

## **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 September 10, 2008.

### Members Present:

Russ Gillard  
Connie Gullatt-Whiteman  
Tim Gump  
Steve Ikeda  
Michelle Udall  
Marilyn Wilson  
Mark Yarbrough

### Staff Present:

Dawn Bies  
J.D. Dockstader  
Rhett Evans  
Mike Holste  
Bob Huhn  
Andrea Moore  
Kelly Rafferty  
Sherry Woodley

### Members Absent:

Frank Alger, unexcused  
Brian Etheridge, excused  
Don Goodrum, excused  
David Martinez, unexcused

The meeting was called to order at 3:32 p.m. by Connie Gullatt-Whiteman, Chair.

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman welcomed Tim Gump to the Board and asked him to briefly give the Board some background information on himself. Mr. Gump stated that he is a retired teacher from the Mesa Public School District and currently works part time at the fitness center on Mesa Community College's Red Mountain campus.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman asked if there was a motion for approval of the minutes from the August 13, 2008 Parks Board meeting. Russ Gillard made a motion, Marilyn Wilson seconded, and it was unanimously carried to approve the minutes as written.

### **Public Comments**

None.

### **Discuss and take action on the Kleinman Park Cell Tower Proposal**

Andrea Moore introduced Bruce Hovey from Wireless Facilities Inc. (WFI) who was attending on behalf of Verizon. Ms. Moore informed the Board that a request had been submitted by Verizon to put a cell tower on top of one of the light poles at Kleinman Park, located at 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Extension Road. She stated that in preparation for today's meeting, Verizon had sent public notices to approximately 100 residents neighboring the park within 500 feet of the softball fields. Verizon also sent notices to leaders of adjoining neighborhood associations. Residents were invited to attend today's meeting or call the City with any questions, comments, or concerns about the proposal. Only one person called with a clarification question. Ms. Moore said that with Parks Board approval of the cell tower location it will go on to the City's Planning and Engineering Departments for consideration. She reminded the Board that the revenue goes into

a dedicated fund that can be used for improvements to City parks. Ms. Moore explained that the City currently has cell towers located at two parks, Harmony and Chaparral, with the last one added in 2003. She then asked Mr. Hovey to present his proposal to the Board.

Mr. Hovey explained that the main purpose of the cell tower would be to improve coverage for Verizon. Mr. Hovey said that Verizon cannot currently provide a reliable signal if a user is inside a building/structure. The proposal includes a new design that will improve the inside signal. The proposed new light pole will be 74 feet in height to the top of the antenna; the radio equipment, generator and batteries will be hidden entirely behind a wall that is 12 feet high next to the existing wall around the seminary. He assured the Board that the existing pole would not be taken down until a new one was erected, and the new illumination would closely match that of the existing light coverage.

Ms. Moore showed an aerial map of the park and the new pole location to the Board.

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman asked where revenue from the cell towers goes. Ms. Moore replied that it goes into a special parks fund, not the General Fund. Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman also mentioned that it was a positive sign that there were no comments registered from surrounding residents.

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman asked for a motion to send the proposal as presented to Planning and Zoning for approval. Ms. Wilson made a motion, Ms. Udall seconded and it was unanimously carried to approve the Kleinman Park Cell Tower proposal.

#### **Update on neighborhood meeting at Washington Activity Center**

Rhett Evans reviewed a presentation that was given on August 26, 2008, to Washington Activity Center (WAC) neighbors who utilize the facility. At the meeting he explained to the attendees that due to budget reductions last fiscal year the City would no longer be able to staff the facility, but the City would continue to service the building from a maintenance standpoint. City Council agreed to keep the facility open one more year as a result of a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding opportunity, but Mr. Evans urged the neighboring community to get involved in raising the required funding and a community member/organization to staff and run programs at the facility with set guidelines.

Mr. Evans told the Board that staff is in the process of doing a needs assessment for the facility and will be developing a Request for Proposal (RFP), with neighborhood input, which will be sent out to various church groups, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, United Way charities and other interested non-profits with the details of what will be required to run this facility. It costs \$131,000 annually to keep the WAC operational. The facility is open weekdays from mid-afternoon into the evening hours and about 75 neighborhood residents use the facility on a daily basis free of charge. Mr. Evans said the goal is to have this process completed by July 1, 2009, with an organization in place to assume the responsibilities of running the WAC. He added that he would like Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman to assign two Board members to a panel for scoring the RFP.

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman asked Mr. Evans if this facility would be run similarly to that of the Gene Autry Tennis Center. Mr. Evans said that the arrangement would be the same; the City owns the facility but a private individual would run the facility at their own expense.

Mark Yarbrough asked Mr. Evans if residents will continue to have free use of the facility. Mr. Evans said that it would be the decision of the new facility manager.

#### **Update on remote control (RC) aircraft in basins**

Sherry Woodley provided the Board with a brief history about the remote control aircraft project. In November 2007, Mr. Evans was contacted by an RC aircraft group requesting the City to assist them in locating a park to fly their aircraft. At the present time, flying RC helicopters and other small aircraft are prohibited by ordinance unless users have been given special permission from the City. Currently one remote helicopter group has secured a permit to fly in Basin 114 in East Mesa (near Elliot and Crismon). Staff met with both the aircraft group and the helicopter group in January 2008 and since that time, more citizens have come forward expressing interest in having park space assigned to fly RC aircraft. Currently staff is working with Pat Gagnon, a representative of AZ WingNutz, to develop an agreement to fly small aircraft, addressing concerns about the frequency of use at the helicopter basin coinciding with the frequency of use of the AZ WingNutz organization. Ms. Woodley said that staff arranged for the two groups to meet, which resulted in the creation of a frequency sharing plan with both parties agreeing to pay for park signage for each basin location. Basin 114 will continue to be designated for RC helicopters and Basin 116 will be designated for RC aircraft. She also said that park rangers and the flyer groups will be monitoring the drop-in use that includes the dog walkers, stroller striders, soccer team play, etc.

Ms. Woodley continued, saying that partnering with AZ WingNutz has brought about a recreational area to meet customer needs, with no cost to the City; however, staff had some liability concerns. The Risk Management attorney said that as long as the \$2 million insurance policy was in place for the City, the flyer groups would be able to enjoy their hobby at the designated City basins. In addition, Ms. Woodley said that all individuals of the flyer groups must be members of an aeronautical association that provides insurance coverage for each of them; this leaves the City exempt from any liability suits. Therefore, in order for citizens to fly their aircraft, they must have proof of insurance or be a member of their respective association.

J.D. Dockstader added that this basin will be shared with general drop-in park users; park usage will be on a first-come, first-serve basis. Currently, this is working successfully. Ms. Woodley said that the City will evaluate this shared arrangement in six months and make any necessary adjustments to the agreement.

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman asked if a regulation park sign will be displayed with the standard park rules posted. Ms. Woodley confirmed and said the signage is to match existing park signage.

Michelle Udall asked Ms. Woodley about parking availability. Ms. Woodley stated that parking is limited and poses a challenge; however, patrons can park along Elliot Road. Ms. Woodley added that the basins for the flyer groups may be a temporary location, but will have to make due for two to three years. The City is already exploring other sites and the flyer groups may organize fundraisers to support a dedicated RC park in the future.

Ms. Woodley concluded by telling the Board that the grand opening will occur in late September or early October, and a press release will be sent to all Board members as a reminder. Also, one of the members of the aircraft group has a contact with Channel 3 which may provide media coverage for opening day.

### **Master Plan Update: Discussion of possible sale of future Beverly Park and Redberry and 82<sup>nd</sup> Street parcels**

Ms. Moore told the Board that this is the next step in the Master Plan Update process. Ms. Moore led a discussion on the Beverly Park and Redberry/82<sup>nd</sup> Street parcels saying that the Parks & Facilities Subcommittee recommended selling the parcels. She reminded the Board that today's agenda reflected discussion only.

Ms. Moore provided the Board with a handout listing the pros, cons and alternatives to selling the two properties. She described the properties in detail to the Board, beginning with the Redberry parcel. Discussion items included:

- The 10-acre property at Redberry & 82<sup>nd</sup> Street is near Thomas and Hawes Roads and was purchased in 2003 for \$630,000 with Park Bond funds
- Recreation opportunities already exist for nearby Las Sendas residents and other neighboring planned communities in Northeast Mesa; not all residents live in a planned community
- The City's nearby Hawes Loop Trail links to Tonto National Forest, offering more recreation opportunities
- The parcel has no utilities and adding a street to the parcel would take out part of the land; a potential buyer may be difficult to find in this market, especially due to lack of utilities
- The City could retain the parcel for future park development or lease/trade it for private use

Ms. Moore said that this parcel is not in an area that is high priority for park development. She pointed out to the Board that there is no road easement around this property, and currently Redberry is a very rough road.

Russ Gillard, who chaired the Parks and Facilities Subcommittee, commented that there are flood control problems in this particular area. He also stated that an overriding factor to consider is that the City does not have nor foresee any funds forthcoming to develop this parcel, and if it is sold, the funds would go directly back to Parks for possible future development of other park parcels. Ms. Moore said the land was purchased with bonds and proceeds from a sale could go back into the parks budget to develop other parcels.

Mr. Evans said that staff could survey residents in the area surrounding the Redberry parcel before the October meeting so that the Board will know how the citizens feel about the possible sale of this land.

Ms. Moore continued her presentation by showing the Board an aerial layout of the Beverly Park parcel, and listing the main issues with the parcel, including input received from the Mesa Grande Community Alliance and Mesa Police Department:

- The 2.86-acre property is east of Alma School and north of Main Street; three parcels were acquired in 2002 with CDBG federal funding
- The undeveloped land has experienced frequent vandalism and other crime problems
- Residents from the adjacent single family homes and multihousing units are concerned about crime and dust problems
- A neighboring apartment wall has been knocked down several times, creating a pass-thru to Emerson Elementary School.
- Police experience poor visibility into the parcel due to its elongated shape, creating difficulty in securing the area; police have requested lighting, "no trespassing" signs, and fencing on each end of parcel
- Currently there are no recreation opportunities in this area of Mesa; the nearest facility is Webster Gym
- A community association, Mesa Grande Community Alliance, is interested in developing this parcel
- If another parcel can be identified, it may be possible to arrange direct replacement with CDBG funding at the same time this parcel would be sold
- It will cost \$1 million to develop this park and \$25,000 a year to maintain it

Ms. Moore said that the Mesa Grande group wants to hear more information from the Police Department regarding the problems in the area so the group can address some of these issues before the City makes the decision to sell the parcel.

Mr. Gillard said that the Parks Maintenance Supervisor told the Parks & Facilities Subcommittee it costs the City significant time and money to keep this empty piece of land. Ms. Moore added that Parks Maintenance spends over \$3,000 a year on trash pickup alone. Graffiti removal is handled by contacting the graffiti removal hotline; staff was not sure of amount spent annually on this parcel. Mr. Gillard said that the City would come out ahead by not maintaining this parcel.

Mr. Gillard asked about plans to add playground equipment. Mr. Evans stated that grants could be obtained, but it would not be enough to develop a whole park. A patch of sod and a few pieces of playground equipment could be placed on the property, but the park would need lighting and ADA accessibility, as well as operational and maintenance costs factored into the overall cost.

Ms. Wilson asked Ms. Moore what the City's original intent was when this parcel was purchased. Ms. Moore said the City had planned to develop the parcel but was never successful in securing funding. Ms. Moore said there were a lot of concerns regarding crime, but staff had hoped that park ranger presence and park activity would deter illegal activity.

Ms. Udall suggested making the east end of the park a dog park so that it would be as if it were almost two different parks. Mr. Evans stated a dog park has even more associated operational costs than a normal park because of the waste pick up and increased maintenance expense. Ms. Moore added that dog parks are noisy and bring a lot of traffic and do not typically work in residential areas. Ms. Udall thought it would be best to break the park into two pieces since the parcel is so long and narrow, and perhaps another parcel would be better suited for a park.

Mr. Ikeda said he thought that representatives from Mesa Grande were going to be at today's meeting. Ms. Moore said that the co-chairs are out of town, but they did request that staff set up a meeting with them before the next Board meeting.

Further discussion ensued indicating that Board members wanted to hear Mesa Grande's reasons for wanting a park in that area of town and the type of amenities they envisioned. In conclusion, Board members agreed to invite representatives from Mesa Grande and the Mesa Police Department to the October meeting. It was agreed by all to put the item on the October agenda to discuss and take action on the possible sale of the parcels with the option to table the action on the Beverly Park parcel after hearing comments from both the Mesa Grande group and Police. The sale of the Beverly Park parcel would be carried over to the November agenda as an action item if action is not taken at the October meeting.

### **Director's Comments**

- Archaeological data recovery at Riverview – Mr. Evans told the Board that as part of the Waveyard process archaeological staff from the Arizona Museum of Natural History must come in do some soil tests and evaluations on whether there is any cultural resource data to be recovered before construction can begin on that site. Ms Moore added that there are federal restrictions on those parcels, which will be transferred to other parcels; in order to do so data recovery must be done first.
- Calendar of Events (update on past/present events) – Mr. Evans told the Board the next Fit City event would be on Saturday, September 13<sup>th</sup> at Fitness Works. Kelly Rafferty added that the Veranda Restaurant at Dobson Ranch would be having its grand opening on September 13, 2008 from 11am – 3 pm.

## **Reports on meetings and/or events attended by Board Members**

Ms. Udall attended Boards and Commissions Day at the Arizona Parks and Recreation (APRA) annual conference at the Camelback Inn Resort. She reported that staff from another city shared that they have local high school teenagers that sit on their Parks Board. She also mentioned developing a better relationship between Parks Board and City Council by having someone from the Board meeting with Council monthly to discuss issues raised at Parks Board meetings.

Mr. Ikeda attended the Mesa Grande meetings; discussions included the Beverly Park land. He also attended the DMB opening ceremony at the Mesa Arts Center.

Ms. Wilson mentioned that she had been to Gene Autry Sports Complex to play tennis and that the courts were in great shape.

Mr. Gillard attended the Foundation for Mesa Parks and Recreation meeting where planning continued for a dog park at Countryside Park. He also attended an American Cancer Society event. He invited Board members to an event on September 11<sup>th</sup> at noon at Banner Desert Cancel Center at Banner Desert Hospital.

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman reported that while on vacation she visited various parks along the west coast of the United States and picked up information about a 24"x24" park in Portland, Oregon.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 4:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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