



PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING



November 14, 2014

Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Department
3500 West River Road, Tucson, Arizona

Quorum having been established, Chair Lundin called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m on November 14, 2014.

Commissioners present were Michael Lundin (Chair), Jan Johnson (Vice Chair), Peter Chesson, Karen Cesare, Anita Kellman, Tom Purdon, Enrique Serna and Victor Rivera. Richard Barker and Kimberly Marohn were absent.

Staff present were Chris Cawein, Robert Padilla, George Kuck, Steve Anderson, Kerry Baldwin, Rachel Loubeau, Greg Hagen, Joy Mehulka, Robert Vaughn and Ann Khambholja.

Those present recited the pledge of allegiance.

Consent Agenda

Commissioner Serna made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Purdon, to approve the September 12, 2014 minutes as presented. The motion passed.

Chris Cawein, NRPR Director presented a Philabaum Glass Studios' County Seal memento to Commissioner Michael Lundin in recognition of his service to the commission.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION/ACTION REQUEST

1. Water for Wildlife on NRPR Managed Open Space (Kerry Baldwin/Rachel Loubeau): Mr. Baldwin gave a presentation to the commission regarding the provision of water for wildlife through the Natural Resources Division on the county's open space properties and introduced Rachel Loubeau, a new Natural Resources Specialist. Mr. Baldwin said that the reason NRPR is providing water is mainly due to the drought in Arizona. Formerly water from stock tanks for cattle provided water, but ranchers did not provide it year round. In addition, the depth of the tanks often caused drowning of wildlife that accidentally fell in and have no way of getting out. Under NRPR, the stock tanks are being augmented at cost of about \$10,000 with shallower and longer ponds that have ramps allowing wildlife to crawl out. NRPR is also using prefabricated watering tanks, with a storage tank attached. These have a cover that can be flipped over to collect rainwater. The longer ponds also allow bats to swoop down and drink. Historically, windmills were used to pump water into the tanks, now they are being fitted with solar powered pumps. In the case of tinajas, because of the slick rock many animals get trapped inside. Mr. Baldwin said that metal ramps may be added to them to allow animals to escape them. Mr. Baldwin told the commission that the water sources are widely scattered providing for a better distribution of wildlife, and they are located in open areas with good visibility to minimize the potential of predators. He mentioned that some wildlife biologists do not like putting artificial water sources in and should allow nature to take its course, but he feels that by putting water out, there is a better distribution of wildlife across available habitat. Many of the tanks also have wildlife cameras and Mr. Baldwin showed the commissioners several interesting pictures of animals, birds and reptiles at the water holes. This allows the county to track activity at the water sources. Ms. Loubeau also showed pictures of the animals captured by the cameras which showed when animals came, whether it was during the day, night and appropriate season. These provide a great deal of information, including behavior issues. Ms. Loubeau was asked about poachers and replied

that the cameras also snap pictures of people passing through the area and so far, they have seen hunters, some undocumented immigrants, and runners, late at night at Tucson Mountain Park. However, she did not know of any specific poaching issues.

Commissioner Chesson asked whether the county had any data on old water sources and was told that much of what was known was based on what people remembered and there unfortunately was no real data available. There are some old maps from the 1920's and '30's which showed some springs. Now NRPR with the Office of Sustainability and Conservation are working to map the known water sources and whether or not they are seasonal, etc. From Mr. Baldwin's recollection of natural water sources from the 1960's, 60-70% have gone dry.

Commissioner Johnson asked whether the water sources were only on county land, and Mr. Baldwin told her that they were also on fee titled and grazing lease-land but the primary focus was Pima County land. Commissioner Cesare wanted to know how many were in place to date, if undocumented immigrants were using them and whether the data was collected for any larger purpose. Mr. Baldwin told her that there were a dozen installed now, and more will be installed as and when funds are available. He mentioned in 2006, Border Patrol estimated that approximately 6000 people a month came through Rancho Seco and they would use any available water source, including vandalizing storage tanks. At this time however, there are fewer undocumented immigrants coming through the ranches but they are still frequented by drug runners coming through now. She was also told that there was no research project per se, but the University of Arizona has a new system that allows photographs to be entered with a quick description and then that allows them to analyze the data. Thus if NRPR wanted to know more about, badgers, for example, it would produce a report based off these and provide information as to location, time and moon phase. Mr. Baldwin told her that a lot of new information on animals has been collected with the use of the cameras. Commissioner Serna asked if this follows the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan policy and was told that it does help in tracking distribution, for example it has been found that a certain possum species is moving northward through Southern Arizona. Commissioner Chesson had concerns about using concrete in tinajas, but was told that metal grates would be used mainly because the water cannot be controlled and most are in areas that are hard to reach. Mr. Baldwin said that the motion sensitive cameras are also being used in areas where there has been vandalism and that the newer models are totally dark with no give-away flashes. Commissioner Lundin asked whether any endangered animals had been sighted and was told that except for an endangered bat in Tucson Mountain Park. The large cat program, which is using Pima County land, is monitoring jaguars and ocelots. The Rancho Seco, Marley and Old Hayhook properties were part of the home range of the jaguar known as Macho B for about fifteen years. Four jaguars are being tracked in Southern Arizona along with several ocelots.

2. Painted Hills property: The property is located in the vicinity of Tumamoc Hill, Feliz Paseos Park, Tucson Mountain Park and Sweetwater Preserve. Mr. Baldwin told the commission that the county had purchased the 286-acre Painted Hills property from the Dallas Police and Fire System for approximately \$7.5 million. The Dallas Police and Fire System purchased the property for \$27 million and due to the economic downturn, the county was able to purchase it. This property will also tie in with the Mary Henderson Desert Center with trails through to Tucson Mountain Park, with minimal development. It will be maintained primarily as open space. It is adjacent to a property called Las Lomas, which the county is also considering acquiring subject to the future Bond. Acquisition of open space in the next bond is currently slated for \$120 million. Mr. Baldwin explained that no specific properties are identified in the open space bond lest sellers raise prices. Commissioner Chesson was concerned that buffelgrass was present on the southern side of the property. Mr. Baldwin said that NRPR had sprayed some, and planned to do more next spring and summer, but there was no funding for management of the property. Commissioner Chesson mentioned that Tumamoc Hill had buffelgrass and Mr. Baldwin said that it had not been treated by the University of Arizona for possibly the last six or seven years. It had been about 80% treated but it has recovered.

3. Cancellation of December 12, 2014 meeting as it conflicts with the Bond Advisory Committee meeting to discuss Parks projects: Commissioner Lundin noted that NRPR staff would be attending the bond meeting scheduled for that date. Mr. Cawein said that there were so many parks' issues that meetings had been scheduled for November 21 and December 12, and there is also discussion regarding a meeting on December 5. Commissioner Johnson asked whether there were any specific parks or projects that NRPR was promoting. Mr. Cawein told her that Mr. Hagen had previously updated the commission on the standing of the parks' bond and if the commission so wished, he would give the commission an update of the discussions of the December 12 meeting. Mr. Cawein explained that over the past several years there have been additions and subtractions made to the bond package and at present parks had projects totaling approximately \$105 million. Commissioner Cesare asked whether there was anything that the commission could do to help support the package. Mr. Cawein said that he had seen letters in support of the projects sent to the Bond Committee, and that there was also polling on projects but at this point most of the projects seem to be moving along. Commissioner Lundin asked whether the commission as a whole could write a letter recommending the projects after the December meeting. Mr. Cawein said that that would be helpful. Commissioner Johnson said that if the public approves the bond package, they could attend the Conservation Acquisition meetings that are public, and maybe suggest parcels to be purchased. Mr. Cawein remarked that this department's projects touch on several different areas – parks, open space and historical conservation. Commissioner Cesare said that an agenda item for January could be about what could be done to advocate for the bond election. Commissioner Serna told her that if her supervisor agreed to it, it could be done. Chair Lundin asked if there was a motion to cancel the December 12, 2014 meeting. It was moved by Commissioner Cesare and seconded by Commissioner Purdon. All were in favor.

DIVISION UPDATE REPORTS:

Natural Resources (Kerry Baldwin): There were no questions on his report.

Operations (George Kuck): Mr. Kuck said that a new date of December 11, 2014, had been set for the dedication of the new solar project at the Northwest Community Park at 10:00 a.m. A new restroom has been added at Rillito Park which is also for the Heirloom Market. The new ramadas are being used and Mr. Kuck invited them to visit the market. Mr. Cawein said the dedication for the new ramadas at the Heirloom Market is scheduled for November 23, 2014. Commissioner Cesare is waiting for the road to be paved and remarked that the pavilions are looking very good. She said that her association entered in to an agreement with the Rillito Park Foundation to lease out their parking lot during racing season. Mr. Kuck said that due to the new improvements parking has been reduced to about 800 spaces and that there is still a need for more parking since approximately 10,000 people are expected to attend the races. Commissioner Johnson asked how many spaces were there previously and was told that there were approximately 1200 spaces. There were no further questions.

Special Projects/Trades (Robert Vaughn): Mr. Vaughn said that October had been a very busy month with several different events at Canoa and participation has been very good. There is a new display about the Anza Expedition at Canoa Ranch, and they have been working very closely with Tumacocori, Tubac, the National Park Service, the Anza Trail and Los Lagunas. NRPR is continuing to gather artifacts for the museum and the family of George Proctor is currently finalizing the Trust documents that will allow the collection to be placed in the Trust, with a subsequent donation by the Trust to Pima County.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

FUTURE AGENDA ITEM(S): Commissioner Lundin asked for a brief update on the bond meeting as well as an action item on what the commission could do, as well as a drafting a letter in support.

Commissioner Cesare would like something to acknowledge and recognize the contributions of Chuck Catino. Commissioner Purdon mentioned that 200-300 people attended his memorial service and almost two hours of spontaneous speeches. Chair Lundin asked whether it could be added as a discussion item as to what could be done to honor Mr. Catino. Commissioner Johnson mentioned that she had attended the dedication of the softball field and every one who attended from Arivaca and Green Valley were so happy at what he had accomplished.

ADJOURNMENT: As there was no further business to come before the commission, duly motioned and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.