



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION MINUTES
January 6, 2012

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



Quorum having been established, the Chair called the study session to order at 9:13 a.m. (instead of 10:13 a.m.) Upon roll call, those present were as follows: Jan Johnson (Chair), Anita Kellman (Vice Chair), Richard Barker (Secretary), Chuck Catino, Tom Drzazgowski, and Judith Meyer; Commissioner Victor Rivera was absent. Staff present were Rafael Payan, Kerry Baldwin, and Ann Khambholja. Nicole Fyffe, executive assistant to the county administrator, was also present. Becky Pallack from the *Arizona Daily Star* attended the study session. Those present recited the pledge of allegiance. Commissioner Jim Mazzocco arrived a few minutes later.

Agenda Item C.1: Corrected the date to December 9, 2011 (instead of February 4, 2011). Action on the December 9, 2011 minutes was deferred. The regular and study session minutes shall be agendized for action at regular meetings only.

Study session notes:

Agenda Item D.1: Natural Resources

Ms. Johnson suggested Kerry Baldwin first talk about the park rules revisions to acquaint new commissioners as to why the revisions are being made. Ms. Meyer suggested that the item be placed at the next meeting agenda to avoid the consequence of violating the open meeting laws. Mr. Payan agreed with Ms. Meyer's suggestion and explained importance of stating specific agenda items for discussion/action by the commission on the commission meeting agenda to avoid violation of the Arizona's Open Meeting Law.

Ms. Johnson suggested changing the division report format. That is, not to include the detailed information on the agenda itself. Commissioner Rivera was not present and has previously voiced his desire to not include detailed information on the agenda that is restated at the commission meetings. The majority of the commissioners, however, decided to retain the current agenda format.

Mr. Baldwin commented that he didn't know which specific natural resource information the commission would like to discuss in this study session. This was a good example of why a detailed agenda is advantageous. Ms. Johnson stated that at the last commission meeting a question about the open space acquisition was brought out. Mr. Baldwin suggested starting the discussion on the Conservation Acquisition Commission (CAC), which has the overall responsibility over the open space acquisition program, which Ms. Fyffe administers. Ms. Fyffe also administers the Bond Advisory Committee (BAC).

Ms. Fyffe gave a recap on the appointments, representation, and the roles and responsibilities of the 11-member CAC. She stated that the Parks and Recreation Commission has a permanent position on the CAC. The CAC used to meet monthly when the county was actively acquiring properties. The CAC currently meets at least quarterly because of limited 2004 bond fund balance. The CAC basically reviews which properties are to be acquired and makes recommendation to the board of supervisors as whether or not to pursue the acquisition. The CAC's discussion is not limited to acquisitions. Ms. Fyffe added that every six months under the direction of the county administrator, county staff have to notify

the committee and the board of supervisors on the status of implementation of the conservation bond program features and also if there are recommended amendments to the bond implementation plan.

According to Ms. Fyffe, the BAC has been around since the 1997 bond election. Membership to the BAC was expanded between 2004 and 2006. Recently, the BAC has been considering a 2013 bond election. Ms. Fyffe reviewed the tentatively approved bond project recommendations, which include developed recreational park projects. During its most recent meetings, the BAC and the county administrator discussed economic development and transportation-related improvements south of Tucson between Raytheon, Tucson International Airport, the University of Arizona (UA) Technology Park, and the proposed UA Bio-Science Complex. Some BAC members proposed that the 2013 bond election focus on just the transportation improvement component and not the larger bond package. This issue is under consideration by the county administrator.

Mr. Mazzocco inquired about maps for open space lands acquired by Pima County. Ms. Fyffe said the current map shows the biologically important areas in the county being considered for conservation. She added that during the 2004 bond election the Arizona Land & Water Trust (used to be the Arizona Open Land Trust) and the Nature Conservancy worked to identify and prioritize the lands that needed to be conserved first and to highlight those that were not yet conserved. Mr. Baldwin provided a map and Ms. Fyffe said that the green areas are within the conservation land system and the white areas are outside the conservation land system. In response to Mr. Mazzocco, Ms. Fyffe stated that a balanced process is applied in the land acquisition prioritization process. Mr. Mazzocco stated that SB 1598, which was initiated in 2011, requires all the jurisdictions within the state of Arizona to identify incompatible land uses in their comprehensive planning process. Mr. Mazzocco inquired as to how the county would deal with the impact of SB 1598 on Pima County's comprehensive plan, open space acquisition, conservation properties/planning, and incompatible uses. Mr. Payan stated that staff could not provide the answers to his inquiry at that time. Mr. Baldwin stated that the county has a tremendous mapping system analyzing property acquisition, etc. In regard to the incompatible uses, Mr. Baldwin said that Mr. Mazzocco's concerns about rock and mineral elements in open space land acquisition are zoning issues. Mr. Baldwin continued that the county uses the Arizona Geologic Survey map showing the rock and mineral elements when analyzing properties for potential acquisition. SB 1598 will be an agenda item at a future regular commission meeting.

Ms. Meyer asked if the commission was involved in identifying lands for open space acquisition. Ms. Fyffe stated that to her knowledge, the commission hasn't played such a role, but has taken the advisory role. She said that prior to the 2004 bond election the seven-member Conservation Bond Advisory Committee recommended the lands to be included for purchase in the 2004 bond election. Mr. Baldwin mentioned that the lands that are eligible for acquisition are not necessarily being identified as property specific; that their significance are based on the analysis of biological potentials. He continued that besides the eligible 2004 conservation acquisition bond elements, there are the community open space recommendations, which tend to be generated by the community and include properties such as the Sweetwater Preserve, the Kino/36th Street, etc. The community open space properties that are acquired are more focused at a property level. He cited that Rosemont was not in the original authorized habitat zone. The effort to amend the bond to include Rosemont prior to its acquisition failed.

Mr. Catino inquired about (a) the two projects that the county administrator put together and (b) the BAC and the board of supervisors proposed to move forward separately this year. Ms. Fyffe said that

discussion is still open; that the county administrator supports aggregating them together with other requests.

Mr. Drzazgowski commented that the \$110 million for economic development such as roadway incorporating Raytheon is really appropriate. Ms. Fyffe agreed.

Mr. Baldwin stated that of the \$164 million originally on the 2004 bond for open space acquisition, \$9 million have been expended. To date, the 1985, 1997, 2004, 2005 bonds have acquired approximately 270,000 acres of open space. Those properties are being administered by NRPR under the conservation program. Mr. Baldwin stated that the Pima County Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan is the framework upon which the land acquisition is built from. There are two elements considered as important: First, through effective land use planning and management of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP), Pima County can control growth for the county and through controlled growth, taxes can be limited and sustainable quality of life can be promoted. It is preferred to force development into the core of the metro Tucson area, rather than creating smaller remotely located developments. Second, Mr. Baldwin added that because of the diversity of environments in Pima County, the county is exposed to the potential of negatively impacting endangered species in the future. As the subset to the SDCP, the multi-species conservation plan (aka: US Fish and Wildlife Services Section 10 Permit) was created to mitigate endangered species issues by notifying the US Fish and Wildlife Services of Pima County's potential future impacts on wildlife. With this advanced notification, Pima County will be protected under the Endangered Species Act. Under the multi-species conservation plan, development of acquired open space properties become "permanently" conserved mitigation lands that offset future development impacts.

Under the SDCP, Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation expanded its name and role from Pima County Parks and Recreation (PCPR) to Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation (NRPR). There have been other models around the country where the open space natural resources have been embedded with the urban parks system into a cohesive unit.

Mr. Baldwin distributed to the commissioners a copy of pages 18-23, pages 26-27, pages 156-159, and pages 167-168 of the report Protecting Our Land, Water and Heritage: Pima County's Voter-Supported Conservation Efforts (February 2011). It is a summary of the 2004 bond program that showcases the acquisitions that are the foundation of NRPR's natural resources programs. Many of the acquired open space properties are working ranches, such as the 42,000-acre A7 Ranch, of which about 7,000 acres is owned by Pima County, the rest is managed under a state grazing lease. Other examples include the 14,000-acre 6-Bar Ranch, the 30,000-acre Rancho Seco, and the 30,000-acre Diamond Bell Ranch. Mr. Baldwin mentioned that the county can't afford to operate all of its ranches, thus there are operating/management agreements with the previous owners of the working ranches to provide maintenance. He explained how the ranches are being managed to provide water to livestock, road maintenance, fencing, etc., and in keeping the ranches open to the public for recreational purposes where suitable. The county provides enhancement projects necessary under the SDCP. There are concerns about drug trafficking and illegal aliens crossing through the ranches, especially at Rancho Seco. Mr. Baldwin further stated that NRPR is committed to maintaining working landscapes in Pima County under the SDCP. The public may obtain a limited special permit from NRPR to access open space county properties for recreational purposes where suitable such as the Cienega Creek Preserve. Mr. Baldwin encouraged the commissioners to visit the NRPR Website to obtain additional natural resource information.

Mr. Baldwin also mentioned that the first segment of the more than 19,000-acre Marley Ranch has been acquired, and two additional parcels are being processed for acquisition to complete the overall acquisition of the ranch. Approximately \$80 million is slated for this purpose in the next bond election.

NRPR will establish a director's bond advisory team to periodically meet and discuss operational and procedural elements on how to manage large land masses, to better understand and provide insight on the ranching industry needs, to monitor biological resources, provide wildlife management, etc. Mr. Baldwin stated that, as a result of an economic analysis, the average household in Tucson is paying \$1.36 a month for open space acquisition.

Mr. Baldwin told the commission that NRPR will bring management issues to them so the commissioners can interact with the district supervisor they represent to provide support to NRPR. Mr. Baldwin also reminded the commissioners to contact him to arrange individual tour of open space lands such as the Canoa Ranch.

Mr. Catino's comment towards Mr. Baldwin: "I can't believe how much you know and how nicely you put it so people can understand it in layman's term, and that's why we need study sessions for." Other commissioners concurred with Mr. Catino's comment.

Mr. Baldwin reminded the commissioners that it is critical for them to submit their comments to him regarding the proposed changes to the current park rules. The Sheriff's Office and the County Attorney's Office are still reviewing the language of the proposed park rules changes. A formal review draft will be presented to the commission at a later date.

Agenda Item D.2: Parks and Recreation Commission recommendations on organization's role, structure, and process:

The study session and regular meeting schedule will be followed as presented.

Future study sessions may be broken down by focus on the following divisions: (1) Carlo DiPilato and Steve Anderson--combined: master planning and bond discussions; (2) George Kuck—urban parks operation/maintenance; (3) Joe Barr—recreation programs/activities; (4) Joy Mehulka and Wendy Burroughs—combined: geo-media and environmental education/interpretation); (5) possibly Bill Roe and Larry Hecker—open space acquisition and future bond election.

Mr. Payan suggested combining the regular meeting and the study session in a scheduled meeting appropriating specific time for each session. Chair Johnson and Mr. Payan shall meet in the future prior to each Parks and Recreation Commission meeting to determine if the meeting will be a study session, regular meeting, or a combination of both wherein the agenda would have a time certain component. Future meeting venues will be NRPR HQ and other Pima County properties. All agendas irrespective of being a regular session or study session shall include a "Call to the Public" item.

The February 3, 2012 regular meeting will be held at NRPR; the March 2, 2012 study session will be held in Green Valley, possibly in the Green Valley Chamber of Commerce or the Green Valley Library meeting room. The commissioners will be provided a site tour of Canoa Ranch during the study session recess or after the study session meeting.

Agenda Item E.1: Future Agenda item(s):

To legally clarify the concerns about how a study session is conducted in Arizona government, Karen Friar, civil deputy county attorney, will be invited to the February 3, 2011 regular commission meeting to explain the provisions of the Arizona Open Meeting Law.

Agenda Item F: Call to the Public: No public comment.

Agenda Item G: Adjournment: The study session adjourned at 11:08 a.m.