



COUNCIL MINUTES

February 11, 2003

The City Council of the City of Mesa met in a joint meeting with the Dobson Ranch Homeowners' Association Board of Directors at the Neighbors Garden Cafe, 2740 S. Alma School Rd., Suite 13, on February 11, 2003 at 7:30 a.m.

COUNCIL PRESENT

Mayor Keno Hawker
Kyle Jones
Dennis Kavanaugh
Janie Thom
Claudia Walters
Mike Whalen

COUNCIL ABSENT

Rex Griswold

STAFF PRESENT

Mike Hutchinson
Dan Cleavenger
Debra Dollar
Sandra Driscoll
Don Flavell
Lenny Hulme
Barbara Jones
Saul Larsen
Frank Mizner
Eric Norenberg
Paul Wenbert
David Zielonka

DOBSON RANCH STAFF PRESENT

Roger Weber
Lynda Bailey
Faye Bristow
Rick Axberg
Donna Chapman
Bob Dowle

DOBSON RANCH BOARD OF DIRECTORS PRESENT

Kathy Henderson, President
Ben Fernandez
Dale Garland
Phillip Lowry
Cindy Mizner
Sandra Murray
Bob Sassano
Amanda Sihler

DOBSON RANCH BOARD OF DIRECTORS ABSENT

Gaby Mathes

DOBSON RANCH BOARD CANDIDATES PRESENT

Judy Miller
Tom Minor

DOBSON RANCH BOARD CANDIDATES ABSENT

Kelly Boycks

Dobson Association Board President Kathy Henderson welcomed everyone to the meeting and stated the opinion that these discussions have proven to be of great benefit to both the City of Mesa and Dobson Ranch Association.

Mayor Hawker stated that in order to comply with the Open Meeting Law, he will at this time call the Joint meeting of the Mesa City Council and the Dobson Ranch Association to order.

Mayor Hawker commented on the fact that the City of Mesa is meeting with the Dobson Ranch Board for the first time since the City converted to a complete district system form of government. Mayor Hawker informed those present that although the Councilmembers represent their respective districts they also represent the City as a whole. Mayor Hawker pointed out that Vice Mayor Kavanaugh is Dobson Ranch's representative and commented on the importance of serving in that capacity.

Mayor Hawker requested everyone introduce themselves.

(Items on the agenda were discussed out of order, but for purposes of clarity will remain as listed on the agenda.)

1. Update on Dobson Patrol District - Mesa Police Department – Commander Sandra Driscoll.

Dobson Patrol District Commander Sandra Driscoll stated that although she has recently been assigned to the Dobson area as District Commander she is familiar with the neighborhood based on her previous assignments in the vicinity during her tenure as an Officer and Lieutenant. Commander Driscoll pointed out that she has been employed by the Mesa Police Department for 28 years and stated that the community's newspaper serves as an excellent resource and enables her to familiarize herself with issues facing the Dobson Ranch area.

Commander Driscoll commented on the positive feedback she has received from Officers assigned to this area relative to their working relationship with the Dobson Ranch Association. She pointed out that Dobson Ranch, similar to other residential areas, experiences numerous calls for service, many of which turn out to be false alarms for businesses and residences. Commander Driscoll stated that the Mesa Police Department Alarm Coordinator, Debbie Langford, can offer assistance in this area by addressing this issue with various groups. Commander Driscoll also discussed the other disturbances noted in the Dobson Ranch area, including suspicious vehicles, suspicious persons and suspicious activities. Commander Driscoll stated that it is evident, based on the reporting of those types of activities, that the residents of Dobson Ranch are cognizant of what is occurring in their neighborhood.

Commander Driscoll reported that in the last six months, the Police Department has been targeting stolen vehicles and announced that an increase in stolen vehicle recoveries has been noted along with a decrease in the number of stolen vehicles. Additionally, Commander Driscoll stated that the Department is also working on reducing residential and commercial burglaries.

In response to a question regarding personnel, Commander Driscoll advised that there are currently 84 sworn Officers covering three shifts in the Dobson Ranch Patrol District, compared to only 59 Officers in the Superstition Patrol District.

In response to an inquiry regarding the need for volunteers, Commander Driscoll pointed out that the Mesa Police Department utilizes volunteers in many capacities and commented on the importance of providing this support. Commander Driscoll stated that interested parties should contact the Mesa Police Department. Commander Driscoll discussed the Citizen Police Academy and encouraged the Board and residents of Dobson Ranch to take advantage of this outstanding program.

Discussion ensued relative to the levels of alert utilized by the Mesa Police Department and their relation to national security. Commander Driscoll pointed out the areas that require a higher level of awareness and provided examples of situations where an alert could increase from an orange level to a red. Commander Driscoll commented that currently the Mesa Police Department operates under an orange level of alert, which equates to consistent preparedness by the Department for any potential target.

Commander Driscoll encouraged neighborhoods to participate in the Block Watch Program and to register their neighborhoods with Mesa's Neighborhood Outreach Office.

In response to a question, Commander Driscoll outlined the process that is in place should any threat against Mesa's water supply facilities be presented.

Commander Driscoll in closing, informed the Board that she would like to remain very involved in the community and is willing to attend any meetings that may be beneficial.

2. Update on City Budget Issues – Mike Hutchinson, City Manager.

City Manager Mike Hutchinson depicted the City of Mesa's budget as similar to that of the Federal and State agencies, surrounding cities, and the private sector and commented that declining revenues have contributed to the budget shortfall. Mr. Hutchinson indicated that due to Mesa's budget restraints, many projects will have to be delayed. Mr. Hutchinson also pointed out other contributing factors to Mesa's budget deficit, which included decreases in sales revenue, a reduction of jobs in the metropolitan Phoenix area, a decrease in State shared revenue and decreases in utility revenue.

Mr. Hutchinson outlined the steps necessary to maintain the current level of service for the citizens of Mesa. He commented on Mesa's current hiring freeze and reductions to City departments' budgets as they relate to employees (travel expenses, healthcare, overtime, etc.) Mr. Hutchinson explained that State law requires that the City of Mesa adopt a balanced budget and commented on the challenges ahead in doing so. Mr. Hutchinson emphasized the fact that the Council's priorities continue to remain in the area of public safety and stated that all other services provided by the City of Mesa will be reviewed for possible funding reductions. Mr. Hutchinson also stated that the structure regarding employee wages will be reviewed and, as a result, salary modifications may occur.

Mr. Hutchinson informed those present that in the next few months he has the duty as City Manager to make recommendations to the City Council regarding next year's fiscal budget.

In response to a question regarding the feasibility of enacting a property tax, Mr. Hutchinson commented that it is a controversial issue and requires a policy decision by the City Council.

In response to a question regarding water rates, Mr. Hutchinson stated the opinion that water rates will not be increased but reported that citizens will be encouraged to conserve.

Mr. Hutchinson requested that he be excused to attend a meeting at Williams Gateway Airport to discuss the Airport's financial outlook. In closing, Mr. Hutchinson stated his appreciation for the positive relationship the City has experienced with Dobson Ranch Association staff.

3. Discuss Landscape Medians – Lenny Hulme, Street Maintenance Superintendent.

Street Maintenance Superintendent Lenny Hulme stated that, unfortunately, landscaping is one area that is often reduced when budgetary restraints occur. Mr. Hulme discussed the necessary landscaping needs associated with freeway extensions located out east and the street lighting programs that must be supported as a result. Mr. Hulme reported that in the next two-year budget no resources have been allocated for replanting unless reimbursement takes place. In addition, Mr. Hulme indicated that the two-year budget does not reflect any new landscaping projects and consists of strictly basic maintenance of existing terrain. Mr. Hulme pointed out that although Mesa recently adopted a Transportation Plan that identified resources for enhancements needed throughout the City, budgetary restraints over the next few years will negatively impact the enhancement program.

In response to a question regarding street curb cuts by cable companies, Mr. Hulme reported that telecommunications has affected the streets by a reduction in sustainability of a street in the amount of 27-30%. Mr. Hulme commented that the City of Mesa is initiating efforts relative to fee adjustments and pointed out that Mesa's Transportation Committee is currently reviewing the issue.

In response to a question regarding sealing projects, Mr. Hulme stated that Dobson Road has been targeted for a reconstruction project or an overlay from US 60 into the Dobson Ranch area, but indicated that the project has been delayed.

Discussion ensued regarding the positive response demonstrated by City of Mesa's crews in responding to various problems reported by Dobson Ranch Association Boardmembers and homeowners.

In response to a question regarding speed humps, Mr. Hulme said he was sorry to report that it is unlikely that any resources will be allocated in the 2003/04 budget for additional speed humps.

4. Update on Dobson Golf Course – Don Flavell, Golf Supervisor, Parks and Recreation Division.

Parks & Recreation Golf Supervisor Don Flavell announced that the new golf shop opened at the Dobson Ranch Golf Course in November and commented that this improvement encompasses approximately 4,000 square feet. Mr. Flavell pointed out that these improvements help ensure that the City of Mesa will remain competitive in providing these services. Mr. Flavell invited everyone to attend the dedication of the golf shop on March 4, 2003 at 10:00 a.m.

Mr. Flavell described the electronic scoring system that has been implemented at each hole on the course and outlined the benefits to both the players and the Golf Course in monitoring individuals participating in tournaments. Mr. Flavell noted that the system retains a player's history and includes a full run down of an individual's statistics. Mr. Flavell commented that the system is unique, with only one system of this type located in Florida.

Golf Supervisor Flavell stated that golf rounds have decreased nationally and pointed out that Arizona has realized an approximate 3 to 5% decrease.

Mr. Flavell reiterated that the City of Mesa is experiencing budget difficulties and that temporary fencing would be erected for those in need of repair until fence replacement takes place.

Discussed ensued relative to the Ranch House Restaurant and Vice Mayor Kavanaugh pointed out that substantial improvements to the interior will take place as part of the operational contract that has recently been enacted by the City Council.

5. Update on Planning Issues – Frank Mizner, Planning Director

Planning Director Frank Mizner provided a brief overview of planning and zoning issues affecting Dobson Ranch. He commented that despite the fact that Dobson Ranch is a mature community with essentially no vacant land remaining, new projects as well as redevelopment projects continue to take place. Mr. Mizner stated that the City of Mesa recently updated its General Plan and noted that the City's Transportation Plan, Economic Development Plan, and Parks and Recreation Plan were all part of that comprehensive, important process. He said that Ben Fernandez, who served as a member of the Committee in charge of the General Plan process in 1996, agreed to serve once again as a member of this recent Committee. He commended him on his diligence and hard work throughout the extensive process.

Mr. Mizner briefly highlighted a number of projects and issues that are occurring throughout Dobson Ranch. He also expressed appreciation to Lynda Bailey for volunteering to serve on the Planning and Zoning Board once again. He discussed the significant volunteer efforts that Mesa enjoys and noted that the City currently has 26 Advisory Boards in place. He emphasized the importance of citizens serving on the various volunteer Boards and the significant contributions they make to the City.

In response to a request from Councilmember Walters to expand further on the Gilbert Costco, Mr. Mizner stated that this is an interesting case with Baseline Road serving as the dividing line between Mesa and Gilbert. He added that because of some long standing historical arrangement, the City of Mesa provides the utilities for that portion of Gilbert. He commented on discussions that have occurred between Mesa staff and Town of Gilbert staff relative to Mesa's opinion that the services should be provided by Gilbert, not Mesa. Mr. Mizner also noted that a large tract of vacant land, zoned for what is currently termed "big box retail," is located on the north side of Baseline Road. He advised that discussions have taken place with Lowes relative to the development of a store either at that location (NEC of Baseline and Country Club Drive) or the possibility of redeveloping the old Fiesta Village Shopping Center (north side of Fiesta mall), where the now closed movie theatres and former seafood restaurant are located. Mr. Mizner stated the opinion that the negative aesthetics of that area impact surrounding businesses and commented on the increasing number of unleased space that exists at that location.

Mr. Mizner informed the group that a possibility exists that Lowes will undertake a complete leveling and renovation of the shopping center in an effort to build one of their new home improvement stores, and commented on the positive impacts of such action taking place. Mr. Mizner added the opinion that Fiesta Mall would benefit from the synergy generated as a result of other shoppers coming into the area.

Additional discussion ensued relative to the Fiesta Quadrant, which was originally owned by the Wolfswinkle family, previous plans for that area that never materialized, the fact that no current plans are in place for that area except for the development of a new bank that has shown interest in locating just east of the former Western Savings building, and the fact that although a number of long-range plans identify this area as a major employment center, no specific users have been identified to date.

Vice Mayor Kavanaugh asked Mr. Mizner to elaborate on the one-mile light rail issue. Mr. Mizner reported that plans are in place to extend the system out from Phoenix through Tempe into Mesa, basically along Main Street or the Apache Trail. He added that to date, plans have been approved for the line to come into Mesa, approximately one mile east of Dobson Road, to the vicinity of Stewart or Longmore. He noted that although a number of discussions took place relative to the feasibility of having the line end at the EVIT facility, it no longer appears that this will be the case since parking is limited and EVIT has expansion plans.

Discussion ensued relative to the development of a Park N Ride facility with structured parking and a transfer point for buses on the Tri-City Mall property; the fact that the developers of the mall have a 99-year lease on the property but do not own the land and, therefore a sub-lease may be pursued; the fact that Valley Metro would build the parking structure; funding options; and Mr. Mizner's opinion that although significant planning and discussions still need to occur, the system will eventually extend into Mesa and positively impact the community.

Mr. Mizner also commented on the large number of vacancies that exist in the Bashas' shopping center and Vice Mayor Kavanaugh asked whether an opportunity might exist for Bashas to expand into the space that was previously occupied by Osco Drugstore. Mr. Mizner said that no one has approached the City relative to this possibility.

Kathy Henderson, Dobson Board President, reported that Rhodes Junior High Chorale has been selected to be part of a regional choir that will travel to New York City in April and commented that Donna has done an excellent job promoting this significant event. She added that fund raising efforts are taking place to cover the cost of sending the 50 youths and staff to New York and encouraged anyone who can to contribute to this worthwhile happening. She said that they can contact her or Debby at the Rhodes Chorale and they will be happy to accept any and all contributions.

Vice Mayor Kavanaugh thanked everyone for their attendance at the meeting and noted that 20 years ago this month he ran for a seat on the Dobson Board of Directors. He added that he has attended many breakfasts such as this over those years and believes them to be unique and extremely valuable. He stated that he looks forward to the opportunity to continue to serve the residents of Dobson Ranch.

Mayor Hawker also thanked everyone for coming to the meeting.

6. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Joint Meeting with the Dobson Association Board of Directors adjourned at 9:04 a.m.

KENO HAWKER, MAYOR

ATTEST:

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

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I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Joint Meeting with the Dobson Ranch Homeowners' Association Board of Directors held on the 11th day of February 2003. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Dated this ____ day of _____ 2003

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK