

**Town of Lyons, Colorado
Board of Trustees
BOT Agenda Cover Sheet
Agenda Item No: VII. 2.
Meeting Date: 4/3/2023**

TO: **Mayor Rogin and Members of the Board of Trustees**

FROM: **David Cosgrove, Director of Parks and Public Works**

DATE: **April 3, 2023**

ITEM: **Staff Memo-2023 Parks Operations**

ORDINANCE

MOTION / RESOLUTION

INFORMATION

- I. REQUEST OR ISSUE:** Staff Memo on 2023 Parks Operations
- II. RECOMMENDED ACTION / NEXT STEP:** None: Information
- III. FISCAL IMPACT:** Decisions made regarding park operations can have a fiscal impact on the budget.
- IV. BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** In preparation for the 2023 spring and summer seasons, Town staff has been reviewing and refining guidelines on park entrance, capacities, reservations, and rules and enforcement measures, among other procedures. Traditionally, Lyons parks have experienced heavy peak season visitation and have seen much regional use. With continued population growth across the front range and the increasing popularity of post-flood park facilities, geographic location, and natural amenities, Lyons continues to see more visitors enjoying its parks and open spaces on a seasonal basis.

Each year concerns over impacts due to overcrowding, parking, and how best to utilize overall resources are discussed. Staffing and budgeting constraints become ever more apparent. Discussions on how best to utilize resources and ensure proper enforcement are at the forefront. To date, sales tax and revenues generated from parks continue to meet projections and offset operations and maintenance expenditures.

Beginning in the spring of the 2021 season, the Town of Lyons began implementing occupancy limits for its major parks. Working in conjunction with local emergency services and the building department, these capacity limits put a cap on how many

people can be present in Lyons's busiest parks at any given time. The occupancy limit for LaVern M. Johnson Park was set at 1,596, and the limit for Bohn Park was set for 855 for the area along the river (Phase I -approximately 7 acres), and 5,985 for the entirety of the park which also comprises the southern portion with the inclusion of the ball fields, multi-purpose fields, dirt jump bike park, and dog park (inclusion of Phase II - approximately 55 acres total). Last season, staff and Park Hosts lowered the capacity limit at LMJ Park to 900 visitors during high volume and peak season days to help curb a greater number of overcrowding issues and the measure was successful.

These limits were set using a per-acre number while also considering each of the park's facilities and amenities. Gate attendants tracked the number of visitors entering the park for day use (on weekends and holidays) and with the help of staff and park hosts, other user numbers were tracked through the reservation of campers, shelter rentals, and other uses. The system allows staff to better plan and prepare during the peak season for the staffing, operational, and maintenance needs of our parks. It also allows for staff to prepare for the eventual halting of visitors from gaining entrance once capacity limits have been met and help to guide users to other parks or facilities to combat overcrowding and the issues that accompany it. This creates a safer and more enjoyable environment for all users, and, in the case of an emergency, allows for better emergency access.

In 2022, apart from festivals and special events, the capacity limits at LMJ park were never exceeded. The closest date the park came to capacity was on the weekend of June 11 and 12, when capacity rose to 1,159 and 1,341 visitors. The second highest dates for visitation were on the Fourth of July weekend, July 2 and 4, where visitor capacity rose to 1,220 and 1,298. Father's Day, June 19, 2022, saw the third-highest capacity at 1,164. A spreadsheet tracking weekend and holiday visitation/occupancy numbers from the 2022 peak season is attached for your review. Staff is recommending the occupancy numbers stay in place for the 2023 season and that the gate attendant continue to monitor these numbers working in conjunction with staff, park hosts, third-party security, Boulder County Sheriff, and Lyons Fire. It is also recommended that the capacity limit at LMJ be set at 900 visitors for those very heavy peak seasons and holiday weekends.

Lisa Ramsey will be entering her second year as Parks and Recreation Coordinator after being appointed in January 2022. Among her many responsibilities, the major duties include: facilitating visitor and guest reservations for camping and other facilities, organizing and communicating with Park Hosts, scheduling Park Security and gate attendant, maintaining schedules for park fields and facilities, contracting with park vendors, scheduling custodial services, maintaining parking kiosks, scheduling and aiding with special events, helping track equipment and supply needs and orders, processing cash and receipts from parking kiosks and shower machines, and tracking park usage through gate counts.

There will once again be two sets of park hosts to help serve guests in LaVern Johnson Park. One set is currently there from last season and will be remaining in place throughout the 2023 season - Karen and Carey Ragland. Our new hosts, Theresa and David Long, are scheduled to be onsite beginning mid-May in time to attend an orientation and be trained prior to Memorial Day weekend.

Brian and Erin Ludwig, the Bohn Park Hosts, left the park at the beginning of March and new Park hosts, John and Diane Jump, will be arriving in mid-May and will be trained in time for Memorial Day.

A third-party security company, Denver Metro Security, will once again be contracted and scheduled to assist this season with staff patrolling LaVern, Bohn, Black Bear, and Lyons Valley River Park areas. The staff has been in contact with Sgt. Sears and Boulder County Sheriff about extra duty/weekend possibilities and it is our hope additional extra duty support for weekends and holidays will be available as has been in the past. Zack Bertges, Lyons Code Enforcement, is working toward the creation of a citation book that would allow him to issue citations for infractions directly related to the Lyons code including park-related issues. A trail volunteer program named Bark Rangers is also currently in development under the Code Compliance Office. The goal of the program is to assist with the reporting of off-leash dogs and other municipal violations that frequently occur in our parks to the relevant and appropriate authorities. The goal of the staff is to schedule an orientation meeting with all parties at the start of the season to discuss roles, duties, protocol, communication, and expectations.

In addition to setting occupancy limits and working with staff on first-contact enforcement measures, there has also been an increase in the number of reservable spaces in Lyons parks. Starting in 2021, picnic table reservations became available on weekends and holidays in LaVern Johnson Park. The town has numbered the tables and added slots for reservation slips. A list of picnic table rules and regulations is listed below. The tables are available online on Reserve America, the same site that handles our camping reservations. Reservations are available weekends, Friday – Sunday, and holidays from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend. There is a \$10 fee required to reserve the tables. A small non-refundable fee is charged to encourage actual use of the tables and to prevent users from making reservations to simply hold the tables. Users must arrive by 11 am or their reservation may be forfeited. Any tables not reserved are available to the public on a first-come, first-serve basis. This system has worked well to prevent the early morning overcrowding and rush issues, scheduling and usage problems, and allowed for staff to better prepare and provide for maintenance. Depending on demand, this system can be activated for Bohn Park on Reserve America as well. Currently, there hasn't been the demand seen for this to be activated in Bohn Park, and allows for ample space and tables to be available for the public at no cost. There are sixteen total picnic sites/tables in Bohn Park and seventeen in LMJ not including the shelter/pavilion areas.

Picnic Table Rules & Regulations:

- o Picnic table reservations are valid from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on the day of the reservation.
- o Maximum of 8 (eight) people per table.
- o Reservations must be made at least 24 hours in advance.
- o Pop-up tents may not be staked down; Shade tents are allowed and encouraged (up to 10'x10'). Please note staking of any kind is not permitted; please plan to use water weights or sandbags for shade tents.

- o Campfires and charcoal or propane camp stoves are NOT allowed. Users may bring charcoal for the on-site grills.
- o Alcohol is not permitted.
- o Reservations must vacate their site by 8:00 p.m. of the expiration date listed on the
- o No refunds for no-shows. No refunds for early departure.
- o Paid parking is still required for picnic table reservations. Parking is \$3 per hour on weekends and holidays and \$2 per hour on weekdays.

The staff has fully completed the expansion of three more tent camping sites and five additional dry RV camping sites in LMJ park to better serve the increased demand for camping. This brings the total number of tent camping sites in LMJ to twenty, fifteen RV sites with full hookups, and five dry RV camping sites (available on weekends only).

Parking along the rear access drive will be reorganized on weekends and holidays and will be reserved parking for dry RV camping, tent campers, and loading and unloading for shelter reservations only. It will be closed to traffic on weekends and holidays. Park Hosts and gate attendants will assist with helping to monitor and assist campers and those with shelter rentals. The rear access drive will be open for public parking during the week and paid parking will be facilitated via the rear parking kiosk.

Ray's River Rentals has requested to run services once again in LMJ Park for the 2023 season out of the concession stand. Ray Mees, the owner/operator, will be submitting an updated proposal and staff is working to update his agreement to present to the Board. He is proposing to be open the weekend of May 26 through September 5, daily from 10 am to 6 pm with rentals due back by 6 pm. Rentals will only be available when river flows are between 250cfs and 40cfs, weather permitting.

2023 parking passes for LaVern Johnson and Bohn Park are available to residents of the Town of Lyons (utility billing customers only). One free resident parking pass per household, a second pass may be obtained for \$40, and the third is \$50. Golf cars are considered vehicles and the one free parking pass may be used for a golf cart. Golf cars should park in designated spaces and vehicles are not allowed on trails per town code. Non-residents may purchase a season parking pass for a flat rate of \$80 per vehicle. The parking fee for 2023 is currently set at \$2 per hour on weekdays and off-season weekends, and \$3 per hour on peak-season weekends. Parking fees can be paid at the kiosks located throughout the parks, placing the receipt on the windshield. Parking fees are enforced. Sign up for your 2023 resident parking pass at: www.townoflyons.com/parkingpass. There are 207 parking spaces in Bohn Park, 112 in LMJ and there will be 18 at the Black Bear Hole, and 115 at the 2nd Avenue Parking Trailhead. The parking kiosk at the Black Bear Hole is now functional and a new kiosk has been ordered for the 2nd Avenue Parking Lot. Staff hopes to have this installed and operational by Memorial Day.

Staff will be continuing to facilitate reservations for facilities and special uses. This includes tent and RV camping, all facilities, special events, and special-use requests for any event for groups over the size of 30. Two new facilities became available for rental/reservation in 2022 in Bohn Park, the Multi-Use Sport Court, and the Riverside

Picnic Area (circular picnic area with a larger grill and multiple picnic tables). Staff is looking into how to better facilitate and monitor all reservations, permitting, and communications with on-site park staff members. While the Town continues the implementation of occupancy limits for the parks, communication with maintenance staff and on-site staff will continue to be an area of focus.

Messaging and education are other key components to aiding in summertime crowd control and setting expectations for park usage. Posting information about new park regulations, including occupancy limits and the need for reservations during the busiest days, on social media and in local newspapers such as the Redstone Review, the Daily Camera, and the Longmont Times-Call will help to spread the word about changes for our parks this summer. Gate attendants and Park Hosts will continue to provide users with informative handouts and maps to help guide them to facilities and make them aware of park rules. An example of those used in the 2022 season for both LMJ and Bohn Park is attached and will be updated based on changes for the 2023 season.

Lyons Municipal Code (LMC) Section 11.4.50 regarding Park Rules and User Fees is also attached for your review.

Signage is another key form of messaging and education that helps inform and guide the public. A Variable Message Sign (VMS) will once again be placed on the Town of Lyons ROW on the east entrance of town to inform visitors of the park, event, and other Town information. Unfortunately, we are unable to place one near the entrance of LMJ per CDOT. We will be using other signs and information for guests at the LMJ, letting them know once the park has reached capacity, if parking is full, and other park information. Town staff will also be including additional signage for the expanded camping, rentable facilities, and some of the recent improvements through flood recovery.

Additional signs and enforcement regarding no motorized vehicles and golf carts have been added to the interior trails of parks. These signs were added to many locations in 2022. In addition, the staff is working on a golf car registration policy and procedure in 2023 which will include education and mapping for golf car users. Issues with golf cars, and in some cases, ATVs, dirt bikes, and even instances of vehicles, particularly during peak seasons have created the potential for safety issues and detrimental impacts to park facilities/amenities. I have attached LMC Section 8.3.10 and 8.3.20 regarding Neighborhood Electric Vehicles and Golf Cars and Unlawful Operation of All-Terrain Vehicles for your review. Number nine states "No person shall operate a golf car or LSEV on a Town-owned or maintained trail, except as permitted and posted by the Town".

Last year the Board of Trustees and Parks and Recreation Commission discussed changing Lyons Park's hours of operation from Dawn to Dusk. I have attached the current LMC Section 11.4.20-Park Hours, which states "The parks within the Town shall be opened daily to the public from 5:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m." During COVID, the Town implemented several iterations of restrictions and guidelines regarding parks, one of those was changing park hours from 8 am to 8 pm. Park Hosts continued to implement these changes to hours during the 2021 season and this did cause some confusion among guests, park hosts, and what is listed on existing signage. Park Hosts and other staff believed there was value in discussing a possible change in park hours of operation

per the existing code as the altering of hours during COVID did offer many positive outcomes. These included allowing for park hosts and staff to help clear visitors from park areas and facilities prior to dark, completing required cleaning prior to dark, clearing/emptying of trash and other maintenance for the next day of operation before dark, and simply making for fewer potential incidents or altercations with late-night users. Staff is currently ordering several new park signs and is changing all the park hours of operation to Dawn to Dusk to reflect the change and make all parks and amenities uniform. Staff will need to present the Board with an update to the ordinance to reflect the change.

V. LEGAL ISSUES: None known at this time.

VI. CONFLICTS OR ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES: Unknown.

VII. SUMMARY AND ALTERNATIVES: Other options may be discussed.

PROPOSED MOTION: None needed.

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1) LMJ Visitation-Weekends and Holidays-2022
- 2) Lyons LMJ Park Map and Rules 2021
- 3) Lyons Bohn Park Map and Rules 2021
- 4) Lyons Town Code-Section 11.4.50-Park Rules and User Fees
- 5) Lyons Town Code-Section 8.3.10-Operation of Neighborhood Electric Vehicles, Golf Carts
- 6) Lyons Town Code-Section 8.3.20-Unlawful Operation of All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs)
- 7) Lyons Town Code-Section 11.4.20-Park Hours