

STATEMENT OF THE BRYANT PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE
TO THE BRYANT CITY COUNCIL
JULY 25, 2023

The Bryant Parks & Recreation Committee recommends the City Council amend the A&P Special Election Ordinance to designate 70% to parks, 25% to the A&P Commission, and 5% to administrative costs.

*Anything less than 70% with the 3.0 millage rate currently under consideration by the Council will effectively result in a **dramatic reduction** in the parks' current budget of \$3.7 million.*

*In fact, the ordinance as amended at the last Council meeting allocating only 30% to parks would be a **twenty-five percent reduction** from our current budget. That would be a major step backward and force parks to operate at a subsistence level with no growth, no added services, and deferral of essential maintenance.*

In addition, with the 35% level of designated funds from the A&P, the parks' strategic planning process authorized by the council will become a wasted effort and a waste of \$50,000 of taxpayer money paid to consultants facilitating the development of the plan.

*More importantly, it will be a breach of faith with the 44 people representing a broad and diverse cross section of the community serving on the planning committee for more than 18 months, **and** the more than 1,000 people responding to our survey seeking their input into how they would like to see their parks system grow and develop.*

*The Council has the opportunity to see that its parks department continues to move forward and **not** take a step backward by designating 70% of A&P revenues to parks. The parks' strategic plan is the **only comprehensive plan that lays out in specific terms projects, their projected costs, and a timeline for implementing each**. That it has been developed with the input and insights of such a broad and diverse cross section of our community makes it a wise, responsive, grassroots-oriented, financially-prudent investment for the City of Bryant and its residents.*

An added benefit of allocating 70% of A&P revenues to parks will also take some pressure off of the City budget in that city funds that might otherwise be allocated to parks could be used to fund other critical needs facing the city at a time when it is facing substantial financial pressures.

The Parks Committee was pleased that more than 30 members of the Bryant community attended its meeting earlier this month. They expressed their appreciation and support for the parks system as well as excitement about further growth and expansion of our parks system. Activities represented at the Committee meeting – and at this meeting -- include...

- *Pickleball*
- *Aquatics*
- *Baseball*
- *Basketball*
- *Boys & Girls Club*
- *Senior Center*
- *Dog Park*
- *Lacrosse*
- *Softball*
- *Soccer*
- *Tennis*

The overwhelming majority of those residents addressing the Committee during the Public Comments expressed appreciation for what the City is doing to grow our parks system and said they look forward to even more growth that will be possible with adequate funding and a vision such as reflected in the strategic planning process.

The Parks & Recreation Department has made significant progress in recent years thanks to the Council's support and the active involvement of an inclusive cross-section of our community.

Designating 70% of A&P revenues will turn the peoples' vision into reality, and help ensure passage of the A&P measure at the ballot box later this year. Anything less will fall short of meeting the wants, needs and expectations of the residents of Bryant and -- in the Committee's view -- and may well put passage of the A&P measure in peril.

*The Parks & Recreation Committee is looking forward to even **more** growth and providing even **more** facilities and services to our community. The parks' strategic plan which will be presented to council in August will be a visionary and **specific blueprint** for moving forward. It is an investment that will pay dividends for the City of Bryant and in the lives of its people now and for decades to come.*

The Parks & Recreation Committee appreciates the Council's consideration of our recommendation and looks forward to your continued support for Bryant's parks and the people who use them.