

Bryant Parks Committee Meeting

May 12, 2026 6:00 PM

Bishop Park Administration Building - Conference Room
6401 Boone Rd

UNAPPROVED MINUTES

Call to Order - Renee Curtis at 6:00 PM

Committee Members Present - Amanda Jolly, Renee Curtis, Jennifer Benning, Drew Martin and Tony Williams

Others Present - Parks Director Keith Cox, Assistant Director Matt Martin, Community Outreach and Engagement Coordinator Cassie Henry-Saorrano, Central Arkansas Soccer Club President Jim Anderson, Representatives from Bryant Youth Association Suzanne Passmore, Amanda Herman, Carl Minden, Shane Knight, Selleck Childress, Madelyn Dunlap, Ryan Dunlap, Heather McKim, and City Council Members Butch Higginbotham and Lisa Meyer.

Approval of Minutes

1. March 10 Parks Committee Meeting

Motion to approve by D. Martin, seconded by Jolly. Motion carried.

Associations / Club Reports

2. Central Arkansas Soccer Club Annual Report

Central Arkansas Soccer Club President Jim Anderson provided an update on current programs, partnerships, and facility needs. Anderson highlighted the launch of the new Pre-Classic state league for 3rd and 4th graders, designed to help young players transition into competitive soccer.

He expressed appreciation for the club's premier sponsors, Everett Buick GMC and PUMA, and commended the Parks Department for its work in maintaining Midland Park, stating it is the nicest fields in central Arkansas. Anderson also noted the recent installation of new backstops, which were purchased by CAS and installed by the Parks Department.

Anderson reported continued growth in player participation and anticipates an additional increase following this year's World Cup. He reiterated the club's need for expanded space at Midland Park to accommodate this projected growth.

Curtis asked if they had a breakdown of participation between girls and boys. Anderson said that the Club is made up of about $\frac{2}{3}$ boys.

Director's Report

3. Parks Department Monthly Summary

Cox presented the monthly overview of activities, events, and departmental updates. With no questions regarding the posted summary, he proceeded to provide a capital projects update, including progress on the Mills-Alcoa Connector Trail, the Bishop Park Splash Pad, ADA lift chairs, and the lining of the Bishop Park parking lot.

D. Martin asked about the first winter season using the new pool cover at Mills Park, which was funded and used for the first time last year. M. Martin reported that opening the pool this spring was significantly smoother than in previous years and that the cover was easier to remove and store than anticipated. He also stated that it was being stored indoors inside the Center at Bishop Park.

Public Comments

There were no Public Comments

Old Business

4. Request to Sublease Property

Cox opened the item by explaining why it appeared under Old Business, noting that it was originally scheduled for the April City Council agenda but was tabled and returned to the Parks Committee for discussion this month. He clarified that the City's use agreement with the Bryant Youth Association allows BYA to sublease its property with City approval; approval they intend to request from City Council in May. Cox emphasized that this is not a Parks Department action item and does not require a vote from the Parks Committee; it is included solely for discussion.

Shane Knight, speaking on behalf of the Bryant Chamber of Commerce and as a BYA board member, stated that although there were initial challenges coordinating the proposal with the Bryant School District, all parties are now aligned, and the Chamber supports the agreement.

BYA board members Carl Minden, Heather McKim, and Selleck Childress reiterated that the proposal is not the creation of a new school but a co-op program that does not compete with the Bryant School District. They requested that the arrangement be viewed as a fundraiser to support BYA's ongoing youth services. They also noted that the Bryant School District, identified as a valued partner, has agreed not to oppose the request as long as participation remains under 20 students.

Committee member Curtis spoke in her capacity as a Parks Committee representative, noting that although she is employed by the Bryant School District, her comments reflect her role on the committee. She expressed concern that the City's agreement with BYA designates the facility for public use, and any use outside that scope should remain under City discretion to maximize public benefit. She also noted that the proposal could increase demand on the Parks Department, which currently covers utilities and maintenance for the facility. Suzanne Passmore distributed a handout addressing several of the questions raised.

Discussion continued regarding alternative rental options, historical practices, the potential operational impact on the City, and which facilities would or would not be included in any rental arrangement.

Committee member D. Martin expressed full support for the agreement, stating that he believes it represents a good use of taxpayer resources and makes productive use of a facility that is otherwise unused during daytime hours.

Questions were raised regarding why the use agreement had not previously come before the Parks Committee. Cox acknowledged this oversight and stated that he will begin bringing updates from both the Bryant Youth Association and the Senior Center to the committee going forward.

New Business

5. Request to add Senior Services Superintendent, Senior Services Coordinator, Lead Cook and Part-Time Cook Positions

D. Martin asked if any of the newly created Senior Services positions are more vital than any other. Cox said that all four of the specific positions are equally important to the operations of Senior Services and that all of these employees have been informed that they would have jobs with the Parks Department once this transition took place.

Motion to group all four newly created Senior Services positions by D. Martin, seconded by Jolly. Motion passes.

Motion to recommend to Council the approval of all four positions by Jolly, seconded by Benning. Motion passes.

6. Request to add Parks Staff Position

D. Martin and Curtis requested additional clarity on the specific responsibilities of the proposed position, particularly regarding support for Senior Services and internal programming.

Cox explained that the Parks Department has become increasingly dependent on part-time staff, noting that full-time staffing has decreased from twenty-one to eighteen positions since 2016. He emphasized the need for a consistent, full-time employee who can cover nights and weekends; capacity the department has lost in recent years and needs to restore.

He outlined that the role would help absorb responsibilities across Flag Football, internal programming, and the Senior Center, providing stability that cannot be achieved through multiple part-time employees. Cox added that this approach aligns with Hunter's preference for a single full-time position rather than several part-time roles.

Cox also reported that programming revenues are tracking well ahead of schedule for the year and should be sufficient to offset the additional cost associated with creating this position.

Motion to recommend to Council the approval of the position by Benning, seconded by Jolly. Motion passes.

7. Request to rebuild Mills Park Basketball Court

Cox reminded the committee that he would return this month with a plan for utilizing the remaining Amendment 78 funds. He reported that, according to the Finance Director, approximately \$80,000 remains available for Parks projects.

Cox also noted that he has secured a \$20,000 donation from a local resident and that \$18,500 was budgeted this year for an asphalt overlay of the courts. With these combined resources, he is proposing a full rebuild of the court rather than applying another layer of asphalt.

He stated that he has received a preliminary quote that is currently under budget but is awaiting information from Public Works regarding the cost of demolition and grading but would like to go ahead and take it to Council this month due to the urgency to spend the remainder of the Amendment 78 funds.

Motion to recommend to Council the approval to rebuild Mills Basketball Court by D. Martin, seconded by Benning. Motion Passes.

8. Request for approval to serve alcohol at special event

Cox reminded the Committee that several years ago, all alcohol requests for special events were required to come before the Parks Committee. Since then, established rules have been put in place allowing the Parks Department to approve such requests administratively, provided the requesting entity meets all requirements.

Cox reported that Leadership Saline is requesting to use Bishop Park for a fundraiser benefiting the Bryant Youth Association. He noted that, because he is a member of the current Leadership Saline class organizing the event, he has a conflict of interest. For that reason, this request is being brought before the Committee rather than being approved at the departmental level.

Motion to allow the serving of alcohol at special event by Jolly, seconded by Benning. Motion passes.

Committee Comments

Benning asked about the status of replacing the netting on the batting cages at the Bishop Park baseball complex. Cox explained that the netting has been in need of replacement for some time and that an agreement was made between the Parks Department and the Bryant Athletic Association in which BAA would purchase the new nets and Parks would install them upon delivery.

Martin reported that he contacted the BAA President within the past week to confirm their plans and was assured that the nets are still scheduled to be purchased and delivered.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by D. Martin, Seconded by Curtis. Motion carried.