

**RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSION  
FOR THE PARISH OF EAST BATON ROUGE**  
**Regular Meeting – 5:00 p.m.**  
**BREC Administration Building**  
**6201 Florida Boulevard**  
**Baton Rouge, Louisiana**  
Commission Minutes  
August 24, 2017

**Call to Order**

A regular meeting of the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge (BREC) was held at BREC's Administrative Offices on August 24, 2017. The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Lloyd H. Benson II, Chairman. Mr. Benson recognized Pastor Rachel Haman of Healing Place Church who offered the invocation. Commissioner Shelton C. Dixon led the pledge of allegiance. Roll was taken and a quorum of Commissioners was present including Shelton C. Dixon, Vice Chairman; Larry Selders, Treasurer; Sandra Davis; Kenneth Pointer; Davis Rhorer; David Tatman; Mike Walker; and Rossie Washington, Jr. Staff members present were Carolyn McKnight, Superintendent; Dale Auzenne, Assistant Superintendent of Recreation, Programs and Facilities; Reed Richard, Assistant Superintendent Planning and Construction; Corey Wilson, Chief of Management and Business Services; Phil Frost; Michael Hutchison; Steven Knight; Cheryl Michelet; Mike Raby; Brandon Smith; Justin Smith; Stephanie Trim; and Chris Marchiafava. Murphy Foster, legal counsel, was also in attendance. The audience consisted of BREC staff, media, and the general public.

**Public Comment**

Mr. Benson stated that before proceeding with public comment he would read the public comment protocol to be observed. After reading the protocol, Mr. Benson noted that many of the comment cards that had been turned in listed the relocation of the Zoo as the item for comment. He stated that the Commission was not voting on the relocation of the Zoo tonight. He then read the proposed resolution. Mr. Benson opened the floor for public comment on the agenda action items and began calling on the members of the public who had submitted comment cards regarding the Zoo. There were 25 speakers in opposition to the relocation of the Zoo, 15 speakers in favor of relocation, and 5 speakers who offered information only. The comment period lasted a little over two hours. Mr. Benson asked if there was anyone else who would like to speak on any agenda item. Hearing none, Mr. Benson closed the floor.

Mr. Benson explained that the Commission would be utilizing an electronic system to vote and outlined the protocol.

**Adoption of Minutes**

Resolved, That the reading of the minutes of the Recreation and Park Commission Meeting of July 27, 2017 be dispensed with and that they be approved as written.

Motion by Mr. Washington

Second by Mr. Selders

Unanimously approved

**Consent Calendar**

Resolved, That the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge does hereby approve the Consent Calendar items.

Motion to approve by Mr. Tatman

Second by Mr. Dixon  
Unanimously approved

The following item was approved as part of the Consent Calendar:

**Acceptance of Recommendations for the Human Resources Advisory Committee**

Resolved, That the Commission approve the Routine Personnel Transactions for the month of August 2017.

**Presentations**

The Commission viewed an informational video highlighting the grand opening of the Knock Knock Children's Museum at City-Brooks Community Park, and the upcoming events in September.

Mr. Benson recognized Councilmember Chauna Banks to introduce Coleman Brown with Coleman Brown Architects who gave a presentation offering an alternate proposal to moving the Zoo from its current location.

**Reports of Officers and Standing Committees**

Mr. Benson recognized Ms. McKnight for the Superintendent's Report. Ms. McKnight stated that she had nothing to report this month.

Mr. Benson recognized Mr. Selders for the Finance Advisory Committee report. Mr. Selders asked Michael Hutchison, Finance Director, to review the items recommended for approval. Mr. Hutchison read the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Commission accept the unaudited financial statements for the seven months ending July 31, 2017 (fiscal year-to-date period January 1 – July 31, 2017), as presented.

Motion to approve by Mr. Tatman

Second by Mr. Pointer

Unanimously approved

Mr. Hutchison stated that there was one contract and bid item for approval and then read the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Commission award Sealed Bid #1704 – Bluebonnet Swamp Parking Improvements to the low responsive bidder, Honore Construction, LLC for the Base Bid of \$360,000 plus Alternates 1 & 2 in the amounts of \$27,597 and 32,433 for a total award amount of \$422,500. (The project consists of improvements and upgrades to an existing parking area including paving, curbs, fencing and other misc. items.)

Motion to approve by Mr. Rhorer

Second by Ms. Davis

Unanimously approved

**Unfinished Business and General Orders**

Mr. Benson recognized Superintendent Carolyn McKnight to give a presentation regarding the staff recommendation to accept the consultant's recommendation to relocate the Zoo. Ms. McKnight shared information gathered through seven public meetings BREC held regarding the reimagining Greenwood Park and relocating the Zoo. Mr. Benson asked if the Commissioners had any questions. Mr. Rhorer indicated that he would like to make a statement. In the statement Mr. Rhorer outlined his reasons for voting against relocating the Zoo.

Mr. Benson read letters in opposition to the relocation of the Zoo from Councilmember Erica Green and State Senator Regina Barrow.

The Chairman recognized Mr. Selders for a question. Mr. Selders asked if they would be voting for all or nothing, if there is no Zoo there is no Greenwood. Ms. McKnight stated that her recommendation was for the Commission to authorize staff to look for land that would be in a highly successful, visible, and sustainable location. If the Commission says no everything would stop tonight. She explained that to make the Zoo the best it can be BREC would have to invest in the Zoo and that BREC can't do that based on current funding. BREC would need to engage other public and private resources. The Superintendent continued that if the Zoo stays at Greenwood Park she would not recommend building the water park and other amenities at the park. She stated that it would be irresponsible to make that recommendation based on the information currently available to her. She said that the Commission had charged her as Superintendent to serve the most people in the most efficient and effective way and that without the land and money they would be back at square one.

Mr. Benson recognized Mr. Washington who stated that the vote tonight was not on whether or not BREC is going to move the Zoo because the Commission does not have enough information. There are many questions such as where it would go, how it would be funded, and who would the private sponsors be if it were moved. He stated that the Commissioners have a fiduciary duty to make the best decision for the taxpayers of East Baton Rouge Parish. That the vote was to allow the staff to gather the needed information to compare side by side the costs and impacts of moving the Zoo or leaving at its current location. Mr. Washington stated that voting to allow the information to be gathered was not an indication of support to relocate the Zoo. He noted that he was disappointed that the philanthropy community has not supported funding the Zoo in its current location. Mr. Washington asked Councilmember Banks and her group to work with BREC staff to attempt to identify potential sponsors and that he would like to be included in the meetings. Mr. Washington expressed concerns regarding the current resolution and stated that he would like to offer changes to the resolution.

Mr. Benson explained that the resolution needed to be read and then Mr. Washington could offer a substitute motion outlining his changes. Mr. Benson read the following:

Resolved, That the Commission, through staff recommendation, accept the recommendation in the Schultz and Williams' 'New Vision, New Experiences – A Conceptual Facility & Site Planning Report for a new Baton Rouge Zoo' and authorize the BREC Superintendent to proceed to determine the best new location for the Baton Rouge Zoo allowing for the longest-term sustainability and to begin negotiations with said owner(s).

Further, the Commission authorizes the BREC Superintendent to work with staff to develop plans for BREC's first regional park - Greenwood Regional Park, including strong input from the surrounding community. In addition, the Superintendent is to work with staff and appropriate consultants to develop a funding strategy for the implementation of these major Parish-wide improvements.

Said recommendation for the most sustainable location of the Baton Rouge Zoo, plans for Greenwood Regional Park, and funding strategies for both initiatives to be brought before the Commission for final approval at the appropriate time.

Mr. Benson asked for a motion and a second on the resolution. Mr. Selders moved and Mr. Dixon seconded. Mr. Benson recognized Mr. Washington who made a substitute motion to approve a revised resolution. Mr. Tatman seconded.

Mr. Benson announced that the Commission would vote on the substitute motion first and asked Ms. Marchiafava to read the revised resolution. Ms. Marchiafava read the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Commission, through staff recommendation, accept the recommendation in the Schultz and Williams' 'New Vision, New Experiences – A Conceptual Facility & Site Planning Report for a new Baton Rouge Zoo' and authorize the BREC Superintendent to proceed to determine the best potential alternative location for the Baton Rouge Zoo allowing for the longest-term sustainability and to begin negotiations with said owner(s).

Further, the Commission authorizes the BREC Superintendent to work with staff to develop plans for BREC's first regional park - Greenwood Regional Park, including strong input from the surrounding community. In addition, the Superintendent is to work with staff and appropriate consultants to develop a funding strategy for the implementation of all the potential major Parish-wide improvements.

Said recommendation for the most sustainable location of the Baton Rouge Zoo, plans for Greenwood Regional Park, and funding strategies for all potential initiatives to be brought before the Commission for final approval at the appropriate time.

There was further clarification. Members of the audience continued to question the Commission. The Chairman brought the meeting to order and called for the vote on the revised resolution offered in the substitute motion. The substitute motion for the revised resolution was approved as follows:

Yeas: 7 Ms. Davis, Mr. Dixon, Mr. Pointer, Mr. Selders, Mr. Tatman, Mr. Walker, Mr. Washington  
Nays: 2 Mr. Benson, Mr. Rhorer  
Abstain: 0

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Tatman made a motion to adjourn and Mr. Benson adjourned the meeting without objection at 8:06 p.m.

---

Carolyn McKnight, Superintendent  
and Ex-Officio Secretary

---

Lloyd H. Benson II, Chairman

**DRAFT**