



Date: August 15, 2014
To: Members of the Budget Oversight Committee
From: Patrick H. West, City Manager *PWest*
Subject: Park Ranger Program

This memorandum is provided to respond to the Mayor and City Council's questions from the PRM's August 5, 2014 Budget Hearing presentation. The existing FY 15 budget for the Park Ranger Program is \$379,489 and includes 3.5 Park Rangers. These park rangers spend the majority of their time patrolling our El Dorado Regional Park. Because this is a regional park, and it is entirely fenced with two "pay to enter" entry gates, it is very difficult for our PD patrol units to routinely patrol the park. The Park Rangers deal with public safety issues inside the park and call for PD backup when necessary. The Park Rangers also service El Dorado Park West and Heartwell Park when there are calls for service. Over the past couple of years, we have authorized the Park Rangers to visit Bixby Park once on both Saturday and Sunday for a brief 30-minute to 45-minute period of time. Outside of this, the Park Rangers do not provide services at any other park. It should be noted that the Bixby Park neighborhood group has secured a grant to pay for these weekend visits.

The City has 160 park sites. Outside of El Dorado Park, our parks receive security and patrol from our Police Department. Our officers routinely visit each of our parks and, on many occasions, dozens of times per day, during all hours of the day and night. Many of our parks are also staffed by our PRM Department for programming and supervision. Staff at these parks deal with routine misbehavior in our parks and are trained to contact the Police for immediate response for more serious violations.

In 2008, our Park Ranger Program contained 12.45 positions and was funded by the General Fund at over \$1M. Approximately 3 of these positions were dedicated to El Dorado Regional Park, leaving 9 personnel to patrol the remaining 159 parks in the City. During the recession, we revisited the Program and discovered that there was a vast redundancy in park coverage between our Police Patrol Officers and our PRM Park Rangers. It led to confusion in calls from the public and park staff on whom to call for park security issues and caused lapses in response to calls for service at parks. When the hard decision was made not to fund new Park Rangers as the current Rangers attrited out, there were many internal discussions with the Police Department to ensure they patrol our parks regularly, and our PD became the single source of response to calls for service at parks, outside of El Dorado Regional Park.

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To address issues that have been brought to our attention at Bixby Park and Chittick Field, we have instituted, as a pilot program, a Park Security Program staffed by adult PRM non-career employees trained by PD to provide park supervision, respond to minor park violations, and know when to call PD for other violations. This is in its third week and appears to be successful. This security staff work in twos, and police these parks for 8 hours both on Saturday and Sunday, and 4 hours in the early evening Monday through Friday. While this program is not funded, we felt it important enough to test this new concept to perhaps expand on it if successful, to assist PD at our parks with hot spots.

To restore the Park Ranger Program to its 2008 staffing level of 12.45 Rangers would require a General Fund commitment of \$790,000, adding to the existing budget of \$379,489. The total budget would be \$1.17 million, including personal protective equipment, uniforms, training, etc. We would also need 4 new vehicles which have not been costed out yet. The total loaded cost for a single Park Ranger ranges from \$75,000 to \$96,000. Please know that if we were directed to begin restoring the Park Ranger Program, we would strongly recommend against providing them with lethal weapons. If it was felt that lethal weapons needed to be a requirement, we would discuss transferring the program to our Police Department, so as not to have our PRM staff supervising non-sworn employees with lethal weapons at our parks.

If you need further information, please contact me at your convenience.

PW:mb

cc: Jyl Marden, Interim Assistant City Manager