



PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES REGULAR MEETING



June 10, 2016

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 June 10, 2016.

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

Staff present were Chris Cawein, Robert Padilla, Kerry Baldwin, Joe Barr, Madeleine Stoll, Robin Hadden, Mike Holmes (ED&T) and Ann Khambholja.

Those present recited the pledge of allegiance.

Consent Agenda

A motion was made and seconded to approve the May 13, 2016 minutes. The motion passed.

Mr. Cawein introduced Mr. Damion Alexander the new commissioner from District 4 and welcomed him to the commission. Commissioner Alexander informed the commission that he has a passion for cycling and the outdoors and uses the parks almost every day. He cycles approximately 5-7,000 miles a year. He also works with advocacy groups to promote outdoor recreation. He is looking forward to working to promote cycling. Commissioner Alexander also loves photography and has many pictures of parks that could be used for promotion. Vice Chair Johnson remarked that he would be a wonderful addition to the commission.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION/ACTION REQUEST

1. Informational update regarding NRPR's Annual work plan (Chris Cawein): Mr. Cawein provided the commissioners some background on NRPR's strategies and initiatives. Mr. Cawein informed them that the three main areas of focus were contractual agreements, programs and facilities. Regarding contractual agreements, Mr. Cawein informed the commission that NRPR has approximately three to four hundred different types of contracts. Short term permits are another category covering field use, special use, advertising etc. Mr. Cawein explained that when he came on board, there were several contracts that had not been renewed in time, thus he put into place a simple arrangement that would give Mr. Padilla approximately 90 days' notice so NRPR could ensure that contracts were renewed in a timely manner. Additionally, another area needing improvement pertaining to contract compliance is submittals. Some of the contracts were executed more than 20 years ago with annual reporting requirements. NRPR is focusing on tracking these to ensure all of the necessary submittals are done in accordance with the contract. Renewals are being critically reviewed to ensure agreement is beneficial to NRPR and Pima County. NRPR is looking at both public/private and public/public partnerships to reduce costs or enhance revenue.

The second element is programs which includes but is not limited to; sports management, trail system, river parks and the Loop, environmental education, conservation lands, aquatics, shooting sports, Canoa Ranch and the Native Plant nursery. NRPR needs to analyze the costs of these programs, as well as the revenue, participation, volunteer participation and net costs per participant. Mr. Cawein informed them that the greatest return was from the Shooting sports program, and the campground. Mr. Cawein also informed them that on some programs NRPR does not generate revenue, like sports field maintenance, but that this will help NRPR to guide future needs.

Regarding infrastructure, Mr. Cawein reminded them that they had previously heard from the GIS group about how they were collecting information on all the details, not only water meters and electrical boxes, but recreational features including ramadas, ballfields, etc. It will include relevant documents, i.e. deeds, construction plans, that will be easily retrieved by staff going forward. This would allow staff to access all the information from their desktops. This can be used for analysis to figure out what is there and what needs to be done. The external facing use is for the public, like the regional sports fields app where the public can see all the different fields in the region. This will be a collaboration between the City, Stadium District, Marana, Oro Valley and all the different communities. NRPR is trying to serve up a web app that would serve all the communities, but each jurisdiction would be responsible for keeping their own information updated. This data collection effort would also aid in needs assessment and prioritization of projects. Regarding the deferred maintenance program, Mr. Cawein informed the commission that in two years, over 90 projects have been completed at a cost between \$1 – 1.5M per year. The deferred maintenance program was started to prevent infrastructure failure especially in cases where there is no bond program. This program includes the sign management program (entry, rules, reminder signs) to bring uniformity; pools maintenance under the 25-year Master Plan – NRPR has nine pools and over time, they need replastering which is expensive; NRPR has 120 playground structures at 36 sites which are being looked at. NRPR is also adding shade structures to extend their lifespan. Another program is park perimeter path treatments, and resurfacing of courts and parking lots. The next category is building repairs: re-roofing of ramadas, restrooms and maintenance shops. NRPR invested in mobile-minis with specialized locking systems that severely reduced theft problems. Commissioner Johnson asked if they were portable and could be moved. Mr. Cawein explained that would be very difficult to do. Other upgrades include picnic tables, bleachers and shade structures, utility repairs and enhancements. With regard to new facilities, NRPR does not have any capital to build, but are using in lieu fees for smaller projects, always keeping in mind that there are lifetime O&M costs involved with new facilities.

The 2016/17 focus will be a continuation of what NRPR has been doing, focusing on data management, program analysis and the inventory program. NRPR is continuing to build GIS linkage and serve regional apps to the public for field optimization, trails, the Loop and aquatics. As the Loop is gaining in popularity, there are more conflicts regarding multi-use. Pima County will work with other jurisdictions on the Loop to provide uniform guidelines. Commissioner Alexander asked whether NRPR works with the Sheriff's department to prohibit motorized use of the Loop. Mr. Cawein informed him that they were working with the Sheriff and Tucson Police, but they do not have much enforcement on the Loop, and are also working on rule making which will help enforcement. Commissioner Johnson asked whether NRPR worked with Pima Trails Association and Mr. Cawein replied in the affirmative. NRPR will also continue with the deferred maintenance program, prioritized by division. For the 2016/17 fiscal year about \$2.5M has been requested, but Mr. Cawein informed them that only about half will be implemented. Commissioner Serna asked about whether aquatics included the YMCA pools as well. Mr. Cawein informed him that we have some partnerships with the Y. Commissioner Marohn inquired why the shooting ranges had the most revenue. Mr. Barr informed her that there were robust fees for the ranges. She then asked about the soccer fields fees which are low. Mr. Cawein informed that they were

looking into that as well. He also informed the commissioners that NRPR has looked at the historical record and found that only about a third of the parks were actually adopted as parks, so going forward NRPR will bring to the Commission an affirmation categorizing and listing all the various types of parks as well as the rules. NRPR will also be working with the Office of Sustainability and Conservation as well as Flood Control on the Conservation Lands Management Program.

Finally, NRPR will look at revenue enhancements. At present Pima County spends about \$47 versus the average per capita funding of \$76 on parks. Commissioner Serna asked about other funding. Mr. Cawein said that he worked with Administration and Flood Control to enhance funding, but for the most part not much is grant funded. Commissioner Cesare asked about money from developers and Mr. Cawein informed her that that was needed too. He also said that he is looking into the ranch management programs to ensure in future that those agreements are robust and if revenue is received, it is for stewardship of the land. Mr. Cawein pointed out that the national average cost recovery through revenue generation is 29% compared to 6% for Pima County. He said he wants to work with the different entities in the region to come up with a reasonable fee schedule as well. Commissioner Marohn asked about the ranch management agreements. Mr. Baldwin informed her that the management of the land is in a partnership agreement, NRPR owns the grazing leases and the fee-title and the ranch management agreement allows the ranch manager to utilize those lands. For State Land or BLM land, they have to pay the annual fee and they have responsibility for maintaining all the infrastructure they use, like wells, buildings, corrals and fences. We do not charge them a fee for the fee-title lands we own which often is a small percentage of the whole acreage and thus try to balance it out. Mr. Cawein said that since this is the end of the fiscal year, they will receive reports from the other divisions showing what has been accomplished over the year. Commissioner Alexander asked Mr. Cawein about the possibility of adding solar panels to ramadas. Mr. Cawein informed him that it would not be feasible due to the non-availability of easily accessible power sources or financially viable. Commissioner Johnson thanked Mr. Cawein for his presentation.

2. Informational update regarding Colossal Cave (Brian Held): Mr. Kerry Baldwin introduced Mr. Brian Held, the General Manager of Colossal Cave. Mr. Baldwin also informed the commission that Colossal Cave's history goes back to the 1800s and has been used in different ways, including as a recreation area. Pima County acquired the site and converted it to a park and had an agreement to operate the cave as a tourist attraction. Later the area known as La Posta Quemada ranch was acquired through the Flood Control District which expanded the area of the park. Additional properties were added under the 2004 Bond. The county now recognizes it as a large mountain park and an open space area under the MSCP. Mr. Baldwin pointed out that there are many problems as it was built in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) era and many of the structures were not adequately maintained. Visitation also declined. The Board of Supervisors requested a performance audit of the facility and it was decided to look at the whole contract. The county issued a request for proposals and Ortega was one of the key groups that provided input and were finally selected as the new operator of Colossal Cave. In the past the operator had responsibility over the whole park. The new model is more like Tucson Mountain Park where within the park we have the Arizona Sonora Desert Museum and Old Tucson Studios. The Colossal Cave Mountain Park agreement gives primary responsibility for development within the footprint to the operator, and the county could modify that to include other activities. This also allows the county to be more involved in the overall management of Colossal Cave Mountain Park. ED&T is the primary liaison with the operator. NRPR has worked with Brian and would like to start educational outreach programs, like birdwatching which will bring visitors to the park. NRPR has also assigned a staff person to work on the non-development side as well looking at the trails system, cultural resources, etc., also to bring other visitors, like mountain bikers and hikers to the park. Commissioner Johnson asked when the new operator took over and was told it was in August 2015. The operator ensured that the park was not shut down in the transition, which was challenging. Mr. Baldwin

reminded the commission that Colossal Cave is on the National Register of Historic places, so improvements are also harder to make. Commissioner Johnson remarked that she visited recently after 40 years and the changes are a great improvement.

Mr. Held informed the commission that they have heard many visitors telling them that they had not visited the cave for several years and that it was good that visitors were returning. They have been trying to expand to make the attraction a weekend getaway, making the place more family oriented, not just to visit the cave, but to spend time there. Some of the focus points were to make the cave tours more history oriented and more fun for the whole family. Mr. Held said he was very proud of the fact that almost all of the staff were retained. From January 2016, revenue was \$665,000, at the same time last year it was under \$200,000. The attendance has also increased from approximately 16,500 last year to 64,000 this year. The cave is still the main focus, but they are looking at other ways to generate revenue. He informed the commission that getting rid of the toll booth fee was a very good idea as it brings in many more visitors who are free to picnic, hike and bike in the park and enjoy it. Commissioner Johnson asked him about horseback riding and he informed her that they are still looking into providing people with a variety of rides. The cave tours now have structure and can be booked online and are usually fully booked. Commissioner Johnson remarked that when she visited there were mostly snowbirds. Mr. Held said that during that time about 70% were out-of-towners, but now have about 70% of local people. They have been doing a lot of outreach as well. The retail shop has been renovated and more merchandise, all with the Colossal Cave logo, added for all age groups which increased revenue. Commissioner Serna asked if any of the proceeds go to the county. Mr. Holmes of ED&T informed the commissioners that ED&T's focus is different from NRPR's in that they want to bring more visitors to the county. Thus they kept the rent low, about \$1,600 per month, so all of Colossal Caves' revenue could be used for repairs to the cave and other infrastructure. When revenue reaches \$2,000,000, 2% is returned to the county. Mr. Held said that they have spent around \$600,000 to date to upgrade the shop and restaurant. Some of the improvements have been putting in air-conditioning at the shop, cleaning up the old campgrounds, started working on road maintenance, added a new café near the tour entrance, which has increased food sales as well. Mr. Held showed the commission some of the before and after pictures of the improvements made. Mr. Held said that they want to get people into the campgrounds, and are working on other projects like the Posta Quemada Ranch, a zip line for which they are looking to find the best location. The zip line would take people down quickly, but move slowly on the upward trip to give people the opportunity to get an aerial view of the park as well. They are also working to get trails for mountain biking and increasing the number of lots for camping. They are clearing out some of the washes and are working with the Arizona Trail Association. Mr. Held said they were trying to accommodate the requests of park visitors as well. Commissioner Alexander asked whether the gates were still closed at night and was informed that they are trying to figure out a better system so people can leave when they want. Mr. Held said that the restaurant is a big draw with many repeat visitors. He expects sales will improve even more when they receive their liquor license and informed the commission that they intend supporting local farms and brewers here. Mr. Holmes said that one of the reasons the Ortega Group was selected, even though they had never operated a cave, was that they understood what drew repeat visitors to a site.

Commissioner Serna asked how this compared with other more famous caves. He was told that it was hard to make comparisons when some were located near more populous cities, airports, and the size of the cave as well. ED&T believes that if they have about 120,000 visitors a year it would be good. They are on target to have about 100,000 this year.

Mr. Held received kudos from Commissioner Kellman on turning the park around so soon. Mr. Held also informed the commission that they are in the process of trying to get rid of bottled water by providing water fountains to reduce the number of plastic bottles on the property. Commissioner Alexander asked whether geocaching was allowed and Mr. Baldwin informed him that it was against park rules. Commissioner Johnson asked about the riding stable and was told that they were still working on that with NRPR. Commissioner Johnson

mentioned that there were many people waiting for the rides. Mr. Held explained that to limit the impact to the trails, the number of rides have been reduced. Mr. Baldwin also explained that horses are hard on the trails, thus NRPR is working on redesigning the trails to make them more sustainable. There will also be some mountain biking trails added. Commissioner Johnson asked whether the stables were part of the Ortega Group and was told yes but that Ortega subcontracts that area out. Mr. Baldwin reiterated that it was still a Natural Resource Park and NRPR wants development that complements a natural perspective.

Commissioner Johnson thanked Mr. Held for his presentation.

DIVISION UPDATE REPORTS:

1. Recreation Division (Joe Barr): Mr. Barr gave the commission a brief rundown on the events of the past few months. He spoke about the horse racing season at Rillito Park and informed them that Rillito Racing continues to host special events at the clubhouse like Simulcast racing for national horse racing events. Vice Chair Johnson asked whether there would be another racing meet in October. Mr. Barr was not sure, but he said that this was still being worked out. Commissioner Marohn asked how the commission could help the foundation get a long term lease considering the amazing job they are doing especially at the Jelks House. Commissioner Rivera wanted to know the length of a lease and Mr. Barr informed them that the foundation had asked for five years and had been given a two-year lease. Commissioner Marohn said that a long-term lease would help the foundation with funding opportunities. Other notable events were the Loop dedication at the Pantano/Harrison section along with the sales of Loop Jerseys and tees. He informed the commission that several events were held at Ajo, including the Ajo Shindig and the Regional softball and baseball championship. A volunteer appreciation picnic was held for the volunteers of the shooting sports program. NRPR has also created several new programs and customer opportunities. New programs include a corporate team-building program at the Clay Target Center and a volunteer leadership program that staff have developed. A new program facilitated by GAP Ministries provides a supplemental nutrition program for youth attending NRPR's summer recreation programs at some community centers. NRPR is also adopting a positive behavior intervention and support program to augment the messaging currently used by local schools. Mr. Barr informed the commission that NRPR is once again partnering with the Y to offer free swim lessons at the Flowing Wells Pool.
Mr. Barr reported that the Ajo Pool plaster job was completed at a cost of approximately \$233,000 and numerous small projects were funded by the Stadium District at the Kino Pool. The Marana School District also funded some projects at the Wade McLean Pool.

2. Natural Resources (Kerry Baldwin): There were no questions for Mr. Baldwin.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEM(S): Park rules regarding drones as compared to new State legislation which has been introduced.

ADJOURNMENT: As there was no further business to come before the commission, duly motioned and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 11:05 a.m.