

Pascagoula parks and recreation master plan says residents want aquatic features

Published: Tuesday, October 02, 2012, 7:45 PM Updated: Tuesday, October 02, 2012, 7:55 PM

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Chris Camp, of Lose & Associates Inc., presented Pascagoula councilmen with a parks and recreation master plan Tuesday night.

PASCAGOULA, Mississippi -- Pascagoula residents want more water-related recreation options and more city-led events and programs, a landscape architect told city councilmen Tuesday night.

Chris Camp, president and co-owner of Lose & Associates Inc., presented to leaders a parks and recreation master plan, which councilmen took under advisement.

"There's tremendous opportunity here," Camp said during his data-packed presentation.

Public input pointed to a need for more aquatic facilities, better park safety, renovations of existing facilities, trails for biking and jogging, teen activities and more water-based parks and activities.

Residents also want a sports complex, a youth center, lighting on existing soccer fields, a performing arts center and restroom upgrades, the master plan said.

Camp said the city's top program needs include expanding youth sports, offering more water-based activities, promoting eco-tourism, sailing, canoeing, kayaking and offering adult sports.

Pascagoula is expected to have 6,668 children who are 19 years old or younger by 2017, Camp told councilmen, so recreation should continue to be a priority.

Now with 1,446 residents per square mile, Pascagoula expects to have 1,615 per square mile by 2017.

The city now has about 195 acres of recreational space, which Camp said is less than it should have.

"A community of your size should have 250 acres," he told the board, noting the city should also have more workers dedicated to parks and recreation.

The city has 16 full-time workers, which is about 5 people fewer than the national average, he said.

It also employs 35 part-time and contract workers.

"The national average is double that," Camp said.

Public meetings and interviews also revealed a need for more parking and better use of the Pascagoula beach; upgraded ball fields; more off-road, paved jogging trails; a large and improved public marina; more events, music and movies at the parks; and painting, cooking and youth art classes.

A two-way driveway, better programming and more staff at the Senior Citizens Center should also be a priority, he said.

"You have a very busy and very dynamic senior center," Camp said, but more staff is needed to expand offerings there.

Residents believe the most needed facilities include an expanded Beach Park and parking, concessions at Point Park and a recreation center with an indoor walking track and indoor and outdoor pools.

They also want greenways and boating/waterfront improvements, Camp said, and there's strong support for funding those projects.

Pascagoula spent \$1.8 million on recreation in fiscal year 2012, which was up from \$1.5 million in 2010.

Grant money represents a good opportunity for the city, Camp said, but bonds will likely be necessary to boost recreational offerings.

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Again, if you would stop complaining for a minute and get involved with what is REALLY going on you would know that the CITY has had several meetings soliciting input from the citizens of Pascagoula. All the "ideas" that are mentioned in the article

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