

Independence Parks Commission



George Owens Nature Park

36th Parks & Recreation Sales Tax Program Report October 26, 2020

Executive Summary

The Independence Parks Commission was established by Ordinance in 1999. The Commission's primary mission is to act in an advisory capacity to the City Council relating to public awareness, facility use, and program participation regarding Parks and Recreation activities. The Commission also serves as the official Parks and Recreation Sales Tax Oversight Committee.

It is the opinion of the members of the Independence Parks Commission that the activities, initiatives, and projects funded by the Parks Sales Tax are in keeping with the sales tax program's intent, and that the sales tax program is critical in supporting the work of the Department to enhance the quality of life in Independence.



DeWitt Hall at George Owens



Independence Farmers Market

Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
Contents.....	2
Sales Tax Review	3
Current Commissioners.....	3
Current Project Status.....	4-5
Park Maintenance Operations	6
Recreation Programming & Operations.....	7-10
ESF6 Coordination Efforts	11
Park Revitalization Program.....	11
In Closing	12



INDEPENDENCE
★ PARKS ★ RECREATION ★ TOURISM ★

Sales Tax Review

The current parks sales tax was renewed in perpetuity in August of 2010. This tax is estimated to generate approximately \$4.2 million this fiscal year and is dedicated to fund on-going parks maintenance, certain facility operations, recreation programming and various parks and recreation related capital projects.

Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, revenue to the Parks & Recreation Sales Tax for Fiscal Year 2019-20 was down approximately \$76,000 and revenue from classes and programs was down approximately \$124,000, for a grand total of \$200,000. For the current fiscal year, revenues are down approximately 4%, or around \$175,000.

Current Commissioners

The Parks Commission is comprised of seven voting members and one ex-officio member, all appointed by the City Council. Current members of the Park Commission include: Zachary Gall – Chair, Gail Price, Jolie Austin, Diane Kyser, Shawn Brimer, April Schuler, and Ira Anders. Roger Hershey serves as an ex-officio member of the group.



Fishing at George Owens Nature Park



Outdoor Boot Camp Fitness Class

Current Project Status

Plans for several new projects and park improvements were placed on hold in response to COVID-19. Those projects that were completed this past spring and summer season were either emergency repair projects or projects that were already in progress with contractors and vendors lined up to complete the work. These projects are in harmony with the high priority our residents have expressed for maintaining and improving our existing facilities and parks. The four most prominent projects completed during this reporting period include:

Fairmount Park Improvements

Following the installation of new playground equipment at Fairmount Park in 2019, Park Maintenance crews poured a new concrete pad and installed new picnic tables and a barbecue grill at Fairmount Park this past Spring.



Fairmount Park Picnic Area



New Modified Waterfall Pump Intake System

Waterfall Park Improvements

Park Maintenance crews are overseeing installation of the modified waterfall pump intake system and rebuilding of the intake pumps at the waterfall. Over the upcoming fall and winter, crews will work on selectively trimming back vegetation and trees to improve sight to the falls.

Sermon Center Landscaping

Park Maintenance crews performed significant clean up and maintenance of the landscaping around the Roger T. Sermon Community Center. Work included removal of old and overgrown plantings, installation of new plantings and landscape rock, cleanout of the stream, repair of the pond pump, and trimming of the trees.



Sermon Center Landscaping



Rotary Park Splashpad Repairs

Rotary Park Splashpad Repairs

Park Maintenance crews oversaw repairs at the Rotary Park Splashpad this past spring. Repairs included installation of a new drain and expanded concrete apron around the splashpad to retain water within the splashpad area and avoid runoff.

Park Maintenance Operations



Park Maintenance Routine Mowing

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, park maintenance staff have modified operations in accordance with guidelines established for the various phases of reopening. Since restrooms, shelters, and playgrounds have re-opened, crews disinfect playgrounds twice per week and restrooms daily. They also perform additional disinfection facility-wide within the recreation centers twice per week.

Routine maintenance and operations continue, including: mowing, tree trimming, graffiti and vandalism remediation, set up of sports fields, and general park cleaning and maintenance. This summer, maintenance staff also took over repairs and maintenance of all park, recreation, and historic site building facilities.

Additionally, Park Maintenance crews are in the process of installing new drainage pipe in the back of Woodlawn Cemetery to address stormwater drainage issues.



Park Maintenance and Recreation Staff host Drive-Thru Arbor Day Tree Giveaway at Sermon Center

Recreation Programming & Operations

Recreation Programming & Operations have changed significantly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Recreation staff have worked diligently to provide high-quality programming and maintain operations while adhering to proper safety protocols for patrons, participants, and staff. Highlights from each area of Recreation operations are as follows:

Palmer Center & Senior Programs

Home Delivered Meal Program: From April – September 2020 Palmer Center staff have delivered a total of 12,560 meals to 161 different people. This averages out to 2,093 meals delivered per month. Sets of 10 frozen meals are delivered every two weeks to those who qualify. There are currently 102 people on the active list for delivering to, and several more who have put their meals temporarily on hold for various reasons (In hospital or rehab, etc.). These meals are above and beyond the regular on-going home delivered meals that are delivered by Trio.

Wellness Phone Calls: Staff is calling just over 200 people regularly as part of the wellness check phone calls.

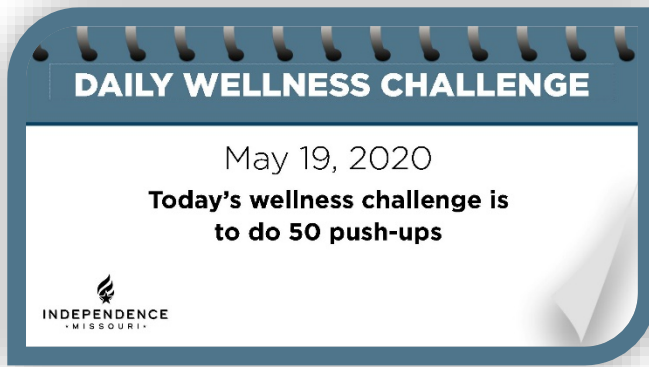
Virtual Programming: Palmer staff have offered the following classes virtually: Aging Mastery Program, Chronic Disease Self-Management, Eating Smart-Being Active!, and Walk With Ease.



Palmer Center's Home Delivered Meal Program



Wellness, Sports, Aquatics, Inclusion

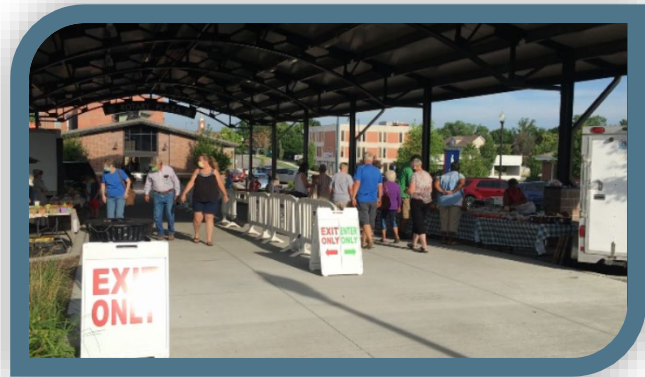


Daily Wellness Challenges

At Home Workouts: The wellness team designed and filmed “at home workouts” for the public to use while gyms were closed. The workouts were posted to the Parks Facebook page along with daily wellness challenges for community members to complete. The workouts included; a warmup video, cooldown video, 5 bodyweight workouts, and 3 dumbbell workouts.

Community Gardens: The White Oak Community Garden was able to maintain its normal operations through the pandemic. This season, 16 gardeners had their own garden beds to plant and grow produce.

Farmers Market: The Farmer’s Market has gone through several variations since opening in May; from drive thru, to walk-up, and now walk-thru with barricades and directional signs to aid in social distancing. The Saturday Markets average 15-20 vendors selling a variety of produce, baked goods, and now crafts. Approximately 400 patrons come through the market each Saturday and around 100 come through on Wednesdays.



Independence Farmers Market

Homeschool Rec: The Parks/Recreation/Tourism Department offers recreational opportunities for homeschooled children. Staff has made modifications including sanitization, social distancing, and mask wearing to keep children safe while they come into the Truman Memorial Building for recreational activities. Approximately 17 children participate in this program each week.

Sports: The PRT Department has been able to provide fields for baseball, softball, soccer, and football during the pandemic. Each partner organization has had to submit plans for safely operating while at City facilities and fields. Also, all participants are required to adhere to city guidelines of social distancing and mask wearing.

Roger T. Sermon Community Center & Fitness Programs

While the Roger T. Sermon Community Center was closed during April, May, and June, staff at this facility assisted with operating a Donation Drop-off Site for the community, limited front desk hours to answer questions about outdoor venues, and assisted with temperature checks/health screenings at other City of Independence facilities as they reopened in June. Certain fitness classes resumed in the spring and were relocated to outdoor locations until the facility was re-opened in July. Staff shared information on Facebook regarding Social Distancing in Parks and on Trails and offered 'May Day' do-at-home activities.

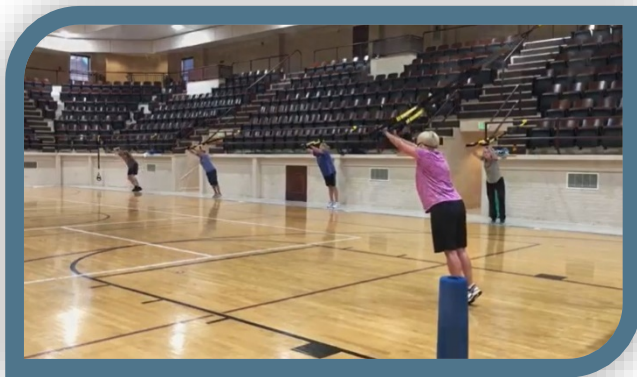


Donation Drop-off Site Receives Homemade Masks

Since reopening in July, many modifications have been made in accordance with safety protocols including: room repurposing and equipment relocation to accommodate social distancing, increased sanitation/disinfection protocols throughout the facility, temperature checks/health screenings required upon entry, required face masks/coverings, and safety protocol signage installed throughout facility. Fitness Classes now being offered indoors include: Body Blast, Yoga Sculpt, AM Zumba, Noon Yoga, Extreme Boot Camp, Yoga PM, Zumba Toning, Tai Chi Chuan, Turbo Kick Live, and Kaero Kickboxing. Additionally, the facility is again offering indoor Clubs including: Piece Makers, Queen City Quilters, and Wood Carvers.



Outdoor ZUMBA Fitness Class at McCoy Park



Socially Distanced TRX Fitness Class at Truman Memorial

Truman Memorial Building

The same modifications have been made at Truman Memorial Building to accommodate current safety protocols. Since reopening in July, facility operating hours were reduced (except for rentals), but program attendance has been strong for Table Tennis, Silver Sneakers Yoga, Wake Up Workout, Zumba Gold, Noon TRX Boot Camp and evening TRX classes, and Homeschool Recreation Program.

George Owens Nature Park & Family Programs

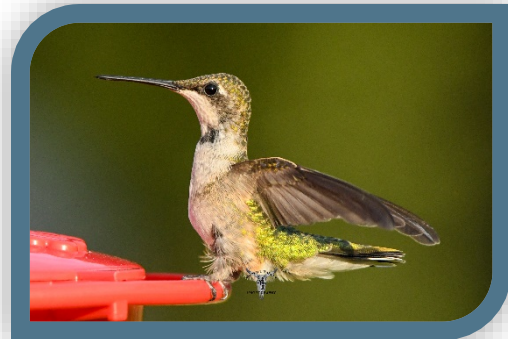
George Owens Nature Park has enjoyed increased popularity and patronage since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, with increased visits for hiking and fishing from individuals and families seeking outdoor recreation opportunities. Since reopening in July, the same modifications have been made for both the Lodge and DeWitt Hall to accommodate current safety protocols. Additionally, staff has worked diligently to offer various virtual nature programs and modified in-person family programs, including: Hummingbird Festival, Online Dino O'Dell Program, and Family Nature Programs. These programs have been very well received by the public.



Father/Daughter Hiking Event



2020 Hummingbird Festival



2020 Hummingbird Festival

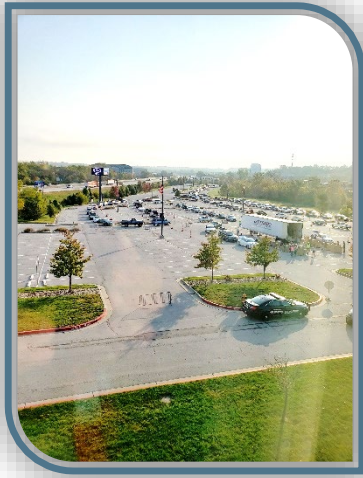


Fishing at George Owens



Hiking at George Owens

ESF6 Coordination Efforts



USDA Food Box Distribution at Cable Dahmer Arena

ESF6 (Emergency Support Function #6) – Mass Care: Parks/Recreation/Tourism Department staff has assisted in many areas of ESF6 operations, including the setup, planning, coordination, and operation of: USDA Food Box Distribution events, donation receiving sites, coordination of COVID-19 Testing Sites, Jackson County Mask Distribution Event, Eastern Jackson County COVID Information Phone Bank, coordination of emergency sheltering, and planning, design, coordination of a field hospital at Cable Dahmer Arena. Additionally, staff converted Truman Memorial Building into dormitory for AmeriCorps Service volunteers.

Park Revitalization Program

The Park Revitalization program is an on-going effort that addresses routine needs such as replacing park benches and trash receptacles, repairing damaged playground equipment and picnic benches, repairing mechanical systems and pumps, replenishing playground safety surfacing, repairs to trails, parking lots and concrete surfaces. Park staff addresses these needs continuously to ensure that facilities are kept in working order throughout the spring, summer, and fall seasons.



New Backstop Installed at Blackburn Baseball Field

In Closing

It is the opinion of the Parks Commission that the activities, initiatives, and projects supported by the Parks Sales Tax are in keeping with the program's intent, and that the work of the Parks and Recreation Department continues to enhance the quality of life in Independence.

The members of the Independence Parks Commission, on behalf of the residents of Independence, express our gratitude and appreciation to the Mayor and City Council for their continued interest in, and support of, providing the best possible parks, recreation facilities, and programs for the people of Independence.



Truman Memorial Building



Santa Fe Park



Independence Athletic Complex



Palmer Senior Center