



MINUTES  
Recreation and Community Services Commission  
Adjourned Regular Meeting  
January 8, 2025

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MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER at 6 p.m. by Chairperson Veronica Lucio.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was led by Commissioner Dave Allen.

ROLL CALL: PRESENT: Chairperson Veronica Lucio  
Vice Chairperson Anitza Valles  
Commissioner Dave Allen  
Commissioner Kristie Larison  
Commissioner Ted Spaseff

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Meeting of December 11, 2024. A motion was made by Commissioner Allen and seconded by Commissioner Kristie Larison to approve the minutes of the meeting of December 11, 2024. Minutes were approved as submitted with a unanimous roll call vote.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS:

Director Valarie Frost began her announcements by announcing that the Recreation and Community Services Department had officially moved back into their newly designed office space, located at the south end of City Hall. She welcomed the commission to stop by and check out the new space.

Next, Ms. Frost informed the commission that city staff stood at the ready to assist with downed power lines or tree limbs, and with potential power outages that may result from forecasted high winds or from the result of the Eaton and Palisades fires. She noted that staff was also in contact with the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) partners in Los Angeles County and was ready to provide necessary support. It was said that the department's Emergency Manager Chuck Martucci had been checking into the Los Angeles County Operational Area Response and Recovery System (OARRS) to see if there is any support that the city could provide.

Assistant Director Kevin Bright provided information on programming and events. He shared that on Thursday, January 9, the Lakewood Youth Hall of Fame Board of Electors Meeting would be held in the Executive Board Room at 5:30 p.m. It was said that the meeting would open with a McDonald's feast, sponsored by Piazza Family McDonald's Restaurants, and would see the electors deliberate and select the 43<sup>rd</sup> class of athletes to the Lakewood Youth Hall of Fame. Mr. Bright noted that an Athlete of the Year, and upwards of two dozen performers of the year and special achievement awards, would be named at the meeting. It was said that the 2025 Lakewood Youth Hall of Fame Awards Banquet would take place on Monday, February 24 in the Weingart Ballroom at The Centre. It was said that the commission would receive a full report regarding the event at the February commission meeting.

Next, Mr. Bright shared with the commission that Community Services Managers Chuck Martucci and Joe Vasquez helped to collaborate on a video training composition with Special Olympics of Southern California (SOSC). It was said that as trainers certified to teach coaches for SOSC, they

were also a part of a video which was shot in December at Bloomfield Park, which will assist new soccer coaches, and another to assist new softball coaches. Mr. Bright pointed out that Mr. Martucci and Mr. Vasquez continue to represent the city well, and continue to maintain a fantastic relationship with SOSOC.

Mr. Bright reported that due to the bad air quality as a result of the tragic Eaton and Palisades fires, all outdoor recreation activities were canceled until further notice. He shared that staff would continue to keep an eye on the AQMD air quality to determine when it is safe to resume.

Lastly, Mr. Bright shared that the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) trainings returned to Lakewood. It was said that the Los Angeles County Fire Department had stopped offering the trainings a few years back, and city staff, including Mr. Martucci, Community Transportation Supervisor Jessica Johnson and Public Safety Manager Caitlin Sanchez began hosting the three-day training. Mr. Bright reported that the 2025 training would take place Friday, January 10 through Sunday, January 12.

Commissioner Ted Spaseff shared that he attended the Ugly Sweater Party at the Weingart Senior Center. He mentioned he had a great time and shared his appreciation for staff's efforts. Commissioner Spaseff commented that he and Chairperson Veronica Lucio had volunteered to assist with packing boxes of food for the Project Shepherd Holiday Program, and shared that they had a lot of fun and enjoyed some fun and healthy competition by seeing who could deliver the most packages to recipients.

Commissioner Lucio noted that Project Shepherd staff on site were extremely organized. She commended them for their hard work and efforts.

## REPORTS:

### **1. Spring Programs and Events**

Community Services Manager Nancy Hitt reported that the 2025 Spring Recreation Catalog highlights spring activities and events, such as Lakewood Youth Sports (LYS) basketball, Earth Walk, Volunteer Day, Special Olympics, the Pan Am Fiesta, and also gives a nod to participants at the Weingart Senior Center. It was said that the new catalog featured an exciting variety of classes, programs and community events guaranteed to engage the entire family. Ms. Hitt informed the commission that the catalog would be posted online on Thursday, January 16, at which time registration for recreation classes will open for residents. Non-resident registration opens on Monday, January 27. Most classes and activities begin the week of Monday, February 3.

Ms. Hitt provided the commission with details regarding programs and events such as the Pan Am Fiesta, upcoming FUN-Tastic Family Nights, Play at Palms events, Mother-Son-Date Night, Daddy-Daughter Date Night, Earth Walk, and Easter Bunny park visits as noted in the written report.

Ms. Hitt reported that spring vacation activities would be offered at city parks during spring recess from school, taking place April 14-18 at Mayfair Park, and from April 21-25 at

Palms Park. She shared that programmed activities would include a variety of arts and crafts, outdoor sports, indoor games and specialized activities, and an excursion to Medieval Times.

Information regarding upcoming travel trips, and older adult and Active+ programming was shared with the commission as noted in the written report.

Finally, Ms. Hitt provided the commission with details regarding the 2025 Lakewood Volunteer Day taking place on Saturday, April 12. She noted that the event would once again demonstrate how Lakewood supports aging and disabled residents through neighbors helping neighbors.

Commissioner Allen stated that the pandemic provided staff with a hyperspace which built the department up and made it even better and more efficient. He congratulated staff for their efforts.

The Commission received and filed the report on Spring Programs and Events.

## **2. Teen Programs Annual Report**

Community Services Supervisor Kelly Garnetti displayed slides and provided details regarding teen programs in 2024. Ms. Garnetti reported that the Teen Resource Center (TRC) at Bloomfield Park, and the Lakewood Youth Center (LYC) at Del Valle Park, each offer a diverse palette of programs, while integrating new opportunities for the community's teen population. Details regarding programming and events offered at both the TRC and the LYC, as well as hours and days of operation, were provided to the commission as noted in the written report. It was said that in 2024, new programs were introduced to enhance engagement and broaden participation. These included Pop Culture Trivia, a St. Patrick's Day Spikeball Tournament, Paint Nights, and the TRC Showcase, which was specifically designed to familiarize teens with available activities at the start of the 2024-2025 school year.

Ms. Garnetti informed the commission that in 2024, the Junior Rec Leader Program made a strong comeback, and was expanded to a six-week program, while nearly tripling in participation with 28 teens. It was said that the program provided training in customer service, park maintenance, program marketing and special events. It was said that all 28 teens completed the program and were recognized with an end of program celebration, receiving a certificate of completion and acknowledgements from members of the City Council.

Finally, Ms. Garnetti provided the commission with a recap of the 2024 College Fair, which took place at The Centre on October 8, as noted in the written report.

Commissioner Larison shared that her children love to attend the Youth Center and thanked staff for the amazing atmosphere provided there.

The Commission received and filed the annual report on Teen Programs.

## **3. Project Shepherd Program Summary**

Community Services Supervisor Caitlin Carioso reported that Project Shepherd had completed its 52<sup>nd</sup> year of assisting Lakewood residents. Ms. Carioso shared that

registration for the Holiday Assistance Program began on November 4 and continued through November 17 at the Burns Community Center and Palms Park. Palms Park registered 132 families, while the Burns Community Center registered 299 families for a total of 431 families registered in 2024.

Ms. Carioso informed the commission that the Boy Scouts of America food collection generated hundreds of boxes of food items, and nine Lakewood schools participated in food drives for the program, donating 387 boxes of food and 117 grocery gift cards. It was said that food collected from both the boy scouts and the schools would be utilized for the year-round pantries at Burns Community Center and Palms Park.

Ms. Carioso reported that Project Shepherd had purchased \$34,981 in food and household care items, and \$2,470 worth of grocery gift cards from local stores to be utilized for the holiday program, thanks to the Nourishing Neighbors campaign at the Lakewood Vons, Pavilions and Albertsons which donated \$12,150 in grocery gift cards. She provided details regarding the different options for online donations, including a virtual food drive, virtual toy drive, and virtual monetary donation drive. It was said that online donations on the city's website for the virtual food, toy and monetary drives totaled \$8,535. In addition, Golden State Water provided a donation of \$480 for the purchase of gift cards for fresh food items, such as turkeys. Ms. Carioso shared that approximately 98 volunteers contributed 684 hours assisting in the warehouse, packing boxes and distributing and delivering them to residents in need.

Information regarding the Teddy Bear Tree Program, scooter and helmet purchases, the Backpack Program, and recreation scholarships was provided as noted in the written report.

Lastly, Ms. Carioso provided information regarding the Project Shepherd Extension Program. She shared that the program provides help with emergency food and utility bill assistance. It was said that in 2024, the extension program assisted 306 families and provided \$5,925.77 in utility bill assistance, which was said to be a 11% decrease from 2023.

Commissioner Spaseff mentioned that he had a chance to assist with can sorting and noted that it was very organized, which made it easy to assist. He commented that it was nice to see that Albertsons and Vons had provided assistance for the program.

Commissioner Lucio thanked Ms. Carioso and staff for all of their hard work and dedication to the program.

The Commission received and filed the report on Project Shepherd Program Summary.

#### **4. Activities and Maintenance Report No. 7**

A written report and discussion of the Recreation and Community Services Department Programs, Services and Maintenance Activities for the month of December 2024 and a listing of upcoming activities for February 2025.

The Commission received and filed the report.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Letter to Ethan Lopez, Employee of the Month for December 2024.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business brought before the Recreation and Community Services Commission, Chairperson Lucio adjourned the meeting at 6:35 p.m. to Wednesday, February 12 at 6 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

Michelle Williams, Administrative Secretary  
Recreation and Community Services Commission