation Department staff were working with the group.

The meeting adjourned at 1:40 p.m.