

Parks & Recreation Board Meeting Minutes

The Parks and Recreation Board of the City of Mesa met in a regular session at the Parks and Recreation office at 200 S. Center Street, Building 1, Mesa, on February 14, 2008.

Members Present:

Frank Alger
Russ Gillard
Don Goodrum
Connie Gullatt-Whiteman
Jeff Kirk
David Martinez
Walter "Bud" Page, Jr.
Michelle Udall

Staff Present:

Darla Armfield	Andrea Moore
Dawn Bies	Kelly Rafferty
J.D. Dockstader	Rochelle Rotert
Mike Holste	Jim Ruiz
Bob Huhn	Sherry Woodley
Cindy Hunt	

Members Absent:

Dina Lopez, excused
Marilyn Wilson, excused

The meeting was called to order at 12:02 p.m. by Connie Gullatt-Whiteman, Chair.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman informed the Board that the information given at the January 10, 2008 meeting during the presentation regarding the urban fishing program stated that staff had negotiated with Bass Pro Shops to commit \$11,000 to stock Mesa's two urban fishing lakes. The actual amount should have been \$8,000 and was corrected in the official meeting minutes for January 10, 2008. Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman asked if there was a motion for approval of the minutes from the January 10, 2008 meeting. Russ Gillard made a motion, David Martinez seconded, and it was unanimously carried to approve the minutes as written.

Public Comments

None.

Discuss and take action on demolition of two buildings at Countryside Park and proposal to convert the facilities at Countryside Park to a dog park area

Andrea Moore presented the Board with some background information regarding Countryside Park, located at Southern Avenue and 32nd Street. Currently, there are two buildings at the southeast corner of the property that have been vacated due to the reorganization of the PRCF Department. These buildings were once used as office space for the Park Rangers and storage for summer recreation program supplies. Ms. Moore informed the Board that staff is recommending demolition of the two buildings and restoring the area to grade with decomposed granite. Staff will ask the Foundation for Mesa Parks and Recreation if they would be interested in converting this area into a potential off-leash dog facility. This would add an additional 1.7 acres of park open space to Countryside Park.

The Foundation for Mesa Parks and Recreation will be asked to consider this site as a location for a dog park at their February 2008 meeting. Should they consider this to be a viable location,

the Foundation's funding will be used to make the changes necessary to create an off-leash dog facility.

Mr. Gillard asked if the area to the north of the entrance road on 32nd Street was already fenced. Ms. Moore replied that it was not fenced, but was designated as an on-leash dog area. Mr. Gillard replied that it could possibly be designated as a "timid dog" area with the area south of the entry road designated as off-leash.

J.D. Dockstader reminded the Board that the existing on-leash area is a retention basin and is heavily used for Little League practice and drop-in use. He suggested that these users would need to be considered by the Foundation and the Board when deciding whether to fence off a portion of the area for an off-leash dog area.

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman pointed out that the existing amenities (parking, restrooms) would help if the space were converted to a dog area, which would cut down on construction costs. Ms. Moore said that additional expenses would include turf instead of granite, fencing and possibly some lighting.

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman asked Mr. Gillard about the amount of funding received by the Foundation for building a dog park. Mr. Gillard stated that the Foundation had a commitment of \$100,000 from Bark Avenue. Once the Foundation holds their February meeting to decide on the location for a dog park, other donations may be secured as well. Mr. Gillard added that \$200,000 was estimated to be the cost based on the Foundation's original discussion about putting the dog area at Riverview Park, which did not require turf or lighting.

Don Goodrum asked Ms. Moore the ages of the two existing buildings. Ms. Moore answered that she was unsure; however, she thought the buildings were at least 40 years old. Mr. Goodrum clarified that by removing the buildings, the intent is to plan for the long-range use of a potential dog park. He further asked Ms. Moore what the \$8,000 annual expenses entail. Ms. Moore answered that it was for security and utilities for the empty buildings.

Ms. Udall asked about the possibility of waiting to pay for granite if it could possibly be removed shortly and replaced with turf. Mr. Dockstader stated that if timely decisions can be made between the City and the Foundation, installing turf instead may eliminate the granite cost; however, some landscape material would be required immediately to comply with County dust control mandates.

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman asked about the time frame for the demolition project, if the Board approved it. Ms. Moore said bids had been received, and if final approval is received by Council, the demolition could proceed by the end of the fiscal year.

Bud Page asked Ms. Moore if the demolition expense was part of the \$200,000 cost the Foundation would incur. Ms. Moore replied that the City would be responsible for the demolition of the buildings at an approximate cost of \$25,000.

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman clarified that the agenda indicated the Board was to approve the demolition of the two buildings and to proceed with a discussion with the Foundation to turn the facilities at Countryside Park to a dog park area.

Mr. Gillard stated that he would be recusing himself from the voting process because he is an officer for the Foundation for Mesa Parks and Recreation.

Ms. Udall asked Ms. Moore if the Foundation does not want the dog park in that location, what is the future of the park once the buildings are demolished. Ms. Moore said that portion of the park would be open space.

Mr. Alger asked Mr. Gillard if the Board approved the demolition at this meeting, would the time frame coincide with the Foundation agreeing to turn the area into an unleashed dog park so that the City could avoid spending funds on granite.

Mr. Gillard said that he could not speak on behalf of the Foundation members; however, the first \$100,000 is at the Foundation's disposal immediately.

Mr. Alger made a motion to demolish the existing buildings at Countryside Park and designate the area as an unleashed dog park area.

Mr. Goodrum asked Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman for discussion on the motion.

Mr. Goodrum asked Mr. Gillard if the Foundation was considering other sites for the dog park.

Mr. Gillard stated that the Foundation's intent was to find a park location on the west side of the city. The Foundation is aware that Countryside Park is considered an east side park; however, the only dog park in Mesa is the Quail Run Park on the far northeast side of the city. Countryside Park is more convenient for west side residents.

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman told the Board members that this is the only available property the City has to offer at this time. The City may never have an opportunity to buy property for the sole purpose of planning a dog park. She commented that Countryside Park has many amenities already in place, such as a playground, restrooms, ample parking, all located in a nice neighborhood.

Mr. Goodrum asked to amend the motion, the real issue being the \$8,000 annual savings in maintenance costs by demolishing the buildings, leaving out the dog park issue in the motion's wording; Mr. Goodrum said there needed to be more discussion regarding the dog park.

Mr. Dockstader said at this meeting, staff was seeking approval of the demolition of the existing buildings at the park.

Mr. Alger amended the original motion to say that he approved of the demolition of the existing buildings. Mr. Goodrum seconded the motion.

David Martinez commented that the agenda item indicated the Board was to not only discuss and vote on the demolition of the buildings, but to talk about the proposal to convert the open space to a dog park. Mr. Martinez believed that the Board's discussion suggests that the dog park is needed, so it should be stated in the motion that the Board will examine the feasibility of converting the area to an off-leash dog park at a future time.

Ms. Udall thought that the Board should first decide whether or not the area becomes a dog park before the Board agrees to spend \$10,000 on the decomposed granite.

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman reminded the Board that there was a motion on the floor that needed an official vote to approve the demolition of the buildings, but the Board could vote it down and start a new motion or the Board had the option to rescind it.

Mr. Alger said that the Board should vote on the demolition of the two buildings, but officially separate the discussion of the dog park.

Mr. Goodrum stated that he did not realize at the beginning of the discussion that there was such a strong possibility the area was ready to be converted into a dog park; Mr. Alger added that there is a real need for a dog park in this area of Mesa because right now many residents travel to the dog park in Gilbert.

Mr. Martinez told the Board that barren ground cannot be left behind after the demolition of a building; therefore, the granite expense may have to be incurred. He was not sure how to amend the motion because of the timing issue between the City's plans and the Foundation's meeting and decision.

Ms. Udall said that it would cost less to maintain the buildings for another year than it would to spend \$10,000 on the granite; it would cost less to wait a couple of months to find out whether or not the location is viable than to unnecessarily spend the money on the granite.

Ms. Moore informed the Board that Parks, Recreation & Commercial Facilities (PRCF) is using cost savings this year to pay for the demolition project, and the funds will not be available in future years.

Mr. Alger said that the property is now available from the City and the Foundation is currently looking for a dog park area. The timing is right; therefore, the Board should make a decision today.

Mr. Martinez stated that he would like to amend the motion to demolish the buildings, but continue to explore the potential of an off-leash dog park at this location with the Foundation. By changing the word "recommend" to "explore", Mr. Goodrum agreed to second the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman stated that the Foundation would be meeting on February 20th, and Rhett Evans would be presenting the Foundation with the opportunity to consider Countryside Park as a future dog park area.

Mr. Dockstader said that staff would be going before the City Council in two weeks to discuss today's Parks Board vote regarding the recommendation to demolish the buildings at Countryside Park.

Mr. Gillard told the Board that the donor who agreed to fund \$100,000 to the Foundation for a future dog park has told the Foundation that he will withdraw his donation if the location has not been decided within three months.

Fit City's Fox 10 Video Presentation

Cindy Hunt shared with the Board a Fox Channel 10 news video presentation that was broadcast live at the Red Mountain Multigenerational Center. Fox 10 interviewed one of the two families selected through an essay contest to talk about the City of Mesa's Fit City Challenge and the January 19th 5k fun run/walk kick-off event at Red Mountain Park. The video explained that Fit City came about, and through 12 organized monthly events, the City hoped to encourage families to establish good eating habits and introduce them to indoor and outdoor activities that the whole family could enjoy while increasing their level of fitness. The reporter said that they would be checking back with the two representative families to see how they were keeping up with the Fit City Challenge.

Ms. Hunt told the Board that currently 800 people have registered for Fit City; this includes 93 families that make up 465 individuals, and 335 individuals that signed up separately. Also, 30 schools are now participating with 102 students registered. She stated that at the kick-off event in January, 585 individuals were at Red Mountain Park, including participants, volunteers and vendors. Fit City's second event was a Zumba exercise class held at the Mesa Amphitheatre with 321 participants. Ms. Hunt reminded the Board of the March 8th Fit City event at Jefferson Recreation Center; this 3-in-1 event will include an indoor Kids Boot Camp, an outdoor Adult Boot Camp and a Stroller Stride activity that includes both parent and child. Ms. Hunt said that the April event, the running of the bases at Hohokam Stadium, is expected to be one of the most popular of the 12 planned events.

Ms. Hunt concluded by saying that Fit City has been a great success so far, with great sponsors and sponsorship team, and new sponsors and vendors coming aboard each week after hearing about the program.

Provide update on pools

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman asked Ms. Moore to provide the Board with an update on the pool renovation schedules at Kino and Rhodes pools.

Ms. Moore explained to the Board that both pools are currently in the design phase, with the Kino pool now close to construction. Staff will be asking City Council for approval of the construction costs in mid-March, with intention to have the pool under construction in April and completed in May 2009.

The Rhodes pool is at 60% plans, with an overall goal to begin construction in August 2008, finishing in June 2009. The FlowRider standing wave feature has been selected as an added amenity to the site.

Mr. Gillard asked Ms. Moore about the status of the future Skyline pool. Ms. Moore replied that staff is waiting for a commitment from Mesa Public Schools.

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman asked Ms. Moore when both pools would be open. Ms. Moore said that Kino and Rhodes pools would be ready for swimmers by the summer of 2009.

Provide update on City Council's decision regarding Pioneer Park locomotive

Mike Holste informed the Board of City Council's decision regarding the Pioneer Park locomotive. He stated that Rhett Evans and Scott Bouchie from Environmental Programs met with City Council on January 31st to present them the Board's recommendation regarding the fate of the locomotive at Pioneer Park. Mr. Holste explained that Council decided to give Mesa citizens two months to see if there is any community interest in saving the locomotive; citizens have until April 3rd to generate \$10,000 in donations for restoration of the locomotive or relocate it to the Arizona Railway Museum in Chandler. In April, staff will go again before Council to advise them of the citizen committee's fundraising efforts.

Mr. Holste explained that the initial report brought to the Parks Board in September 2007 indicated that \$40,000-\$60,000 would be needed for asbestos abatement; according to Scott Bouchie, that cost estimate has now increased to \$80,000-\$120,000. Mr. Holste said that complete restoration of the locomotive and moving it to the front of the park will now cost approximately \$350,000.

Mr. Holste said the City is advertising that a citizen's fundraising committee has been formed via news releases on the City's website; also, staff has put together a "Save the Train" committee announcement. He told the Board that the Citizen's Fundraising Committee would be meeting on Wednesday, February 20th at 6:00 p.m., and City staff will show them a presentation similar to that given to City Council. After this initial meeting, Mr. Holste said that City Council has requested staff to relinquish any involvement with the locomotive and turn the fundraising committee solely over to the citizens.

Mr. Holste said that City Council wants cash generated only, not just a verbal commitment that cash will be donated in the future.

Mr. Holste told the Board that staff member Melanie Dykstra has been made the point of contact, and her name, phone number and website address appear on the flyers; Mr. Holste said to direct any questions regarding the locomotive to Melanie.

Mr. Gillard noted that the Foundation for Mesa Parks and Recreation would be collecting the funds for the locomotive and reminded the Board that donations are deductible.

Provide update on the Riverview Park plans

Ms. Moore provided the Board with an update on the results from the neighborhood design charrette meeting held on September 13, 2007, at Whittier Elementary School. It gave Riverview Park neighbors an opportunity to redesign the park.

Ms. Moore gave the Board a summarized version of a report that was created by the organizing hosts of the neighborhood meeting, the West Mesa Community Development Corporation. Mesa Community College facilitated the meeting, placing attending citizens into six groups to discuss their ideas about the future of the Riverview Park area and to participate in a hands-on design project, deciding the location of the lake, playground, walkways, restrooms, parking, and other amenities they wished to have considered in the design.

Mr. Gillard commented that every citizen design group that attended recommended a water feature amenity for the park and asked Ms. Moore if this was a possibility. Ms. Moore said although a lifeguard would not be necessary, most splash water features require some type of supervision because so much activity is drawn to this kind of feature and the equipment tends to break frequently due to the non-stop usage during the summer.

Provide update on the Arizona Rattlers partnership with the City

Kelly Rafferty provided an update on the Arizona Rattlers partnership with the City to use Gene Autry Park as a practice facility. The Arizona Rattlers, a professional indoor football team, has partnered with the City to rent the Gene Autry baseball practice field and clubhouse. They will pay \$3,500 monthly to rent the clubhouse and pay for maintenance costs to the practice field. They will also pay for utilities. This brings additional revenue to the City for an area that had not been used since the Los Angeles Angels moved out of the facility.

Mr. Goodrum asked if the other ball fields would still be available for use by other groups. Mr. Rafferty replied that the ball fields were still being rented year-round for tournaments. Mr. Dockstader added that the agreement with the Rattlers will not impact users in any way and that the ball fields will remain operational for team and tournament play.

Hear and discuss the subcommittee updates

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman informed the Board that the Finance Subcommittee had been put on hold for the time being, with Board members being assigned to the other two subcommittees.

Mr. Gillard informed the Board that the Parks and Facilities Subcommittee had met several times to review and grade the various facilities in PRCF. A grading system previously used by the Parks and Recreation staff was updated to clarify how the grades were assigned to each facility. A spreadsheet listing each facility was created with information including facility age, construction history, acreage, building size, etc. Staff took pictures in order to show the condition of the facilities. The areas that have been reviewed and graded are aquatics facilities, PRCF buildings, parks, ball fields and sports facilities. Future areas of discussion will include park basins and future facilities, with grades being assigned to each. One item of discussion recently was the lack of fees collected for users of the facility (ex: Senior Center at RMMC). The subcommittee feels there should be some revenue collected for that type of use. The next meeting is scheduled for February 28, 2008, at 7:30 a.m.

Mike Holste informed the Board that the Programs Subcommittee met on February 6, 2008 and developed a rating sheet to score each program offered through PRCF. Each program was rated and given a point value between 0-100; each program will be put in point value order, with FY 06/07 budget, revenue, and program net cost information added. Some programs that had been eliminated in the past are also being looked at in the hopes that they may be reestablished in the future. The next meeting is scheduled for February 27, 2008, at 4:00 p.m.

Mr. Gillard thanked City staff for the support and help given to the various subcommittees.

Chair Comments

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman informed the Board that Reggie Dye had resigned from the Parks and Recreation Board due to scheduling/attendance conflicts. Mr. Dye enjoyed his time on the Board and looks forward to serving on the Board again at a future date.

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman told the Board that Brian Etheridge, whose first official meeting would be March 13, 2008, had replaced Mr. Dye on the Board. She gave the Board some background information about Mr. Etheridge and stated that he would serve until June 2009.

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman invited Jeff Kirk to address to the Board about his decision to resign his position. Mr. Kirk told the Board this would be his last official meeting, that he had enjoyed serving on the Board and the opportunity to serve the City; however, his work life had changed dramatically, which made it difficult to attend meetings on a regular basis. He mentioned that he had noticed some trends in the City, and the Board should expect to see him again in the public forum.

Director's Comments

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman introduced Mr. Dockstader, who was sitting in for the Director at this meeting.

Mr. Dockstader asked if any Board members had suggestions for future agenda items. He explained that staff had originally placed a Park Ranger overview on the agenda; however, an update of the pools took priority. Board members agreed that they would like to have a Park Ranger agenda item at next month's meeting. Mr. Goodrum asked to have an update on the Riverview ball fields.

Mr. Dockstader shared with the Board some upcoming events to mark on their calendars:

- February 20th – Save the Train Committee Meeting
- February 29th – First Chicago Cubs Spring Training game at Hohokam Stadium
- March 8th – Third Fit City event, held at Jefferson Recreation Center
- April 12th – City Hall at the Mall – Reps from various City departments to field questions from citizens, booths set up at Fiesta Mall

Reports on meetings and/or events attended by Board Members

Mr. Gillard said that he attended the City Council Study Session to listen to Council's discussion regarding the Pioneer Park locomotive. He also attended both Fit City events and encouraged everyone to attend. Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman said she had attended the same Study Session with Mr. Gillard and attended the first Fit City event.

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman reminded Board members to please respond to Dawn Bies' emails by indicating whether or not they would be able to attend each upcoming Board meeting. She said if obtaining a quorum is not possible, knowing ahead of time gives staff and Board members an opportunity to rearrange their schedules if cancelling the meeting is necessary.

Mr. Gillard noted that on April 26th the Foundation for Mesa Parks and Recreation is sponsoring a car show, primarily to raise funds for the dog park. He said that it would be held at the Hohokam Stadium parking lot and the adjacent park; next month Mr. Gillard will provide the Board with an update and bring flyers.

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman asked if there were any other items for discussion; the Board had no additional comments. Mr. Alger made a motion, Mr. Martinez seconded, and it was unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

J. Rhett Evans
Parks, Recreation and Commercial Facilities Department Director