

County Council and Commissioners meet with Park Board

Written by

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? In a rare joint meeting involving the Washington County Council, the Washington County Board of Commissioners, and the Washington County Park Board, the financial well-being of the Delaney Park operation was the main topic of discussion on Monday, February 2.

According to Park Manager, Chris Strange, revenues are up over the last few years. Furthermore, Strange told the Commissioners and Council members that the county only pays 12 per cent of the park's \$465,000 yearly budget. Strange questioned if any other county department with revenue could say the same. Council President, Mark Manship, noted that the park is \$140,000 in the red at present but much of that has to do with the late property tax distribution. Stating that Delaney Park is truly an asset for Washington County, Manship went on to say that the Council's concern is that with diminishing tax revenues, it is imperative to evaluate all county services, both essential and non-essential.

Park Board President, Paul Jolly, indicated that all options are on the table to improve the financial condition of the park. According to Jolly, fees have been increased for 2009 and serious consideration is being given to closing the restaurant. In addition, the park's tax rate will increase for 2009 and thus so will the amount of property tax revenue earmarked for the park's operation. By most estimations, the increased tax rate will generate approximately \$200,000 for the park's operation.

At the end of the joint meeting, all parties agreed that better communication need to take place and that more timely adjustments to the park's budget need to be made to offset decreases in revenue.