



City of Lawrence

PARKS AND RECREATION

DAVID L. CORLISS
CITY MANAGER

City Offices
PO Box 708 66044-0708
www.lawrenceks.org

6 East 6th St
785-832-3000
FAX 785-832-3405

CITY COMMISSION

MAYOR
ROBERT CHESTNUT

COMMISSIONERS
MIKE AMYX
ARON E. CROMWELL
LANCE M. JOHNSON
MICHAEL DEVER

Tuesday, July 21, 2009

Dear Mayor and Commissioners:

The Advisory Board for the Lawrence Parks and Recreation Department supports the City Manager's recommendation of an allocation for developing plans for a new recreation center to be located in west Lawrence.

First, the location in the northwest part of the community is in need of recreational facilities. As this neighborhood continues to grow and expand with new developments, we feel it is important for the city to also continue its growth of community facilities to meet current and future needs of the public.

The Parks and Recreation Department fills a vital role in our community. We learned from our April public forum and online survey that a majority of people feel parks and recreation are essential city services. To continue this, we must meet their service expectations.

We believe staff are good stewards with city dollars and continue to look for ways to maximize its resources in very efficient and effective ways. But over the past several years, the department has faced an increasing demand for facilities. Many of its programs are at capacity and are unable to expand without additional facility space. However, staff has been able to develop partnerships with area organizations and provide programming in their facilities. Although not ideal, the facilities provide a venue for programs, but the department has to pay for the use of those facilities, which reduces the overall revenue the department generates.

While most recreation programs are somewhat being accommodated, the major need is in gymnasium space, which is harder to come by with outside organizations. Much of the programming taking place in gyms is related to youth and their sports programs. The department has utilized U.S.D. 497 facilities free of charge for years, but staff has been informed by school district officials the department may be charged for use beginning in 2010.

We feel programming for youth is critical to not only foster their personal development but also provides positive activities for them in which to participate. Without youth programming, youth often fall victim to unhealthy, sedentary activities or take part in destructive behaviors, such as vandalism and bullying others.

The department has had several bond payoffs in recent years funded through the sales tax of 1994, and the final Indoor Aquatic Center bond payment comes due in 2010. This would free up



We are committed to providing excellent city services that enhance the quality of life for the Lawrence Community

monies for a project and also assist with the O&M costs once the facility is operational. This would also follow the use of the sales tax passed in 1994, which was originally intended to fund Parks and Recreation projects as it was marketed to the public. Since the sales tax initiatives passed last fall, it is important to realign the 1994 sales tax back to its original intent.

In 2005, the department had requested a second generation of park and recreation projects when the debt payment was completed on several facilities, including: East Lawrence Recreation Center (2006), the Outdoor Aquatic Center (2005) and Clinton Lake Softball Complex (2006). The Commission at that time decided not to move forward with bonding a number of projects put forth by the Parks and Recreation Department and funded just a very small portion of what was requested, diverting the funding source of the 1994 sales tax to other projects, like the city's infrastructure. We hope you won't follow this as a precedent.

We can appreciate and understand the hesitancy to begin a new project in the current economic climate, but we see this as a project that can bring the community together. It can be a bright spot in a bleak time. Yes, caution is needed, but we also need to continue planning for the future so we aren't caught some day in the future saying "well, if we only would have . . ."

We hope you'll consider supporting the City Manager's recommendation for plan development of a Westside recreation center and provide an allocation to begin the process in 2010.

We appreciate your service, time and consideration of this issue. Best wishes on continued success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Loos', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Kevin Loos

Chair, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board