



## PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES REGULAR MEETING



February 10, 2017

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 February 10, 2017.

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

Staff present were Chris Cawein, Robert Padilla, Linda Mayro, Director, Office of Sustainability and Conservation(OSC), Julia Fonseca, Environment Planning Manager, OSC, George Kuck, Steve Anderson, Valerie Samoy, Joe Barr, Elisabeth Van der Leeuw, Wendy Burroughs, Jason Ground, Communications Office, Robin Hadden and Ann Khambholja.

Those present recited the pledge of allegiance.

### Consent Agenda

A motion was made and seconded to approve the January 13, 2017 minutes. The motion passed.

### COMMISSION DISCUSSION/ACTION REQUEST

Informational status report and update on the Section 10 permitting development and implementation (Linda Mayro, Office of Sustainability and Conservation): Ms. Mayro introduced herself to the commission and informed the commissioners about her office, which manages issues regarding sustainability, conservation and historic preservation. She informed them about the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP) and the Multi-species Conservation Plan that is a local plan for balancing the conservation and protection of Pima County's heritage with an effort to maintain an economically vigorous community. Ms. Mayro informed them that in 1997, the Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy Owl was listed as endangered under the Endangered Special Act (ESA), hence there were several conflicts involving land use. In response to that, the county engendered the SDCP, working with a steering committee of over 80 people, the community and scientists as well. In 2002, the Board of Supervisors adopted the plan and updated the county's comprehensive land use plan by integrating it with the SDCP to allow for a better approach to conservation while allowing for development as well. The SDCP identified riparian areas, critical habitat, mountain parks and cultural resource areas as ways to achieve a landscape level conservation network. She informed them that in 1997 and 2004, county voters approved bonds allowing for acquisition of open space land. She informed them that the OSC works very closely with NRPR and the Flood Control District in managing those lands.

Ms. Julia Fonseca spoke next and gave a presentation about the Section 10 permit which is a federal permit that provides a more effective way of complying with the ESA. The SDCP is a local plan that was developed after over 400 public meetings, scientific studies and working with several jurisdictions including RFCD, the Tohono O'odham Nation, US Fish and Wildlife, the City of Tucson

and several others. She informed them that this permit allows development where covered species are present while promoting the long-term conservation of species using certain open space lands. She informed them that several other counties have section 10 permits as well. Commissioner Alexander asked why Orange County had a duration of 75 years as compared to 30 years for most of the others. Ms. Fonseca informed him that at the beginning of the program, some believed that it was best to go as long-term as possible. It also depends on the acreage and economic costs. She added that it was also hard to plan for 75 years. Ms. Fonseca also informed them that County-owned mitigation land is not protected against incompatible uses via restrictive covenants and that the Board of Supervisors has recently designated these lands as County Parks. Commissioner Johnson thanked Ms. Fonseca. There were no other questions. Mr. Padilla commented that NRPR has requested a supplemental budget request for implementation of the Section 10 permit and asked for the commissioners' support in urging their board members to fund it. Ms. Mayro also mentioned that OSC had a supplemental budget request for ecological monitoring, as they do not have adequate staff to do so. Chair Lundin thanked staff for their input.

Informal update regarding the call for nominations for the Chuck Catino Volunteer Award: Mr. Cawein informed the commission that NRPR received only one nominee for the award that was submitted by Mr. Steve Anderson for Mr. Bill Adamson. Mr. Cawein informed them that Mr. Adamson was a well qualified candidate for the award and put forward that recommendation for the commission's consideration. He asked Ms. Valerie Samoy to inform the commission about the process involved in getting the word out about submittals for the award. Ms. Samoy informed the commission that the Communications Office sent out a press release to all the news media, but it was up to them to publish it. It was featured in the Green Valley, Sahuarita, Nogales and Marana news sites, the Pima County newsletter and on social media. She was told it had also been published in the Star. She also informed the commissioners that when she received the only nomination, she targeted other volunteer groups. Some of the comments were that the fund raising criteria was hard to meet, along with the minimum age limit of 55+. Commissioner Johnson asked about Mr. Adamson's age and she was told he met the criteria. Mr. Cawein said that maybe the criteria should be modified so that the pool of applicants could be wider. Chair Lundin mentioned that the goal of 55+ was because much was done for youth volunteers and this was to keep it for more of the adult community. Chair Lundin reminded the commission they had two motions to consider: the first to change the leadership award criteria and second, to approve Bill Adamson to receive the Chuck Catino award.

Commissioner Serna moved to remove the criteria to raise funds and lower the age limit to 45+ years. Commissioner Marohn seconded it. Commissioner Johnson moved to accept the nomination of Mr. Bill Adamson for the Chuck Catino Community Leadership Award and was seconded by Commissioner Marohn. All were in favor.

Informational update on Mike Jacob Sportspark (Chris Cawein): Mr. Cawein informed the commission that the contract for the league and tournament operator and concessions area ended December 31, 2016. The Board of Supervisors offered a six-month extension, however the operator declined. One of the conditions submitted to the Board to not consider the extension was the safety condition of the premises. Some examples of safety risks were the pole holding up the safety net between the softball court and the volleyball court falling onto one of the courts where kids and young adults were playing a few minutes earlier; a leak in the gas line which posed problems to repair due to the way it was routed; and an electrical fire which occurred in the office, though the Fire Department could not ascertain the cause. These issues were submitted to the Board stating that due to the conditions of the premises NRPR needed to move forward with cessation of the existing contract at the site and try to reinvest some money. Due to the expansion of the Ina Road interchange, ADOT required some land in the area and gave the County 1.44 million for it. Thus,

NRPR approached the Board and received approval to spend one million on refurbishing the site. Since January, NRPR has been evaluating the site and moving forward. During Phase 1, the gas line is in the process of being replaced, an electrical audit has been completed and NRPR is presently doing a structural analysis of the poles. With some mitigation, Mr. Cawein said he feels confident that the park could be opened up safely fairly soon. In the Phase 2 study, NRPR will perform a full facility audit, including the pubs, bleachers, netting and other safety issues on the site. Mr. Cawein reiterated that it was a very unique site with six softball fields, four sand volleyball courts – the largest in the region – and while this is going on, allow some limited play. He informed them that there were some interested parties who had approached NRPR for sand volleyball activities as well. He also informed them that probably in summer, after the Phase 2 study is over, NRPR could complete other improvements the Board has authorized, with the probability of reopening the facility in fall despite the ongoing freeway issues. Mr. Cawein also informed them that NRPR hopes to be bidding out for a new unitary operator. However that will be contingent on how the repairs progress and the interest shown. In the interim, NRPR will issue special use permits to allow play there and have tournaments and leagues on a limited basis. Commissioner Johnson asked about the two pubs, whether they sold beer, and was it necessary to have two. Mr. Cawein informed her that the concessions vendor sells beer out of both pubs. During this period of limited play he has indicated that he is willing to work with NRPR in operating concessions. However, all these decisions will be made later. Mr. Cawein indicated that the community wanted the site reopened as soon as possible and that it is what NRPR is striving to do. There were no more questions.

Informational update on Rillito Racing (Chris Cawein): Mr. Cawein informed the commission that racing was beginning on Saturday, February 11, 2017, and that the Board had approved an amendment to the contract to allow racing to continue until 2021 with certain conditions attached. Mr. Cawein also informed them that they had received a million dollar grant from the Bert W. Martin Foundation, which will be invested in the site. The exact improvements have been left to NRPR to work out between soccer and racing. Most of the investment the foundation wants to do is associated with the clubhouse, grandstand and other racing facilities. Mr. Warden also indicated that that is what the money was intended for. The Board has authorized upto 16 racing dates annually. Commissioner Johnson asked whether the grant was County money. Mr. Cawein informed her that the contract allows that it will be incrementally distributed and placed into a special revenue account that the County will hold. NRPR will use County approved contractors to construct the agreed upon improvements. As owners of the park, NRPR will be significantly involved in the process. Mr. Cawein informed them that he would keep them updated. Commissioner Johnson asked if there were any conflicts from soccer and was informed that both entities are trying to work it out and that NRPR's goal is to implement the wishes of the Board who wants it to be a multipurpose site. He informed them that there are multiple sports and special events at the site.

Informational update for Natural Resources Division (Wendy Burroughs): Ms. Burroughs, the Environmental Education Program manager gave the commission a brief summary of the program. She informed them that this February marked a 15-year milestone for the environmental education (EE) program. The EE program was created shortly after the Natural Resources Division was established. It was initially developed to provide educational outreach for the SDCP. Ms. Burroughs was initially tasked with providing educational outreach mainly to youth and their first tasks were getting kids out into the Sonoran Desert and NRPR's parks. Today, EE has four full time and four part-time educators. Over the last two months, 4,500 people have participated in their programs. Commissioner Johnson asked whether these were only children, and was informed that there were programs for all ages. She informed them that they have park interpretive programs and outdoor programs. The most popular are the birding walks and EE is now offering regular guided birding walks in ten of NRPR's parks. She also informed them that EE has a great network of volunteers to

help staff. These are held at Agua Caliente, Cienega Preserve, Sweetwater Preserve, Feliz Paseos and other areas. EE also does some seasonal wildlife viewing activities like the bats at the bridge over the Rillito River, butterflies and dragonflies at Agua Caliente. There are also thematic hikes like cactus and wildflower hikes. These also serve to introduce the community to our parks and trails. The hikes consist of small groups not exceeding 15 persons. Ms. Burroughs emphasized this to show that the participation of 4500 people in groups of that size indicates the number of programs necessary to reach that number. Another program is workshops for adults, like cooking with mesquite or harvesting cholla buds. These are typically longer and last for 3-4 hours. EE did a natural wreath-making program for families as well. These programs are very popular, but they need extensive prep-time to prepare for. Ms. Burroughs also contacted the Tucson Plein Air Painters Society and worked out a series called 'Paint out in the Parks' which is usually held once a month in one of the parks. This also helps the community, brings awareness to the organization and users to our parks. She informed the commission that NRPR has an art gallery at Agua Caliente and they host exhibits that change out every month. EE has added photography as well and will have three workshops to help people learn about nature photography, for travel, wildlife and night sky photography. These programs are run through the ActiveNet online registration system and NRPR collects the fees, while the photographers are the instructors for the program, thus it does not take up staff time. EE also host tours, exhibits and lectures like the history lecture at Agua Caliente are very popular. She mentioned that the 4500 person count did not include the tours at Canoa Ranch. There are also programs for social clubs and civic groups as well. Ms. Burroughs mentioned that sometimes it is harder now than it was 15 years ago to get word out about the programs in spite of social media. Commissioner Alexander asked where he could find the information on Facebook and was told it was under Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation. He then commented that all the activities listed in the brochure were not listed. Ms. Burroughs informed him that every event was not listed due to time constraints. She told them that besides Facebook, Pima County FYI newsletter highlights one event which links to the EE calendar page which then allows people to see all that is going on. Commissioner Alexander noted that The Loop did not have a Facebook page originally and he created one on his own, and now that the County has its own, they complement each other. He also suggested other social platforms like Instagram which could be used to get the word out. Ms. Burroughs agreed with him and said it was useful.

Ms. Burroughs informed the commission that 460 students participated in the school programs and these have expanded as well. EE does programs along the Santa Cruz River as part of Living River of Words, the youth poetry and art contest where about 900 students participated. The celebration will be on April 8, 2017. EE is also expanding their field study trips with different school districts. There is a pollinator program and EE is partnering with the native plant nursery at Prickly Park for kids to look at different pollinators and learn about propagation. EE is also running some programs at the Desert Discovery Center in Tucson Mountain Park. Commissioner Johnson commended Ms. Burroughs on the great job she is doing.

Chair Lundin asked to table the informational update for the Planning division and include it in the next meeting agenda due to lack of a quorum.

#### DIVISION UPDATE REPORTS:

There were no reports.

**CALL TO THE PUBLIC:** Mr. Jason Ground from the Communications office informed the commission that their office is launching a new feature as part of Pima County FYI, where every other week a feature on different boards, commissions and committees to highlight the citizen government aspect. This would let people know who the commission members are and why they have made this commitment to lend their expertise to benefit the community.

He requested that Chair Lundin take some time after the meeting to answer some of his questions. He commended Ms. Burroughs for making his job easier with her programs.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEM(S):

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