

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 13, 2007.

Members Present:

Frank Alger
Reggie Dye
Russ Gillard
Connie Gullatt-Whiteman
Jeff Kirk
David Martinez
Walter "Bud" Page, Jr.
Michelle Udall
Marilyn Wilson

Members Absent:

Don Goodrum, excused
Dina Lopez, excused

Staff Present:

Rhett Evans
Andrea Moore
J.D. Dockstader
Rochelle Rotert
Bob Huhn
Dawn Bies
Kelly Rafferty
Dale Furnas
Scot Rigby
Mike Holste
Alfred Smith

The meeting was called to order at 4:01 p.m. by Connie Gullatt-Whiteman, Chair.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman asked if there was a motion for approval of the minutes from the August 9, 2007 meeting. Marilyn Wilson made a motion, Russ Gillard seconded, and it was unanimously carried to approve the minutes as written.

Public Comments

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman opened the floor for public comments and introduced Tom Klobas from the Arizona Railway Museum. Mr. Klobas reviewed his company's proposal about the Pioneer Park locomotive (Agenda Item #4).

Chair Comments

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman requested input from the Board regarding possible dates for a tour/board meeting/facility retreat. It was concluded to expand the October 11, 2007 meeting from two to four hours to include a tour/retreat for the Board.

It was decided that staff would make available a list of facilities from which to choose, with each Board member responding back with their preferences in terms of priority. Staff would consider all responses, and then establish a route for the tour.

Discuss and Make Recommendation to Council – Pioneer Park Locomotive

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman introduced Mike Holste to give the Board background information regarding the Pioneer Park locomotive.

Mr. Holste began by informing the Board that in 1965 an airplane was placed nearby the locomotive at Pioneer Park. It was sold in 1995 for \$100 and taken to the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) Museum in Quartzite, Arizona, and is now located at the USS Hornet Museum in California. Mr. Holste passed around a picture of the airplane, along with some further facts and statistics about the airplane, which had been previously requested by the Board.

Mr. Holste introduced Ernestine Tesarek from the City's Neighborhood Services Department. He explained that Ms. Tesarek has worked with him on the locomotive issues for approximately one year, and is available to the Board should any questions arise regarding the locomotive.

Mr. Holste shared some historical facts on the locomotive in his presentation, saying that a committee had been formed a year ago to discuss and make a recommendation to the Board about the future of the locomotive.

Mr. Holste informed the Board that the City had brought in an expert specializing in train restorations who concluded that something needed to be done with the train within the next two to three years. Mr. Holste presented the Board with three recommendations from the sub-committee to resolve the locomotive issue:

- Restore and rehabilitate the locomotive at a cost of approximately \$240,000; locomotive would be relocated to another area with better visibility within Pioneer Park. The City would be responsible for on-going maintenance of the locomotive.
- Initiate a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the sale of the locomotive, (the City has received inquiries from three parties, all from California, interested in purchasing, restoring and making the locomotive functional again).
- Exhibit the locomotive at the Arizona Railway Museum; the City would retain ownership, however, the locomotive would move to Chandler at a cost of \$30,000 to the City. This would ensure that the locomotive would remain in the East Valley.

The presentation highlighted the current condition of the locomotive, outlining concerns/issues regarding relocation and renovation. Mr. Holste explained that the locomotive is home to 12 to 20 cats, has many heavily rusted areas, and cement had been poured on the top of the locomotive for use as a walkway in previous years, possibly dropping into the boiler, which could make it inoperable. An iron fence was put up due to vandalism and as a safety precaution (asbestos leaking out from portions of the rusted areas), which makes it difficult to view.

Ms. Wilson asked what other cities had done with locomotives that had been donated to them. Mr. Holste mentioned a case in Nebraska where the City had restored the engine and built a depot for it. Mr. Klobas told the Board that the engine from Chandler, which is on display at the Arizona Railway Museum, was restored by the Museum with Chandler retaining ownership. He also mentioned that Kingman, Flagstaff and Tucson all have trains. Mr. Holste added that Scottsdale also has a train.

Ms. Wilson asked if those communities all have funds to expend regarding their trains. Mr. Holste stated that he was unsure if City funds were used, or if they were Friends of the Train or volunteer groups.

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman asked if anyone had come forward offering to start a Friends of the Train group that could be combined with grant opportunities or donations. Mr. Holste answered that there have been inquiries from citizens who wanted to be part of a group, but no one has come forward and offered to lead the group at this time.

David Martinez inquired about the types of offers the City had received to purchase the trains. Jeff Kirk responded that one of the offers was for \$5,000. Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman added that there would still be clean up/restoration work needed for the park area afterwards, and that amount might possibly take care of that work.

Ms. Tesarek presented the Board with a list of grant sources as possible funding venues. Mr. Page asked if it would be possible to go to each grant source individually and acquire funds from each. Ms. Tesarek explained that some sources do not put a limit on the amount requested; however, some are 50/50 matching grants.

Mr. Martinez asked about the phasing process for restoration and if there was a timetable for each phase. Mr. Holste replied that it would most likely be a three to five year process, with the asbestos and lead paint abatement being the first phase.

Mr. Martinez asked if a grant would be awarded on an annual basis or a one-time basis. Ms. Tesarek replied that it would depend on the grant source; however the City had, on some previous projects that were phased, returned to grant sources and asked for funding for the subsequent phase.

Mr. Kirk stated that regardless of the grant situation, the quote is in today's dollars and the City needs to inquire about opportunities for private funding from community sources in addition to applying for grants.

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman asked for a motion to be made regarding the locomotive.

Mr. Gillard made a motion, Ms. Wilson seconded, and it was unanimously carried that the Board wants the City to form a citizen's advisory committee to come up with a recommendation and funding to keep the locomotive in Mesa, fully restored, or to supplement the movement of the locomotive to the Arizona Railway Museum. If neither of these options occurs within six months, the Board recommends the City go forward with the Request for Proposal for the sale of the locomotive.

Hear a Presentation and Discuss the Relocation of the Riverview Softball Fields

Scot Rigby shared information with the Board regarding the relocation of the Riverview softball fields as presented to the City Council during an earlier Council meeting. Mr. Rigby asked Mr. Holste to talk to the Board about ball field configurations. Mr. Holste spoke about recommendations that should include:

- A minimum 16-acre site plus a buffer for residential areas for lights, noise and traffic
- Four 310-foot fields in a cloverleaf configuration for play, operations and maintenance
- Seventy to 100 feet between the fields for warm-up and foul ball safety zones
- Centralized restrooms and a concession stand
- Parking area with a minimum of 250 parking spaces
- Fenced and gated complex so fields are protected from unauthorized use and overuse
- Construction of an irrigation lake to reduce watering expenses

Mr. Rigby explained that, along with staff involvement, a real estate broker was hired by the City to look for potential ball field sites on the west side of the City. Fifteen sites have been evaluated so far on private property, existing City-owned property, and other public property,

along with input from citizens, as possibilities for replacement ball fields. The sites range from 5-62 acres but the 12-acre parcels would only accommodate two ball fields. He then asked for questions from the Board.

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman clarified that this is not an action item on the meeting agenda; however, it shall be in the future. Mr. Rigby further clarified that staff would be keeping the Board and the City Council abreast of the process as property owners are contacted and the real estate options are narrowed down.

For the record, Mr. Page declared that he would be recusing himself from the current and any future discussions/voting process regarding the ballparks or the Waveyard project, however, he will continue to attend and be involved in the meetings. He explained that he is an active real estate broker and is attempting to acquire a location which creates a conflict of interest.

Director's Report

Update on Riverview Park survey results – Mr. Evans told the Board that to date, the live on-line survey has only received 132 responses, with the majority of the respondents in the Riverview area (zip code 85201). Staff would like to receive more responses; therefore, advertising will be increased as well as an additional press release and emails sent out to encourage citizens to participate in the survey. Once the survey ends (in approximately two weeks), staff will gather all the data and compile it into a summary report to share with the Board.

Mr. Evans continued by stating that citizens have many ideas as to where the ball fields should be located, and all of these sites have been passed along to management so that each one is investigated and researched to see if it is a viable location.

Michelle Udall asked Mr. Evans if the 9/13/07 public meeting at Whittier Elementary was advertised. Mr. Evans said that the Mesa Grande Alliance, which was active in helping to develop the online survey questions, have sent out emails to specific target groups within their association to advertise the public meeting that would allow citizen input to reconfigure Riverview Park.

Annual Report – FY 06/07 – The Parks, Recreation & Commercial Facilities (PRCF) FY 06/07 Annual Report was distributed to each Board member. Mr. Evans reminded the Board that the report is posted on the City's website and thanked staff for all of their accomplishments and challenges that were overcome during this past year.

Review upcoming events – The TimeOut Fall publication was distributed to each Board member. Mr. Evans explained that the brochure lists all of Parks and Recreation's current activities and programs, with the focus on after-school programs and sports leagues. He encouraged the Board to make their friends and neighbors aware of what is available through the City's recreation program. Mr. Evans also mentioned that the PRCF department, along with the Mesa Association of Sports for the Disabled (MASD), is hosting a fundraiser, on Saturday, September 22nd at the Phoenix-Mesa Marriott, and would share more details with any of the Board members if they were interested in participating. Mr. Evans invited the Board to come to the Special Olympics Fall Championships on October 5th and 6th, held at various sites, and to the Turkey Trot at Jefferson Recreation Center on November 20th, and at Webster Recreation Center on November 21st.

Upcoming facilities tour/retreat – After receiving input from the Board, Mr. Evans scheduled the retreat and tour for Thursday, October 11th, and staff will put together a list of facilities to be toured and send it to Board members via email for consideration as to which facilities would be of

the most interest. A retreat will follow the facilities tour, and Mr. Evans gave an overview of some of the topics that he would like the Board to consider for review and/or discussion in order to educate the staff and provide direction. They are as follows:

- Review “Mesa 2025: A Shared Vision”
- Redefine the current strategic plan and identify any gaps
- Decide whether to revamp the plan based upon current financial structure
- Identify next year’s focus (acquire park land/develop park acres *or* expand the parks programs)
- Discuss how the plan will impact the future in 5-10+ years

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman added that the retreat is also the time for the Board to review last year’s recommendations to staff and evaluate what the Parks Board and staff have collectively accomplished to date. Mr. Evans stated that he and Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman would meet prior to the retreat to review the Work Plan that was originally established in 2006 after the Parks Board created some priority areas. He and Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman will update the current work plan and share this, too, with Board members and staff at the retreat.

Reports on Meetings and/or Events Attended by Board Members

Mr. Page, Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman, Ms. Udall, and Mr. Gillard attended the APRA Boards and Commissions Day at the annual conference on Thursday, August 30th in Tucson, which they all found to be very interesting and informative. Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman and Ms. Udall attended a new board member orientation session with the City’s Board and Commission’s liaison, Heidi Gast. Mr. Gillard also attended a Council Study Session regarding an update on the relocation of the Riverview Park ball fields. Mr. Kirk attended a Parks meeting in Las Vegas and commented that they are very forward thinking.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 5:18 p.m.

Convene an Executive Session

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman asked for a motion for the Board to convene an executive session regarding Discussion or consultation with designated representatives of the City in order to consider the City’s position and instruct the City’s representatives regarding negotiations for the purchase, sale, or lease of real property (Riverview softball fields) (A.R.S. §38-431.03A (7)). Mr. Gillard made a motion, Mr. Martinez seconded and it was unanimously carried to convene an executive session. Mr. Page was excused from the executive session.

Respectfully submitted,

J. Rhett Evans
Parks, Recreation and Commercial Facilities Director