

**MINUTES  
CARBONDALE PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION  
September 8,  
2021**

Hollis Sutherland called the in-person/virtual meeting of the Carbondale Parks & Recreation Commission to order at 7:00 p.m. at Carbondale Town Hall on September 8, 2021.

**ROLL CALL**

The following members were present for roll call:

Members: Hollis Sutherland, Chair  
Rose Rossello, Vice Chair  
Leslie Keery, Member  
Ashley Hejtmanek, Member  
Susan Rhea, Member  
Misha Logan, Youth Member  
Brian Soby, Alternate

Town Staff Present: Eric Brendlinger, Parks & Recreation Department Director  
Jessi Rochel, Recreation Center & Recreation Programs Manager  
Luis Yllanes, Board of Trustees Liaison  
Kae McDonald, Boards & Commission Clerk

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**Motion Passed:** Rose *moved* to approve the minutes from the August 11, 2021, meeting. Ashley *seconded* the motion, and it was *unanimously approved*.

**ITEMS FROM CITIZENS PRESENT NOT ON THE AGENDA**

There was no one present, not on the agenda, to address the Commission.

**WELCOME TO NEW PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEMBERS. DECISION OF ONBOARDING DATES AND RECOGNITION OF OUTGOING MEMBERS**

I'd like to welcome our new commission members, Leslie, Susan and Misha, we are delighted to have you join us. John congratulations on your reappointment. It is good to have you continuing on with us. I want to thank each of you for being a part of this team. Everyone's life is full and for you to give of your time, talents, energy, and expertise to be on this volunteer committee is a gift to the staff, trustees, citizens and visitors of Carbondale.

Thank you for entrusting me as the Chair of the Commission again this year. It means a lot to me that you put your faith in me to lead our team. We have a smart, thoughtful, experienced group of diverse individuals who have come together to do fantastic things for our community. While we may not always agree on priorities, the approach, or the process, we come out with a better product having these differing viewpoints.

The Commission has been operating under a set of standards which I'd like to remind the returning Commissioners of and share with the new Commissioners.

- Elevate Your Perspective
- We all come in with our own passions, preferences, and individual biases. I ask that each time you enter this meeting room, you check those personal filters at the door and acknowledge that our role is to serve the Town of Carbondale and the diverse interests of our citizens. To look at what is possible and where opportunities lie and what is best in serving the Town, even if that is different from our own interests.
- Listen to understand
- Assume value and good intent - in each of us
- Respect the inherent worth and dignity of every person
- Separate the person from the behavior
- It's not me vs. you, but us vs. the issues

- Stay open and non-defensive
- Value diverse perspectives
- Create an environment where everyone feels free to speak and guests feel welcome
- Share “air-time” and don’t belabor a topic
- No side bars
- Maintain a sense of humor
- Have fun!

We are the ‘Commission on Fun’, so let’s make this a fun year! We have a lot of exciting things going on. How lucky are we to be working on things that involve people’s leisure time and supports their health and wellbeing? Thank you again for being on this Commission – each of you is integral to our success! I invite you to contact me outside these meetings to talk about what’s on your mind and how we can make this Commission even better than it is.

Hollis also explained that she is working to complete an onboarding packet that should be ready for the October meeting. She went on to say that she has been on the Parks & Recreation Commission since 2010 and there has never been any training, including what is required for boards and commissions under Colorado’s Sunshine Law. Hollis stated that her goal was to help everyone feel comfortable with the process. She also noted that she does want to recognize Celeste, Becky, and Tracy for their service and there are plans for a short “Meet and Greet” just prior to the October meeting. Hollis noted that both Rose and Ashley expressed an interest in planning the party and she expressly asked them to do so.

### **BENCHMARKING RV PARK FEES AND PROPOSED FEE INCREASE FOR 2022**

Eric noted that there is a memo in the packet that outlined the proposed fee increase at the Gateway RV Park. He explained that reservations at the park have exploded and there was direction at previous Parks & Recreation Commission meeting to consider raising the rates at the park. During the benchmarking process against similar facilities in the area as well as a municipally owned RV Park in Golden, Eric found that they are undercharging. Eric noted that a rate increase can be justified by the infrastructure improvements at the RV Park including a four-year project revamping the electric service along with improvements to the Wi-Fi service. Eric is proposing a 35% increase on all site reservation costs and noted that the benchmarking process also illustrated that Carbondale is too lenient on the cancellation policy, so that was changed as well. Eric also explained that normally this process would be covered under Schedule A work in November and December, but because the RV Park begins taking reservations for 2022 on October 1st, he would like to submit a resolution for the Board of Trustee’s approval at their September 28th meeting.

#### Questions/Comments:

Rose asked if Eric had investigated “Starlink” to supply internet to the RV Park.

Brian noted that you must be invited to use that product, and, in his experience, it goes down a lot.

Eric responded that the Wi-fi will be a line-of-site radio transmission system and it will be secure with plenty of bandwidth.

Ashley thanked Eric for his work and thought this was a good move. She added that the cost increase is appropriate and won’t overwhelm returning guests. She also applauded the proposed change to the cancellation policy. Ashley asked that this item be added to the calendar so it can be reviewed every two to five years. Brian noted that the proposed increase to \$55.00 for a full hook-up is still slightly on the low side but added that it is also high enough to discourage long-term stays; he thought the two-week maximum stay was appropriate. Brian proposed a two-week cancellation policy because 48 hours isn’t enough time to re-book the site. He also asked if the RV Park had a notification system.

Jessie replied that the Camp Hosts keep a manual waitlist in a google document.

Ashley commented that some locations charge the full first-night fee if there is a no-show.

Eric responded that there is language in the reservation agreement that if a guest doesn’t call to cancel or doesn’t show up, they forfeit their entire reservation.

Susan pointed out that reservations at National Park sites are held for 24 hours, but after that the reservation is cancelled and there is no refund. She thought that the 48-hour requirement was generous but added that that could be extended to 72 hours. She suggested that the length of time required for a cancellation be based on the length of the reservation.

Hollis agreed with the other commission members but added that the water and water/electric site fees might be too low. She agreed with Ashley's request that the fees be reviewed again next year or at least in two years.

Luis was appreciative of Eric's work and thought that there was room to go slightly higher—possibly by \$5 or \$10 per night. He didn't think there would be a problem renting the sites at that cost and noted that if the fees aren't going to be reviewed for another two years it was better to increase them by a little more now.

Brian pointed out that the benchmarking was against the RV Park on Highway 133 where an equivalent site goes for \$90.00/night and there is double the density. He thought the market rate for the Gateway RV Park would be \$120.00/night.

Susan asked what the toilet and shower facilities were like.

Eric replied that there was a bathhouse with two showers and a toilet in the women's bathroom and one shower and toilet in the men's bathroom.

Susan pointed out that the Gateway RV Park isn't in the greatest location compared to the other two locations used as benchmarks—both of those are along a river. It was her opinion that it might not be people's first choice.

Leslie asked what the vacancy rates were at the RV Park.

Eric replied that they have been breaking records—that as of now the RV Park had 2,436 reservations, which was 122 more than in pre-Covid years. He added that if you look at the reservation calendar, almost all the sites are rented out with very few sequential days available. Eric referred to the proposed cancellation policy in the memo and noted it is more stringent than the present cancellation policy.

Jessie commented that the cancellation fee can be either a flat rate or percentage, so any other option would have to be completed manually.

Eric preferred to go with a percentage. He added that there was a 35% increase on all sites except for the full hook-up which was increased 20%.

Susan commented that rather than accepting reservations on October 1st for next year, perhaps go to a 60 or 90-day cycle with a stiffer penalty for cancellations. She asked if reservations are really booked that far out?

Eric thought that if they changed the reservation process, it might discourage their return business and pointed out that reservations are cancelled for a variety of reasons. He didn't want to discourage those people that reserve spaces every year.

Luis thought that the BOT would have an appetite to approve higher rates and suggested a 50% increase from the original rates (which would be 10 to 25% higher than the currently proposed rates).

Rose **moved** to recommend to the Board of Trustees a 45% increase from the current rates across all the sites at the Gateway RV Park. Brian **seconded** the motion.

Discussion:

Susan asked why there is a rate increase proposal.

Eric responded that it is based on supply and demand and to pay for the infrastructure improvements.

Leslie pointed out that the costs cover the use of the RV Park infrastructure—like trash, for example.

Susan asked how the infrastructure improvements were funded—bonds? cash?

Hollis replied that the improvements were made using money from the Parks and Recreation Department budget and were intended to improve the guests' experience. She explained that the benchmarking was a required process.

Luis added that the Recreation Center and the pool are amenities geared towards the community and operate at a loss, but the RV Park is used by visitors to the community with the intent to use what is available to them at the park. He noted that given the types of rigs that utilize the park, he thought the rates were extremely affordable and the BOT will support the proposed rate increase.

Ashley didn't think a 45% increase was drastic and supported the motion.

**Motion Passed:** Rose *moved* to recommend to the Board of Trustees a 45% increase from the current rates across all the sites at the Gateway RV Park. Brian *seconded* the motion. One person was opposed, and the remaining members supported the motion, so the *motion carried*.

Hollis asked for questions or comments on the proposed cancellation policy.

Eric reminded the commission members that the currently proposed policy is 48 hours for a full refund minus a processing fee. He noted the suggestion of 72 hours or up to one week.

Hollis asked if that timeframe is sufficient to fill the vacancy.

Jessi replied that she will check with the camp hosts. She noted that there are a lot of returning guests, so making a lot of changes at once might be overwhelming for them.

Brian didn't think the changes were that drastic and commented that it was going from a "sweetheart" deal to the "best" deal.

Rose noted that in the hospitality industry, Marriott requires a 30-day cancellation in the premium settings. She suggested a two-week cancellation requirement across the board.

Jessi commented that with their current system, the rates are automatically applied and it is a single rate across the board.

Hollis asked how realistic it was to require a one-week cancellation policy.

Jessie replied that the one-week requirement would replace the 48-hour policy and the cancellation fee would be a fixed percentage of the reservation.

Brian asked what the cancellation timeline usually was.

Jessie responded that they don't get many day-of or 24-hour cancellations.

Eric noted that the one-week cancellation requirement would allow the opportunity to re-fill the reservation. He thought a percentage of the overall reservation would level the playing field along with an administrative fee to process the cancellation. If the cancellation is made within the one-week window, there would be no refund.

Susan thought that the cancellation fee needed to be a flat rate plus a percentage based on the length of the reservation.

Brian replied that a small fee for cancelling prior to the deadline is okay, but the cancellation fee needs to be more stringent for short notice cancellations. He thought that, in the case of a no-show, the site should be held for 24 hours.

Susan agreed that if there is a no-show the reservation should be held for 24 hours and if no contact is made in that timeframe, the reservation should then be cancelled.

Eric commented that he has heard the commission member recommendations and they will distill them based on the software capabilities.

**Motion Passed:** Rose *moved* that there would be no refund within the seven-day cancellation period and staff will work on the appropriate rates. Susan *seconded* the motion, and it was *unanimously approved*.

### **THOMPSON HOUSE PERMACULTURE GARDEN AND THE CARBONDALE HISTORIC FOOD FOREST**

Eric introduced Adrian Fielder and Erin Anderson, who have been working on the Thompson House Permaculture Garden and the Carbondale Historic Food Forest. He asked the commission members to refer to the updated map in the meeting packet and related tables that describe plant maintenance, protocols, and future plans.

Adrian pointed out that the site map identifies the seven plant “guilds” and explained that a guild is a group of organisms planted together that support each other. He reminded the commission members that this came about because of input from the community and the goal is to create a thriving learning center at this location.

Erin added that the garden is within the Carbondale Historical Society’s easement, but the historical society prefers to put their efforts towards the Thompson House.

Adrien noted that they have several items on their wish list including a shade shelter, herb garden, and a teepee. He added that while the sprinkler infrastructure is in place, it is set up for a traditional sod lawn. He related that the growth of quack grass is strangling the irrigation system—which is an ongoing frustration because they don’t have the authority to change it and the current mowing schedule hasn’t included the park, so it has been a lot of work to maintain. They would like to request some help from the Parks Department in mowing between the guilds, which would improve the aesthetics, show visitors where to walk, allow the irrigation to work properly, and by clearing spaces would help promote community events.

Erin commented that they have spent a lot of time defining the guild and a mowing schedule would substantively change what they could do with their time.

Hollis asked if the area was being mowed currently.

Adrian replied in the affirmative but noted that it is on their own time and with their own equipment/money; they have a tool shed on the wish list, as well. He noted that the parcel to the north is currently maintained by the Parks Department, and they think it is a reasonable ask to mow their space, as well.

Erin added that the Thompson House grounds are mowed every week and all they are asking for is once per month.

Hollis asked if there is a way to get rid of the quack grass.

Adrian replied that you can use solarization, but the area needed to cover is too large.

Hollis asked if they got rid of the quack grass, what would the next steps be?

Adrian responded that they would actively let the beneficial plants go to seed and these would eventually drown out the quack grass. Adrian also pointed out that they are also getting noxious weed seeds blowing in from the nearby construction site and the quack grass captures these seeds and helps them germinate.

Eric commented that the equipment used to mow the Thompson House grounds is different than what is needed to mow at this location. He noted that the Parks Department does have a rider lawnmower, but its use is on a different mobilization schedule. Eric thought, however, that it might be possible to mow the area two or three times per summer. Eric asked what other plans they might have for the area.

Adrian responded that with the amount of work it is to weed the quack grass, it is hard to envision adding more. He did note that the locust grove is important, and it can be harvested for fencing.

Erin added that they have been hosting student groups and they have been holding garden workshops. They have also seen some involvement from the RVR community. Erin pointed out that the trees and shrubs are growing and producing, so there is progress, and it is beginning to look more like what the community expects.

Adrian commented that Amy Kimberly has taken a personal interest in the garden when Carbondale Arts hosted several events at the Thompson House. She is interested in using the garden as a backdrop to events, as well as learning how to harvest and use plants.

Susan pointed out that she has ridden by, but she didn't see any signage indicating it was a TOC park rather than an RVR park. She also noted there wasn't any signage at Triangle Park, either.

Eric responded that there is some signage in the works that will be posted at the Thompson House. He added that the garden is a passive park.

Hollis asked if there was a way to add the permaculture garden to the Weed Management Plan so it can be included in maintenance planning.

Eric commented that there has been a lot of work that has been done at the garden and that the TOC is responsible for the irrigation infrastructure.

Adrian reiterated that the issue is the sprinkler heads must be free of vegetation to reach the guilds.

Hollis asked if reporting to the Parks & Recreation Commission once per year is the right cycle.

Erin noted that she is in regular contact with Eric and the maintenance crew.

Adrian added that they don't have the capability of making big moves right now, but as the opportunity arises, they will report to the Commission.

Rose thanked them for taking care of the area. She requested that they clarify what the garden currently has and what is on the wish list.

Adrian responded that they currently have the raised beds and the locust grove; the wish list includes a tool shed, the education center and pathways.

### **AQUATICS FACILITY MASTER PLAN—NEXT STEPS: RFP RESPONSES**

Eric reported that there are two finalists for the Aquatic Facility RFP—Steiffel and RDC Capital Markets. He noted that they got good information during the interview with Steiffel, but because the responses are currently under consideration, the responses weren't included in the meeting packet. The topic is on the agenda for the September 28<sup>th</sup> BOT meeting.

Ashley asked if Eric could include the RFP as well as the responses in the next packet.

### **REPORT & UPDATES: STAFF AND COMMISSION MEMBERS**

Eric Brendlinger, Parks & Recreation Department Director:

- The Parks Department is now fully staffed with the new hire of a fulltime Parks employee. Chris Gleason has also been hired to fill the maintenance position.
- The nonprofit "Safe and Healthy Communities" and CAFCI have created an "Outdoor Livability Assessment Tool" that will assess and Carbondale's parks. Once they have data, they will present the information to the Commission. It is a useful tool, and the data can be used in applying for grants
- Fall projects include the Nuche Park parking lot, Bonnie Fischer signage and the installation of a fence at White Hill.

Hollis asked if there will be a check-in with RVR concerning the Weed Management Plan.

Eric responded that they are still working on controlling weeds within TOC parks. He wants to meet with them once they have recommendations. He added that a report on the Nature Park test plots is planned for the November meeting.

Susan asked about the Gianinetti Park GoCo grant.

Eric responded that they weren't awarded any grants for the proposed work, so no further work is planned at this time. Eric pointed out that they were awarded a Resilient Communities grant in conjunction with AVLTL for Red Hill.

Rose asked Eric to add Carbondale Historical Society to page 24 in the Master Calendar.

Jessi Rochel, Recreation Center & Recreation Programs Manager:

- There is a Blood Drive on Wednesday, September 15<sup>th</sup>
- There are youth pickleball, tennis, and climbing classes in September.
- Older Adult programming at the Rec Center is booming; unfortunately, they have lost their other fitness instructors
- The pool will be open through Sunday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>

Luis Yllanes, Board of Trustees Liaison:

- Luis thanked Eric and Jessi for the recent First Friday
- Luis noted that some of the feedback he has received on the One Town, One Table is to reach out to the LatinX population

Hollis Sutherland, Parks & Recreation Commission Chair:

- Happy Birthday to all those with recent birthdays
- Becky sent a letter to the Parks and Recreation Commission; it is included in the packet. Any questions or comments?
  - Rose thanked Becky for the letter and apologized for not acknowledging Becky and Tracy's service. She pointed out that the letter brings attention to the need for more training opportunities
  - Hollis noted the intent to recognize Becky, Tracy, and Celeste before the next meeting.
  - Becky responded that she didn't care about the recognition—the whole point of the letter was to make sure everyone was aware that Eric and Hollis violated the open meeting law and to point out how they are leading the Commission.
  - Rose responded that she appreciated the letter but didn't think it was malicious. She suggested adding some aspect of training to every meeting.
  - Brian asked for context with respect to the BOT—are they involved in the minutiae of every Commission's action, or do they prefer higher level thinking?
  - Luis responded that there is always discussion on each agenda topic—if it is related to TOC facility's, they often have in-depth discussions, but if it is about other things, they prefer Eric or Hollis to summarize decisions reached.
  - Rose asked that new members have all the available information.
  - Hollis replied in the affirmative and noted that it will be in the onboarding material.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The September 8, 2021, regular meeting adjourned at 9:01 pm. The next regularly scheduled meeting is scheduled for October 13, 2021, at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kae McDonald