

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

Minutes February 15, 2022, 6:30 pm via Webex

Attending:

Director Joe McRae
Erin Cameron Miller, Cain Park General Manager
Davida Russell, City Councilperson
Lisa Manzari, Friends of Cain Park representative

Deby Auerbach-Brown
Mike Payne
Alex Pesta
Peggy Spaeth
Peter Titas, Chair

January minutes were approved.

Staff overview of Cain Park

Erin Cameron Miller, Cain Park General Manager—Production Manager for ten years, General Manager for 18 years.

Dina Rees Evans amphitheater

Booking is multi-faceted. Suggestions for performers are solicited from the community. [Pollstar Pro](#) is source for info on performers, such as box office info. Cain Park is mid-size to smaller intimate venue with 1200 seats and 1300 on the lawn. Many musicians take vacations in summer, and we're competing with surrounding venues, so summer is a challenging time to program. Programming is like a giant game of Tetris.

Programs that sell well are singer-songwriters, folk, blues, jazz, dance, R&B (very popular.) Country hasn't sold well even though it is huge.

Band cost is tied to ticket prices. City ordinance limits ticket price to \$125, and Erin thinks this is appropriate to the community.

Arts Festival

Started 57-8 years ago by resident Audrey Feinberg with 5 local artists and cardtables. Her husband Harvey expanded it to 125 artists and it became a juried festival. Artist [George Kozman](#) succeeded the Feinbergs in the mid-90s as director. George, the Cain Park Gallery Director Michelle, and two artists jury applicants. Typically 100-150 artists participate but 2021 was limited to 75 because of Covid. This year they hope to have up to 125. The 2021 artists liked the expanded space. The award-winning festival is nationally known and recognized, and artist surveys consistently say that the #1 asset is how well they are treated when they come to Cain Park.

Alma Theater

Originally built as a puppet theater. In 1989 there were huge renovations from a grant. Cleveland Musicians Union presents free programming at Alma. The Alma is mostly used for musical theater productions since 2008 since musicals at the scale of the amphitheater are not cost effective.

This year there will be two musicals, *Sondheim on Sondheim* and *School of Rock*. Pre-pandemic the CP budget has been \$700,000 with a \$100,00 city subsidy. This year they are operating with the city-wide 30% budget cut. The revenue goal this year for CP is about \$600,000.

CP arts camp was dissolved in 2008. The non-profit Heights Youth Theater currently offers summer camp with a revenue-sharing agreement. They have the venue in exchange for 30% of their revenue.

Staff has asked the Mayor to amend the ordinance capping the ticket price at \$125 to enable more flexibility such as meet-and-greet etc.

Parking is both the biggest challenge and the biggest asset to Cain Park. When it is safe, shuttling patrons from Severance or another parking lot can resume. (Alex offered his yard for parking.)

Facilities are a big challenge as they are very old. They are ADA compliant as it was a city priority. State capital improvement money is being sought for roofing, seating, and lighting.

Tennis courts have been redone recently and scheduled for every 5-6 years. The skate park may get some improvements—users consider it a beginners' park and would like expansion.

Alma will get new curtains this year.

Lisa Manzari of Friends of Cain Park (FCP) offered their financial support for these needs.

Erin responded to a concern that the music skewed towards an older crowd—they've surveyed the younger crowd, and they want music to be nearby bars and restaurants.

It was asked if there was any intention to create a strategic plan for Cain Park as one of the city's greatest assets? Apparently, there is some discussion about that in the new mayor/council administration.

Friends of Cain Park report

Lisa reported on FCP: a nonprofit started in 1991 by Chessie Bleick that raises money through memberships. Lisa's been on the board for 16 years when Chessie voluntold her. There are 8 board members.

Membership fees are \$50/double and \$40/single and have only been changed once in 30 years. Members benefits are discounts and prime seating. They help with the Arts Festival and funnel all their funds to Cain Park. They have a website and a goal to increase membership.

A request was made for an org chart. Erin's staff is responsible for everything within the wrought iron fence, and perimeter flower beds. Everything outside is Parks and Rec and Public Works, including flower baskets.

There was a discussion about how to enhance street appeal and neighborhood use of the park. A suggestion was made to create a subcommittee to continue the discussion and create an action plan.

Future agenda items:

March— Youth Scholarship Fund (moved forward from February for lack of time)
end of ice season discussion

April-Friends of Heights Parks presentation and capital needs of all parks

The meeting was adjourned at 8 p.m.