

COMMUNITY & NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE

June 25, 2007

The Community and Neighborhood Services Committee of the City of Mesa met in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on June 25, 2007 at 3:30 p.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

Rex Griswold, Chairman
Scott Somers
Mike Whalen

COUNCIL PRESENT

None

STAFF PRESENT

Debra Dollar
Alfred Smith

1. Items from citizens present.

There were no items from citizens present.

2. Discuss and consider a request from the Mesa Historical Society for the disposition of City-owned parcel of land located at the 800 block of East Lehi Road (East of Southeast corner of North Horne and East Lehi Road).

Arts and Cultural Center Assistant Director Rob Schultz introduced Southwest Museum Administrator Tom Wilson and Dennis Kavanaugh, Chairman of the Mesa Historical Society.

Mr. Kavanaugh reported that a partnership between the City of Mesa and the Mesa Historical Society began more than twenty years ago when community leaders recognized a need for a history museum. He advised that this public/private partnership is based on similar models utilized by other Valley communities and communities throughout the country. Mr. Kavanaugh said that the Mesa Historical Museum property, the site of the former Lehi School, was transferred to the Mesa Historical Society with the caveat that the property reverts to the City if utilized for any purpose other than a museum. He noted that an adjacent section of property (see Attachment 1) in the 800 block of East Lehi Road was obtained by the City in a land exchange with Mesa Public Schools and the City currently leases the property to the Mesa Historical Society. Mr. Kavanaugh stated that the Historical Society operates the museum and although the City provided an annual operating grant for many years, funding to the museum was discontinued and the museum was encouraged to charge admission fees and secure private funding sources.

In response to a question from Committeemember Somers, Mr. Kavanaugh stated that two years ago the City's annual grant was reduced from \$125,000 to \$74,000, and that a year ago the grant was eliminated. He noted that unlike museums in other Valley communities, the Historical Society presently receives no operating funds from the City of Mesa. Mr. Kavanaugh said that holding title to the eastern parcel would increase the Historical Society's asset base and improve its financial stability. He reported that plans for the property include the construction of a climate-controlled building to house many of the museum's collections.

Mr. Wilson advised that the City deeded the western parcel to the Historical Society in 1988 and leased the eastern parcel to the Society in 1994 for a period of thirty years at a cost of \$1 per year.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that at the time the City eliminated the \$74,000 grant, this amount represented 38 percent of the Historical Society's budget; that City grants in prior years represented a larger percentage of the Historical Society's budget; that the Real Estate Department valued the eastern parcel at \$5 per square foot for a total of \$530,000; that the commercial value of the property was diminished by the nature of the surroundings; that the parcel is currently being utilized by a school; and that the surrounding property to the north and east of the eastern parcel is residential.

It was moved by Committeemember Whalen, seconded by Committeemember Somers, to recommend to the Council that the City-owned property located in the 800 block of East Lehi Road adjacent to the Mesa Historical Museum be conveyed to the Mesa Historical Society.

Chairman Griswold noted that the City has conveyed property to other non-profit organizations that have proven their viability over a period of years. He expressed support for the motion.

Committeemember Somers stated that although he supported the Historical Society's request, he suggested that the Council consider opening a public bid process for the parcel.

Mr. Kavanaugh advised that the Lehi Subarea Plan supports the Mesa Historical Museum's utilization of this property.

Committeemember Whalen noted that the unusual configuration of the property could limit the available uses for the parcel.

Assistant City Manager Debra Dollar stated that when the Council considers the Committee's recommendation, staff would provide information regarding the current zoning on the property and any stipulations that may be included in the Lehi Subarea Plan.

Committeemember Whalen suggested that the Mesa Historical Society request a written communication from the Lehi Association indicating their support for the proposal.

Chairman Griswold called for the vote.

Carried unanimously.

Chairman Griswold thanked staff and Mr. Kavanaugh for the presentation.

3. Hear a presentation, discuss and make a recommendation on a Volunteer Code Enforcement Program.

Code Compliance Director Ray Villa reported that the proposal for a Volunteer Code Enforcement Program was developed over a one-year period by representatives of the Marlborough Mesa Neighborhood, the Mesa Grande Community Alliance, CARE (Community Asset and Resource Enterprise) Partnership and the Golden Hills Homeowners' Association (HOA). He advised that Stephanie Wright of the Mesa Grande Community Alliance would present an overview of the proposed program.

Ms. Wright displayed a PowerPoint presentation (a copy is available for review in the City Clerk's Office) and reported that neighborhood representatives began meeting in 2006 to create a volunteer program to assist the Code Compliance Division. She advised that a one-year trial program is proposed in each of the participating neighborhoods, and that future participation would be limited to neighborhoods registered with the Neighborhood Outreach Office.

Ms. Wright outlined the responsibilities of the neighborhood team leader, which include processing volunteer applications and agreements and scheduling team training in the following areas:

- City of Mesa volunteer orientation, including a Waiver of Liability and Volunteer Agreement.
- Recognizing common Code violations.
- Introducing the neighborhood to the Code Team Program.
- Using the forms and logbooks.
- Code Compliance Division forms/letters.
- Observing, recording and reporting information to team leaders.
- Cause for removal from a Mesa Code Team.

Ms. Wright outlined the process (see Attachment 2) that would be utilized by the Mesa Code Teams. She explained that the team responsibilities include educating neighbors regarding Code violations, recruitment and training of volunteers, recording violations, maintaining consistent communications with Code Compliance Division staff, and providing written documentation of observations and activities of the Code Team. Ms. Wright stated that the Code Teams would provide assistance to the Code Compliance Division by encouraging voluntary abatement of Code violations. She added that existing programs, such as the City's graffiti hotline, Tool Lending Program, Clean Sweep, etc., would be utilized to provide assistance.

Mr. Villa continued the PowerPoint presentation by describing the types of behavior that would result in the removal of a Team member, some of which include a failure to follow procedures, behavior construed as a conflict of interest, harassment, selective enforcement, or trespassing.

Ms. Wright added that Team members are prohibited from photographing private property. She summarized that the program is designed to free Code Compliance Officers to address more difficult and time-consuming cases, to be cost-effective for the City, educate residents about City Codes, and enable residents to become more familiar with their neighborhoods.

Mr. Villa advised that staff is recommending a one-year trial program in the four neighborhoods that have been involved in development of the proposal and, if the program is successful, staff would recommend expanding the program throughout the City.

In response to questions from Committeemember Somers, Mr. Villa advised that the costs to implement the program would be very minimal and that staff would provide an update to the Committee when the trial program has been in operation for six months.

Committeemember Somers expressed support for the Program and noted that the proposal does not replace Code Compliance Officers, but rather the Program provides "another set of eyes" to identify problems.

It was moved by Committeemember Somers, seconded by Committeemember Whalen, to recommend to the Council that the Mesa Code Team Volunteer Code Enforcement Program be approved in the four designated neighborhoods for a one-year trial period.

Committeemember Whalen commended the neighborhood representatives for their efforts, but said that based on his past experience with a volunteer program, he was not optimistic regarding the sustainability of the program. He acknowledged that the program could provide a valuable service to the entire community, and he suggested that the effort also include thank you letters to neighbors who comply.

Chairman Griswold stated the opinion that the program would educate citizens regarding the City Code, and he expressed support for implementing the program for a one-year trial period.

Chairman Griswold called for the vote.

Carried unanimously.

In response to a question from Committeemember Whalen, Ms. Dollar advised that she was unaware of any current effort to create a new Housing Code.

Mr. Villa stated that the Prosecutor's Office has been addressing some proposed changes to the existing Housing Code.

Chairman Griswold thanked staff and Ms. Wright for the presentation, and he acknowledged the efforts of the neighborhood representatives who were present in the audience.

4. Hear a presentation, discuss and make a recommendation on renaming the Mesa Southwest Museum.

Arts and Cultural Center Assistant Director Rob Schultz advised that staff is recommending that the name of the Mesa Southwest Museum be changed to the Arizona Museum of Natural History in order to more accurately reflect the current mission of the museum. He noted that newspaper articles solicited public opinion on the possible name change and 151 visitors to the museum provided input. Mr. Schultz reported that the majority expressed support for the name change, and he stated that staff anticipates that the name change will generate additional visitors and greater public and private support for the museum.

Mr. Schultz stated that the direct costs to implement the name change would be negligible. He noted that the only City expense would be replacement of the brown signs installed by the City in the area of the museum. He explained that the new name would appear on printed materials (letterhead, brochures, etc.) when the existing supplies were depleted, and he added that the Southwest Museum Foundation has agreed to fund the cost of a new sign for the museum building.

Mr. Schultz explained that the increased revenues that could result from the change are difficult to project, but staff estimates additional annual revenue of up to \$150,000 based on 25,000 additional visitors (50% adult and 50% youth) paying the current admission fees. He noted that an increase in visitors would also generate additional gift shop sales. Mr. Schultz reported that both the Museum and Cultural Advisory Board and the Mesa Southwest Museum Foundation unanimously concurred with staff's recommendation to change the name to the Arizona Museum of Natural History.

In response to a question from Chairman Griswold, Southwest Museum Administrator Tom Wilson stated the opinion that the name change presents a great opportunity for the museum. He noted there is no major natural history museum in Arizona and that the closest natural history museums are located in Los Angeles and Albuquerque. Mr. Wilson further stated that the name change would enable the museum to create new partnerships, obtain additional grants and develop Statewide support for the museum.

It was moved by Committeemember Somers, seconded by Committeemember Whalen, to recommend to the Council that staff's recommendation to rename the Mesa Southwest Museum to the Arizona Museum of Natural History be approved.

Carried unanimously.

Chairman Griswold thanked staff for the presentation, and he expressed gratitude to the Mesa Southwest Museum Foundation for offering to fund the costs for the building sign.

5. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Community and Neighborhood Services Committee meeting adjourned at 4:17 p.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Community and Neighborhood Services Committee meeting of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 25th day of June 2007. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

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Attachments (2)