

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 100 N. Center Street, Mesa on September 14, 2006.

Members Present:

LeRoy Brady
Reggie Dye
Russ Gillard
Connie Gullatt-Whiteman
Jeff Kirk
Dina Lopez
David Martinez
Bernadine Mooney
Walter "Bud" Page, Jr.
Marilyn Wilson

Staff Present:

Darla Armfield
Al Bravo
Mike Holste
Cindy Hunt
Mary Lindemuth
Kym Otterstedt
Terri Palmberg
Scot Rigby
Jenny Sheppard
Patricia Sorensen
Sherry Woodley

Members Absent

Don Goodrum, excused

The meeting was called to order at 12:01 p.m. by Bud Page, Chair.

Election of Officers

Marilyn Wilson made a motion, LeRoy Brady seconded, and it was unanimously carried to re-elect Bud Page as Chair for FY06-07. Mr. Page thanked the group.

LeRoy Brady made a motion, David Martinez seconded, and it was unanimously carried to re-elect Connie Gullatt-Whiteman as Vice Chair for FY06-07. Ms. Gulatt-Whiteman thanked the group as well.

Public Comments

No public comments.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Russ Gillard moved to accept the minutes from the meeting of August 17, 2006. Ms. Dina Lopez seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Report on Special Events

Assistant Director Mike Holste addressed the Board to report on the recommendation of the Special Events Study Group. The group, composed of two Board members, Russ Gillard and Dina Lopez, and staff members Cindy Hunt, Al Bravo and Mike Holste, convened to study the handling of multiple requests for special events that were formerly managed by the Parks and Recreation Division on City park sites. The study group proposed that non-profits not be given automatic first right of refusal for reservations of park facilities, nor, in light of current fiscal restraints, that fees be waived, as fee waivers

would have a negative impact on revenues. To ensure that reserving park sites for special events is handled fairly and impartially, in the event that more than one organization seeks to reserve the same park for popular dates (such as May 4-7 for Cinco de Mayo), a special event application would be filled out and submitted to a panel comprised of Parks and Recreation Board members for review. Staff would be included per the Board's request. The review panel would use a score sheet to rank the competing organizations, then make a recommendation to the Parks and Recreation Director for a final decision. Score sheet criteria would include history of event production, benefit to the community, and other appropriate rating points. In the event of a tie, the Director would make a decision. Non-profit organizations that benefit Mesa would receive additional points.

Management Support Administrator Sherry Woodley addressed the Board to report that she had surveyed the cities of Scottsdale, Chandler and Tempe for their policies on non-profit organizations. None offer discounts to non-profits. Russ Gillard asked whether the City had in the past offered a discount to non-profit organizations. Sherry Woodley responded that we have not. The fees schedule is based on non-profits and commercial events have a 10% increased cost.

Marilyn Wilson stated that she would refrain from discussion as she and her spouse had both been charter members of Sister Cities.

Dina Lopez said that the study group wanted to be fair and so developed selection criteria. The group felt that an award point system would be the most fair.

Russ Gillard agreed that a point system is a fair way of analysis and noted that it would require Board volunteers to help judge. The fairest system would be a lottery, although accountability is lost using that method. He considers a lottery as the method of last resort.

Bud Page declared the item open for discussion and queried Al Bravo and Cindy Hunt for their recommendations. Al Bravo, Marketing Specialist, stated that from the City of Mesa standpoint and from the standpoint of many voters, the mandate is to reduce and/or eliminate staff time spent on special events. The City must respect the wishes of the voters. Cindy Hunt, Recreation Supervisor, concurred. Staff must provide a quick turnaround for event planning purposes.

Dina Lopez proposed a panel of two Board members and one member of the community to evaluate special events. David Martinez questioned the number of special events under consideration. In a year's timeframe, how many events would require evaluation? We must keep in mind that a precedent is being set. Acting Community Services Director Trisha Sorensen informed the Board that in prior years City staff produced nine events and supported five. Sherry Woodley noted that generally six months to one year of preparation is required to plan an event. David Martinez asked whether the three-member panel would retain the same members or would membership rotate? Russ Gillard said that the sub-committee would have rotating membership.

David Martinez stated that the Board report was marked "draft". By voting today, what exactly are we recommending and can it be changed? Acting Parks and Recreation Jenny Sheppard spoke to inform the Board that the next City Council study session would be held next Thursday, September 21. David Martinez suggested adding a

qualifier to the rating template, "How would people benefit from an event", not just who would benefit. Would the benefit be social? Monetary? Russ Gillard responded with the suggestion that the qualifier could be included in question four on the template and made more explicit.

David Martinez expressed concern with the rating system. Non-profit organizations benefiting Mesa enjoy an automatic 10% advantage over businesses. There needs to be a solid reason for the preference given. Russ Gillard explained that non-profits benefit Mesa. Reggie Dye said that this heralds back to prior discussions and that he was also troubled by the rating system. Sherry Woodley observed that Tempe has a resident versus non-resident system in place with preference given to Tempe based organizations. Dina Lopez said that this issue frequently arises. Preference is given to Mesa based organizations.

Russ Gillard agreed and said that when an event involves overnight stays increased priority was given in the past. Bud Page asked if other Board members wished to comment. Dina Lopez and Bernadine Mooney responded that they had no comments. LeRoy Brady agreed that "how" an organization benefits Mesa must be better defined. Still, a system must be put in place and we must recognize that the unexpected will occur. We must adapt to the changing circumstances and remain flexible. Russ Gillard stated that David Martinez raises good points. Further review of the point scale would be beneficial. He would like to see more detail on question number five on the template.

Jeff Kirk stated that in his experience with non-profit organizations, expecting an organization to be able to project six months out may be difficult due to current events and other pressures. As an example, Hurricane Katrina immediately and radically changed the focus of many non-profits. Disability sports leagues have needs that change regularly. David Martinez clarified that the Board's concern is for the quality of the events hosted in the City of Mesa. Selection criteria must remain objective. Jeff Kirk stated that there are always subjective elements. Dina Lopez said that in her work for non-profits she has planned two years in advance. Non-profits experience the need to plan well in advance quite frequently. The Board is seeking the benefit an event brings to the community. Jeff Kirk believed that he had initially misunderstood and then inquired if money was attached to event applications.

Bud Page requested information as to how applications have been handled in the past. Cindy Hunt responded that within the past year 50% is requested upfront and the remaining 50% within 30 days of the event park rental.

Jeff Kirk asked whether available parks would be listed on the application. Cindy Hunt responded that they would be listed only in the event multiple uses were requested. Bud Page noted that the selection criteria template does not list sites as shown in the draft. Dina Lopez said that it would be attached as an addendum to the application.

David Martinez again asked what "benefiting Mesa" meant. Jeff Kirk responded that, in his opinion, it meant that the non-profit was Mesa based. David then asked if the weight given to businesses would be the same as for non-profits. Jeff Kirk said, "Yes".

Bud Page opened the floor for a motion. Jeff Kirk motioned to include question five on the selection criteria template as discussed, but to leave question number one for further

discussion. Dina Lopez seconded the motion. Jeff Kirk and Dina Lopez then rescinded the motion.

David Martinez moved to accept the recommendation of the study group. Connie Gullatt-Whiteman seconded the motion with the addition of 50% of the park rental fees be collected up front. The motion carried unanimously.

Trisha Sorensen stated that Council can obtain direction from the Board's recommendation. It would be acceptable to tweak the evaluation criteria at a later date.

David Martinez said that the Board could do so now and recommended that the selection criteria template be changed to assign the same value to both Mesa based non-profit organizations and businesses. Terri Palmberg concurred that the scoring system template requires additional work. If a company partnered with a Mesa based non-profit, how would it be scored? Russ Gillard offered that events held during the first year of this new process may not make the window. Terri Palmberg replied that she anticipated problems with only this one event. Sherry Woodley agreed to update the draft template and provide to Jenny Sheppard. Jenny Sheppard will present to the City Council.

Dina Lopez and Russ Gillard agreed to work on further developing the selection criteria as a part of the review panel. Jenny Sheppard stated the need to also work on the administrative issues. Russ Gillard agreed and noted that a recommendation as to the staffing of the subcommittee will be required. He assumed it would be standing. Connie Gullatt-Whiteman indicated that this could be discussed at a later date.

Bud Page thanked Sherry Woodley and Mike Holste for their work.

Reports on Meetings

David Martinez announced that he had attended the Arizona Parks and Recreation Association (APRA) conference held in Mesa. Russ Gillard also attended and announced that Dave Bang and Associates sponsored a poker hand which the City of Mesa won. Marilyn Wilson attended and reported that Mike Hutchinson spoke at one of the sessions. She enjoyed the session which clarified the need, in her mind, for the Board to be better, more aggressive advocates for parks and open space in Mesa, especially considering recent proposals concerning Riverview. Dina Lopez and Connie Gullatt-Whiteman reported that they also attended, learned from, and enjoyed the conference.

Bud Page inquired what the Board's obligation toward parks, specifically Riverview, is and asked that Jenny Sheppard comment in the Director's Report.

Staff Updates

Mike Holste announced that programming is ramping up again for the fall. As the Parks Division lost a supervisor within the past month, responsibilities have been reassigned to other supervisors. Darla Armfield has assumed Adult Sports, Cindy Hunt Junior High Intramurals, and Kym Otterstedt supervision of the Decatur office operations.

The APRA conference was well attended and very successful. City of Mesa staff coordinated the Golf Tournament, the Educational Sessions, audio-visual equipment placement and the Silent Auction. Russ Gillard commented that staff did a great job on the Golf Tournament. Longbow Golf Course ran out of golf carts due to the high attendance—144 players!

Mr. Holste was pleased to announce that the Red Mountain Multigenerational Center will be receiving new gym equipment due to a recently signed lease agreement. The leased equipment will be turned over regularly and remain in better repair.

On news from the adaptive programs, Camp Grant took 75 happy participants up for the annual Payson getaway. A Power Blast is in the planning stages for November. Teams come to Mesa from across the country and Canada for this event.

Junior high through elementary after school programming is kicking off at 10 sites. This is the first year that programming is being offered for grades 1-3.

Terri Palmberg thanked the Board for their attendance at the APRA Thursday Boards and Commission day. She informed the Board that the \$250 donation for winning the poker hand has been received and will be used for playground equipment at Meadowgreen Park. In addition, 100 bricks for the Carson Buy a Brick campaign have been purchased for a total of almost \$5,000 to date. The campaign will run through Christmas. Funds will be used to purchase upgraded equipment, i.e., water polo goals.

A Parks Foundation meeting for the West Mesa Bark Park will be held. Ms. Palmberg is confident that an appropriate location will be identified should Riverview be unavailable. A \$100,000 donation was made toward the establishment of the bark park.

Russ Gillard inquired as to the status of the planned renovation of four pools. Ms. Palmberg stated that the project will be reconfirmed with the City Manager. Information will be provided to the Board as available.

The Convention and Visitor's Bureau collaborated with Parks staff to develop a new sports facilities guide to Mesa. CVB staff use the guide as a marketing tool when promoting Mesa amenities and facilities to other states and regions. Ms. Palmberg showed the piece to an interested Board and provided web site information.

Sherry Woodley reported on the presentation she and CVB marketer Aaron Muth developed on the economic impact of sport for the APRA conference. The CVB is sending Mr. Muth to Las Vegas to bring sports business to Mesa. As this marks the end of the first year of the collaboration between Parks and the CVB, Ms. Woodley will report on the economic impact when the data is in.

Cash handling controls continue to be tightened in all program areas.

Recreation Coordinator Melanie Dykstra received an APRA scholarship to attend Reitz's Marketing School in La Jolla, California to learn marketing techniques for application in Parks & Recreation.

Fall registration is underway. 50-60% of all registrations are now conducted online using the WebTrac software. Staff is working to bring ramada reservations online as well. The spring 2007 target implementation for League Scheduler remains on schedule.

The film company that shot scenes in Mesa donated \$50,000 to the Parks & Recreation division. Some of the monies will be spent to install playground equipment in retention basin 723 and some to upgrade the Red Mountain and Fremont Sports field areas. Parks Board will be kept informed as to the disposition of the final \$10,000.

Jeff Kirk asked Ms. Woodley if there was any cell tower news. Ms. Woodley replied that there was not. Parks staff is still seeking approval to hire a marketing person to sell opportunities such as the cell towers. Trisha Sorensen stated that she is hopeful to have someone on board by October. Mr. Kirk wondered if undeveloped park land could be used for marketing purposes, as well as cell towers. Terri Palmberg responded that at present not much movement is being seen in cell tower locations in parks. Companies target dead areas for cell phone towers. Schools have benefited as poles are already in place.

Director's Report

Jenny Sheppard introduced herself to the Parks Board. While a veteran of just three weeks as Acting Parks & Recreation Director, she has worked 28 years for the City of Mesa. She is impressed with dedication of Parks staff, some of whom work two or three locations in a day. Ms. Sheppard also introduced Management Assistant Scot Rigby, newly arrived in Parks.

The biannual budget process begins anew in November. Ms. Sheppard hopes that the process this year will not be so "bloody"! She will present the recommendations for special events to the City Council study session next Thursday, 9/21 and to the City Manager the day following the Parks Board meeting, Friday, 9/15. A review of funding will be studied at the Thursday, 9/28 Council Study 7:30 AM session, as well as aquatics reports. (The aquatics presentation has since been moved to the 9/21 date.)

Bud Page requested that Ms. Sheppard comment on the proposed sale of the Riverview ball fields. Ms. Sheppard responded that staff would meet with City Manager Chris Brady next Wednesday, 9/20. At present the process is in the preliminary, analytical stage only. A developer has brought forth a proposal, that is all. Russ Gillard noted that the developer is connected with Larry Miller. Scott Rigby clarified that there are several developers interested, not just one. Mr. Gillard queried whether it is true that in order to build a new park, voter approval would be required, in light of the \$1.5 million Proposition 104 requirement. Ms. Palmberg stated that Carson Pool was considered a neighborhood project and hence was not subject to the requirement. Mr. Page believed that as the Riverview fields were constructed with federal funds, building commercial facilities might pose a legal challenge. Ms. Palmberg replied that the fields were funded 50% using LWCF monies. The language is questionable and is being investigated.

Marilyn Wilson stated that Terry Goddard, the Arizona Attorney General, addressed the APRA general assembly to go on record stating that he understands the needs that our children have for play and for safe places to play. In Arizona there is concern that pools close too soon in the season, as an example, and it is true that the state requires more available recreational spaces to keep children healthy and engaged. The Attorney

General makes the connection between recreation and healthy families and communities. As Parks Board members, we must help advocate. Mr. Page concurred

Jeff Kirk made the motion to adjourn. Connie Gullatt-Whiteman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:09.

Respectfully submitted,

Jenny Sheppard
Acting Parks and Recreation Director