

# City's Parks Deemed In 'Horse, Buggy' Era

Mrs. Fagan Dickson says Austin has a Mickey Mouse Parks and Recreation Department. Mrs. Dickson is head of the department's advisory board.

She chose Monday's board meeting to sound off against city hall's slowness in putting more land and more manpower into the parks department program.

Mrs. Dickson locked horns with city public works director Reuben Rountree for what she called his "zeal to hang onto" the manpower of his department.

City Manager W. T. Williams was scored by Mrs. Dickson for an alleged failure to follow through transfers of land from the public works department to the young Parks Department.

"Do we have any intentions of appealing to the city manager to do what he promised three years ago?" Mrs. Dick-

son asked of her board.

She was obviously miffed that city hall officials have given Parks and Recreation only the big area swimming pools, Zilker Park and the recreation centers.

Public Works, meanwhile, maintains the neighborhood pools and playgrounds.

"We thought three years ago we were on the way," she said of initial plans to transfer recreational lands to the Parks Department. "But suddenly, we're on rock bottom."

"Austin has just got a funny old horse and buggy system," she said. "Parks care is a highly specialized thing. Why shouldn't this department have the privilege of doing it?"

Rountree and Parks Department official Beverly Sheffield tried to tell Mrs. Dickson further transfers were impossible

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# City Parks System Said 'Horse, Buggy'

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now because of budgetary concern.

"There has been nothing rewarding about what's happened in the past three years," Mrs. Dickson said. "The first year they (city hall) gave us three men; the next year one man; and this year none.

"This year, no men, no lawn mowers, no land, no dollars.

"We'd be in serious default if, when they give us nothing, we just turn our backs and take it," she said.

Sheffield pointed out that the city manager asked all department heads to be aware of the city's tight budget for the coming fiscal year.

"Be so aware of it that we are not to ask for another penny?" she asked of Sheffield. Sheffield said this year's Parks and Recreation budget will run about \$1 million, compared to

\$962,760 last year.

Mrs. Dickson demanded repeatedly that Rountree turn over to the Parks Department its playgrounds — and the men public works uses to care for those areas.

Rountree said he could turn over the lands, but his department is barely able to serve the city's other needs with the manpower — about 610 men — he has.

"If you say you could give up the parks, and still need these men, then you or the city need to face up to it that you are understaffed," Mrs. Dickson admonished Rountree.

On motion by Dr. D. K. Brace, the board voted to study the problem of transferring areas and areas of responsibility from other city departments to the Parks and Recreation.

Mrs. Dickson scoffed at the study, noting that Sheffield and the board had already made massive studies and surveys.