



Agenda Report

Parks and Recreation Commission

MEETING DATE: JANUARY 13, 2025

TO: PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

SUBMITTED BY: ANGELA LINDSTROM, PARKS AND RECREATION AD HOC COMMITTEE

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SUBJECT: PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION ENHANCED RECOMMENDATIONS

This report summarizes the findings and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee formed in August 2024 to enhance the effectiveness of the Parks and Recreation Commission. The committee, comprised of Commissioners Angela Lindstrom, Jozef Maldonado, and Susan Rhie, conducted a two-month review of the Commission's operations.

Approach:

The Committee shared their own observations and experiences of the Commission's operation. We compiled a matrix of 11 Parks and Recreation Commissions in comparable nearby cities for comparison. Additionally, Irvine and Los Angeles were included to understand how larger cities scale their parks and community services commissions. Individual meetings were held with staff (Christian Hernandez), Mayor Pro Tem Fred Jung, and Councilman Ahmad Zahra to gather initial feedback on the committee's preliminary findings. *Please note this report reflects the Committee's recommendations and has not yet been formally reviewed by the aforementioned individuals.*

Key Challenges:

The Committee's work focused on addressing the overarching question: "How can we maximize positive impact on the lives of Fullerton residents through our parks and community programs?" This led to the identification of key challenges centered around the following questions:

- A. **Agenda Development:** How can we ensure Commission agendas address the most relevant issues for the community?
- B. **Sound Decision Making:** How can we ensure decisions are based on data, consider diverse perspectives, and incorporate relevant context and expert knowledge?
- C. **Community Engagement:** How can we better understand community priorities to inform investments in parks, recreation, and community programs?
- D. **Maximizing Commissioner Contribution:** How can we enhance individual contributions to the Parks and Recreation Commission?

The Committee developed specific recommendations to address the identified challenges. These recommendations are detailed below and are designed to be implemented incrementally and iteratively. We believe their implementation will improve the Commission's ability to serve the community and contribute to the overall quality of life in Fullerton.

Next Steps and Metrics:

The Committee acknowledges that due to time constraints, specific metrics for evaluating the success of these recommendations were not developed. We believe defining measurable metrics is crucial for assessing the effectiveness of any adopted improvements. We therefore recommend the Commission prioritize the development of such metrics following review of this report.

Conclusion:

This report presents the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee's efforts to identify opportunities for enhancing the Parks and Recreation Commission's effectiveness. The Committee emphasizes the importance of a continuous improvement process involving ongoing introspection, feedback, and refinement. We respectfully request the Commission's review of this report and welcome the opportunity to discuss our findings and recommendations in more detail.

Recommendations

This section outlines recommendations developed by the Ad Hoc Committee to address identified challenges and enhance the effectiveness of the Parks and Recreation Commission. These recommendations are designed to improve the Commission's advisory function, enhance community engagement, and promote sound decision-making. The challenges addressed by each recommendation are indicated in brackets using the following key:

- A:** Meaningful Agenda Items
- B:** Sound Decision Making
- C:** Community Engagement
- D:** Maximizing Commissioner Contribution

1. **Detailed Commissioner Roles and Responsibilities [D]:** The stated purpose of the Fullerton Parks and Recreation Commission is to provide “study and policy recommendations related to parks and recreation concerns, projects, and programs.”¹

We recommend developing a more detailed definition of Commissioner roles and responsibilities to provide clearer guidance and structure. This effort can start with review of similar documents from other cities (see the attached comparison matrix). Interestingly, the City of Placentia takes this a step further by assigning specific areas of responsibility to individual members.

Furthermore, we recommend incorporating Commissioner involvement in new Commissioner onboarding to provide a practical perspective and ensure continuity in organizational knowledge and practices.

2. **Defined Community Engagement Activities [C, D, B, A]:** To increase and improve community engagement, we recommend establishing a target number of activities for Commissioners each month or quarter. Commissioners will have the flexibility to choose the activity type and area of focus from a range of options, including (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Parks and Recreation and Programs office hours for the public
- Attendance at public events (e.g., summer markets)
- Public park design workshops
- Attendance at staff-held public meetings (e.g., Sports League Partner User Group meetings)
- "Day-in-the-life" shadowing of staff in Public Works and Parks and Recreation and Programs

3. **Master Park Plan [C, A, D, B]:** Development of a Master Park Plan is recommended to engage the public and provide a strategic roadmap for parks and community programs. If internal funding is unavailable, external funding and partnerships with educational institutions and non-profit organizations should be pursued to maximize resources. The Commission can support staff in developing a funding plan.

¹ From City of Fullerton's website (<https://www.cityoffullerton.com/government/departments/city-clerk/commissions-committees-and-boards>)

4. **Baseline "State of the Parks, Recreation, and Community Programs" Analysis/Study [A, C, B, D]:** A baseline study is recommended to assess the current state of parks, recreation, and community programs. This study should include:
 - Field observations of Fullerton's parks and trails to document service levels
 - Gathering input from park users
 - Partnerships with educational institutions to conduct polls, research and document findings
5. **Network with organizations to leverage expertise, identify best practices, resources, and opportunities to collaborate [B, D, A]**
 - "Adjacent" Fullerton Commissions: Senior, Youth, Infrastructure and Natural Resources, Active Transportation Committees or Commissions
 - Civic organizations / nonprofits
 - OC Parks Commission
 - State Parks Commission
 - Neighboring cities' Commissions
 - Cal State Fullerton (public opinion polls, political science & government, cultural heritage, etc.)
 - Cal Poly Pomona (landscape architecture design)
6. **Analysis of Local and Regional Trends [B, D, A]:** We recommend analyzing local and regional trends in parks and community services to identify innovative practices that could enhance Fullerton's parks and programs. Actively implementing recommendations 2-5 will provide valuable data to support this analysis. This includes identifying professional conferences for Commissioner attendance to enhance domain knowledge and expertise.
7. **Regular Briefings to City Council:** To enhance the Commission's advisory role, we recommend regular (e.g., quarterly or semi-annual) briefings to the City Council. These briefings, conducted by the Chair and Vice-Chair with Commissioner support, will provide updates on key Commission activities and feedback from the Council.

Attachment

1. [Parks and Recreation Commission Comparison Matrix](#)