A Meeting of the Meridian City Council was called to order at 4:37 p.m., Tuesday, December 13, 2022, by Mayor Robert Simison.

Members Present: Robert Simison, Joe Borton, Luke Cavener, Treg Bernt, Jessica Perreault, Brad Hoaglun and Liz Strader.

Also present: Chris Johnson, Bill Nary, Joy Hall, Crystal Campbell, Steve Siddoway, Mike Barton, Jamie Leslie, Joe Bongiorno and Dean Willis.

ROLL-CALL ATTENDANCE

__X__ Liz Strader	__X__ Joe Borton
__X__ Brad Hoaglun	__X__ Treg Bernt
__X__ Jessica Perreault	__X__ Luke Cavener

___X__ Mayor Robert E. Simison

Simison: Council, we will go ahead and call this meeting to order. For the record it is December 13th, 2022, at 4:37 p.m. We will begin this afternoon's work session with roll call attendance.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Simison: Next item up is adoption of the agenda.

Hoaglun: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Councilman Hoaglun.

Hoaglun: I move that we adopt the agenda as published.

Borton: Second.

Simison: Motion and second to adopt the agenda as published. Is there any discussion? If not, all in favor signify by saying aye. Opposed nay? The ayes have it and the agenda is adopted.

MOTION CARRIED: ALL AYES.

CONSENT AGENDA [Action Item

1. **C-Shell Starbucks 2022-0026 Water Main Easement**

2. **TM Crossing Subdivision No. 4 Water Main Easement No. 1**

3. **Final Plat for Gander Creek South No. 3 (FP-2022-0026) by Kent Brown Planning Services, generally located south of W. McMillan Rd. on the south side of the Five Mile Creek, west of N. McDermott Rd.**

4. **Findings of Facts, Conclusions of Law for Alden Ridge Subdivision (H-2022-0059) by Dave Yorgason, Tall Timber Consulting, located at 6870 N. Pollard Ln., and (3) parcels to the north and east, directly east of State Highway 16 and south of the Phyllis Canal at the northern edge of the Meridian City Impact**

5. **Findings of Facts, Conclusions of Law for Hadler Neighborhood (H-2022-0064) by Laren Bailey, Conger Group, located at 7200 S. Locust Grove Rd., approximately 1/2 mile south of the Locust Grove and Lake Hazel intersection on the east side of Locust Grove Rd.**

6. **Findings of Facts, Conclusions of Law for Ledges Business Center (SHP-2022-0015) by Kent Brown Planning, located at 4120 N. Linder Rd.**

7. **Findings of Facts, Conclusions of Law for Lost Rapids West (SHP-2022-0014) by KM Engineering, generally located on the south side of W. Chinden Blvd., 1/4 mile west of N. Ten Mile Rd.**

8. **Resolution 22-2361: A Resolution Vacating the remainder of S. Black Marlin Ln., located within lots 10-18, Block 1 of Interstate Center Subdivision**

9. **Resolution 22-2360: A Resolution Approving Adoption of an Amendment to the Citizen Participation Plan for the Community Development Block Grant; Authorizing the Mayor and City Clerk to Execute and Attest the Same on Behalf of the City of Meridian; and Providing an Effective Date**

Simison: Next up is the Consent Agenda.

Hoaglun: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Councilman Hoaglun.

Hoaglun: I move approval of the Consent Agenda and for the Mayor to sign and Clerk to attest.

Borton: Second.

Simison: Have a motion and a second to approve the Consent Agenda. Is there any discussion? If not, all in favor signify by saying aye. Those opposed nay? The ayes have it and the Consent Agenda is agreed to.

MOTION CARRIED: ALL AYES.

ITEMS MOVED FROM THE CONSENT AGENDA [Action Item]

Simison: There were no items moved from the Consent Agenda.

DEPARTMENT / COMMISSION REPORTS [Action Item]

10. Community Development Block Grant Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report

Simison: So, we will move on to Department/Commission Reports. Item 10 is the Community Development Block Grant Consolidation Annual Performance Evaluation Report from Crystal Campbell.

Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Mayor, Members of the Council. So, this is for our most recently completed program year '21, which ended -- it started October '21 -- '21 and ended September. So, our end of year report is called our CAPER, the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report, and the purpose of this presentation is to give you guys an overview of our annual accomplishments, our evaluation of our progress towards our five year goals, and also to open the public comment period. The goals that were identified in this con plan were to improve accessibility, enhance homeownership opportunities, provide social services, stabilize the rental gap and provide admin and fair housing activities. This was the final year of our con plan. So, all of the five year goals that was the final that we did on those. So, our first goal of improving accessibility -- at the beginning of the con plan we have to project how many we will serve throughout the five years. So, when they did this con plan they anticipated serving 220 individuals under this goal and we ended up serving more -- closer to 75,000 and this is benefits that were related mainly to public facilities and infrastructure improvements. This year we worked with Public Works to install or modernize 25 streetlights on walking routes to Meridian schools. We also worked with Parks and Rec on two different activities, one was the Chateau Park playground where they installed an all abilities playground. There is going to be some additional features in PY-22 and also the walking path for the northwest area to provide better access to that LMI area will be completed during PY-22. We also completed Fairview Avenue connection, which was the multi-use path that had an accessible ramp and handrail. Under enhancing home ownership opportunities we ended up at 118 percent of this goal. During PY-21 we were able to work with Neighborworks Boise and they provided emergency accessibility and weatherization repairs to seven households. We also identified social services and we ended up at 206 percent of our five year plan on that one. The Boys and Girls Club provided extended care scholarships to 39 youth and Jesse Tree was able to provide rental assistance to 28 individuals. We also provided social services with our CARES Act funds and under this one the Boys and

Girls Club they started a counseling program for youth, but they had a hard time identifying eligible participants and so they ended up only serving three and, then, returning the funds to us, so that we could better utilize those funds. We did provide funding for ID AEYC for child care scholarships and that does not expire until May and so far they have been able to provide 37 children with scholarships for childcare. We also have worked with Neighborworks Boise on mortgage assistance and the -- they start taking applications in September and so they will have a few more payments to close out those applications, but they were able to serve 66 people. For our goal of stabilizing the rental gap, that is actually being reported under public services, so we don't have any accomplishments to report on under this one. For admin and fair housing we provided subrecipient management. We administered the additional CARES Act funding. We ensure deadlines are met for timeliness reporting and applications. We receive and provide ongoing training. We look for process improvements and we also coordinate with other local entitlement communities and we facility -- we helped to facilitate the Idaho Fair Housing Forum. Our total resources during this year was 1.3 million. Of this 37 percent was our PY-21 funds. We also had about 30 percent of the CARES Act funds. Then we had a little bit of the 2019 funding left over and we also had about 30 percent of that was the PY-20 funding. Our total expenditures this year was 753,000 dollars and this is a breakdown of the different goals and how it was spent. So, as you can see the majority of our funding goes towards public facility and infrastructure improvements. So, of our remaining resources about 250,000 of those are our regular CDBG funds. We completed these six projects, the Fairview Avenue sidewalk connection, Chief Joseph streetlights, admin fair housing, Boys and Girls Club scholarships and emergency rental assistance. Some of those remaining resources will go towards our continuing projects and all three of these are expected to close fairly early in this new program year, but those are the homeowner repair program, Chateau -- Chateau park playground and Locust Grove and Pine streetlights and, then, the remaining amount will be reallocated to the two projects that were identified as alternate projects in our PY-21 action plan, which was the east MHS MMS streetlights and home buyer assistance. For our remaining CARES Act funds we completed our admin and youth counseling programs and we are continuing with the childcare scholarships, the Children's Museum and, then, we are finishing up the payments for the mortgage assistance and the remaining amounts will be reallocated toward the Woodrose Apartments acquisition. Also in our CAPER they asked us to report on our ongoing efforts. So, for housing affordability we spoke to the programs that we use to purchase housing or remaining housing that is affordable. We also talk a little bit about we provide services to offset the basic living expenses for public housing. We discussed our efforts to coordinate with the Ada County Housing Authority for homelessness and other special needs. We collaborate with the agencies who specialize in those areas and other actions that we have taken deal with the Can-Ada Collaborative Fair Housing and just how we addressed that. So, our timeline for this tonight is our presentation and, then, I will ask you guys to open the public comment period, which will go until December 29th and, then, I will take all of the comments and accept them all and respond to any and to submit the -- the CAPER to HUD on December 30th. This is my information to -- if anybody has any comments, then, they can call me or e-mail me or I'm here in City Hall, anybody can come talk to me at anytime, and starting tomorrow a draft of the CAPER will be available on our website and with that I will stand for questions.

Simison: Thank you, Crystal. Council, any questions or comments for Crystal? Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

11. Parks and Recreation Department: Lakeview Golf Course Operations, Capital Projects, and Fee Adjustment Discussion

Simison: Okay. Next item up is Item 11, which is Parks and Recreation Department Lakeview Golf Course operations capital projects and fee adjustment discussion. Mr. Barton.

Barton: Good afternoon, Mayor and Council. Happy to be here. So, it's been a while since we talked to you about the operations over at Lakeview Golf Course and haven't talked to you in awhile about the capital improvement project that we started early -- late spring, early summer. So, we are here to do that. We are also here to talk about an adjustment to several of the fees. So, first off operations. Just the highlights. On August 1st the city entered into an agreement with Roosters Catering and Eatery to operate the food and beverage component of the golf course. That was the outcome of an RFP that was advertised. From what I have heard Roosters is doing a phenomenal job. The hours are up. The -- you know, the food's been good and we -- we have kept periodic check-ins and so from that standpoint, hearing nothing but positives from -- from that. Probably the big one is on October 1st the city took over full operations of the golf course and that includes we, you know, took -- took in -- took -- assimilated all the employees. So, the HR component. We are doing the IT. We are doing the financial reporting. So, the whole thing is under the city's guidance, leadership. Kemper Sports kind of stayed on for a short period of time to ease the transition, so we could -- you know, some of the financial stuff had to be merged together and some of the HR stuff. But Kemper Sports is -- we are -- we are no longer needing their services, so it's a hundred percent being run by the city. Part of that, Kemper Sports has maintained both a personnel account and an operating account that the city funded. That initial startup was a hundred thousand dollars into each one and we have kind of kept that -- they have kept that -- those accounts open and as of now the -- the year end or the cash balance in the combination of both those accounts, inclusive of that initial funding, is 570,000. So, over the course of two years we have made 370,000, which, you know, in light of everything that's gone on, construction wise and we have had a little bit of weather here and there, I think that's all good news and very positive on the operations. As far as the capital improvement project goes, the big one is the irrigation system. We have installed -- the heads and the piping are complete. The -- we are doing concrete cart paths. Tees and greens. The cart paths are prepped. The concrete is 50 percent complete right now. It's going a little bit slow in the winter. They are still out there pouring, although later this week may change things. We have been in the upper 30s and it's pretty good with ground heaters and blankets and they can keep working, but slow, but still progressing very well. The -- the quality is excellent. We did some ground repair where the irrigation system has never covered the dirt, it was just -- it was just bare ground. So, we went in and hydro seeded all that. So, in the springtime when the weather warms up that -- that seed is just kind of laying there dormant. When the weather warmed up it will -- it will pop up and we have irrigation water, so it will be corner to corner green. And, then, the well -- just a couple of -- the well is going to be installed here this winter. A couple of fun facts that the irrigation system is controlled by the two wires in a jacketed control wire. We put in 21 miles of wire. It's -- a wire has to go to each individual head and there is about 1,900 heads. So, we have got 21 miles of that. We went under the road ten different times. Some of the piping under the road is as big as 12 inches, so we bored that. Didn't hit anything. That was awesome. So, the project is -- where it stands now it's on time. They have until May 1st to complete it. We are on time and we are on budget. So, all -- all positive good news there. So, as we have lived with this and we take feedback from the public and, you know, we periodically check, we have benchmarked what we are doing against other courses and it's come to our attention that it's time to adjust a couple of fees. So, the first one that we would like to adjust and -- and just -- you know, process wise what we want to do is kind of get a nod of heads and -- before we notice these fees and, then, bring them back for a public hearing and, then, a resolution to adopt them. So, just a nod of heads to see if we are in the right -- kind of headed in the right direction. If there is something that you think we should do differently let us know now. We didn't want to surprise you at a -- at a public hearing. So, we are looking for feedback. The first one is the trail fee and that's the fee that we charge if you have your own cart and you bring that to the course -- right now it's 580 dollars. Our proposal is to reduce that by 50 percent down to 290 dollars. If you buy an annual pass and you use the course's carts, we are proposing to leave that unchanged, because there is quite a bit of wear and tear on the course's carts that we have to maintain. So, there is -- there is cost there. Annual passes. We would like to institute a resident, nonresident fee, so that -- we are not proposing a reduction in the resident fee, but we are proposing that we charge nonresidents and added ten percent to each annual pass and that would be across all pass offerings. So, not just like an unlimited -- family unlimited, there is about eight to ten different offerings. We are proposing a ten percent increase if you are a nonresident. Also came to our attention that the winter rate -- we have always had winter rates and they have been reduced, but it wasn't reduced across all categories. Just for example the winter rate was 29 dollars and the senior rate was 28 dollars. So, the seniors weren't getting the discount to play in the winter. So, our proposal is to reduce rates four dollars for 18 holes across all offerings and reduce those fees two dollars for nine holes across all offerings. So, if you are a senior, you play in the winter, where it's 28 dollars during -- during the year, you can now get four dollars off of that. So, it just makes more sense. The other -- the other proposal is a four percent price increase to green fees. We did a six percent increase last year. Our costs are going up higher than it was -- the six percent was lost probably almost immediately. So, we are proposing another four percent. In addition to that, where there is a little bit of foregone revenue in the -- in the cart, the trail fees that we would like to recapture with that four percent. And, then, cart fees cost to maintain the carts, obviously, were going up. Our proposal is to increase the cart fee dollars for 18 holes and a dollar for nine and, then, a ten percent increase on range fees. So, with that I'm happy to answer any questions you have and take feedback.

Borton: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Council, questions, comments? Mr. Borton. Not Barton.

Borton: Certainly. Thanks, Mike. I kind of want to dovetail on your comments. I have been talking pretty closely with the golf course community and -- and pretty well embedded with -- with this particular issue. So, there is a couple of -- two things are true. One is there is not -- there is more than one way to skin the cat on rates and what you do with each of these. There is not a single path that you necessarily have to go forward. But the -- the policy consideration that I think -- I'm supportive of what you have presented, Mike. I think the golf course community would be supportive of this. I think it captures two things that we can do now. We talked a lot about trying to provide a -- a tier somehow where our residents, who have through our savings, funded a lot of these improvements, can receive either some benefit. In this case their -- their pass rates aren't going up. There is some process reasons why you can't create tiers in the daily rates in the same way as you can for passes. So, this is a -- this is a feasible first step to use the annual pass, resident, nonresident that it rewards our resident taxpayers somewhat and the other part is the annual pass for -- or the trail fee for the annual pass and -- and there is maybe a hundred of those -- a hundred or so of those. These are folks that buy the pass to use their own cart all year and the vast majority of them are the seniors who live on or around the course. They just -- probably 95 percent of them really. And these are the folks that, one, have been -- the vast majority have been living there for a long time. They, through the prior ownership, were the ones that were out donating twenty dollars to buy bricks to get the patio bricks done and, then, they are donating sand and trying to help plant trees and they kind of did some sweat equity to keep the course going through difficult times and -- and those folks usually buy an annual pass and a trail fee. So, to them it's kind of a combined expenditure. It's a relatively minor impact on the bottom line for the -- for the city, but it does account for kind of our long standing residents who have been on and around the course loyal through this process. So, you have been in communication with them a lot, so that's some of the -- the policy reasons behind this. Again there is not one way to do it, but I thought this one, with your work and what your team had done, made great sense and addressed those community concerns. So, thanks for letting me add a little context to how we got here.

Perreault: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Council Woman Perreault.

Perreault: Well, I'm really happy to hear that the irrigation project is on budget and on time. The many conversations we have had it's been my biggest concern for our course and just really really great news. Just two questions regarding the fees. To Councilman Borton's point -- and I appreciate him giving context. I just wanted to understand if the reduction in trail fees is because of concerns or comments that the residents have made or if it is for the benefit of those that have made those contributions -- or just kind of help me understand how that originated. And, then, the second question I have is are -- are these all cumulatively being done with a particular financial goal in mind or are these recommendations made by GreenPlay just to keep up with the amount of use we have had or kind of help me understand -- this is -- is this intended to help fund our capital projects in the past or in the future or is this about what it's costing us to run the course on a daily basis or both?

Barton: Yeah. Great questions. Thank you.

Simison: Want to answer?

Barton: So, the --

Simison: I want Joe Borton to answer the first part, because he unmuted.

Borton: The -- I can. Certainly.

Simison: I would like him on the trail head -- trail one and, then, you can take the second one to start off with.

Barton: Sure. Either way.

Simison: Just the -- the historical context on the trail fee is some of the -- the disconnect in years prior -- this is, you know, maybe more than five years ago was, you know, the trail fee was established, but it wasn't, you know, established as a means of, then, segregating those funds and, then, applying those funds, so that the golf cart -- or the -- the paths which were garbage and so over the years and years and years and years and years you had the folks paying the fees and their carts would just get beat to hell and the money would just go in the owner's pocket or go to something totally disconnected. So, there was just no correlation to -- and that frustration grew overtime and so there has been annual pressure to try and remedy, for lack of a better term, the trail fees being artificially high for no purpose other than you have got a captive senior community that you probably could charge a thousand dollars and it's not right, but you could. So, I think this is trying to remedy that historical equity.

Barton: Council Woman Perreault and Councilman Borton, those -- our trail fees are currently on the high side comparatively, so -- and -- and it was exactly that, that, you know, it was a -- a way to -- it was -- it was a way to get some revenue and then -- and, theoretically, it was, yeah, if you pay a little bit more we will -- we will fix up the cart paths and I don't think that ever happened in any way. So, now is the time to reduce that fee. But the four percent increase -- so, there was -- there was a total of 83 trail passes sold last year for -- the revenue was 58,000 dollars. So, the -- if we cut that in half, the four percent increase on the greens fees makes up for that lost revenue, so -- and we feel that, you know, just in -- the market will support that, especially with -- you know, the construction project is going to wind down. The -- the course is going to look phenomenal. It's going to play good. You are going to have nice cart paths and so with the -- with the goal of, you know, that tier five kind of break even, make a little bit of money thought, that's -- that -- that's -- at least our thinking is that if we are going to -- if we are going to not bring something in that we will try to make it up somewhere else and -- and this is a good one, because it really didn't make a lot of sense. It was artificially high.

Simison: And -- and if I could add to that a little bit. And we still have more that we are doing out there. We haven't -- we got to do the employee wage evaluation, which could have a cost to the operations and we have some -- are we also talking about any of the construction projects that we hope to do in the next few months here in this presentation?

Barton: Not -- not -- not at this time, but there are -- we are -- there are a couple others, like the clubhouse, some -- some renovation, remodeling in the clubhouse, because it hasn't been touched for -- for years. It -- it's due, so -- and that will be a future conversation. We hope to come back sometime in January. Because we are -- we -- we have the -- what it could look like, but we don't have a breakdown of the cost. So, once we get that we will come back and have a conversation.

Simison: Okay. So, at least from -- there is still more work to do, but part of my philosophy with working with the Parks Department is I'm -- and I'm supportive of these changes -- with just trying not to change our revenue projections that we are currently into until we -- we still have a little bit more evolution out there at the course to figure things out, to kind of get that long-term plan and, obviously, with the decisions last week on -- was it last week? The weeks are kind of getting -- two weeks ago on the -- the fee recovery model. So, trying to adjust that -- I mean maybe we have more people that now buy a trail pass at a lower rate. You know, we -- we don't know. But it could -- it could happen. I mean I -- I do the math, 300 bucks, go out and buy a used cart. That money change, if you play enough golf you may now consider that. So, could even be a revenue generator.

Barton: And you know it's not going to get destroyed with a bunch of potholes.

Bernt: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Councilman Bernt.

Bernt: The only thing that I would say is don't make the buckets of balls too expensive. That's all I'm saying. You go to some -- and I'm being serious. So, you go -- you go to some of the -- the golf courses around town and it's -- it costs 30 bucks to go hit a large bucket of balls and it's just -- it's -- it's getting -- that defeats the purpose of the bucket of balls. You want people to learn how to play golf. That's how people learn how to play golf. That's how sometimes people are introduced to play golf. So, the only thing on here -- I just wouldn't get greedy on the bucket of balls. It's important that people know and have a desire to come down and practice and play.

Barton: Thanks, Councilman Bernt. I -- so, the ten percent is -- a small bucket is six dollars -- would go to 6.50. A large bucket is 12, it will go to 13. So, I -- I think we are -- we are -- we are a long way away from 30 bucks for a large bucket.

Simison: Council Woman Perreault, I know you also --

Perreault: Mr. Mayor, thank you. Just one more follow-up question. I -- I think I'm -- what I'm hearing about the -- the overall changes is that it's meeting two goals, which is to fund some of the capital projects, but also some increases in some, you know, seasonal costs. Is it common for golf courses to change pricing in this many categories every year? We have done this for the second year in a row. Is there -- is there anticipation that we will keep making these adjustments for the next few years as we get through and get this all up to where we want it to be or is it normal for courses to change their pricing every year in this many categories?

Barton: I would say that -- well, the -- the -- the fees are not covering capital projects, They are covering the operational needs of the course, and in this environment that we are in where prices are -- costs are rapidly changing and wages are inflating, I would say that it's more -- more common or -- or even unusual. I -- I don't think -- I haven't been doing -- doing golf that long, so I was hoping Ryan could be here. He is -- he knows more about the intricacies of the business than I do, but I would say that when costs stabilize we can stabilize any kind of price increases. I mean that -- that would be our goal is to just get it set, let it ride. If -- if there is an adjustment to something up or down, if we are doing it wrong, I mean we are -- we are fine tuning the business.

Strader: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Councilman Borton. Oh. Council Woman Strader.

Strader: Thanks, Mike. Great job executing on the capital improvement projects. That's awesome. This all makes sense to me. Don't have any issues with any of the changes. Sort of an aside, though, Todd in the Finance Department had sent us an e-mail that they are not going to be sending a monthly reporting of the financial results for the golf course. I don't think we need those monthly anymore. I think what we need, though, is I still would like to see at least a semi-annual, if not a quarterly, sort of like a management discussion and analysis that combines -- here are the operating results of the golf course. Here are -- you know, here is how the business is doing and, then, you know, just some discussion. It's not enough to get it -- so, if you could just convey to Todd or I will send him an e-mail as well, but it's just not enough for me personally to just get it on the dashboard. I like to have the, you know, sort of MD&A background on that. Yeah. To understand how the operations are going, if there are problems. So, I mean at least twice a year if that's okay.

Simison: I think we can get -- you know, we will continue to come back probably at least twice the year until we get this dialed in. I think once we are all dialed in and feel good about it, then, it is part of the yearly adjustments on -- or if we ever see a concern. But once we feel comfortable then I think we back up -- but, yeah, we will be back at least once every six months at a minimum.

Barton: We are happy to come as often or as little as you want. Just let us know. Thank you.

12. Parks and Recreation Department: Master Plan Update

Simison: Thanks, Mike. Okay. So, next item on the agenda, Item 12, Parks and Recreation Department Master Plan update. Mr. Siddoway.

Siddoway: Thank you, Mr. Mayor and Members of the Council. I'm going to introduce Art Thatcher, who I think you guys have met enough times to know. His last couple of presentations have been remote through Zoom, but we have him in person tonight. He is also here tonight with James Nichols. Did I get your last name right, James? All right. Also from BerryDunn, formerly with -- known as GreenPlay. But we have been working with them as a company over the past year, as you know, on this master plan update and we are quickly nearing the completion of this plan. We have worked on some extensive public involvement processes, interviews, focus groups, stakeholder meetings. We did the statistically valid public opinion survey. We did an inventory and analysis of conditions on all parks and facilities throughout the system and more recently we have been focused on the cost recovery piece, which was kind of a -- a separate kind of addendum. So, that's been the more recent focus and we presented that to you a couple of weeks ago. The goals and objectives for the plan have been recently updated and we are presenting the draft plan overall to the Parks and Rec Commission tomorrow night, but with Art in town we wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to get in front of you, give you kind of a high level highlights version of that -- the -- the final plan, including some of the updated goals and objectives. We will be taking that, like I said, to the commission tomorrow night, anticipating a -- a formal recommendation to Council following that and us coming back probably in January to seek your approval of the plan. But we wanted to give you the chance to -- to see it while it's in kind of a final draft stage and with that I'm going to turn the time over to Art Thatcher.

Thatcher: Thank you, Steve. Mayor, Members of Council. Very nice to see you again. And as Steve said, I'm here to kind of give you an update of how we got here and, then, what the goals and objectives are for -- for the plan. I will run through a lot of these, because Steve kind of hit on the highlights of -- of what we have talked about. So, we are kind of here in this bottom -- we are in the draft final presentation stage. These are all the kind of stages we have -- we have gone through. As Steve mentioned, our kickoff, the survey, our public engagement, the inventory and, then, our organizational assessment through the process and so it's been a little over -- over a year kind of working through this process. As Steve said, we were here in November and did public engagement. We had six focus groups with 39 participants. We did interviews with the elected officials and stakeholders. We did a staff SWOT analysis and workshop with them. Did a briefing and got feedback from the Parks and Rec Commission. Did tours of the parks and facilities and, then, held an open forum that was both in person and virtual and we had 18 people attend that and so one of the things that we -- we asked about strengths, weaknesses, new -- new facilities, new -- new amenities and so, then, we -- we kind of wrapped that up with top priorities and you can see from the focus groups and the stakeholder meetings that connectivity, a new indoor facility, and rectangle fields to -- to support the needs and, then, land acquisition and -- sorry. And managing growth were kind of those top five priorities that came out of the -- out of the focus groups. We used the information from the focus groups to develop the -- the survey. We did a statistically valid mailed needs assessment survey and -- and, then, once we started receiving responses back from the survey we did an open link survey, so anybody could take the survey and so we had 690 total surveys completed, 312 from the invitation sample and another 378 from the -- from the open link and as we looked at that one of the -- one of the things -- we were here in 2015 and did the master plan in 2015. So, not only were we able to look at the results of this survey, but we were also able to kind of compare those to the 2015 survey and get kind of the -- you know, how the community had changed a little bit. So, one of the questions we asked about were future needs for indoor facilities and you can see that -- that community center -- the community recreation center in 2015 was the -- the number two top facility and in 2021 moved to the top facility and, then, it took the place of an indoor aquatic facility, which -- this survey came out prior to you all taking over the -- the -- the aquatic facility here in town and, then, followed by that field house and indoor gymnasium space, as well as a performing arts center and an ice rink as kind of those top five. So, we also asked about future needs for outdoor facilities and, again, you can see the -- the comparison to -- to 2015 and parks and -- parks and trails being the number one, both in 2021 and in 2015, and, then, improvements to -- to your park amenities being that -- that number two and, then, shade structures and parks. In 2015 shade structures were -- were really number two. However, over -- over the period you have added shade structures within many of your parks and so it's still a priority, but kind of dropped down to that number three, followed by playgrounds and, then, lights to your outdoor athletic facilities and rounding out that top five. So, one of the things that we ask is, you know, given a hundred and in five dollar increments how would you spend that hundred dollars. You can see that compared '21 to 2015, that additional pathways was number one in -- in -- in this survey, but in the 2015 expanding your aquatics indoor and outdoor was number one. Again, I think that reduction stems from you -- you acquiring the -- the outdoor swimming pool. That number two in both was making improvements to existing and renovating your existing facilities and -- and parks. So, as -- as Steve mentioned, we also did your inventory and level of service analysis. So, from 2015 to today we -- we updated your -- your inventory, looked at all of your parks and looked -- and looked at all the components within those parks and did an inventory of those. We also looked at other service providers and, then, we also looked at the inventory and schools. So, really getting a -- a really great picture of all of those -- those recreation amenities that are available to the community. We also looked at HOA and private facilities within the system -- within the city. So, again, as we -- we were able to look at 2015, so your population grew from 94,000 to 124,000. Your -- the -- the city limits, you know, grew from 18,000 acres to 23,000 acres and your number of parks went from 21 to 25 over that period. So, we do an atlas. So, we provide GIS of your parks and, then, we look at all the amenities in there and we do a quantitative analysis of -- and a qualitative analysis of those and provide that in a booklet to the department and electronically, so that they can keep up with the -- with the inventory. Some of the kind of -- some of the things that came out of our inventory site visits were your parks are very consistent across the board. They are very well maintained to a very high standard. Restrooms are -- in our opinion some of the cleanest that we have seen in a system around the country. We have noted that most of your parks have public art and, then, that you have -- you have added additional bike repair stations to many of your parks. Your turf is in really good condition and that there seemed to be a very high priority to -- to planting trees in many of your parks. So, your urban forestry is a -- is a high priority, which was one of the things that came out of the 2015 master plan. So, this is just a -- we GIS all of your parks and all of the amenities within that. We also added in the schools and the -- and the HOA parks within the system. We -- one of the things that we look at is walkability. So, that ten minute walk to -- to a recreation facility. The -- the -- the yellow is -- is -- meets a five component park and, then, the yellow is that it's still -- you still have walkable access, but it's below that five components within the park. So, the -- the great thing and -- and what should be really celebrated is that really a hundred percent of your community has walkable access to some recreation component from their homes. So, we -- we, again, kind of look at that neighborhood access and begin to kind of look at the Meridian parks alone and, then, adding in the schools and the HOAs and, again, you kind of see that -- still that hundred percent, but, really, 91 percent are within a -- that ten minute walk to an outdoor recreation component within their -- within their neighborhood. So, we take all the data and -- and everything that we have collected and we develop recurring themes and so those recurring themes are continuing to create a connected community through your pathways development, maintaining the quality of maintenance level, level of service and funding for your parks and facilities, finding future locations for parks to stay ahead of your future development, which you are doing through your -- your -- work with your developers. Keeping up with future changing demographics, as they -- as growth occurs. Looking at a -- a new community center, recreation center within the community. That was one of the greatest needs identified for an -- for an indoor facility. And, then, your pathways and trails was identified as the -- the greatest need and desire for outdoor facilities. Again, shade structures and communication were the top two areas that if addressed would increase participation in parks. Communication piece being knowing where the parks are and knowing what -- what activities and facilities are going on there. And, then, we asked about how people would like to receive their information on parks and programs and services and e-mail and social media were those two top two. So, kind of looking at that -- that communication piece. So, we take those and we begin to -- working with staff develop goals and objectives and so we have four goals, like we did in 2015, and so continuing to improve your organizational efficiency is the first goal and we have six objectives and, then, there are a number of actions steps that fall under each one of these objectives that you will see when you get the draft of the master plan. So, maintaining your existing level of service goal of four acres per -- per thousand residents. Enhancing and improving internal and external communication. Maintaining existing quality standards for your facilities and amenities. Utilizing technology to improve customer service and efficiencies. Increasing potential partnerships to -- within the community. And, then, staffing appropriately to meet demand and maintain existing quality of service, both on the recreation side, as well as on the park side. So, the second goal was maintaining and improving your facilities and amenities and we have -- like with 13 objectives within this one and it's -- it's really kind of the -- it is the largest of all of those. So, maintaining and improving your existing facilities, expanding your pathways and your connectivity, adding indoor recreation space, developing new amenities -- that new and existing parks. Acquiring new land for -- for parks. And, then, evaluating your parking at parks events and scheduled activities. So, the -- the second half, continuing to monitor your -- your ADA needs within the community. Since the last plan you developed an ADA transition plan and, really, you have taken care of all of those -- those issues in that transition. So, now it's just monitoring, keeping up with that. Upgrading your comfort convenience and customer service amenities. Shade would fall under -- under this objective. The number nine, kind of creating park identities in your existing and new parks. So, continuing to kind of look at, you know, how you are -- you are -- you are infusing unique components within your parks to create identities. Addressing current and future needs for athletic fields. Consider programming needs when adding new components to existing parks and -- and developing new parks. Maintaining component -- the component based inventory and level of service analysis. That's the -- the inventory that I showed you earlier and, then, you continue to -- to maintain your life cycle replacement plan. So, make -- make sure you are continuing to -- to keep that up. And, then, the -- the third goal is really -- is around continuing to improve programs and service delivery and that's really to continue to address recreation programming, activity needs in the community. The department does a really good job of reaching out to the community, getting satisfaction surveys back and -- and working on those. So, there are several actions that are underneath that. And the final is the -- to help increase your -- your financial opportunities. And so looking at those opportunities to increase your special events and activity sponsorships, evaluating your impact fee ordinance, pursuing grants and philanthropic opportunities and, then, implementing the cost recovery and pricing policy that -- that we did for you as part of this. And so those are the -- the goals and objectives and kind of how we got there and I'm happy to answer any questions that you might have.

Simison: Thank you, Art. Council, questions?

Perreault: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Council Woman Perreault.

Perreault: Art, thank you very much for the update and hope you are enjoying our wonderful weather.

Thatcher: Absolutely.

Perreault: Yeah. So, what are -- are there any specific updates -- let me rephrase that. Are there any specific goals and objectives and/or action tasks that are new to the plan that didn't exist before or any -- any that significantly changed?

Thatcher: No. I think the -- you are -- the -- the first plan was -- was pretty broad. I think there are some actions that are -- that have changed some or maybe new actions, but the goals and objectives are -- are pretty common and -- and pretty -- broad enough that they encompass a lot of those actions. Some have taken greater priority, like maintaining what you currently have, because your system has grown. So, making sure that you are continuing to maintain those have taken a greater priority than -- than they did at first. When we were here in 2015 a lot of the system was new and so, you know, there -- there wasn't a lot of need to -- to kind of upgrade those facilities. So, now making sure you are keeping up with -- with new trends, adding new components to parks and those things to keep them interesting and -- and attracting users.

Perreault: Mr. Mayor, one more question.

Simison: Council Woman Perreault.

Perreault: What are the top two or three things that you think we should take from this update and do differently or implement sooner or that we should shift our priorities on from the original plan?

Thatcher: Well, the -- the number one is maintaining what you currently have, because you do have -- your -- your system is now starting to kind of get in that -- that aging process and so make sure that we are -- you are keeping things current, keeping them well maintained. That's what keeps people going. That's what also continues to attract new residents into the community is those new parks. Continuing to increase your -- your park acreage and your -- and -- and your amenities within those parks as the community grows. It doesn't necessarily mean that you need to -- you need to buy new land, but as you work with your developers having them, you know, provide recreation components within their HOAs, within their developments, so that -- so those residents are -- are getting that same use. I think those are kind of two of the top. And, then, continuing to -- to connect the community through -- through your pathways.

Cavener: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Councilman Cavener.

Cavener: Art, it's great having you in person. Appreciate you being here.

Thatcher: Thank you.

Cavener: I love your guys' surveys, because they are statistically valid and it gives me real confidence about where we should be allocating our resources and so this -- this question is not a -- an arrow at the data, because I -- I really validate it and I appreciate it. But as a Council Member the things that are listed as priorities are not things that I hear from our citizens that they need or want. The things that I'm hearing about is farmland preservation, nature preservation and so help me understand -- do you -- do you see similar trends in other parts of the country where maybe it's a -- it's a vocal minority that want this thing, but it never bubbles up on a survey. Is that something that your -- how does your survey kind of contemplate those unique things that maybe a city hasn't offerred, that citizens haven't thought about. Are those questions included in -- in your survey and -- and what I'm trying to do is to parse what I hear, you know, versus what we see in the survey and I will give you a great example. When I very first got elected I met a guy in a park who wanted to talk to me about this weird sport coming out called pickleball. Right? And so -- that was 12 years ago. And now -- and now we have got -- we are -- we are investing in pickleball all over the place. He -- he was on the cutting edge of what he felt that our community needed and I don't -- I don't want to discount where these citizens are coming from, but it also -- those types of things don't necessarily show up on a survey until people are maybe frustrated that it doesn't exist.

Thatcher: And -- and I think we do infuse into the survey some national trends that see -- we see around the country. You know, I mean disk golf courses are, you know, being constructed, you know, all over the country. It's one of the top things that communities are investing in, as well as pickleball courts and some of those things. So, we do infuse some of that into -- into the surveys. Also we don't just use the -- the survey responses when we start making our recommendations. We look at national trends. We -- you know, we consider what we heard from the -- from the focus groups. What the focus group does is in -- in a lot of cases we will have very enthusiastic users that will show up, you know, to -- to focus groups to -- to give their opinion and so, you know, we get a lot of, you know, skate park users that come to the focus groups. Pickle ballers that come to the focus groups. The first project I did in Wake Forest, North Carolina, the first focus group I did there were 50 people and sitting in the -- in the front rows and they all had on lime green Wake Forest pickleball T-shirts and so, you know, they were -- you know. And that was, you know, ten years ago and -- and so, as you say, they were kind of on the cutting edge, but they became proponents to the whole master plan and I think we see that here as well, is that, you know, we -- we hear those enthusiastic citizens that -- that want things and so we did hear preserving open space as one of those priorities. We did not ask specifically about agricultural land. In like the -- the state of Maryland they -- as part of their master plans for state funding they -- they require an ag section within their land preservation plans, their parks and recreation land preservation plans and so, you know, that's one of the states that we work in that we do -- specifically do ask about ag land.

Cavener: Thank you.

Thatcher: You are welcome.

Strader: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Council Woman Strader.

Strader: Thanks, Art. I appreciate it. I -- I do think if -- if the final plan or the final report could have kind of an overview of emerging trends I think that would be really helpful. I -- I agree with Councilman Cavener, I think it's good for us to also have a view kind of leading into the future of what's emerging. Like I hear a lot about parents and even insurance companies wanting to see kids have riskier playgrounds. That's something going on in Europe that I have heard about. Not dangerous playgrounds, but playgrounds were kids can kind of learn what their limits are and -- and developmentally it's important for them. Just things like that. If -- if there are new trends that we should be aware of I would like to hear about those.

Thatcher: And -- and so as you read through the -- the final plan you will see that as we -- as we do recommendations there is also a plan and there is also parts in there about emerging trends within the industry. That -- that's a part of that. So, you will see those throughout.

Simison: Council, additional questions or comments at this time? All right. Well, thank you very much, Art.

Thatcher: Thank you all very much. It's good to see you again.

Siddoway: I will just wrap it up by saying we appreciate the feedback tonight very much. We will go to the -- the commission and hope to be back before you next month to conclude this process and request your adoption of the final plan. So, thank you very much.

Simison: Thank you, Steve. Council, we have reached the end of our agenda.

Hoaglun: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Councilman Hoaglun.

Hoaglun: I move we adjourn our work session.

Simison: Have a motion to adjourn. All in favor signify by saying aye. Opposed nay? The ayes have it. We are adjourned.

MOTION CARRIED: ALL AYES.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 5:31 P.M.

(AUDIO RECORDING ON FILE OF THESE PROCEEDINGS)

___________________________________ ______/______/______

MAYOR ROBERT E. SIMISON DATE APPROVED

ATTEST:

____

CHRIS JOHNSON - CITY CLERK