

## **7-23-2020 Park Views**

**By APRC Commissioner and Chair, Mike Gardiner**

### **Parks & Recreation CIP information for the current fiscal year 2020-21**

My hope is that this short essay will inform the citizens of Ashland as to how the Ashland Parks & Recreation Commission (APRC) is using the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) funds that are currently available to the Commission. CIP is an acronym that is commonly used but sometimes misunderstood as to how it relates to our public budget.

CIP funds are funds that are designated for projects that add to or replace the infrastructure of an organization. These funds are designated for things other than daily operational costs such as supplies, wages, permits and day-to-day expenses that are budgeted to support the organization.

CIP funds, as it relates to APRC, are budgeted funds that are available to us to build parks, improve irrigation systems, resurface tennis courts and add amenities to existing parks and other properties.

The lion's share of the CIP money available for APRC comes from the voter approved Ashland Food & Beverage Tax that we all contribute to when we buy food and drink from our local businesses. For the record this tax is 5%. APRC receives 25% of this tax. This is the revenue that we use to fund the type of projects that I listed above. Currently a portion of this revenue is being used to pay for the remaining debt of past-completed projects: Calle Guanajuato improvements, the Garfield Park improvements completed in 2018 and the purchase of the Briscoe playground fields from the Ashland School district. Hopefully citizens value these amenities as worthwhile investments in our community.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic APRC has had to dramatically adjust. We laid off six regular staff members. We put a hiring freeze on temporary help hires. We lost all of our 2020 recreation program revenue since we are not able to sponsor any recreation programs. We are reassigning personnel to jobs that they would not normally be doing. And we are doing our job by adjusting our budget to meet the reduced revenue expectations due to the economic impact of the COVID-19 shutdown.

Over the past several months the board of commissioners and APRC staff have analyzed what our future funding levels might be as we move forward under the cloud of COVID-19. We know what our debt obligations are for the next several years. After we have accounted for these obligations, we needed to reevaluate our priorities on projects moving forward. Currently revenue dedicated to CIP projects for APRC amounts to about \$550,000. We had a list of close to 10 projects for which we had created budgets and that we were intending to act on over the next couple of years. This list is now down to three.

Replacing the Daniel Meyer Memorial pool has been our #1 goal for several years. We intend to honor our commitment to the public by committing \$325,000 of our available project funds for the pool replacement. This is only a portion of the revenue that we will need to replace the pool but it will help us establish a funding base as we move forward with this project.

Second on our list is the continued design and phased construction of the neighborhood park on East Main, near Clay Street. This park is being planned to accommodate a second dog park, a bike skills

facility, a community garden and other amenities. We have designated \$125,000 to be added to a fund that we currently have for this project. This new park fills the void of a neighborhood park in this part of our town.

And finally, we are earmarking \$100,000 for resurfacing of the Hunter Park tennis courts. This facility is beginning to fail and needs regularly scheduled maintenance. Our goal here is to bring the courts back up to quality status. We also hope to find a solution for relocating pickleball to a location that benefits both pickleball and tennis players.

While making necessary adjustments to our budget with regards to both personnel and projects, APCR wants the community to know that we are doing our best to meet the needs and expectations of the citizens of Ashland.