

**BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING AGENDA  
City Hall, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Park Conference Room  
455 N. Main  
Wichita, KS 67202  
November 9, 2015  
3pm**

**Present:** Tori Deatherage, Ron Allen, Cindy Claycomb, Patty Vizzini, Troy Palmer, Hoyt Hillman, Chris Highfill

**Absent:** none

**Also Present:** Troy Houtman (Director of Park and Recreation), Elizabeth Harlenske (City Assistant Attorney), Michelle Haun (Clerk), Don Reinert (Westar), numerous citizens

Deatherage called the meeting to order at 3:03pm.

**PUBLIC AGENDA**

None.

**REGULAR AGENDA**

**Item 1: Approval of Minutes**

**Motion by Highfill, second by Palmer, IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY VOTED to approve, sign and file the minutes of October 12, 2015, Board of Park Commissioners Regular meeting. (7-0)**

**Item 3A: Veteran's Memorial Park – Flag (Troy Houtman)**

**Motion by Deatherage, second by Claycomb, IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY VOTED to move the Veteran's Memorial Park Flag item to the top of the agenda. (7-0)**

Houtman stated that there are two items to review. The first to be voted on will be to replace the confederate flag with the Kansas flag. The confederate flag was removed from the Veteran's Memorial Park on July 2<sup>nd</sup>. After some research it was determined that the Kansas flag would be an appropriate replacement for the confederate flag. Eric Kale provided information for the verbiage that will be at the base of the flag. He asked Claycomb to read the text.

Claycomb read the following: "On the eve of the American Civil War as the southern states seceded, Kansas entered the union as a free state, becoming the 34th state on January 29, 1861. Kansans flocked to support their country, producing one of the highest Union Army volunteer rates of any state. After the war Kansas became known as the "Soldier State" because by 1870 nearly 28,000 Union veterans had returned or emigrated to it. The state's population soared further as former slaves known as "Exodusters" left the South following emancipation. Kansas did not have a state flag until 1927. Through the efforts of General Milton R. McLean of the Kansas National Guard, the legislature passed an

act in 1927 "designating the form and color" of a Kansas flag. The seal includes 34 stars, a rising sun, the rolling hills near Fort Riley, Native Americans hunting buffalo, oxen teams and prairie schooners representing the advance of the frontier, a steamboat on the river celebrating commerce, plowed fields suggesting the importance of agriculture, and a log house symbolizing settlement. The motto suggested by John Ingalls, "Ad Astra per Aspera" (To the stars through difficulties). The state crest depicts a sunflower above a twisted gold and blue bar symbolizing the Louisiana Purchase. The flag retained its original form until 1961, when the legislature added "KANSAS" to the flag below the seal.

Houtman stated that this text would replace the plaque that was below the confederate flag and asked the board to make a motion to replace the confederate flag and plaque with the Kansas flag and the text, as read by Claycomb.

Deatherage asked for comments from the board, there being none, she asked for public comment.

Neal Sanders 509 N Broadmoor stated that the board should not succumb to the hysteria that has swept the nation and dishonor the service of confederate veterans. He asked that the board allow the battle flag to remain on the flag pole.

Dick Croft 11017 S 151<sup>st</sup> St W, Clearwater stated that he is the son of a confederate veteran and has sixteen confederate ancestors. He stated that the confederate flag is there to honor those veterans.

John Wilson 4309 Dover stated that he objects to the first paragraph of the text for the plaque. He stated that the issue is with the wording of Civil War. He explained that it should be the "war between the states."

Kevin Ivey 1207 N 9<sup>th</sup>. Garden City stated that the confederate flag at Veteran's Memorial Park was not a national flag, it was the battle flag that was created with the sole purpose of identification of the southern army, during war time. He does not support the removal of the flag.

Jerry Spahr 2947 S Walnut stated that his ancestors are military and have fought for the United States. They are dishonored by the removal of the flag from a military park.

Bill William 3928 Vesta Dr stated that the flag represents hatred and that the war was representative of slavery. He wants the flag to stay down.

James McCluer 1700 Arrowhead, Derby stated that he is retired military. He stated that there is a designation on the graves to honor veterans. He stated that they don't need a flag. He opposes the raising of the confederate flag and supports the Kansas flag taking its place.

Joe Boughman 1901 N St Paul stated that flags are just a symbol, it is the people carrying the flags. He is not in support of keeping the confederate flag down.

Gerry Domitrovic 1219 George Washington Drive stated that this is about racial fear. It is wrong to take down the flag.

Sandra Rankin 2466 N Fountain stated that she wants to share history with young people. We need to teach them to respect all. She is in favor of replacing the confederate flag.

Francine Sharp 1820 Arkansas stated that she is in support of keeping the confederate flag. The Veteran's Memorial Park serves the purpose of teaching U.S. history.

Bonnie Till 1319 Chipper Lane stated that the confederate flag represents horrifying things.

Djuan Wash 547 Trotter shared a passage written by William T. Thompson, designer of the confederate flag. It is symbolic of slavery and racial hatred. He is in favor of leaving the confederate flag down.

Larry Burks, Sr. 2913 Meadow Oaks Court stated that he served in the Gulf War and stated that it is a travesty to re-fly the confederate flag. He stated that even cities and colleges in Mississippi are removing the confederate flag.

Brandon Johnson 5203 E 20<sup>th</sup> St N stated that Wichita has a rich Native American history. Putting the confederate flag back up is disrespectful to that history. It is a symbol of hate.

Magda Garret 5102 Kings Row stated that she opposes the confederate flag going back up.

Carl Williams 261 N Armour stated that displaying the confederate flag in a combat veteran park is offensive.

Demi Webber 2731 Rainier Court stated that she opposes the confederate flag being put back up.

Durell Gilmore 1502 N Battin stated that he opposes the confederate flag being put back up.

Janet Wilson 1152 N Estelle stated that she opposes the confederate flag going back up.

Herb Duncan 814 N Colorado stated that the confederate battle flag was only used in combat. He is in favor of the battle flag being put back up as an educational tool. The battle flag was only used for four years.

Houtman stated that the motion is to replace the confederate battle flag with the Kansas flag and the verbiage of the plaque as well. He introduced Eric Kale to explain why the verbiage was chosen.

Eric Kale stated that he is with the Wichita Sedgwick County Historical Museum. They brought multiple resources together to create a label for the Kansas flag. The flag memorial is an educational setting. Kansas had a unique history during the Civil War and the nation's history. The Kansas flag will add our local role to the flag line up. Removing the confederate battle flag is not erasing history, it is putting it into a different context. We hope to find a common unity under the Kansas flag.

Claycomb asked Mr. Kale if American Civil War is correct, if it is more appropriate than War Between the States.

Kale stated that it is the more common term.

**Motion by Hillman, second by Claycomb, IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY VOTED to replace the confederate flag with the Kansas flag and replace the plaque at the base with the text as read. (7-0)**

Houtman stated that the second part of the discussion is the monument proposed by the veterans that help maintain the park. It has four sides and will be placed near the flag pavilion. It will recognize the efforts of reconciling the Civil War, the Reconciliation Memorial.

Bryson Allen 11618 S Greenwich chairman of the Veteran's Memorial Park Board of Wichita, Inc. Group of veterans appointed by the City Council, responsible for maintenance of the park. The group only has advisory authority. When the issue of the confederate battle flag came up, input of the VMPWI was sought. They voted to support the mayor and the City with whatever action they took. The VMPWI suggested another solution, the Reconciliation Memorial, designed by Phil Blake. The intent of this memorial is to bring folks together and reconcile their differences. It will be seven feet tall and three and a half feet wide. It will replace the broken drinking fountain, in the circle area.

Claycomb asked who will pay for this.

Houtman stated that this idea was brought forth by the veterans. The City Manager and mayor are very supportive of this so we are seeking money in City funds to pay for this. The veterans have been researching and trying to find cost efficient ways to install this. Moving forward with this memorial, the City would pay \$25k.

B Allen stated that he has been asked why confederate veterans would be on the other side of the memorial. He stated that we are honoring veterans who just happen to be on the other side of the wall.

Houtman asked Claycomb to read the verbiage of the memorial.

Claycomb read the following: East Face - With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the Nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and orphan to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all Nations. Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address, 1865. West Face – Not for fame or reward not for place or rank not lured by ambition, or goaded by necessity but in simple obedience to duty as they understood it, these men suffered all, dated all – and died. Inscription honoring Confederate dead Arlington National Cemetery, Washington DC. South Face – CSA In honor of all Confederate Veterans of the War Between the States 1861-1865 for their courage in battle and their devotion to military duty. North Face – USA in honor of all Union Veterans of the War Between the States 1861-1865 for their courage in battle and their devotion to military duty.

Houtman stated that this is to meet the needs of all. It has been discussed with several stakeholders within the City and have received positive feedback.

Mark McCormick stated that he does not feel that the confederate battle flag deserves a place of honor, but the reconciliation aspect is very important to him. He stated that there is not another reconciliation memorial in this country.

Houtman stated that we are seeking a solution and sharing the message. He stated that he is seeking boards support so that we can move forward. This monument might be in place by spring.

Vizzini asked how important it is to replace, rather than just leave the flag down.

Houtman stated that we wanted to add something to the park that adds value to the community, not just take something down.

B Allen stated that the monument has been in the works for the past three years. The removal of the flag was a good time to bring this up.

Vizzini asked who Phil Blake was.

B Allen stated that years ago he was the one that noticed the condition of the Veteran's Memorial Park and raised money and formed the memorial park board.

McCormick stated that Blake was known as the Keeper of the Veteran's Memorial.

**Motion by Hillman, second by Allen, IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY VOTED to move forward with building a Reconciliation Monument at Veteran's Memorial Park (7-0)**

**Motion by Deatherage, second by Highfill, IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY VOTED to postpone agenda items 2D: Adoption of River Ordinance and 3B: Park Property Encroachment Policy Update until next month. (7-0)**

**Item 2A: Growth Inhibitor Program – Westar (Don Reinert)**

Reinert stated that Wichita was a pilot for the Reliabilitree program. The new program will focus on reducing the regrowth of street trees after pruning. As streets have widened, trees are getting closer to power lines. The chemical will be injected into the soil and picked up by the tree roots. It puts energy into the root system. It is used widely across the country. Other utilities around us use this.

Houtman stated that a similar program was used in Austin.

Allen asked if it is a spray.

Reinert stated that it is injected with a probe. It helps to reduce tree debris. This will be contracted by Asplundh. Short Stop is the chemical name we are using. It is formulated to stay where we put it.

Hillman asked what the cost to the City of Wichita will be.

Reinert stated that it will be paid by Westar.

Houtman asked what the cost per tree is.

Reinert stated approximately \$100 per tree, just for city responsible street trees.

Allen asked if there is a target area.

Reinert stated that at this time they are working in northeast Wichita and asking adjacent home owners. It is not currently mandatory. Westar is sharing data with the City and tracking information.

Houtman stated that we can show cost recovery when skipping a pruning cycle with this data.

Vizzini asked if it is harmful to bees, children or animals, trees.

Reinert responded that it is not harmful to any of those. He stated that it actually benefits the tree. It makes the tree and the grass around it grow slower and makes it healthier. The trees will produce smaller, denser leaves. Trees will also be more wind resistant. The grass around the tree will also grow slower and be thicker. There is a media day coming up within the next six months.

**Item 2B: Naming of Pracht Wetlands/Cadillac Lake Development (Troy Houtman)**

Houtman stated that the developer is naming the development Cadillac Lake, so the name will not be associated with our park land. We will be using Pracht Wetlands. We cannot formally name it until we officially own it, so we will be bringing it back to the Park Board later this year.

**Item 2C: Cell Tower at Woodard Park (Troy Houtman)**

Houtman stated that we received a request install a cell tower near Century II. This would generate \$200-\$300 per month in revenue which can be put into the maintenance fund. Mr. Philbrick will bring more details about the arrangement next month.

**Item 4A-H: Updates**

Houtman stated that the updates were given to the Park Board during the Retreat on Saturday.

Deatherage stated that the ribbon cutting at Buffalo Park will be at 10am on Friday.

**Item 5: Adjourn**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:51 pm.

  
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Tori Deatherage, President

  
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Michelle Haun, Clerk