

*City-Parish Recreation Advisory Commission
Programs Committee
September 16, 2024 Meeting Minutes*

Present: Judy Placer, Kristopher Harrison, Thaddeus Shelvin, Harold Porter, Tim Sensley, Ross Gresham, Alena Fields, Chris Arceneaux, Todd Robertson, David Gary, Nourine Lanerie

Committee Chairperson Judy Placer calls the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. Opened with a Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance.

Recognition of Guests/Staff Members:

Committee Chairperson Judy Placer welcomes the commissioners and staff in attendance. She welcomes the guests as follows: Kathy Ruckstuhl with the Acadiana Community Tennis Association (ACTA), Barbara Gauthier with Scott Area Team Sports (SATS), Jo Charles and Donna Duhon.

Judy advises that this committee meeting is to discuss programs outside of the regular commission meeting. The goal is to discuss what programs are going on and what can be done to improve them. Judy adds that good programs will make this department stand out.

Brown Park Association Election

Ross advises that the Brown Park Association (BPA) has a total of 12 members, including their executive board that has been elected. He has attended their meetings; however, their last meeting was cancelled and he is not sure of when the next one will be held. They have decided to start up their athletic programs in December with the basketball season. Harold asks Ross to let him know when the next meeting is scheduled so that he can attend. Judy asks if the board meetings are open meetings. Tim explains that they are open to the community.

Youth/Adult Programs

Ross advises that volleyball, flag football, and tackle football are all underway. Football is played at Clark Field on Saturdays and volleyball is played at various recreation centers on Saturdays. Judy asks if adult flag football was offered. Ross advises that it was not; the only adult sport offered is basketball.

Judy asks if the participation numbers are up from last year. Ross explains that they are about the same. He adds that Cajun Sports Association (CSA) is not participating in football or volleyball. Harold advises that a lot of participants are playing in Youngsville; however, the infrastructure is not keeping up. Judy adds that they are pulling a lot of kids from Lafayette. Thaddeus agrees and advises that travel ball is growing and the options are endless; he does not see it slowing down anytime soon. Judy advises that travel ball is good for some; however, not everyone can afford it. If the PARC Department can beef up their programs, more participants would join. Thaddeus asks what the registration fee is. Ross asks Barbara Gauthier (guest) to provide information on the fees. Ms. Gauthier explains that SATS charges \$105 for tackle football; each additional child is \$75. The charge for volleyball and flag football is \$80; each additional child in the household is charged \$50. Judy asks if the non-participation of CSA is a good thing. Ross advises that it is not great for the department; he agrees with his predecessors that all associations should be encouraged to play within the department's sports programs. Ross adds that a lot has been lost in translation over the last few years. Thaddeus asks if the neighborhood zones are still in place. Ross confirms that they are; however, they need to be redrawn. The old maps still show Broussard/Youngsville Youth Association (BYYA) and South Lafayette Youth Sports Incorporated (SLYSI), which are both dissolved. Ross advises that he will need assistance from the commission to get the zones redrawn and in line with the youth guide. Judy asks where the kids that live in SLYSI's zone are playing. Ross explains that there are not many participants; however, those that sign up are permitted to play in any association. Judy asks why there is no SLYSI board. Ross advises that he and Walter Guillory had assembled a board;

however, there was not enough participation. Kristopher asks if it would be possible to elect another SLYSI board. Ross advises that it is possible if there is a group of people who are willing to step up. Judy suggests that the commissioner who represents that area take the lead. Kristopher confirms that SLYSI is in his area and he will look into reviving it.

Tennis

Judy introduces and welcomes Kathy Ruckstuhl (guest). She asks Ms. Ruckstuhl to provide an update on tennis programs. Mr. Ruckstuhl advises that the Acadiana Community Tennis Association (ACTA) has entered into a partnership with LCG to redo four courts at Thomas and the project is expected to last six months. Ms. Ruckstuhl advises that the ACTA is gearing up to launch a fundraising program and it will go live next week. Ms. Ruckstuhl adds that ACTA is a non-profit organization. The league is also increasing to a six-person team format and there is one state tournament left for this year.

Judy advises that five courts are needed for league play; however, there are only four good courts at Thomas. Ms. Ruckstuhl explains that people either wait for an open court or play on one of the front courts. Judy asks if there are any plans for the unplayable courts at Thomas. Ms. Ruckstuhl advises that a new grant may be available. Judy adds that getting the courts at Thomas in playable condition is a priority. Ms. Ruckstuhl agrees and thanks Tim for securing the additional funds needed. Judy asks Ms. Ruckstuhl if she has any information on "red ball" tennis. Ms. Ruckstuhl explains that a smaller racket is used and the game is played on smaller courts. It is great for new tennis players who are learning the game.

Swimming

Judy asks for an update on swimming programs at Robicheaux. Ross advises that the City of Lafayette Aquatics (COLA) runs the swimming programs there. Alena adds that Jennifer Simms offer swimming lessons at the Martin Luther King (MLK) pool. Judy suggests that Ms. Simms use the Earl J Chris Pool at the Robicheaux Center to offer lessons since it is an indoor pool. Alena explains that the pools are under two different organizations. Judy advises that more aerobic and therapy programs need to be offered at the pools. If the pool at the Robicheaux Center is a city owned pool, Ms. Simms should be allowed to utilize it. She asks if the MLK pool will ever be completely enclosed. Tim advises that he has a meeting at Public Works on Wednesday regarding the project. Judy adds that she would like to see the swimming program ramped up. She asks for an update on the Girard and OJ Mouton pools. Tim advises that the plan is to have the Girard pool up and running by next summer; however, the OJ Mouton pool will require extensive repairs before it can be opened. Judy suggests that the OJ Mouton pool be filled in and used for something productive if it is not going to be reopened.

Pickleball

Alena advises that pickleball is still being offered on Wednesdays mornings at the Thomas Recreation Center and the Recreation Coordinators within the Athletics Division are assisting with the staffing. Free play pickleball is also offered in the evening at the Comeaux, Dupuis, and Robicheaux Recreation Centers. It was also offered at the Domingue Center; however, there were not many participants. Judy asks if the outdoor pickleball courts at Beaulieu Park are being used regularly. Ross confirms that they are used a lot and participants are able to play under the lights at night.

Thomas Skate Park

Tim advises that the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Thomas Skate Park is tentatively scheduled for October 17, 2024. The lighting still needs to be installed and the concrete still needs to be poured in the transition area. He will let the commission know once the ribbon cutting ceremony is confirmed. Judy asks if any programs have been set up to teach people how to use the skate park. Tim advises that the skate park community is heavily involved, so they may be able to provide some training. Judy suggests that someone from the skate park community attend the next commission meeting to provide an update. She is

also concerned about the safety issues. Ross advises that signage will be put up explaining that skaters are skating at their own risk.

Golf

Judy asks for an update on the golf course closures due to the weather. Chris explains that each month is challenging based on the weather. Todd adds that Les Vieux Chenes (LVC) was closed for four days last month. The drainage issues on Ambassador Caffery near the golf course are also a contributing factor. Tim advises that he will speak with the Director of the Drainage Department to see what can be done. Judy asks for an update on the process at the golf course once it is closed due to weather. David explains that it is never feasible to leave the golf course open for a few golfers; therefore, when the golf course closes, a staff member remains to answer the phone and the course can also be contacted through email or Facebook. Chris advises that the answering machine message also has instructions on how to book a tee time online.

Senior Center Programming

Alena advises that both senior centers are filled up with programming. Ms. Jo Charles (guest) has been offering programs since 1975 for seniors 55 and above. The senior centers also provide resources for seniors.

Alena introduces Donna Duhon, the Senior Center Coordinator at the Greenhouse. Ms. Duhon advises that she enjoys working with the seniors and initiating new programs. Judy suggests that the senior centers solicit some media coverage to promote their programs. Thaddeus asks if transportation is provided for seniors to get to the centers. Alena advises that there is no transportation offered through LCG; however, she refers seniors to the SMILE action agency for assistance with transportation. Alena adds that some senior health care plans will assist with transportation as long as there is a health component involved.

Chris advises that he has teamed up with the Council on Aging to provide an event for seniors that will take place on October 19th. He recently provided a free program for veterans and it was a great success.

Judy advises that there is so much going on with the department and the word needs to get out. Judy suggests that a staff member attend one of the local tv shows weekly to promote the programs. Discussion follows.

Staffing Concerns

Judy asks if Walter Guillory's position has been filled yet. Tim advises that a candidate has been selected and an offer is on the table. Judy adds that she hopes the new Civil Service pay plan will help attract qualified workers and eliminate some of the staffing concerns.

Other

Judy advises that the December committee meeting is usually a Christmas Social for the youth program volunteers. She suggests that a committee be formed to start the planning process. Discussion follows.

Program Recognition

Judy introduces and welcomes Jo Charles. She provides the following summary:

In recognition of Ms. Josephine Shropshire-Charles:

Josephine Shropshire-Charles is the sixth of ten children born to Gladys and Herman Shropshire. She is the proud mother of one daughter, Tanya Charles-Brown, and the loving grandmother to three grandchildren: Chelsea, Cody, and Carson, as well as her grandson-in-law, Scotty.

Ms. Charles earned both her Bachelor's and Master's degrees, along with an additional 30 hours, in Education from Southern University in Baton Rouge. She dedicated many years to teaching in the public-school system before transitioning to higher education, where she became a professor in the Kinesiology Department at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

In addition to her academic career, Ms. Charles has been a steadfast contributor to the Lafayette community. For many summers, she worked with the Lafayette Parks and Recreation Department to organize engaging summer activities for local children.

In 1975, she created an adult exercise program for the Lafayette community, which was followed by the formation of the Tiny Tots Dance Team. She held classes at Heymann Park, the MLK Center, and the Domingue Center, leaving a lasting legacy in these community spaces. One of her favorite mottos, which she shared with many, is "Move it or lose it."

Ms. Joe Charles continues to teach today, offering chair aerobics classes to seniors at the Greenhouse Senior Center every Tuesday and Thursday and "Walkercise", walking program. Her lifelong passion for fitness and unwavering dedication to the community remain a true inspiration, as she continues to motivate others to stay active, healthy, and engaged through her remarkable work.

Judy thanks Ms. Charles for her many years of service. Alena presents Ms. Charles with a gift in recognition of her ongoing assistance and programs offered for the seniors of the community. Ms. Charles thanks everyone and adds that she really loves what she does.

Harold Porter motions to adjourn; seconded by Kristopher Harrison; no opposition; motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 6:38 p.m.