

**BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
INTERIM MEETING
Park and Recreation Department
Ralph Wulz Riverside Tennis Center
551 Nims, Wichita, KS
Thursday August 3rd, 2006
8:00 p.m.**

Present: Glen Dey, Nalini Johnson, Doug Leeper, Janet Miller, Andy Solter, Mick Tranbarger

Absent: Dennis Brunner

Also Present: Sharon Fearey, Council Member District VI, Representatives from Riverside Citizens Association Members and the Park Use Taskforce, Greg Ferris, Doug Kupper and Larry Foos, Park and Recreation Department, Jack Oxler, Tennis Center Professional

President Miller called the meeting to order at 8:45 p.m.

PUBLIC AGENDA

President Miller asked if there were any public agenda items. No items.

AGENDA SUMMARY FROM SPECIAL PARK BOARD MEETING

Item 1. Ralph Wulz Riverside Tennis Center.

Park and Recreation Staff presented information to the Park Board concerning the HUD Grant funding in the amount of \$429,000 and the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) funding of \$220,000. Staff presented several possible tennis center improvement options for the downtown facility. These options included lighting, fencing, replacing existing courts and an enclosed inflatable dome over the east courts. Mr. Kupper informed the board that there was possibly between \$400,000 and \$600,000 in repair work, not including the dome, which needed to be done on the center. Mrs. Miller asked Mr. Kupper what the cost of adding three new courts would be. He stated that the base cost would be \$180,000. He was then asked what changes to the parking lots and landscaping were being considered. Mr. Kupper said that if the dome were put in place, no new landscaping would likely be required. Either way, the parking conditions are ok. He said they were asked to put a stem wall around the courts to block the wall. He said further analysis was needed on this issue.

Mr. Kupper asked Mr. Oxler if there was normally a large waiting line in the clubhouse to play tennis. He responded that no, on days when there is not a tournament, a person can come in at any time of day and immediately play tennis. He was asked if, in his perspective, they needed new courts. He responded by saying that we do need more courts to participate in more frequent and larger tournaments. As far as the general public, the number of courts we have now is adequate.

Mrs. Johnson asked about people moving around in the bubble from the clubhouse and restrooms in the wintertime. If members are wearing shorts, will they be protected from the cold weather? Mr. Oxler responded that member's will most likely choose to wear warm-up sweats. Mr. Kupper responded that the facility also has handicapped accessible ramps that get icy and the recreation and park staff cleans them. She then asked about liability if a person fell and Mr. Kupper replied that the facility is protected under Kansas Law.

Ms. Miller then spoke and said that she figured a minimum of \$50,000 worth of expense. Mr. Kupper said that estimate was very conservative and that there are a lot of unknowns about programming and labor. He said that the utility bill would run approx \$29,000, \$30,000 for utilities and \$16,000 for the staffing.

Mrs. Johnson asked about the technology of the dome concerning the energy. Could energy be generated through solar or some other way? Is it worth looking into? Mr. Kupper replied that by using solar technology we would have to affix a device to the roof and this dome is not able to handle that type of equipment. If we chose to do the dome, then we should have an expert come in and perhaps help us figure out more energy efficient ways to cut on utility bills.

Mrs. Miller said that her calculation figured that the center would generate an extra \$200 a day for an extra two months a year that comes out to \$12,000 in additional revenue.

Mr. Dey asked if we would we be using the CIP money as allocated to which Mr. Kupper replied yes. Mr. Dey then questioned the possibility that needs may arise at the other facilities that could not be fixed if there was no money. Mr. Kupper said that annually we spend the money where we do, this year we are programmed to do Evergreen and Orchard with the funds that are currently available. We have done that for a lot of neighborhoods. McAdams court needs to be replaced but is not priority because there already five other courts there. Mr. Dey then questioned if we currently have a sample schedule of how the center would bring in youth from the less affluent areas on a routine basis, so that we know they have access to the facility. Mr. Kupper answered that at this time there is no sample but that he is awaiting a signed agreement with the group that would aid in this development. He again mentioned that the plans are moving faster then normal because of the change in deadline.

Mr. Kupper said that he anticipates extensive after school programs for tennis and public play starting after that. The YMCA was very excited and the middle school was enthusiastic about the program. He said that we may be able to make an agreement with customers of the YMCA and that our main focus is the underprivileged kids and getting them to go with a reduced cost

Ms. Johnson questioned if whether or not the new dome will generate more interest and any new members once it is built. Mr. Kupper replied that perhaps more people would feel more comfortable playing in an enclosed environment.

Mrs. Miller said that she does not necessarily expect 100% cost recovery, but she does not want to sacrifice what they currently have. Mr. Kupper understood and said that they have had success in generating additional dollars for their cost centers. It wasn't always as much as they wanted though. He said that the recreation side did not receive any funds last year but did add new softball fields and that the maintenance side did receive additional money.

Mrs. Miller then turned the discussion to the topic of encumbering the funds and doing what needed to be done to make sure that the money is there. She asked what the contract has to have and what we need to know now. Mr. Kupper responded by saying that we must have a decision by Tuesday before we go to the City Council. He said he failed to ask for a vote of the RCA tonight and that he should have but wanted to ask what the board's impressions were and whether people were impressed with the dome or against it. If you vote no dome, then we will give the info to the DAB on Monday and the Council on Tuesday. He said he would like to see the dome, but it will ultimately come down to the city council's decision. Either way there will be a good package to present to the board.

Mr. Johnson recounted that the real decision tonight was if we really wanted to improve the tennis courts. Mr. Kupper replied by saying that we cannot build the dome without doing the other improvements as well.

She said she would like the dome to be a profitable thing and that we should do something that not only creates a profit but makes it exciting to users so it will cover utilities and maintenance as well. Mr. Kupper again mentioned that involvement with other youth organizations would help with costs to cover the facility. Mrs. Johnson asked if there was time to do any market studies. She said with the lack of knowledge it would be difficult to make a decision right now. She said she felt uncomfortable making a decision without having studies done. Mr. Kupper told her that there was no way those studies could be completed before presenting the package to the Council on Tuesday. Ms. Johnson then motioned that the money not go for the dome but to make sure we do get the money to improve the current parks.

Mrs. Miller then asked the audience if they had any questions or comments.

M.S. Mitchell, 1215 Forrest

Recommends we not include the dome and spend all the money on other Ralph Wulz center improvements. He said he does not think the dome is appropriate for the location and for what this tennis center was intended to be. An event center takes away being the open-air park setting improvement that Mr. Wulz wanted.

Mr. Greg Ferris stood to speak and began by saying that his son is an avid tennis player and he is familiar with the tennis facilities available. He said having a dome would indeed save him a lot of money. However, he felt that the \$30,000 estimate was wrong and in the winter the heating expenses would be approximately \$2000 a month. He recommended taking the bubble down in the summer months and only using it in the winter. He said that Genesis has two part-time bubbles. He suggested the Board vote to add more courts and forget about the bubble. Mrs. Miller asked Mr. Ferris if he knew the costs of taking the bubble up and down. He said it would take six people all day to complete the job.

Mrs. Johnson asked how much it would cost to add courts to which Mr. Kupper replied around \$80,000 a court. She then asked where they would go and Mr. Kupper replied that they would probably do 15ft alleys between courts and extend them back to the parking lots. He wasn't sure if additional landscaping would be required.

Sharon Fearey, District VI Council Member said she will not be at council meeting on Tuesday and wanted to speak now. She said that the money can be spent on recreation facilities and re-doing courts which would free up the CIP funding to be spent elsewhere. The Riverside Park Master Plan has projects that need to be completed. Sharon suggested a possible canoe access point in the park or we should consider how this might affect tournaments and the economic impact of not hosting these tournaments. We should provide an optimal sized facility for tournaments.

President Miller then asked the Board members to each state their position on the idea of tennis center dome. Ms. Miller

President Miller asked if anyone else had any public comments. No one spoke. She returned discussion to the table and each Board member to state their opinions on the tennis dome proposal.

Summary of Motions:

Nalini Johnson made a motion to use the \$429,000 HUD funds to improve and enhance the Ralph Wulz Riverside Tennis Center. The motion died from lack of a second.

Doug Leeper made the motion “It is recommended that the City Council build a dome structure over a three court system to include additional landscaping and other facility upgrades as appropriate. Second by Mick Tranbarger.

Motion failed 4-2.

Janet Miller made the motion to use the \$429,000 Federal Grant for facility and court upgrades and additions at Ralph Wulz Tennis Center not to include an inflatable dome. Second by Glen Dey.

Motion passed 5-1.

Nalini Johnson made a motion that we accept the idea of a dome on principle and direct staff to research cost of operation of a dome and search energy efficient system for operations of a dome system. Second by Andy Solter.

Motion passed 5-1.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 10:22 p.m.

Janet L. Miller, President

ATTEST:

Myca J. Bunch, P&R Administrative Assistant
Recording Secretary

Information and Questions Asked at the Pre-Board Meeting

The Dome is made of a material called Tedlar. This material is such that paint or writing from graffiti can be cleaned off with an Acetone cleaner. Its color will not turn yellow or discolor with age. It is also resistant to winds up to 80 mph. This dome would be the only indoor tennis facility available to the general public. Through partnerships, sponsors and grants, underprivileged and disadvantaged citizens can participate in tennis activities year-round.

President Miller submitted several questions prior to the meeting for staff to research and gather additional information to present to the Park Board. Several questions were asked of staff and addressed by Mr. Larry Foos, Recreation Superintendent, during the meeting.

- What public facilities are available for tennis in Wichita and in what parts of town are those facilities located?

Staff found that Genesis and BK Tennis Academy have a daily fee to accommodate out of town guests. They would be classified as semi-public.

- What are the needs related to tennis facilities and programs in Wichita today? How will upgrades/enhancements at Ralph Wulz address these needs? And how will these upgrades at Ralph Wulz better address those needs than court replacements in other parts of the city?

The City does not have an indoor facility. No place to play year round in inclement weather. Three courts in a climate-controlled setting will allow citizens to play during extreme weather conditions. Our philosophy has been to ensure that our cost centers courts are replaced first. This facility will provide instruction, leagues, open play and lessons.

- If the entire tennis court allocation (\$220,000) in the 2007 CIP is used for the inflatable dome project (in combination with the \$429,000 grant), which tennis courts in the City will not be replaced as planned?

Our plan was to replace those 4 courts in 2007.

- What impact will an inflatable dome have on the surrounding natural environment?

The dome will impact the appearance of the area. The lines will be cleaner and there will be less clutter with no light poles.

- What is the performance and reliability of an inflatable dome? What is its expected life span? How will an inflatable dome stand up to the tens of thousands of roosting crows each winter?

There are domes in existence that are 30 years old and still working. An expected life span is 25 years. After 20 years a dome will have 90% of original tensile strength. The material is too slick for birds to rest or roost on the facility. The birds will naturally roost in trees and power lines as opposed to buildings.

- What are the estimated annual heating and cooling costs?

\$29,421 for heating and air conditioning for a while dome..

- What are the estimated annual maintenance and upkeep costs?

\$1,000 for belts, filters and routine maintenance.

- Will additional staff hours be required for year-round operation? What are those estimated costs?

This is currently a year-round facility. This facility will facilitate more year-round play during inclement weather and extreme heat. If the facility proves very popular and widely used then increased revenues will generate additional staff.

- What is the estimated increase in revenue net of expenses?

Court fees are currently \$1.00 per hour. The new indoor courts would be priced higher. The facility operates at 64% cost recovery. If we maintain that same percentage with the domed courts, there would be an additional \$19,000+ in revenue.

- Assuming no increase in the annual Parks and Recreational operating and maintenance budgets, what line item budgets will be cut to cover the costs of operating and maintaining the inflatable dome?

The recreation budget is separate from the maintenance budget. No line items will be cut and there will be a line-item increase in the Tennis Center utility bills.