



## PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES REGULAR MEETING



May 8, 2015

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

Quorum having been established, Vice Chair Johnson called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m on May 8, 2015.

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

Staff present were Chris Cawein, Robert Padilla, Kerry Baldwin, George Kuck, Robert Vaughn, Josue Romero and Ann Khambholja.

Those present recited the pledge of allegiance.

### Consent Agenda

Commissioner Chesson made a motion, seconded by Commissioners Barker and Marohn, to approve the February 13, 2015 minutes after staff make a minor correction under the heading Division Update Reports. Under item 1, Planning, the organization should read Tucson Mountains Association. The motion passed.

### Commission Discussion/Action Request

1. Commissioner Serna's request to defer the commissioners' compensation as a symbolic gesture, due to the proposed budget cuts: Commissioner Rivera made a motion to make acceptance of the compensation voluntary, those who can afford it can forego the compensation and those who cannot can still receive it. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cesare. Commissioner Purdon suggested that when the county's budget cuts were removed, the commissioners could reinstate reimbursement. Commissioner Cesare asked if the intent was to have it stopped until you ask for it to be continued, or could a commissioner voluntarily do it right away. Vice Chair Johnson wanted to know when this started. Mr. Cawein informed the commission that an administrative procedure allowed reimbursement of advisory board expenses at the rate of \$20.00 per meeting. Mr. Padilla said that he would provide the commissioners with a copy of the procedure. Vice Chair Johnson remarked that she had been on several boards and had never heard of the procedure before. Mr. Cawein informed the commission that it was administrative procedure #22-12 and had an effective date of October 6, 1987 and was revised in March 2013. It is a Finance and Risk Management procedure and states that 'members who attend may be compensated for travel, parking and subsistence at the rate of \$20.00 per meeting'. It also states that each department will be budgeted with an amount of travel funds sufficient to pay for all eligible members times the yearly meeting frequency. Mr. Cawein informed the commission that it is not mandatory, hence it is up to the discretion of the commission if they want to accept it or not. Commissioner Marohn said that she considers it an honor to be on the commission and as long as she has a choice to donate her money it is enough for her. Vice Chair Johnson asked how that could be done. Mr. Cawein said it could be done on a meeting to meeting basis, if the need was there for reimbursement, the dollars would be available, or they could be refused at the time. Mr. Padilla informed the commission that Commissioner Marohn was donating her reimbursement to Natural Resource Parks. Mr. Cawein said the commissioners could choose to donate the reimbursement if they so wished. Commissioner Chesson pointed out that the procedure

did not say the commissioner must accept the reimbursement and that it was discretionary. Vice Chair Johnson asked whether they actually needed an amendment. Commissioner Cesare agreed with her. Vice Chair Johnson asked all the commissioners for their input. Commissioner Barker said it should be a choice for each commissioner, and if they choose not to take it, it would stay for use of the department. Commissioner Purdon said he was content with the procedure and now that they knew more than they did, they did not need the motion. Commissioner Cesare suggested that the motion be withdrawn. Commissioner Rivera withdrew the motion. Vice Chair Johnson said that the commissioners could either accept the reimbursement or return it to the department. Mr. Padilla explained to the commission the monies are distributed from the General Fund. He also thanked Commissioner Marohn for her donations. He further explained that NRPR had created several donation accounts in a special revenue fund, and told them that General Fund monies are swept at the end of the fiscal year and not carried over into the next fiscal year. However, when donations are made to the special revenue fund, they stay with the department and are carried over into the following fiscal year. Vice Chair Johnson said that in that case commissioners were free to donate it to the fund of their choice or keep it. Thus the motion was withdrawn and everything remains status quo.

2. Request for a discussion regarding the commission's meeting schedule during summer: Mr. Cawein informed the commissioners that most Boards take a summer recess or reduce the summer meetings. Vice Chair Johnson remarked that this was not done in the past. Commissioner Barker said he preferred the monthly meetings and plans his vacation around the commission meetings. Commissioners Marohn and Cesare also agree with keeping the meetings monthly. Commissioner Rivera was also in favor of the monthly meetings. Commissioner Chesson said the meetings should be held when there are agenda items and a quorum. Commissioner Purdon asked how hard it was for staff to know if there was a quorum in advance, and whether it was possible that notice be sent 24 hours ahead if there is no quorum. Mr. Cawein said it was appreciated when R.S.V.P.'s were received. Commissioner Rivera asked if there should be a meeting if there is nothing to report on and Commissioner Chesson said that meetings should be consolidated when there are few agenda items. Mr. Cawein said in the case of lack of agenda items or a quorum, he would discuss it with the Chair and decide if a meeting would be held. Vice Chair Johnson asked that the commissioners' input be sought out by email or phone call as to whether a meeting should or should not be held.
3. Update on the future Bond election being called for by the Board of Supervisors: Mr. Cawein reminded them about a memo distributed at the last commission meeting, from Mr. Huckelberry dated April 21, 2015, regarding the call for a special bond election to be held in Pima County on November 3, 2015. It lists the recommendations from the Bond Advisory Committee and the resolution included seven ballot propositions which, if approved by voters, would authorize the county to sell \$815.8 million in bonds. The Board of Supervisors approved this action. Mr. Cawein also handed out information from County Administration informing the commissioners about what they can and cannot do to influence the outcome of an election. Vice Chair Johnson asked whether any commissioners beside herself had attended the Board of Supervisors meeting and acknowledged the presence of Commissioner Chesson there. Commissioner Purdon said that he had watched the proceedings on television. She said that the meeting was well attended with a number of supporters of open space present as well as some dissenters. The board passed the resolution 4-1. She was disappointed that there was only one supporter for parks and thus spoke up as well. She said she realizes that taxes would go up, but it supports things that we need.
4. 2015/16 Budget update: Mr. Cawein reminded the commission that at the last meeting he had informed them that County Administration had placed a freeze on non-essential purchasing activities and a mandated 2% reduction in departmental operating budgets for the 2015/16 fiscal year. Mr. Cawein also told the commission that the 2% cut translated to approximately \$350,000 in spending cuts. NRPR was also asked to do an additional 3% for a

total of 5% of NRPR's budget which is about \$875,000. Mr. Cawein said that a 5% budget reduction would have a significant impact on programs and projects especially since NRPR is not a wealthy department. However he was happy to report that a few days before the budget hearing, he received a memo from Mr. Huckelberry advising him that a 2% cut would suffice. He said it was difficult as NRPR is always competing with mandated programs like the Sheriff's department and courts, and parks are a discretionary program. This brings NRPR's budget to \$17.1 million from \$17.5 million.

Mr. Cawein mentioned that at the budget hearing held the previous week, they spoke about the facilities NRPR is responsible for; approximately 348 different properties, including trails parks, recreational centers and several other facilities. He let the Board know about the large swath of things that NRPR takes care of. He also spoke about the benefits of parks, which include economic development, lifestyle and health benefits. He also informed the commission that because the Flood Control levy that was increased last year, NRPR was able to shift some of the costs for river parks to Flood Control and were able to create a deferred maintenance budget, which Parks had never had before. Mr. Cawein will also put together a memo describing all that has been done this year with those dollars from the deferred maintenance fund. Mr. Cawein said that NRPR will not close facilities or cut programs significantly. Due to a few retirements recently, the department has realized cost savings, and through additional minor reorganizations may incur additional savings. He also pointed out to the Board that he wanted to look more at the revenue side. One of the things he left with the Board was two numbers, 47 and 6. 47 is the per capita allocation of dollars that the Board gives parks programs in Pima County. The median on the national scale is \$70. Looking at the cities of Tucson, Phoenix and some of the others, the per capita allocation is much higher than that. Vice Chair Johnson asked about the City of Tucson and was told that not including capital expenses it was in the 70's and Phoenix is almost \$80. Mr. Cawein remarked that this shows NRPR is pretty efficient and able to optimize its large cadre of volunteers which equates to a tremendous amount of dollars. NRPR is also leveraging community partnerships, grants and other funds to make the programs work. Vice Chair Johnson inquired if NRPR was thinking of raising fees. Mr. Cawein reminded them of the second number – 6. NRPR generates 6% through user fees. The national median for parks is 29.6%. At the budget hearing a couple of Supervisors said that NRPR would have to be cautious in their pursuit of increased fees so as not to alienate low income participants. Mr. Cawein informed the Board that the department is not planning on increases fees to match the national median but hopes to get to at least 10% as a first step. He said that he and his staff will look at the schedule and in about six months bring some suggestions to the commission. Vice Chair Johnson asked what categories NRPR would think of raising. Mr. Cawein said that at first they would look to fees that were in the NRPR fee schedule but not being collected. One of these fees was for special events where vendors charged a fee, there is a board adopted fee where NRPR can collect \$1-2 per person. That historically had not been charged, and now where events had been held for several years without the fee, the organizers have raised objections to paying it. To work around this, NRPR has incrementally increased the fees. Mr. Cawein said that they will try to ensure that the existing fees are charged first, and as far as new fees, NRPR is still in discussion of what those will be. Commissioner Cesare asked for some clarification about the IT fees. Mr. Padilla explained that the county has a new IT Director with a different vision about how the county should treat hardware and software costs. His vision was that technology is rapidly changing and hence the County should no longer be procuring hardware, software and server space, but instead leasing. The Board approved the plan which is to have every county department provided with new computers which will be replaced every three years. However there still is a lease cost, which in the case of NRPR was \$212,000. NRPR received an increase of \$212,000 in the base budget which eventually will be used by the IT department to pay these costs. Vice Chair Johnson asked whether all departments would participate. Mr. Padilla said that that was the initial plan, but with the budget freeze, this would be looked at again and perhaps instead of a three year replacement plan, have a four or five year replacement plan.

## DIVISION UPDATE REPORTS:

1. Operations (George Kuck): Mr. Kuck was asked by Vice Chair Johnson for a quick run-down on the progress of park projects. The play structure at Thomas Jay Park remains closed due to the budget freeze. At Flowing Wells Park, the County Administrator has allowed NRPR to move forward with the necessary repairs which are estimated to cost \$15,000, but the playgrounds are expected to remain closed for two months due to the delay in getting the replacement parts. The lighting project at McDonald Park Off-leash Dog Park estimated to cost \$65,000 utilizing in-lieu fees is on hold due to the budget freeze. The restroom project at Canoa Preserve Park is also on hold for the same reason, however CBDG funds will be used for construction of certain elements. The lighting project at Picture Rocks Skate Park has begun using CBDG funds and in-lieu fees. The new parking lot at Curtis Park has been completed with matched funding from the Southern Arizona Community Sports. Construction of the new soccer fields and lighting has begun at Rillito Park. The demolition of the old barns has been completed and the metal barns have been dismantled for future use.
2. Special Projects and Trades (Robert Vaughn): Mr. Vaughn gave the commissioners an update regarding the activities at Canoa Ranch. He praised the volunteers who help restore the buildings, create interesting displays and tell the story of the ranch to an increasing number of visitors. The Green Valley Gardeners have also been active in maintaining and restoring the vegetable, herb and cactus gardens there. Donated ranch related artifacts are on display at the historic buildings. The first Canoa Ranch Heritage Fair was held on March 7, 2015 and attracted a number of vendors and visitors to the ranch. The Sonora Astronomical Society hosted a successful star gazing event in April, with another to be held in May. The Green Valley Gardeners also held their annual meeting at the ranch which also drew a number of people. The event included entertainment for the members, self-guided tours of the site, a catered lunch and a short business meeting. Vice Chair Johnson asked if they were charged a fee. Mr. Vaughn replied that as they do so much for the ranch, they were not charged. Vice Chair Johnson commented that they were very fortunate to have such a large number of volunteers as well. She also presented Mr. Vaughn with a ceramic replica of a western boot for his collection of artifacts at the ranch.

## FUTURE AGENDA ITEM(S) :

Commissioner Cesare requested a wrap-up report on the horse racing season at the Rillito Regional Park.

Mr. Cawein will present the commission with a year-end summary of events at NRPR by division. Mr. Kerry Baldwin will give the first presentation at the next meeting covering the Natural Resources Division.

ADJOURNMENT: As there was no further business to come before the commission, duly motioned and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 10:45 a.m.