

**SPECIAL MEETING**  
**JANUARY 22, 2009**

The Special Meeting of the City Commission was called to order at 5:30 p.m. in the Forum Room of Wilbarger Auditorium by Mayor Jeff Bearden, and a quorum was declared present.

Present: Mayor Jeff Bearden

Commissioners: Jimmy Dennis, Russell Brownlow, Tra Cardwell and Phil McCuiston

Staff Present: City Manager Mitch Grant, City Attorney Trish Byars, Police Chief Tom Wilson, Public Works Director Bob Cochran, Special Services Director Monica Wilkinson and City Secretary Linda Byers.

Mayor Bearden led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. and Texas flags, followed by the invocation.

**REPORT FROM SWIMMING POOL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Commissioner Russell Brownlow, as chairman of the swimming pool committee, thanked the other committee members for their service. He explained that the committee's first choice for the swimming pool site had been a triangular piece of land belonging to Wilbarger General Hospital; however, the hospital elected not to lease the property to the city.

Commissioner Brownlow said that the committee met eight to twelve times and considered a number of locations including behind the high school football stadium, near Vernon College, off of Hwy 287 behind the strip mall on Hillcrest and a piece of property owned by the City near Wilbarger and Una Streets. The committee decided to recommend Orbison Park as the pool's location by a unanimous vote during their last meeting. The reasons for this decision included the fact that approximately \$26,000 had previously been spent on architectural work for building the pool at the park, and there would be no additional land costs since the City owned the land.

The committee's vision for the swimming pool complex includes a 25-yard six-lane pool, with an additional dive pool, a pool with a slide and volleyball net, and a spray park.

Swimming Pool Committee member Susan Couch told those present that both the current and the former swimming pool committee's had agreed that the swimming pool should be located at Orbison Park. She said that the committee felt that the pool needed to be located in an existing park with other amenities such as the clubhouse, soccer fields, baseball and softball fields, playground equipment and bathrooms, and children were

already used to going there for outdoor activities. She noted that any location would garner opposition, but the committee felt that this was the best location for all citizens.

Committee member Beverly Campsey stated that she agreed with the Orbison Park location. The clubhouse was used for many events, as well as the gazebo. Orbison Park also has trees and grass, and are well maintained by the city staff. Parking is a concern and a problem. She also stated that it is important that if we do something – do it right.

Committee Member Kim Macklin commented that she was initially opposed to the Orbison Park location, citing problems with parking and kids safety during the Kid League games, but after lengthy discussions she realized that Orbison Park was the best location.

Commissioner Tra Cardwell also served on the swimming pool committee and stated that neither himself, Commissioner Brownlow, nor any City staff serving on the swimming pool committee, participated in voting for the pool location. Commissioner Cardwell said he did not know that all possibilities for finding a suitable location for the pool had been exhausted and that there was still time for alternative sites to be looked at before the city commission voted on where to place the new pool.

Mayor Bearden thanked the Swimming Pool Committee for their service and for coming up with recommendations.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING SWIMMING POOL REPORT**

Jan Hartin, who was on the original swimming pool committee, said that the new committee agreed with their findings, and it was time to decide and move on.

Willie King suggested that the pool be placed on the north side of town, possibly on the Gibson's site or on Dean Street. The pool would enhance north Vernon. He also voiced concern about the distance for some kids to go to get to Orbison Park, and suggested that the pool be closer to town.

Judy Tatum said that there was no funding for the pool at this time, and that in view of the economy, the City should postpone the pool project and re-prioritize their goals. She asked how the City could go forward without funding, and only a small portion of the citizens would use the pool. The City Commission should pay attention to more important things.

Commissioner Cardwell responded that there is money left from the original bond of approximately \$262,000, grants from Tyson and AEP, and the remainder would be paid from a Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPW) Grant.

Frances Ham asked if the project would help put people to work.

Travis Goodman agreed with Judy Tatum and asked what the operation would cost.

Mayor Bearden responded that the TPW grant required a park plan. The city would have required fees and rules, and the fees would include rentals.

Ronnie Richie, who was on the original swimming pool committee, noted that part of the park is in a flood plan, and cannot be used. Part of the park was formerly a dump ground. Susan Couch, who has participated in fund raising for the pool project, said there are other funding sources. She said that fees should cover the cost of operation.

Linda Cochran thanked the committee for their service. She said that the kids need activity, and that Orbison Park is a good site.

Kim Macklin noted that the pool would not be built by this summer, but would take time.

Commissioner Cardwell stated that the committee had met with the manager of the pool in Iowa Park. Their pool was operating at cost, and had been built with 4B economic development funds.

Judy Tatum stated since the taxpayer would not be expected to pay the cost of the pool, she had objections to the site because of the parking problems.

Don Goodrum agreed that there was a need for a pool, but had a problem with the location because the only access would be from Sand Road. He stated that the pool should be more centrally located to accommodate the kids in North Vernon.

Vicki Pennington asked if the City planned to extend Roberts Street south to the park. Public Works Director Cochran verified that they were.

Charles Shippet stated that the park was overloaded for the acreage available, and that parking was needed. There should be no parking on the west side of Sand Road. He would like to see the pool located at Vernon High School. He said that the City should purchase Hillcrest Country Club.

Ronnie Richie stated that parking was a problem and that blowing sand was going to be a problem at this location.

Linda Cochran stated that there were parking, trails, etc. in the original plans.

Joann Wilson asked if the pool is at Orbison Park, where will parking be, and could the old pool site be used?

Kim Macklin noted that Vernon ISD would not want to give up land for the pool. Orbison Park would be the less expensive site. The people who want to use it will find a neighborhood park.

Commissioner Brownlow noted that the swimming pool committee had addressed every question voiced tonight. The city is at the end of the time line to get the necessary grants to build the pool, and its time to get started.

Beverly Campsey agreed with the opinions voiced by the committee, agreed with the need for funding not from the taxpayer, and stated that parking needs to be addressed.

Judy Tatum asked if there was location for the pool near the Boys and Girls Club?

Commissioner Brownlow responded that there was not enough land at either of those locations for the planned facility.

Ed Goodman asked if it would only be a summer facility. Commissioner Brownlow responded that it would be open in the summer and covered with a removable bubble in the winter. It would be a year round facility.

Commissioner Cardwell noted that there were \$750,000 grants available for covered pool facilities. Jalayne Goss asked if there would be a city match on TPW grants. City Manager Grant responded that it would be a 50/50 grant.

There was discussion about locations around the Multi-Purpose arena.

Charles McArthur, a swimming pool committee member, said that these same problems came up at the committee meetings. Orbison park has existing facilities that can be used along with the pool.

Donna Hager suggested that the city use a survey to get citizens input.

Mayor Bearden said that the surveys would be addressed in the park plan. The City Commission will put forth the plan that will benefit the most citizens. The pool facility has to be part of the park master plan.

After no further comment the Public Comments were closed.

### **REVIEW OF PARK INVENTORY** **PARKS PLANNING PROCESS OVERVIEW**

Special Services Director Monica Wilkinson introduces the park plan process, noting that the City needed the parks plan to qualify for state grants. The City wants input from the citizens on what is needed and desired.

There are three components to the master parks plan:

1. Inventory of current facilities (Orbison Park, Allingham Park, Christine Lyday Park, D.L. Green Park, Sunshine Park, and Castleberry Park)
2. Needs Assessment in which the city will get public input.
3. Prioritization of needs and plan implementation strategy.

At least two public hearings will be conducted to receive comment on the planning process and completed plan. City staff will be facilitating a number of focus group meetings to receive input from a cross-section of the community (Community leaders, economic development allies, senior citizens, youth at the Boys & Girls Clubs, young families, blue collar workers, churches and special interest groups) A survey might also be administered through the newspaper or online.

There will be a public hearing to present data from the focus groups in March. The completed plan will be presented to the City Commission in April.

The plan is to identify where possible needs are in the future, and citizens should come to the focus groups with needs in mind.

**DISCUSSION REGARDING PARKS PLANNING OVERVIEW**

Sean Stockard suggested that the city might want to include Vernon High School students, the KEY Club and Vernon College students.

Kelly Lehman asked if a survey would be included, and if it would be available in the grocery stores.

Charles McArthur asked if this would be a ten year plan.

Director Wilkinson responded that the plan would be for what the City needed to do now for the next ten years.

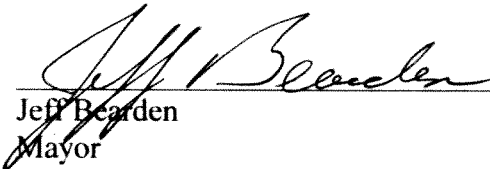
City Manager Grant noted that some of this would be included in the grant. The Parks Plan as a whole would be included

Donna Hager suggested that the city include a copy of the parks map with the survey.

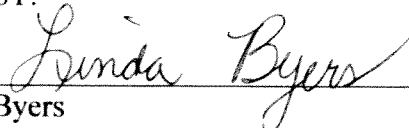
Mayor Bearden commented that all of the City Commission would be available to hear comments. After no further comment the public hearing was closed

**ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 6:55 p.m.

  
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Jeff Bearden  
Mayor

ATTEST:

  
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Linda Byers  
City Secretary