

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 October 13, 2005.

Members Present:

LeRoy Brady
John Dyer (arrived 12:50pm)
Connie Gullatt-Whiteman
Jeff Kirk
Dina Lopez
David Martinez
Walter "Bud" Page, Jr.
Marilyn Wilson

Members Absent:

Russ Gillard, excused
Don Goodrum, excused
Bernadine Mooney, unexcused

Staff Present:

Jared Alder
Darla Armfield
Tim Barnard
Mike Holste
Mary Lindemuth
Aimee Manis
Beverly Nielsen
Terri Palmberg
Rob Price
Diane Rogers
Linda Thompson
Sherry Woodley

The meeting was called to order at 12:03 p.m. by Bud Page, FY05-06 Chair.

Mr. Page introduced and welcomed new Board member David Martinez. Mr. Martinez gave a brief personal background.

Mr. Page asked Jeff Kirk to provide information concerning a check the City recently received from Wal-Mart.

Mr. Kirk said Wal-Mart believes in being part of a community. When a new store opens, about \$20,000 becomes available for donation. Mr. Kirk is employed by a recently opened Wal-Mart and led the effort for Mesa to apply for funds. About \$8,000 was awarded to various Mesa organizations, with \$1,000 being awarded to Mesa Parks and Recreation.

Mr. Page queried the Board about the November Board meeting. It was the consensus of Board members that the meeting be held on the scheduled date of November 10.

Approval of Minutes

Dina Lopez made a motion, Marilyn Wilson seconded, and it was unanimously carried to approve the minutes from the meeting of September 22, 2005.

Public Comments

No public comments.

Citizen Survey

Tim Barnard reported that the Parks and Recreation Division contracted with Leisure Vision/ETC Institute in May 2005 to conduct a citizen survey. Leisure Vision/ETC Institute is a nationally known firm that conducted the last Mesa Parks and Recreation citizen survey, as part of the public input efforts associated with the development of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan in March of 2001.

The Community Attitude and Interest Citizen Survey was conducted during July and August of 2005 to aid in establishing priorities for current levels of service for and future development of parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services within the community. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout the city of Mesa. The survey was administered by a combination of mail and phone.

Leisure Vision worked extensively with Parks and Recreation and Community Services staff in the development of the survey questionnaire. This allowed the survey to be tailored to issues of strategic importance to effectively assess public opinion on key planning and financing issues facing the Division and the City of Mesa.

In July 2005, surveys were mailed to a random sample of 3,002 households in Mesa. Approximately three days after the surveys were mailed, each household that received a survey also received an electronic voice message encouraging them to complete the survey. Additionally, about two weeks after the surveys were mailed, Leisure Vision began contacting households by phone, either to encourage completion of the mailed survey or to administer the survey by phone.

The goal was to obtain at least 600 completed surveys. This goal was accomplished, with 620 surveys being completed. The results of the random sample of 620 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/-3.3%.

Leisure Vision/ETC Institute provided a final survey report. The survey tool, which included 29 total questions, provided a wealth of data and results. Some of the key findings from the survey are:

- 66% of respondent households have visited City of Mesa parks during the past year.
- Of the 66% of respondents who have visited Mesa parks during the past year, 88% rated the physical condition of all the Mesa parks they have visited as either excellent (29%) or good (59%).
- 23% of respondent households have participated in programs offered by the City of Mesa during the past year.
- Of the 23% of respondents who have participated in Mesa programs during the past year, 93% rated the quality of programs they have participated in as either excellent (42%) or good (51%).
- The top five types of facilities that respondents selected as ones they use most often are small neighborhood parks (36%), large community parks (23%), children's playgrounds (22%), walking and biking trails (22%), and picnic shelters/areas (21%).
- The top four programs that respondents selected as most important are adult exercise and fitness programs (25%), recreational swimming (24%), community special events (18%), and swim lessons (16%).
- 86% of respondents said that parks and open space do provide economic benefit to the city.
- 96% of respondents indicated that well maintained parks and open space do enhance the property value of surrounding homes.
- Between 88% and 97% of respondents indicate that it is a function of the City of Mesa Government to provide the following actions: maintenance of existing parks and recreation facilities (97%); acquisition of parks and open space (91%); development of new recreation facilities (90%); and providing programs and activities (88%);
- 70% of respondents indicated they either would vote in favor (45%) or might vote in favor (25%) of a bond referendum.
- 73% of respondents indicated that it is either very important (29%) or somewhat important (44%) to fund improvements to parks and recreation services compared to other priorities for the City of Mesa.

Board members were given a CD with full results of the survey.

Mr. Barnard said the City will undertake extensive public information and marketing efforts before the tax and bond initiatives next year. He introduced Rob Price, Marketing Coordinator for the Community Services Department, and said Mr. Price will do some public relations pieces for the initiatives. The survey indicates that the City has support from the community; it is valuable and timely information

Mr. Page asked if fix up/repair of existing city parks was a generic question or if specific parks were identified.

Mr. Barnard replied that it was a generic question.

David Martinez asked if the survey was open ended.

Mr. Barnard replied that some questions included a line to write in answers. However, most questions were options to choose from and were based on what the City does on a day-to-day basis. Questions were not in-depth due to the cost and length of the survey.

Mr. Price advised that the responses can be cross-tabbed geographically, so staff can determine the areas of town that received the most answers.

Mr. Barnard said the survey contains eight different categories with which to tabulate.

Ms. Wilson asked how Leisure Vision determined 3,002 random households.

Mr. Barnard replied that the company utilizes a standard method to get to that number. The group has done two other surveys for the City of Mesa and is very well known in the Valley by governmental agencies.

Terri Palmberg said that in the age groups, there are good representation, diversity, and income levels. The Park Ranger Program, however, was misrepresented. The City does not market or have citizens enroll in the park ranger program; however, it is in the list with recreation programs.

Summer 2005 Recreation Programs

Beverly Nielsen said the Summer Recreation Program could not happen without all the partnerships with other City departments and school districts. She introduced Jared Alder, assistant with the program.

Ms. Nielsen said each summer the Division is challenged with providing the ever increasing population of Mesa with a variety of quality recreation programs designed to meet the diverse needs of the thousands of participants and parents who utilize these services during June and July. In order to meet the needs of the community, staff are required to offer over 20 program sites throughout Mesa, with programs divided into five separate types (Boredom Busters, Kids In Action, Kids Club, Summer Adventure Program, and the Youth Adventure Series). Each of these programs varies in length, activities, size, and cost.

The Summer Recreation Program has a unique relationship with Mesa Public Schools in that Parks and Recreation is allowed to utilize several school facilities for an eight-week period at a discounted rate during June and July.

Highlights of the Summer Recreation Program include:

- Use of over 200 volunteers, generating 21,608 hours of service to the operation of all of the program sites.
- An extensive inclusion program has been developed by the adaptive staff, allowing children with a variety of abilities, needs, and backgrounds to participate and play together at each of these recreation sites.
- Summer 2005 was the 25th Anniversary of the Summer Recreation Program at Mesa Parks and Recreation.
- The success of the Summer Recreation Program depends on partnerships that have been developed between the Mesa Recreation staff, Mesa's Aquatics program and staff, Mesa Public Schools, Gilbert Public Schools, and other departments within the City of Mesa.

Ms. Nielsen provided the following highlights of each program:

Boredom Busters:

- A half-day afternoon camp, held from 1:00-5:30p, Monday-Thursday.
- Camp has two 4-week sessions, with each session costing \$52 per person.
- Participants must be entering the 1st - 6th grade in the fall.
- There are ten separate sites offered throughout Mesa.
- Activities include P.E. skills, crafts, games, guest speakers, theme days, special events, movies, and swimming twice a week.

Kids Club:

- A half-day afternoon camp, held from 1:00-5:30p, Monday-Thursday.
- Camp has two 4-week sessions, with each session costing \$27 per participant.
- Participants are allowed to enter and leave the program site as they choose.
- Participants must be entering the 1st - 6th grade during the fall.
- There are three separate sites offered throughout Mesa.
- Activities include crafts, games, special events, movies, and swimming.

Kids In Action:

- Separate morning (9:30a-12p) and afternoon (1:00-3:30p) sessions are offered at each location, Monday-Thursday.
- Camp has two 4-week sessions, with each session costing \$37 per participant.
- Participants must be entering the 1st - 6th grade during the fall.
- There are four separate sites offered throughout Mesa.
- Activities include games, crafts, theme days, and special events.

Summer Adventure Program:

- An all day camp, held from 7:00a-6:00p, Monday-Friday.
- Camp has eight 1-week sessions, with each session costing \$94 per participant.
- Participants must be entering the 1st - 6th grade during the fall.
- There are three separate sites offered throughout Mesa.
- Activities include recreational and educational opportunities, with P.E. activities, crafts, games, movies, guest speakers, special events, daily swimming, and a weekly field trip.

Youth Adventure Series:

- A full day program, held from 8:00a-4:00p, Fridays only.
- Participants must be entering the 1st - 6th grade during the fall.
- Program has six separate trips, each to a different location, for a cost of \$28 per participant per trip. Trip sites have included Arizona Science Center, Bank One Ballpark, IMAX, Polar Ice, Fiddlesticks, Skateland, Broadway Palms Theatre, Stratum Laser Tag, Mesa Southwest Museum, Arizona Rock Gym, and Sunsplash. Each trip includes open swim at Brimhall Pool (time permitting).

Ms. Nielsen distributed the summer programs newsletter. She said there were over 2,700 participants this past summer and waiting lists were necessary.

Ms. Lopez asked how the school sites are selected.

Ms. Nielsen replied that in March, a meeting is held with Mesa staff, the school district, and other organizations. The school district has a master schedule of sites that are available. Mesa tries to have a site operating in each area of the city.

Mr. Martinez asked how the program is advertised, especially to new residents.

Ms. Nielsen replied that the program is advertised in the TimeOut brochure, on the City and Division web sites, and flyers are distributed at schools.

Summer 2005 Aquatics Program

Mr. Page read an email from Russ Gillard, who was unable to attend the meeting. Mr. Gillard complimented aquatics staff for the good job they do.

Mr. Page presented a check to aquatics staff from the HoHoKam Board for \$5,000 for the Making Waves program.

Darla Armfield introduced aquatics staff Linda Thompson and Aimee Manis. She then provided the following overview of the 2005 summer aquatics program.

The aquatics program is instrumental in achieving the Community Services' vision of making Mesa the greatest place to live, work, and play. Its long history dates back to the 1920's when the Rendezvous Pool was the sole aquatic center of Mesa's community. Today, things have changed. Twelve city pools are now cooperatively operated with the Mesa Public School District. Program operation is shared and divided into two periods, school-use and non-school use. In general, Mesa Public Schools use the pools for junior high physical education curriculum and high school swim and dive team practice and competition. The City uses the pools for recreation teams, swim lessons, public swimming, and rentals. While the City facilitates pool usage year round, the bulk of the programming is held during the summer.

In summer 2005, Mesa's pools were busy from sun up to well past sun down. A typical day begins at 5:30 a.m. with the start of competitive practice for swimming, synchronized swimming, water polo, and/or diving. Lessons begin approximately four hours later followed by afternoon public swimming. Public swim at most facilities is held from 1-7 p.m. except for specialized pools referred to as "night pools." (Night pool programs mirror the morning programs by offering working parents and their children an opportunity to participate in evening swim and dive teams and swim lessons.) The day concludes with water polo practice and competition, swim, dive and synchronized swimming competition, and pool rentals. Programming concludes by 10 p.m.

Recreation Teams: Swimming, Diving, Synchronized Swimming and Water Polo: The recreational team program can best be summarized in a parent's own words, "My child participated for health and a sense of belonging as well as fostering a sense of responsibility and fun. She loved this program and plans to continue each summer." Comments like this are a common explanation of why parents and participants love Mesa's recreational team program. The program is comprised of four sports; swimming, diving, synchronized swimming, and water polo. Swimming, diving, and synchronized swimming are offered at all 11 junior high pools and water polo is offered at five pools. A competitive format provides for daily practice and weekly competition. The program is held for eight weeks during June and July during a critical down time in the city when school is out and the climate is hot. School age youth 5-17 years-old are

encouraged to participate to improve their aquatic skills and fitness levels and most importantly, have fun. Attendance this past summer totaled over 2,700 participants. Water polo continues as the sport most in demand, especially in the Brimhall and Shepherd areas. Both teams filled and overflow had to be accommodated at Mesa Jr. and Powell. Finding pool space for water polo is challenging, but future pool renovations will add deeper water and larger competitive areas, thus providing more program capacity.

Swimming Lessons and Volunteer Programs: Arizona has one of the highest drowning rates in the nation. Children love being around water whether it be backyard pool, public pool, or play pool and those under five are most vulnerable to drowning accidents. Mesa's learn-to-swim program is critical in teaching children how to swim and educating parents about the dangers of water and proper safety precautions. Water adjustment classes begin for infants at six months of age where parent and child attend class together. It is really the parent that is taught when children are so young. Swimming skills and appropriate reaction in emergency situations are best retained after age three. Swim instruction is divided into various levels all the way through adult lessons. Instruction progresses from basic swim stroke to more advanced competitive strokes such as butterfly and breaststroke. Other lessons include diving, lifeguard training, fitness instruction, Boy Scout merit badge, junior lifeguard training, water polo, and synchronized swimming.

A new lesson curriculum was introduced this year. The Starfish program replaced the traditional American Red Cross program primarily to gain more lesson plan flexibility. The progression aligned better with the competitive stroke skill development, allowing a more efficient transition in to the recreational team environment, the next step after stroke mastery. Registered participants for swimming lessons alone totaled 12,195 and participation reached 90,000.

The jewel of the 2005 lesson program was the volunteers. Two volunteer programs were utilized, the Guard Start and Golden Instructors (G.I.'s). The Guard Start program has existed for over 10 years and targets teens 13-16 years of age. Its goal is to prepare teens to compete for lifeguard jobs. Training begins with a two-week class where participants learn the responsibilities of lifeguarding and swim lesson instruction. After their training is complete, participants begin acquiring direct experience by volunteering in learn-to-swim classes and other programs. Their presence in the classes adds more one-on-one instruction time and decreases student ratios in classes. Over 150 teens participated this summer, donating over 10,600 volunteer hours. The most innovative volunteer program was Golden Instructors. This program is in its second year of operation and utilizes seniors to assist swim lesson instructors. Similar to Guard Start, these volunteers improve the instructor-to-student ratio, but the seniors also provide the benefit of life experiences contributing to their relationship building potential and communication abilities. Seven seniors volunteered their time for 167 hours.

Public Swim and Reservations: Afternoons at the pools are reserved for public swimming and host a multitude of experiences. Mesa's entire community, younger and older, spend time at the pool for family fun, lap swimming, swim skill practice, special events, cooling off, etc. The newer pools draw the largest crowds due to special amenities. Shepherd, Stapley, and Brimhall have water slides, grass and lounging areas, zero depth pools, and spray features. The more traditional pools, built over 20 years ago, are showing their age and innovative programming helps sustain attendance. Special events draw neighborhood youth who would not normally show up. The teen midnight madness drew regular crowds of 75 youth or more. Two of the largest water safety events are held during public swim hours. Water Safety Day is hosted at all pools the first week of operation to education youth on facility rules, emergency procedures, safe and unsafe behaviors, and other safety education topics. Frequently the Fire Department will bring the fire trucks and assist with rescue scenarios and drowning prevention information. Another event is held a week later at Mesa Jr. that specifically targets the Hispanic community with the same message. Public swim attendance totaled 83,153 participants. Free group usage totaled an

additional 44,873 participants. Free group usage is comprised of other Mesa Parks and Recreation programs such as Boredom Busters, Camp Fiesta, etc.

Pool reservations fill a unique need for businesses, churches, non-profit organization, families, and schools. These organizations rent the pools for exclusive use and host parties, social gatherings, and other events. This is the only program that generates a profit to help offset other program costs. Over 250 reservations were recorded this past year, totaling over 26,000 participants.

Ms. Armfield concluded by saying that Mesa's aquatics program is widely supported by Mesa residents, as demonstrated in the most recent demand for a pool at Smith Junior High. Programs are regularly evaluated by the users and adjusted to keep pace with community needs and aquatic trends. A sample survey and 2005 Aquatic Survey Highlights were distributed.

Reports on Meetings and/or Events Attended

Ms. Lopez reported that Xicanindio will be having an opening reception at the Mesa Arts Center.

John Dyer said the parks in Mesa are full every night of the week with youth playing various sports, such as baseball and soccer.

Mr. Page reported that he and Russ Gillard attended the September 22, 2005 Growing Smarter meeting which was held at Centennial Hall. The focus was "Where do we go from here?" It was a good meeting.

Staff Updates

Mike Holste reported on the following events/programs:

- Mesa Association of Sports for the Disabled will hold its 12th annual fundraising dinner/dance on October 15.
- Mesa Pow Wow will be held October 29-30 at Pioneer Park.
- Veterans Day Parade will be held November 11 and will include a Stealth flyover.
- Adult Sports programs had 458 teams participating in various sports.
- Gene Autry Sports Complex has begun its fall hours of 8 am-9 pm. Staff at Autry are preparing for five weekend tournaments over the next six weekends.

Mr. Holste advised board members to contact him if they would like to visit the programs.

Sherry Woodley introduced Mary Lindemuth, who is completing a Management Development Opportunity with the division. She then asked the Board for volunteers to serve on the division's fees and charges subcommittee, explaining that the subcommittee would have 2-3 meetings. Staff has been reviewing the economic impact of various programs and that information will be included in some of the cost recovery data provided to the subcommittee. Board members who will serve on the subcommittee are John Dyer, Connie Gullatt-Whiteman, and Marilyn Wilson. (Note: After the regular meeting, Mr. Martinez asked Mr. Page to also serve on the subcommittee.)

Mr. Barnard distributed a news release concerning The League of American Bicyclists reaffirming Mesa's status as a "Bicycle-Friendly Community," following a thorough review of the City's efforts to provide safe facilities for bicyclists and to encourage residents to bike for transportation and recreation. Mesa received the bronze award, the fourth-highest level of the League's Bicycle-Friendly Community national awards program.

Mr. Barnard also distributed a map showing the location of a pedestrian bridge adjacent to Palo Verde Park and a map of the multi-use master plan.

Ms. Palmberg gave a slide presentation on the Foundation for Mesa Parks and Recreation. The Foundation will be undertaking a "Bricks Program" in connection with the Westwood High School/Carson Junior High and Smith Junior High aquatics projects. The Foundation will partner with the Westwood Student Council to sell bricks for Carson. A meeting with student groups from Skyline High School will be scheduled to discuss this program. The next meeting of the Foundation will be November 4, 2005, at 4 p.m. Board members were invited to attend.

Chair's Comments

Mr. Page provided comments at the time the Board meeting was called to order, so no comments were given at this time.

Director's Report

Bob White gave the following reports:

- As the weather cools down, people begin to engage in outdoor activities, thus the use of parks and ramadas has also increased.
- The 2005 Citizens Bond Committee will meet on Wednesday, October 19, at 6:30 pm. Parks and Recreation staff will present follow-up data which originated from the September 14 meeting.
- Staff was asked to develop a list of potential cuts, a "worst case scenario" list. Parks and Recreation cut \$4 million, and the Community Services Department total was \$13 million. All City departments were affected. A RIWF (Reduction in Work Force) program is being developed by the Personnel Division. It is an unsettling time for the City; however, it gives staff the opportunity to look at programs and find new ways to deliver services.
- A special City Council Study Session will be held Tuesday, October 18, at 3:30 pm. The City's budget and financial issues will be discussed.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 1:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob White
Parks and Recreation Director