PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION  
MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING  
April 12, 2013  
Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation Department  
3500 West River Road, Tucson, Arizona

Quorum having been established, the Chair called the meeting at 9:03 a.m. Commissioners present were Jan Johnson (Chair), Anita Kellman (Vice Chair), Richard Barker (Secretary), Charles Catino, Peter Chesson, Tom Drzazgowski, Michael Lundin, Victor Rivera, and Enrique Serna. Commissioner Jim Mazzocco was absent.

Staff present: Dr. Rafael Payan, Steve Anderson, Kerry Baldwin, Joe Barr, George Kuck, and Joy Mehulka, Gregoria Tucker, and Ann Khambholja

Guests: Jessie Byrd of Tucson Cactus Succulent Society  
Joe Frannea of Tucson Cactus Succulent Society

Pledge of Allegiance: Those present recited the pledge of allegiance.

Consent Agenda: Motioned and seconded, the February 8, 2013 minutes were tabled for the next Commission meeting.

Call to the Public: There was no response from the public.

Commission Discussion/Action Request

1. Central Arizona Project (CAP) Trail

Mr. Steve Anderson, manager of the NRPR Planning Division, made a PowerPoint presentation. He gave a brief history that led to the construction of the CAP from 1973 to 1993 by the United States Bureau of Reclamation (BOR). The BOR, in anticipation of developing a multiuse recreational trail along the canal, acquired land with emphasis on urban areas. The CAP Trail is non-motorized multiple use trail and includes walking, jogging, equestrian use, bicycling, and roller blading. The CAP Trail was originally intended to go into an area approximately 20 feet wide on the downhill side (south or west) of the canal in the Phoenix area, west of the canal in the Pinal County area, and on the uphill (east) side of the Pima County area. The CAP did say that the trail could switch sides in specific locations. There was a difference of opinion between Pima County and the CAP as to where the trail would be located. Pima County prefers to construct the trail outside of the canal fence on the top of the protection berm to maximize the views of the Tortolitas, Marana, and the western side of the Saguaro Nation Park West, and Tucson Mountain Park. CAP relented, supporting Pima County’s position. In 2003, the CAP Trail received National Recreation Trail recognition, and is now called the Central Arizona Project National Recreation Trail.

Phase I, as planned and preferred by the County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry, is to form a loop from the Santa Cruz River Park at Avra Valley Road to the Santa Cruz River Park at 22d Street. The BOR could fund 50% of the CAP Trail construction, subject to fund availability. Mr. Huckelberry wants Phase I of the trail developed in 2013 and 2014. Phase II development will be from Tangerine Road to the Pima-Pinal county line. Marana, Pima County, and the BOR are
collaborating to fund Phase II. It is anticipated that nearly fifty miles of the CAP Trail will be
developed in the near future.

2. Action: Discussion and establishment of a new park site/open space, and/or facility
Naming/renaming procedure

Chair Johnson, on behalf of new Commissioners, read the minutes of the Parks and Recreation
Commission meeting held on February 4, 2011 and April 1, 2011 as they relate to the naming and/or
renaming of Pima County park sites, open space, and facilities procedure. The procedure was
originally executed and signed by Dr. Rafael Payan, director of the Pima County Natural Resources,
Parks and Recreation. Both the February 4, 2011 and April 1, 2011 meetings relating to the issue
pertained to the re-evaluation of the original procedure, and Commissioner Chesson and Mr. Joe
Barr, superintendent of the Recreation Division, were assigned to review the May 21, 2007. The
May 21, 2007 procedure was revised and modified twice—August 2009 and April 2011, respectively.
The meetings in May and June of 2011 were canceled, therefore, no discussion or action transpired
regarding the recommended modification to the May 21, 2011 procedure. Basically, the
recommended modifications to the May 21, 2011 naming/renaming procedure were the elimination
in its entirety of the sub-committee process and the 30-day public notification process.

Commissioner Chesson made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Barker, to approve the April 13,
2011 modification to the naming/renaming of park sites, open space, and facilities. The motion was
carried.

3. Trails in Sweetwater Preserve

Commissioner Chesson, by way of PowerPoint presentation, pointed the trails in the original
section of the Sweetwater Preserve and the acres added in the Preserve. He commented that the
Preserve is absolutely fantastic wildlife habitat. Commissioner Chesson stated that the acquired
additional acres have no formal trail system, but have several informal trails, many of which are not
well sited and have places of extensive erosion. He showed the maps and photographs of the trail
areas affected by heavy erosion—his major concern. Commissioner Chesson “would like to
encourage planning for consolidation of trails in the new section of the Sweetwater Preserve,” and
would like staff to share with the Parks and Recreation Commission any plans for trail construction
or consolidation.

Dr. Payan commented that this item will be a future agenda item, and stated that several public
meetings have to be planned and conducted before the construction or consolidation plan is
developed.

4. Vandalism in Pima County Parks

Kerry Baldwin, manager of the Natural Resource Division, and George Kuck, manager of the
Operations/Maintenance Division, explained in detail the various strategies being used by the
agency to alleviate the constant theft (of wire and metal) and vandalism, including graffiti occurring
at Pima County parks, open space, and facilities and its impact on the NRPR budget. Mr. Baldwin
commented that the criminal acts are culturally, socially and economically motivated; that the
occurrence of theft and vandalism is a constant element that the agency has to deal with. One of the
various restorative strategies is the installation of surveillance cameras, which can be rotated, in high intensity vandalism/theft areas. The Pima County Finance and Risk Management Department pays for cameras on a monthly basis. The cameras, however, only cover a certain portion of the sites wherein they are installed. Gates Pass and the Yetman trail have to be physically opened and locked on a daily and nightly basis because there's no electricity in the area. The cost to contract the task is $37,000.

With respect to the loss of the Catalina Neighborhood Park’s playground due to fire, NRPR paid the $9000.00 deductible and Risk Management paid the remainder of the expense incurred for its replacement. In general, the Sheriff Department and the Tucson Police Department are actively monitoring the occurrence of the criminal acts at our county parks. Some arrests on felony charges have been made and restitution through the court has in some cases been made. Because of liability concerns, in addition to budgetary constraint, volunteer programs with regard to this issue have not been established.

5. Action: Approval/Ratification of the Henderson Property Master Plan

Dr. Payan stated that the Mary Henderson property was bequeathed to The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and TNC then asked The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum (ASDM) to consider the management/operation of the property. However, ASDM declined the offer, which gives the county an opportunity to acquire the land through the probate court process.

Dr. Payan presented the Henderson Property Master Plan to the Commission for their support and subsequent endorsement of the master plan for approval by the Board of Supervisors. The Henderson Property is slated for development as an extension and connection to Tucson Mountain Park and in the future, possibly, the Painted Hills area should that site be made accessible to public use. According to Dr. Payan, subject to approval by the Board of Supervisors of the master plan and securing right-of-way from adjacent privately-owned parcels, Pima County endeavors to adaptively re-use the Mary Henderson property purposely to preserve the natural vegetation found at this site, restore natural habitat that has previously been disturbed, potentially pursue the re-establishment of a wildlife corridor that connects the Painted Hills site, privately held parcels, and Tucson Mountain Park by mitigating hazards caused by Anklem Road by constructing an underpass that will enable wildlife, park visitors, and the areas of hydrology to move between the Henderson and the Painted Hills properties should that site become available, construct a pedestrian, equestrian, and mountain bike trails system, trailheads, and a staging area for vehicles, develop and install interpretive displays that detail the site’s history, and conserve the in situ Henderson Residence and, possibly, adaptively re-purposing the residential structure as an environmental education center, restroom, or park-related operations center ensuring that modifications utilize or reclaim previously disturbed sites or cause minimal disturbance of the existing natural landscape.

Dr. Payan stated that NRPR is negotiating with the property owners of the adjacent residential properties and the Starr Pass Homeowners Association to secure right-of-way for the location of a trail across their property.

Commissioner Catino made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Serna, (1) to approve the Henderson Property Master Plan as presented, including the trail network on the property, and to
endorse its ratification by the Board of Supervisors, and (2) to name the property as the Mary Henderson Desert Center. The motion was carried unanimously.

6. Special Project Presentation by Jessie Byrd of Tucson Cactus Succulent Society

Ms. Byrd, who also works as a landscape designer for NRPR, gave background information of the Tucson Cactus Succulent Society (TCSS), a 501©(3) not-for-profit educational institution dedicated to conserving, protecting, researching, studying, and learning about cacti and other succulent plants. TCSS conducts a number of educational activities throughout each year, reaching approximately 4000 children, also offering school grants for educational research projects and grants to teachers teaching about cacti and succulents. TCSS is composed of volunteers dedicated to the conservation of cacti and succulents and has contributed thousands of hours to the endeavor.

Ms. Byrd also gave an update on the improvements to the Pima Prickly Park (PPP), which is one of TCSS projects and administered by TCSS under a development, operation, and maintenance agreement. Ms. Byrd invited the Commissioners to walk through PPP, which is located immediately adjacent to the NRPR main office building, after the meeting. She also invited them to the anniversary event for PPP and TCSS Fund-raising Expo on Sunday, April 14, 2013. Revenue from the expo will be used to further develop PPP.

Ms. Byrd continued with her presentation relating to the landscaping project at the Pima County Cemetery. Ms. Byrd orchestrated the turning of the disheveled site into a place of peace and dignity for the 4000 people buried at the cemetery. A collection of plants from the NRPR’s Native Plant Nursery were planted and the irrigation system was completely refurbished. Ray Rizzo, a local artist, designed a sculpture for the cemetery. The project was financed by the Pima County Fiduciary Department. She announced that Channel 4 would interview her on Monday, May 15, 2013, regarding the cemetery.

Ms. Byrd is also involved in the Maeveen Marie Behan/Conservation Land System monument and trailhead landscaping project. With this project, she aims to provide a “high quality experience without hurting the knees” of the trailhead users. Scope includes installing of native trees, benches, a ramada, etc. The gateway entrance, designed by the GeoMedia Division staff, will have a portrait of Maeveen Marie Behan.

The Commissioners thanked Ms. Byrd for her outstanding job.

7. Commissioners Report

Commissioner Kellman commented that the March 15, 2013 Beat Cancer Boot Camp’s (BCBC) annual Challenge fund-raising event was a huge success. She mentioned that the BCBC is now operating in six other states. Las Vegas will be the seventh of nine BCBC sites and will open in September 2013.

Commissioner Catino stated that the March 26, 2013 dedication ceremony of the two softball fields at the Canoa Preserve Sports Complex was extremely successful. There was much fun to be had with the activities offered that day. He reported that the fields are already being used by little
league groups from Lakewood, Amado, Rio Rico, Green Valley, and Sahuarita. The BAJA group had a homerun contest and a three-inning scrimmage with Special Olympics.

Dr. Payan announced that the Commissioners in attendance, except for Commissioners Drzazgowski and Lundin (being Pima County employees) will receive a $20.00 reimbursement meeting expense effective April 12, 2013, in accordance with Pima County Administrative Procedure 22-12. The reimbursement is not retroactive.

NRPR Divisions Update Report

1. GeoMedia Division

Ms. Joy Mehulka, manager of NRPR’s GeoMedia Division, reported that 350 plus people attended the dedication ceremony for the Historic Hacienda de la Canoa held on March 2, 2013. She gave a recap on the building restoration efforts, and mentioned that the county administrator asked staff to prepare an estimate for the restoration project for consideration in the future bond. Coincidentally, Chair Johnson gave Ms. Mehulka a set of spurs as a donation to the Canoa Ranch collection.

Ms. Mehulka, on behalf of Mr. Robert Vaughn, manager of the Special Projects/Task Force Division, gave an overview on the conservation/renovation effort being done at the Curley Gym in Ajo, Arizona. Pima County Facilities Management is assisting with this project.

Commissioner Drzazgowski asked to be excused to go to another meeting and left at 10:58 a.m.

2. Natural Resources Division

Mr. Baldwin reported that Facilities Management provided funding for the Roy P. Drachman-Agua Caliente Park for the upgrade and complete re-roofing of the historic ranch building, the rose cottage house, and the cowboy barrack. The parking lot will also be upgraded. He mentioned that by July 2013, the operation and management of the A7 and M Diamond ranches may be transitioned to private ranchers.

3. Operations/Maintenance Division:

There was no discussion on the written report regarding Rillito Park, Canoa Preserve, Rillito River Park, and Catalina Neighborhood Park.

4. Planning Division:

There was no discussion on the written report regarding the Arizona Trail Canopy, Pantano River Park survey, and the outcome of the 36th Street trailhead public meeting.

5. Recreation Division

Mr. Barr mentioned the ongoing renovation of the community centers in partnership with the Pima County Facilities Management Department. The division purchased an inflatable pool toy Ghost Ship, funded through the Pima County Parklands Foundation. The Ghost Ship rotates amongst the
numerous county pools, and that the aquatics unit will offer free swim the funding of which was made possible through the generosity of the Pima County Parklands Foundation and the Knights of Pythias Tucson Lodge #9.

The Littletown Community Center hosted a regional basketball bonanza presented by the Arizona Parks and Recreation Association and the Phoenix Sun. On March 30, 2013, NRPR staff transported program participants and families to watch the 90-minute Phoenix Sun’s game in Phoenix. The event was an overwhelmingly positive experience for the players and their families, as well as for the staff.

Mr. Barr referred to the letter from the Kino Baseball League expressing the leagues gratitude and appreciation for the support and service of NRPR staff.

Call to the Public: No response.

Future Agenda Items

- Approval of the February 8, 2013 Minutes
- Approval of the April 12, 2013 Minutes
- Update on the Sweetwater Preserve trails
- Update on the Curley Gym (Ajo, Arizona) conservation/renovation project
- Curtis Indoor Basketball Gym
- Announcement of future dedication ceremony

Adjournment

Motioned and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.