



Spokane County

PARKS, RECREATION AND GOLF
Doug Chase, Director

MEETING MINUTES

SPOKANE COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC)

Location: 404 N Havana St.

Wednesday, February 9, 2022 at 8:00 AM

Present: Eric Sawyer-Chair, Dave Schaub, Mel Fowler, Doug Kelley (Via phone), Chris Duff (Guest Speaker).

Not Present: Eric Johnson, Tom MacKenzie

Staff: Doug Chase – Director, Paul Knowles, Aysha Al-Hafian

I. Call Meeting to Order (*Chair, Eric Sawyer*) 8:04

A. Additions to the Agenda

Mr. Chase would like to add more to the Director's report in regards to committee positions.

B. Review and consider PAC minutes from January 12, 2021 meeting

Motion to Approve: Mr. Schaub.

Seconded by Mr. Kelley.

Unanimously approved.

II. Guest Presentation: Chris Duff, President, Spokane Indians Baseball (20-30-minute presentation followed by 10-15 minute Q & A)

1. Chris will provide an overview of (SIB) operations, including relationship with Spokane County, Major League Baseball, significant projects in the works and looking ahead.

Mr. Sawyer introduced Mr. Duff, the president of Spokane Indians Baseball, and thanked him for joining the PAC to present. Mr. Duff himself has worked with Spokane Indians Baseball and the Chiefs for about twenty years. He is extremely passionate about what he does and then began his presentation. [See Presentation](#)

Mr. Schaub asked what it was about Spokane Indians Baseball that has allowed them to double jump the leagues (from Low A to High A).

Mr. Duff replied that the jump was due to geography. In our region, there were eight teams. Only six of them were kept, but all six made the same jump in league in part, because Major League Baseball ("MLB") desired a robust Northwest-based league.

Mr. Sawyer asked if with all the new player development requirements, is there a need for more revenue [to help with increased costs] and if so, will MLB help?

Mr. Duff answered that there is no financial help coming from MLB. With the short season changing to a long season, they do anticipate more revenue, however, they do not expect a significant increase due to the extension coming earlier in the season.

Mr. Sawyer asked for more clarification on what fan amenities might look like. What would make a fan more likely to buy a ticket?

Mr. Duff referred to page five of the [handout](#). The first five projects are player-related, but an example of what one might see as a spectator amenity would be the videoboard. On page six, there are other potential spectator amenities such as expanded dugouts, landscape improvements, and a 360 concourse. This walkway would provide a history of the Spokane Indians and Avista Stadium, allowing spectators to circle the stadium and see the game from all angles.

Mr. Sawyer asked if Spokane Indians Baseball is thinking about artificial turf.

Mr. Duff responded that it is on the table. To his surprise, there are more people open to the idea of turf than previously expected. Baseball has a strong contingent of traditionalists who have historically preferred natural grass. That seems to be changing.

Mr. Sawyer also asked if there were any restrictions from MLB about what they put on the field.

Mr. Duff replied that there are no restrictions. If he had to choose today, he might choose turf for the field. The operational cost is not as low as anticipated though. However, a turf field would provide new opportunities. No concerts or extra events have been held on the field for fear of damaging the grass. A turf field would allow for more events to take place within the stadium.

Mr. Schaub wanted to hear more about how the stadium is a community asset. So far, he can see how it helps MLB, but where is the broader Spokane community benefit?

Mr. Duff explained that they try to do as many community events as they can at Avista Stadium. There is the desire to do more, but the facility is not set up for it at this time. The stadium has been around since 1903, and Mr. Duff believes that as the Spokane community continues to grow, the stadium should grow and develop with it. It has been sixty plus years since the current stadium was built and there has not been much investment into the facility itself, and it is time to invest in it.

Mr. Sawyer asked if the community is unable to contribute money towards the stadium to meet MLB compliance, would that be the end of Spokane Indians Baseball in Spokane?

Mr. Duff confirmed that that's a strong possibility. If compliance is not met, the MLB has the option to either move the team or take their license. A similar situation happened in Boise – a similar market to Spokane.

Mr. Sawyer thanked Mr. Duff for his time to present to the PAC. He asked Mr. Chase if there is a role the PAC should play or if they need a recommendation from the PAC.

Mr. Chase said that the formation of the Ballot Measure Committee will be the main committee making these recommendations. However, since everything is still being worked out, he would like to consider it and check-in at the next PAC meeting.

Mr. Duff added that they want to take a strategic approach and when the time comes, a PAC recommendation would be great.

Mr. Chase also stated that there would hopefully be a PAC liaison member on the new Ballot Measure Committee which would be helpful.

III. Member's Report: (Chair, Eric Sawyer):

Park Advisory Committee Members are encouraged to provide a brief report.

Mr. Sawyer is enjoying the new meeting format and receiving the written department update ahead of the meeting. It's great to read and develop questions before meetings. He also believes that having more frequent meetings will help keep them to a reasonable time.

Ms. Fowler mentioned that there is new ownership at the indoor soccer center and the turf is in the process of getting redone. Turf can be tricky if not maintained regularly.

IV. Director's Report: (Doug Chase):

1. Legislative Update: HB 1925 (County Park Regulations), HB 1672 (Conservation Futures Levy Lid Exemption), HB 1918 (Parks Equipment Regulations).

Mr. Chase explained that Parks staff have been watching certain House Bills. House Bill 1925 would provide counties with the same flexibility as municipalities for setting penalties for park rule violations. Currently, any violation in a county park, such as littering, is considered a misdemeanor. More often than not, the punishment does not fit the crime. This law would have allowed the county to issue civil infractions (non-criminal, monetary fine) for certain violations. Unfortunately, it did not make it out of the committee. Some Democratic legislators were concerned it was a ploy to get rid of the homeless within the parks system. There is hope that Parks staff will continue develop the bill and get it passed in the future.

House Bill 1672 is dead in committee.

House Bill 1918 is currently under consideration, but it has not been passed.

2. Staffing Changes

Mr. Chase briefed PAC members on some staffing changes within the Parks department. Ms. Fitzgerald has been extremely helpful with recruitment for her position. She is leaving the County to go and work for the City of Wenatchee (her previous Parks-world employer).

Mr. Sawyer congratulated and thanked Ms. Fitzgerald for everything she has done for the County.

Mr. Chase assured members that things have been very busy at the Parks department with recruitment. There are good applicants to interview, and progress is being made as quickly as possible to fill open positions.

3. Chair Elections (Added)

Mr. Chase reminded PAC members that it is time to elect a new Chair and Vice-Chair. This election will be worked into the next PAC agenda. The PAC liaison to the Golf Advisory Committee (GAC) is also due for election. To be considered as liaison for this committee, people of interest are to contact Mr. Chase. There is also a rotating spot on the Land Evaluation Committee (LEC). Mr. MacKenzie was the last member in that position. Mr. Chase assured that he will have all positions up for election on the next agenda.

V. Written Department Update: (Misc. 0-15 minutes) Time allotted for Questions/Clarification Advisory Committee Members may have associated with the "written departmental update".

No Questions.

Meeting adjourned 9:04.

Next Regular Meeting: March 9, 2022; **Location:** 404 N Havana Street, contingent upon COVID-19 sanctions.

Purpose: *The purpose of the Parks Advisory Committee, (PAC) referred to, as the "Park Board" is to make recommendations to and advise the Parks and Recreation Director on matters concerning the operation and maintenance of the Spokane County park system.*

Spokane County Parks and Recreation Mission Statement

“The mission of the Parks, Recreation and Golf Department is to enhance the general quality of life for the residents of Spokane County by providing the highest quality and quantity of parks, recreation, open space, and related cultural opportunities given the available resources.”

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) INFORMATION: Spokane County is committed to providing equal access to its facilities, programs, and services for persons with disabilities. The Spokane County Parks, Recreation & Golf Conference Room is wheelchair accessible. Individuals requesting reasonable accommodations or further information may call, write, or email Ashley Cameron at (509) 477-2122 (TDD), 824 North Adams Street, Spokane, WA, 99260; or acameron@spokanecounty.org. Please contact us forty-eight (48) hours before the meeting date.