



AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY FORM

MEETING DATE: 8/12/2024

PREPARED BY: Megan Mainer, Director of Parks & Recreation

AGENDA CONTENT: Discussion and possible action on Rueben Welch Park use, design, and development.

AGENDA ITEM SECTION: Regular Agenda

BUDGETED AMOUNT: NA **FUNDS REQUESTED:** NA

FUND: NA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Staff is moving forward with various action items within the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master and Strategic plan including addressing low scoring park components, increase programming and revenue, as well as renovating substandard facilities. One of the parks in need of attention is Rueben Welch Park.

Rueben Welch Park - ACTION 4.1.c. - Consider site specific Master Plan for Rueben Welch to address additional fields as demand increases or for use as a large gathering space (amphitheater). Diamond fields - Generally overgrown, rusty fence, does not appear to be in use; currently unusable due to lack of fencing, concessions - abandoned and recently demolished Brushy Bayou Park, Rueben Welch Park, and Veterans Park are the least-used facilities. Site-specific plans should be developed for Rueben Welch Park to address more programming space and improving level of service for residents.

On June 15, 2020, staff proposed the demolition of obsolete park elements including field fencing, restrooms, and a concession building at Rueben Welch Park so the park could be repurposed for another park use. Since these components were funded by the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD), the City received approval to deem these components as obsolete so they could be demolished. The Parks & ROW Division maintains the grounds, but all utilities are currently cut off at the road.

Staff researched the possibility of converting Rueben Welch Park into a BMX/Bike pump course. However, on June 14, 2021, the Parks & Recreation Board recommended other opportunities other than a BMX/bike pump course be considered due to utility constraints that would be required for restroom facilities.

Staff addressed the need to develop a concept plan within the 2021-2022 budget. City Council's direction was to consider pursuing a public-private agreement to develop the site with public access.

On August 9, 2021, staff presented the idea of advertising a public-private Request for Proposals for Rueben Welch Park. The Parks & Recreation Board noted they would like this park to be a more passive and natural park but agreed to advertise a public-private Request for Proposals to consider all options. Staff published the RFP in the fall of 2021 and did not receive any submissions.

TPWD has provided state funds for the development of Rueben Welch Park. Funding received from the state requires park sites to be maintained as public parkland in perpetuity. As a result, staff engaged TPWD to determine restrictions related to public-private agreements for Rueben Welch Park. TPWD reiterated the park must be a public facility and if a fee is charged, a portion of the fee should come back to the City of Angleton's Parks & Recreation Department.

Due to severe weather events like Hurricane Nicholas and the high winds in March 2024, the City of Angleton has used Rueben Welch Park as a tree debris management site. Staff is seeking clarification from TPWD regarding public park access and closures for emergencies and special event events. Tree debris remains onsite, and the Angleton Office of Emergency Management is working on a plan for removal.

Additionally, staff was directed to work toward a park concept for Rueben Welch Park. On May 22, 2024, staff contacted a landscape architect to review possible uses of Rueben Welch Park but required additional information regarding TPWD-approved uses and space needed during emergencies.

Currently, funding has not been allocated for Rueben Welch Park design or development. Staff plans to initiate the park design process by developing a public survey regarding desired park uses.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Parks & Recreation Board discuss park uses as well as questions to be included in a public survey regarding the design and development of Rueben Welch Park.