

Parks and Recreation Board  
Meeting Minutes

The Parks and Recreation Board of the City of Mesa met in a regular meeting at the Parks and Recreation Administration Office, 100 North Center Street, on January 8, 2004.

Members Present:

LeRoy Brady  
Robert Brinton  
John Dyer  
Russ Gillard  
Dina Lopez  
Walter "Bud" Page, Jr.  
David Richins  
John Storment  
Robin White

Staff Present:

Tim Barnard  
Sue Deck  
Joe Holmwood  
Andrea Madonna  
Terri Palmberg  
Diane Rogers  
Gordon Sheffield  
Bob White  
Paul Widman

Members Absent:

Jeff Kirk, unexcused  
David Peterson, excused

The meeting was called to order at 12:08 p.m. by Robin White, Chair.

**Approval of minutes**

David Richins said the last sentence of the paragraph under "Riverview development" should be deleted from the record.

David Richins made a motion, John Storment seconded, and it was unanimously carried to approve the minutes from the meeting of November 13, 2003, as amended.

**Public comments**

No public comments.

**Approval of communication towers**

Gordon Sheffield, Senior Planner, reported that in February 1997, the Parks and Recreation Board reviewed guidelines prepared by the Planning Division that proposed to regulate the placement of commercial communication towers throughout the city. These guidelines were adopted by Council resolution in May 1997. Copies of the guidelines were distributed to Board members.

The guidelines state that the location of stand alone communication towers would not generally be permitted in City parks; however, the Parks Board could consider proposals to co-locate communications equipment on athletic field lights provided the equipment did not interfere with the function of the lights and/or detract from the overall park aesthetics.

Many of the carriers have constructed communication towers at City of Mesa fire stations. The City gets a lease revenue from these towers. The City also works with Mesa Public Schools concerning communication towers on school athletic field lighting poles.

The competition among cell phone companies to locate adequate cell towers to provide the required coverage has increased the interest in park sites that do not have athletic field lighting. When the Board originally approved the existing procedure, park aesthetics and neighbor concerns were the primary reasons for adopting the process. Because new designs for communication towers, such as faux palm and pine trees are available that can be blended into the natural landscape, staff believes further flexibility in the guidelines is warranted.

Language would be added to the current guidelines that would allow consideration to be given to communication towers in urban park settings where the towers are camouflaged as trees, shrubs, or rocks that blend into the natural landscape.

Staff is requesting the Board's concurrence to allow for administrative review and approval of proposals that meet the stated guidelines. This would enable staff to respond to requests in a more timely manner and improve overall customer service. Appeals to staff's decisions would come before the Parks Board.

Robert Brinton asked if an enterprise fund could be created for the revenue received.

Joe Holmwood replied that the formation of an enterprise fund has been discussed, but currently the revenue goes into the City's General Fund.

Brinton said he believes that if communication towers are located in parks, the revenue should benefit the parks.

Robin White said parks and recreation needs to be protected and revenue should remain with parks and recreation.

Sheffield said some of the sites were given to the City of Mesa by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and negates the City as a recipient of any revenues.

Storment said if a communication tower is established in such a park, the park should get a share, if not all, of the revenue.

Richins suggested that rather than sacrifice the integrity of our parks with these poles, other locations could be used rather than parks.

Brinton said the towers are going to be built; the City needs to determine where.

John Dyer said we live in an age of technology so towers will be built. He would prefer that they be in parks rather than residential areas and that the City get the revenue.

Richins asked about the neighborhood notification process if a cell tower is to be located within a neighborhood.

Sheffield replied that neighbors within 150 feet of the proposed towers are notified and, in some cases, 300 feet. Installation requires a Special Use Permit, which is approved by the City of Mesa Board of Adjustments.

Russ Gillard asked what other Valley cities are doing about requests for communication towers.

Sheffield replied that Phoenix does not allow towers in parks; they are co-located on athletic facilities.

Bud Page asked about contaminants coming out of the cell tower units.

Sheffield said a concern of microwaves is that they may cause health problems. Research has shown that a person has to be in close proximity with the antenna. An installation cannot be denied because of health concerns

It was the consensus of the Board that Sheffield return to a future Board meeting with additional information on what parks have potential as cell tower locations, as well as sample language that might be included in updated communication tower guidelines.

Storment requested that Sheffield provide data on the total number of communication towers currently in Mesa and the revenue generated by those towers.

Gillard asked if more requests would be received by Mesa if towers are allowed in parks since other Valley cities do not allow it.

Sheffield said it depends on geographics; how many users a company has.

LeRoy Brady said when a company is required to co-locate, the other organization should have the structure already in place.

Sheffield indicated that he would come back within more details at a future Board meeting.

### **Fee adjustments**

Robin White thanked Brady, Gillard, Page, and Dyer for serving on the fees and charges subcommittee.

Bob White reported that annually the City requires a full review of all fees and charges that are ultimately approved by the City Council. It has been particularly important in the last year because of the City's financial situation and because of the directive from Council to adjust adult softball fees to recover 100% of the costs. The Parks and Recreation Division begins its review process in late October and establishes a subcommittee with Board-appointed members. The subcommittee works with staff to conduct a detailed review of fees.

Staff received preliminary background data on all fees, including the survey data from other municipalities, and reviewed and discussed the information on December 23, 2003. The subcommittee met again on December 30, 2003 to review the information that would be provided at the Board meeting.

The following programs and service and facility fee areas are being recommended for fee adjustments: Adaptive Leisure; Aquatics, Field Supervision; Recreation Centers/Gymnasiums; Special Events; Sports Field Use; Sports Leagues; Tennis; and Volleyball (Sand).

Bob White advised that the City Council gave direction last year that the adult softball and basketball programs should have 100% cost recovery, so staff will further review those fees to ensure they meet that goal.

Brinton asked that the subcommittee consider an additional fee for sports tournaments that require participants to stay in cities other than Mesa. If an outside group rents a Mesa sports

field, it should be determined if the event sponsors have any stipulations for the participants to have accommodations outside of Mesa.

Dyer said the additional fee should pertain to major tournaments, not weekend use. The group has to provide a certificate of insurance, so that may be one way to determine if an additional fee is charged for field rental.

Dyer requested that the subcommittee also look at youth teams and specific seasons. Allowances for earlier practices should be considered.

Bob White said the subcommittee will meet on January 20, 2004 to prepare the final proposal for the February Board meeting and will discuss these suggestions.

Storment asked about the increases in the aquatics fees.

Terri Palmberg said last year the fee was raised only for pools with amenities. Fees were raised this year to be in line with other communities' aquatics fees and to increase the percentage of cost recovery.

Storment asked about programs that are self-sustaining.

Palmberg replied that most adult special interest programs are self-sustaining, with the exception of the team sports area, which is in the process of becoming self-sustaining.

Holmwood said adult softball and basketball were the programs that City Council requested be 100% self-supporting.

Dyer said the City needs to be careful to not overprice classes and programs.

### **Riverview at Dobson project**

Andrea Madonna reported that the City of Mesa has been working for the last several years to bring an economic development project to the northwest area of the city. A proposal being considered by City management and a development group is a retail project to be built on the vacant Hurley property on the west side of Dobson Road adjacent to and including portions of Riverview Park.

The negotiations include the City selling the land with the four-diamond softball complex and a portion of the adjacent parking lot at Riverview Park to the developer for use in the retail project. These facilities at Riverview Park were developed with a federal grant from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Projects funded through LWCF are protected in perpetuity from being converted to non-recreation uses unless replacement recreation facilities of at least equal appraised value are substituted.

To comply with these LWCF conversion requirements and to continue to meet residents' recreational needs, the City will require that the developer rebuild the four-diamond softball complex on land currently owned by the City. The site proposed for the ballfield relocation is to the west of Riverview Golf Course partially on the old VORTAC site and partially on City-owned land previously targeted for expansion of Riverview Golf Course. The new facilities will include the replacement four-diamond softball complex, a control building, and 250 parking spaces. Due to the current scope and schedule for the retail project development, it is likely that there

could be a delay between when the Riverview ballfields are taken out of commission and when the new ballfields are ready for play.

The LWCF conversion regulations also require that the additional parkland be purchased to replace the land lost to development. The developer must provide at least the same amount of land that is displaced. There would be approximately 28 acres lost that must be replaced. The City is currently negotiating with the developer for approximately 44 acres of replacement land between Brown Road and 8<sup>th</sup> Street, on the west side of Alma School Road. This site falls within an identified Parks and Recreation Master Plan target site for a community and/or metro park in west Mesa.

The Riverview at Dobson retail project is still in the development phase. City management continues to negotiate the detail for the development agreement and staff are hopeful an agreement can be signed. More information will be presented to the Board for review and comment when the project scope has been completed.

Robin White asked if the development affects Riverview Golf Course or the southern part of Riverview Park.

Madonna replied that the existing golf course is not affected, just the plans for future development.

Holmwood said the area of Riverview Park where the lake is located would not be affected and the soccer fields would also remain. The north half of the parking lot, though, will be affected.

Palmberg said the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) should be contacted about sports fields next to the freeway since there could be a problem with the lights.

Dina Lopez said she has received several emails concerning this project and there is a lack of support from the neighborhood.

Richins said he lives in the neighborhood near the proposed development and has worked with the development group on several issues. He believes the company is not listening to the neighborhood and their concerns. The neighborhood has taken steps to retain their own architect to develop a design to address their concerns. The neighborhood also looked at retention basins that will be required in the development to determine if soccer fields could be created. The neighborhood has become frustrated.

Richins asked about language in the master plan.

Holmwood replied that the master plan identifies target areas and this area is identified as a location for a community- or metro-size park. He asked if the neighborhood is supportive of establishing a new park in the area.

Richins replied that the neighborhood is very supportive. He asked that the Board consider the cost of moving the ballfields.

Holmwood said the original plan for Riverview Golf Course was to build an additional nine holes sometime in the future. That changed because of the encroachment of the water treatment plant. The plan then was for a junior-size golf training area.

Storment requested information about the amount of land that will remain after the development of the replacement softball fields is completed.

Holmwood replied that staff will follow up on that request.

Brady expressed concern about the relationship the new ballfields will have to the Riverview Park neighborhood. He indicated that there is no connection with the neighborhood.

Richins said there will be no playground amenities at the replacement site, which families use during games at the current ballfields.

Brady suggested that the southeast corner of the golf course be utilized for the replacement softball complex, which would maintain the relationship with the ballfields and the park. Also there would be a neighborhood relationship with the park and fewer problems with lighting and the freeway. He asked if the Board can be involved in the approval of this development.

Richins said he has learned that the developer is paying for moving the ballfields. However, they are asking the City for \$14 million in tax subsidy to do the project so, in reality, the City will be paying for the move. Also, there is no guarantee that development will occur on the east side of Dobson Road.

Gillard asked if there is a plan in place for league play if there is a delay in shutting down the existing ballfields and opening the new ballfields.

Holmwood replied that once the development plans and time schedules are more precise, a plan will be prepared by staff.

Richins requested that information be brought back to the Board on the feasibility of lighting the fields.

### **Meetings and/or events attended**

Richins reported that he recently went on a ride along with a Mesa Park Ranger. It was an outstanding experience. He asked about the possibility of having a concessionaire at the Reed Skate Park.

Palmberg replied that staff has looked at that issue, but there is a local business across the street who has better prices than a concessionaire can offer. The youth at the skate park go to that business on a consistent basis.

Gillard reported that he has been in contact with the H&R Block Foundation regarding a Cancer Survivors Park. They will fund the construction plus provide ongoing maintenance cost. He will continue discussions with the Foundation. If it is a successful effort, the H&R Block Foundation will be asked to place the funding with the Foundation for Mesa Parks and Recreation, which is a 501(c)(3) organization.

### **Director replacement**

Holmwood distributed information on the rotating process being used to provide coverage for the vacant Parks and Recreation Director position. The process begins January 12, 2004.

Criteria was developed and interviews conducted. Four staff meet the qualifications and each will serve for three months as Acting Parks and Recreation Director. At the end of the 12-month period, the City will go through the usual recruitment process.

Staff who will serve as Acting Parks and Recreation Director are Bob White, Mark Woodward, Rhett Evans, and Terri Palmberg. White is first in the rotation.

The same TAD process was used to fill the positions of these four staff members and the positions of those staff will be filled also. The succession planning is a domino effect, with positions being temporarily filled as staff move into new temporary positions.

Robin White asked why the Centennial Center is considered part of Parks and Recreation.

Holmwood replied that the Centennial Center was included in the mix because an organizational option being considered for the immediate future is to roll the Centennial Center into the Parks and Recreation Division organizational structure.

### **Other Business**

Storment said speaking on behalf of the Board, he wanted to recognize and thank Holmwood for his efforts and dedication as Parks and Recreation Director for the past 17 years.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 1:36 p.m.