

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 May 8, 2003.

Members Present:

LeRoy Brady  
Robert Brinton  
John Dyer  
Fernando Guerrero, Jr.  
Dina Lopez  
Walter "Bud" Page, Jr.  
David Peterson  
David Richins  
John Storment  
Robin White

Staff Present:

Tim Barnard  
Diane Eft  
Gordon Haws  
Joe Holmwood  
Terri Palmberg

Others Present:

Maria Baier

Members Absent:

Don Thompson, unexcused

Robin White, Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:01 p.m.

**Welcome new Board member**

White welcomed David Richins to the Board. Richins provided a brief personal background.

**Recognition of outgoing Board members**

White said that Fernando Guerrero and Don Thompson will be leaving the Board at the end of June after having served two three-year terms, per City Code. She presented Guerrero with a plaque of appreciation. Thompson was absent from the meeting and his plaque will be mailed.

Joe Holmwood said staff appreciates the dedication of the Board members; being a volunteer member of the Board is very important in that Board members are advocates for parks and recreation.

Guerrero said his six years on the Board have been very rewarding.

White said it is an honor to be on the Parks Board and to work with division staff. A legacy is being created for future generations.

**Approval of minutes**

John Storment asked about information in the minutes concerning the tee pod system at Dobson Ranch Golf Course and requested clarification of the associated costs.

Holmwood said staff will gather the information requested.

Bud Page made a motion, LeRoy Brady seconded, and it was unanimously carried to approve the minutes from the meeting of March 13, 2003.

## Public comments

No public comments.

## Va Shly' ay Akimel Project

Tim Barnard reported that the Va Shly' Ay Akimel feasibility study is a joint project between the City of Mesa, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community for potential restoration of the Salt River bed and adjoining floodplain along the north border of Mesa, from the Loop 101 Freeway on the west to the Granite Reef Dam in the east. The project is being proposed to restore the Salt River to possibly include wetlands, riparian habitats, species recovery, and to improve water quality in the area. Issues that have been addressed include hydrology, hydraulics, sedimentation, economics, cost, engineering, design, environmental impacts, and real estate needs. In addition to the environmental impacts to the area, the study recognizes the importance of the need to protect the important cultural resources in the area.

The Corps of Engineers and City staff have been working with the Indian community to develop design alternatives that would restore water and native vegetation to various sections of the riverbed. At the March 17, 2003 City Council Study Session, 13 design alternatives were presented that showed various types and locations of water recharge, native vegetation, and potential cultural preservation areas. These alternatives provide many options that include:

- Securing a water supply/recharge system for the area
- Plant and establish native trees (cottonwoods and mesquites)
- Create wetlands in appropriate locations
- Improve flood control
- Incorporate trails and passive recreation features
- Establish interpretive centers to provide education/instruction on historic agricultural practices and native ecology

Gordon Haws provided a slide presentation on the Va Shly' ay Akimel project, including the following feasibility study schedule:

Initiate Study	September 2001
Public Workshop/Scoping	January 2002
Work Order Project	June 2002
Conditions Baseline	
Preliminary Alternatives	June 2003
Alternative Formulation Briefing	July 2003
Draft Feasibility Report	October 2003
Final Public Meeting	November 2003
Feasibility Review Conference	December 2003
Final Report to US Army Corps of Engineers Headquarters	March 2004
Public Notice	April 2004
Chief's Report	August 2004
Project Authorization	December 2004

Barnard said Haws is working with Parks staff to determine how this project can tie into the master plan and to determine if it could be an opportunity for trails.

John Dyer asked about irrigation for the project.

Haws said three kinds of irrigation are being considered: graded channels; traditional drip; and flowing water channel.

Barnard said City Council has discussed the water needs for the project; it would not be developed unless there is a known water supply.

### **Bond Subcommittee**

White reported that the bond subcommittee has had three meetings and identified projects that the subcommittee considers the most important. Jenny Sheppard, who is responsible for the City of Mesa bond program, attended the most recent meeting. Also in attendance at that meeting was Maria Baier, Finance and Marketing Director of the Trust for Public Land (TPL). The subcommittee was told that TPL is supportive of groups, organizations, and agencies that acquire land for parks and the City may get support from TPL.

Baier said the TPL is a 30-year old national, non-profit land conservation agency that helps communities acquire land for conservation/recreation. She explained the four-phase process TPL undertakes to acquire land : 1) feasibility research; 2) polling, to determine the level of support a potential parks bond election might expect; 3) advice on the parks bond package and help on writing ballot language; and 4) running a really good campaign. TPL has been involved in several hundred bond programs over the last six years and ones they have supported have won 84% of the time. The process used by TPL must adhere to all the legal parameters of the state and city.

White and Dyer expressed support for working with the TPL for a Mesa bond initiative.

Barnard distributed a list of potential bond-eligible projects that was created by the parks bond subcommittee. The Council-adopted Parks Master Plan was used as the primary reference document for the majority of the listed projects. Barnard also distributed information on the City of Mesa capital improvement program, which includes bond-eligible projects.

### **FY03-04 Budget**

A copy of the FY03-04 budget information that was contained in the slide presentation to City Council was distributed to the Board, along with a draft of the budget reduction targets.

Holmwood said the draft City budget document shows the number of positions within the division has been reduced from last year's number – from 318.9 to 251.1. The 318.9 included about 39 positions associated with the indoor aquatic center. Since this project has been placed on hold, there is no need to identify aquatic center positions in the FY03-04 budget. The remaining positions are vacant and will not be filled until the City's financial situation improves, at which time a reassessment will take place. There are no guarantees that any of the vacant positions will be filled in the future. At this point in the process, no staff will be laid off.

Concerning Quality of Life Programs, City Council will be discussing that fund separate from the general fund budget. For Mesa, it is a dismal forecast for actual sales tax revenues versus what was projected in the late 1990's. Quality of Life revenues have been reduced by approximately 33%. Many outstanding parks facilities have been constructed and are operating because of the Quality of Life sales tax initiative. However, with a 33% reduction in revenues, Council's focus has been placed

on public safety operations and the performing arts center, which is under construction and slated to open in 2005.

The division is looking at redeploying some parks and recreation staff within the division. Some of the focus areas, in addition to recreation programming, will be a re-emphasis on the division volunteer program and on looking for additional funding options. Holmwood and Brinton recently made a presentation to the Ecumenical Council about the need for volunteers (i.e., adopt-a-park, recreation programming assistance). Staff is developing options and trying to make reductions in areas that impact citizens in the least possible ways.

White said she supports recruitment of volunteers because people who are involved in volunteer efforts become part of the picture of what parks and recreation is about and become advocates of parks and recreation.

Regarding fees and charges, Holmwood said that City Council gave staff direction to look at adult sport fees with the goal of 100% cost recovery. A chart of valley market comparisons for adult sports programs was distributed to Board members. The chart also included the proposed new fees that would make the adult sports leagues self-supporting.

There are not many capital improvement projects included. The multi-use path projects are included because federal money is involved and if the City can leverage outside dollars by investing small amounts of City money, everyone wins. With money remaining from the bond issue of 1996, the City is trying to acquire park land so it is not lost to future development and is trying to focus on projects that do not create immediate costs for operation.

Richins asked what the N/A on the adult sports programs comparison chart meant.

Holmwood replied that it means that the fee(s) recommended by the Board already covered 100% of the costs.

Storment asked why baseball is more expensive than softball.

Terri Palmberg replied that the cost for umpires is greater for baseball.

Dyer asked if lighting costs were included.

Holmwood replied that the figures on the chart are for operations and maintenance (including utilities), the salary of staff who are involved 100% in the specific program, and the maintenance costs.

### **Meetings and/or events attended**

Brady, Peterson, and Dina Lopez reported that they were salsa judges at Cinco de Mayo. Brady asked staff's opinion of this year's event.

Holmwood replied that this year was set up different than in previous years, so it may have seemed like there were less people attending. It is estimated that about 40,000 people attended the two-day event, which is about 10,000 less than 2002.

Dyer said he has been at Quail Run Park several times a week for the past few months. The park is still heavily used. He requested that a sign be erected stating that the park was built with bond money.

White said she recently attended the Mesa Convention and Visitors Bureau (MCVB) Board of Directors meeting. The indoor aquatic center was an agenda item. The MCVB is very supportive of the indoor aquatic center, but understands the financial condition of the Quality of Life sales tax fund.

White also reported that on April 2, Mayor Hawker hosted the annual get-together for board and commission chairs. It is a good opportunity to meet other chairs and share information.

Holmwood said White also attended the department budget meeting on May 6. Items discussed at the meeting included the fence at Dobson Ranch Golf Course, if the cost of the fence should come from the Golf Enterprise Fund, and the closing of swimming pools on Sundays and holidays.

Dyer suggested advertising programs that involve partnerships.

Lopez thanked several staff for their support of Cesar Chavez Celebration, which was held at Pioneer Park on April 6.

Storment asked about the Golf Enterprise Fund and the amount of money that the golf courses has generated for the general fund over the past years. He said he is concerned the Enterprise Fund may be used for fence repairs, when it was his understanding that the enterprise fund was created to fund a new golf course, such as Longbow Golf Course.

Holmwood indicated that staff would provide information to address his question.

### **Director's report**

Holmwood reported that the Parks and Recreation Division recently received two awards: 1) a service award from the Child Crisis Center; and 2) a plaque from the Arizona Parks and Recreation Association for support given at the APRA Bike Tour.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 1:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph H. Holmwood  
Assistant Community Services Manager