

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 10, 2002.

Members Present:

LeRoy Brady  
Robert Brinton  
John Dyer  
Joseph Fu  
Fernando Guerrero, Jr.  
Dina Lopez  
Bud Page  
David Peterson  
John Storment  
Don Thompson  
Robin White

Staff Present:

Tim Barnard  
Marc Beasley  
Doris Cline  
Diane Eft  
Don Flavell  
Joe Holmwood  
Wayne Korinek  
Layton Meininger  
Terri Palmberg  
Steve Toland  
Bob White  
Mark Woodward

Others Present:

Kent Bulkley  
Kevin Christopher  
Sheila Mitton

Members Absent:

None

The meeting was called to order at 12:02 p.m. by Robin White, Chair.

**Welcome New Board Members**

White welcomed Dina Lopez and Joseph Fu to the Board. Lopez and Fu gave brief personal backgrounds.

**Approval of Minutes**

LeRoy Brady made a motion, David Peterson seconded, and it was unanimously carried to approve the minutes from the meeting of September 12, 2002.

**Public Comments**

No public comments.

**Park Ranger Program**

Mark Woodward and Steve Toland, Mesa Police Department, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Park Ranger Program and reported that a staff committee representing the Police Department, Parks and Recreation Division, and Mayor/City Manager's Office, was formed for the purpose of analyzing the program to determine if it is the most cost effective and efficient way of providing the service. The analysis considered various alternatives to administering the current program.

The Park Ranger Program began in October 1987, when Council approved funding to begin implementing the program under the supervision of the Parks and Recreation Division. The purpose of the program is to provide a high visibility education and public relations program designed to enhance park user experiences, increase awareness of park rules and regulations, and provide enforcement of these rules. It was an outgrowth of citizen concerns about misuse of City parks, which were creating negative impacts on adjacent neighborhoods. The first Ranger patrol area included six central Mesa parks and in May 1993, Park Rangers were granted the authority to cite park visitors for violation of Title 6, Chapter 10 of the Mesa City Code pertaining to public park regulations. In the mid-1990's, the separate parks security maintenance program was folded into the Park Ranger Program as the duties were becoming similar as the number of parks patrolled expanded. Over the past 15 years, the Park Ranger Program has been successful in attaining the goal of making parks a positive asset to Mesa by providing the necessary attention and detail to concerns expressed by the park users, ultimately making the parks a safe and pleasurable environment for users.

Ranger duties include but are not limited to: walking/riding through parks to give users a positive use experience; checking restrooms; closing park gates at night; turning athletic field lights on and off; conducting educational classes in Mesa public schools on proper park use; litter control; habitat interpretation; and patrolling and "rattling doors" of other parks or recreation facilities (pools and recreation centers), the City Cemetery, Hohokam Stadium, Fitch Park, and City electrical substations. These responsibilities now provide coverage for approximately 75% of the most heavily used parks, recreation facilities, and other City facilities from 6:00 a.m. to midnight daily. The Rangers have been able to provide this level of service through a combination of nine full-time and 20 part-time positions.

The program also provides an effective community policing partnership with the Police Department for more serious infractions that take place in Mesa parks. The Park Ranger Program began as a way to assist the Police Department in monitoring use of the parks and recreation facilities. After the first year of the program, Police Department statistics showed a 47% reduction in the number of recorded offenses at Pioneer Park alone. It continues to serve a much-needed function of encouraging appropriate use, providing safe parks for visitors, and maintaining an identifiable and positive community presence. The Park Ranger Program provides a separate and distinct role from the responsibilities of the Police Department and the Police Department's Municipal Security Unit.

The committee reviewed current operational procedures for each respective area and brainstormed to formalize several alternatives. The alternatives analyzed were: leaving the program as it is currently structured; eliminate the program and have current Police Department patrols provide a reduced level of service; transfer the program to the Police Department creating a new unit of sworn officers; or transfer of the program as it is currently structured to the Police Department. After considerable analysis and discussion of these alternatives, the committee agreed that the best alternative would be to leave the program as it is currently structured under the supervision of the Parks and Recreation Division. There would be no fiscal impact with this recommendation as the program would remain as currently budgeted.

It was determined that the level of service currently provided by the Park Ranger Program and the primary emphasis on public education could not be maintained if the program were administered by the Police Department. Police Department committee members indicated that the Department would emphasize enforcement and leave little, if any, time for direct public contact and opportunity for the wide variety of ancillary duties currently provided by the Park Ranger

Program. The Police Department has grown to depend on a variety of civilian employees and groups to assist in the lower priority duties at a substantially reduced cost compared to a sworn officer handling those duties.

The committee discussed the potential for additional operational problems with the possible transfer of the program out of the Parks and Recreation Division. With the Division being the manager of parks and recreation facilities throughout the City, there can be immediate response/resolution to facility use issues as they occur. By moving the Park Rangers to another Department within the City, a significant response time gap is created, thereby diminishing the customer service levels and creating a significant delay in issue response and resolution.

The committee also recognized that greater cooperation could occur between the existing Park Ranger program and the Police Department to better facilitate the goals of both groups. This could be accomplished by expanding communication, sharing information technology, regularly reviewing operational procedures, cooperative training, sharing of resources to enhance the service levels of both groups, and developing new partnerships to better serve the community. Using this approach, the Police Department and the Parks and Recreation Division can work together on issues that affect all areas of Mesa.

The alternatives were further explained:

Alternative I - Eliminate the current program and have existing Patrol Units provide a reduced level of service.

This alternative is the least preferred by the Police Department as they are aware of the level of in-park service that the public has come to expect from the Park Ranger Program and that they would not be able to duplicate that level of service. The Police Department did a comparative analysis based on the number of citizen contacts made by the Park Rangers in 2001 and found that they would have extreme difficulty maintaining the same number of citizen contacts. If this alternative were enacted, the current educational programs, additional coverage and support at City special events/programs, and community public relations would suffer greatly. Calls for service to address park problems and issues would be a low priority response. The most significant issue associated with this alternative would be the reduction in level of service. Without the Park Rangers' presence in the parks and facilities, a variety of direct duties and responsibilities would not occur as the Parks and Recreation Division does not have the budget resources or staffing levels to absorb these duties. A portion of the current budget would need to remain in the Parks and Recreation Division to cover the basic Park Ranger service duties that the Police Department would not provide, including: checking restrooms; closing park gates at night; turning athletic field lights on and off; litter control; "rattling doors" of other parks or recreation facilities (pools and recreation centers), as well as the City Cemetery, Hohokam Stadium and Fitch Park, and City electrical substations. Without the Rangers presence to mitigate incidents in the parks, the Police Department could see an increase in the number of calls for service. The budget reduction under this alternative would be approximately \$620,000 and result in greatly reduced service and park user dissatisfaction. In addition, the entire budgeted amount could not be reduced because of some basic operational functions that must be continued (i.e., opening and closing parks, sports lighting turned on and off, restroom checks, picnic ramada reservation verification, etc.).

Alternative II - Transfer the program to the Police Department creating a new unit of sworn officers.

This would include the same requirements as listed in Alternative I, as well as additional requirements per Police Department staffing, scheduling and reporting standards. Those

standards require that 16 officers and two sergeants be hired to provide an equivalent amount of coverage currently provided by the Park Ranger Program. An equivalent work schedule would be one sergeant and eight officers working day shift (0600-1600 hours) and one sergeant and eight officers working swing shift (1500-0100 hours), for a total of 16 employees. This scheduling would be necessary to provide a similar amount of time coverage for patrolling Mesa's 56 parks and 127 retention basins. To establish a comparable motor and bicycle pool, nine additional police cars (to meet the standard of one car per two officers) and 18 bicycles would need to be purchased. The police cars and bicycles would need to be special ordered to meet Police Department standards. Major issues associated with this alternative include: a significant cost, over and above the existing Park Ranger Program budget related to hiring and training, capital purchases, maintaining existing Ranger staff while officers are trained; a reduced level of service; and separation from direct Parks and Recreation supervision creating an increased response time to park management issues. To implement this program, based on estimates from the Police Department, would result in start-up costs of approximately \$3.7 million and ongoing annual costs of \$1.1 million, or a net annual additional cost of \$480,000.

Alternative III - Transfer the program as it is currently structured to the Police Department.

To move the current number of Park Rangers to the Police Department would require all of the Rangers to pass the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies standards for hiring. This requires a thorough background check and the passing of a polygraph. These stringent hiring requirements usually result in a small number of recruits actually being hired. This would require the hiring of additional staff to replace the Rangers that would be laid off due to the Police Department hiring requirements. Transferring the program would also create additional impacts to the existing Police Department structure and operation, including: additional office space/workstations; revising the Mesa City Code to reflect the authority to cite violators (currently, Park Rangers get their authority from the Parks and Recreation Division); and moving operating budget and capital assets from the Parks and Recreation Division to the Police Department. The annual estimated cost of this alternative is approximately \$820,000, or a net increase of \$200,000 over the current structure.

Woodward further reported that it is the committee's recommendation that the Park Ranger Program remain under the supervision of the Parks and Recreation Division with current budget levels of approximately \$620,000.

Toland said the Park Ranger Program is a big cost savings to the Police Department because the Rangers attend to minor infractions in the parks, thereby freeing up the time for sworn officers to deal with more serious issues. If the Park Ranger Program is transferred to the Police Department, officers will not have a constant presence in the parks and will not be able to interact with parks users. Officers would try to be in the parks as much as possible, but their main focus would be trying to impact crime rates.

Doris Cline, Mesa Municipal Security, said the Police Department has the resources to offer training to the Park Rangers. From the Police Department perspective, Police officers would not be able to be as public relations oriented.

White asked how often Police officers are called to parks.

Toland replied that the calls to parks are minimal; at most, two times per day. Park Rangers handle most of the concerns in the parks; the Police Department is called for drugs or other disturbances.

John Storment asked what the next step in this process.

Woodward replied that a presentation will be made to City Council at their study session on October 31, 2002.

White said she believes the Park Ranger Program should not be transferred to the Police Department because Police officers' time could be utilized better on more serious issues. The system that is currently in place appears to be working well.

Don Thompson said he goes to Red Mountain Park 5-6 times per week and sees the Park Rangers maintaining order there. If Police officers are present, it is usually late at evening and alcohol-related. The Park Ranger Program is a good program and he would be disappointed if major changes were made.

Joseph Fu said it is clear to him that the Police Department emphasis is enforcement and Park Ranger emphasis is on relationships with and education of the community. The City would lose that if change is made.

John Dyer said he believes the Park Ranger Program should remain under the supervision of the Parks and Recreation Division.

Storment said the existing program should continue. He believes the Board will agree that the Park Rangers have done an excellent job. It should be emphasized to the City Council that the City needs to keep this program as it currently is.

Bud Page made a motion, John Dyer seconded, and it was unanimously approved that the Board recommend that the Park Ranger Program remain under the supervision of the Parks and Recreation Division.

### **Agreement with 4everSports**

Woodward reported that at the September 12, 2002 Parks and Recreation Board meeting, the Board was presented a report on the 4everSports Golf Tee Pod Information System that staff was proposing to have installed at Dobson Ranch Golf Course. It was the consensus of the Board that a subcommittee be formed to gather additional information on the system and present a recommendation to the Board at their October meeting.

The subcommittee, comprised of Board members John Dyer, Fernando Guerrero, Jr., and John Storment, attended a presentation by 4everSports on October 1, 2002. Also present were the City's contracted golf professionals, the President of the Dobson Ranch Golf Association, avid and novice golfers, and City staff members. The group had the opportunity to ask questions of 4everSports representatives concerning the system and its applicability to Dobson Ranch Golf Course.

Subcommittee members offered input and several suggestions for improving the educational process for training golfers on how to use the system. It was also suggested that a clause be included in the agreement with 4everSports to protect the City financially if the relationship with 4everSports continued beyond the original two-year time period.

Following the special presentation by 4everSports to the subcommittee, members were supportive of staff bringing back to the Board the original recommendation that an agreement be entered into with 4everSports. The contracted golf professionals and food/beverage concessionaire at Dobson Ranch Golf Course are in concurrence with this recommendation and are supportive of the tee pad concept.

Storment said he was impressed with how this system will positively impact Dobson Ranch Golf Course. It was a well-done presentation by 4everSports.

Guerrero agreed that it was a good presentation by 4everSports. The system should provide improved communication between golfers and the golf course and there is the potential for increased revenue. 4everSports will sell all the advertising. It looks like a win-win situation.

Woodward advised the proposed agreement is for two years. The committee recommended and 4everSports agreed to honor initial the price if the contract term goes beyond the two years. Another committee recommendation was to have a practice pod so golfers can use the system before going onto the golf course. This will help with the education of golfers.

White asked if 4everSports would be bringing clients to the golf course at no cost to demonstrate the system.

Woodward replied that there will be a cap on the amount of play 4everSports would be allowed.

Dyer explained that the City of Mesa is protected and can terminate the agreement with short notice. The equipment for this system is solid state so it will tolerate the heat. He is comfortable with the technology aspect.

Brinton asked about the implementation schedule.

Woodward said the system can be installed in three weeks after all approvals are received. The golf shop at Dobson Ranch Golf Course is currently under construction and could be completed around December 1. Installation of the tee pod system could occur in November, and the 4everSports staff member who will be on-site for six months will be at the golf course during its busy season.

Page asked about the number of golfers who would use the system.

Woodward replied that a certain percentage of golfers will not use it; however, it will probably be a small percentage. The President of the Men's Golf Association at Dobson Ranch said they would use the system for tournaments. However, there will be a time period for learning the system before the majority of golfers use it.

John Storment made a motion, Fernando Guerrero, Jr. seconded, and it was unanimously carried that the City enter into an agreement with 4everSports to have the Golf Tee Pod Information System installed at Dobson Ranch Golf Course under the terms and conditions outlined in the agreement between the City of Mesa and 4everSports.

## **Mesa Indoor Aquatic Center**

Joe Holmwood reported that at a recent City Council retreat, City Councilmembers completed an exercise to identify their priorities. The Mesa Indoor Aquatic Center was one of the top issues that City Council wanted to see happen.

The City of Mesa has retained the services of Hartsook Associates, a fundraising consulting firm, to complete an assessment to determine if it is viable to raise private dollars for a portion of the cost of the indoor aquatic center. Fifty percent of Hartsook's fee of about \$14,000 will be paid for by the Foundation for Mesa Parks & Recreation.

Hartsook's assessment process will include one-on-one interviews, focus group meetings with small groups, and a mail survey. The target date for completion of the analysis is December.

Korinek said Hartsook will try to finish its report in early December so the findings can be presented at the December Parks Board meeting.

Stormont asked about the dollar amount to be raised through fundraising efforts.

Holmwood replied that the initial target would be \$2.5 million. The assessment will tell City staff what the capability of the community is to support this level of private fundraising.

Stormont asked about the amount of funds allocated for the indoor aquatic center.

Holmwood replied that \$24.65 million has been allocated, which is \$8-10 million short of the actual cost. Savings can be realized in other areas, such as delaying the project, other entities in the community coming forth with funding, etc. All savings and fundraising efforts have to come together to make up the difference of \$8-10 million.

White asked about a model for the indoor aquatic center, similar to the one done for the Mesa Arts Center.

Holmwood replied that the model for the Mesa Arts Center was built into the cost of that project. For the indoor aquatic center, the City will create a compact disk visual of the outside and inside of the facility, which is less expensive than a model.

## **Youth Sports Program and Facility Use**

Bob White reported that during the past 37 years, the Division has been collaborating with the Mesa Parent Youth Athletic Association (MPYAA) as an "umbrella" organization that provides assistance to the Mesa Parks and Recreation Division in administering, coordinating, and communicating with youth sports groups' field/facility use throughout the City. MPYAA includes representatives from many non-profit youth sports organizations that provide sports activity opportunities to Mesa's youth year-round in baseball, softball, football, soccer, basketball, and Lacrosse.

The City works closely with Mesa Public Schools (MPS) on facility use for these community groups. To date, the City has installed athletic facility lighting on 60 fields at 23 school sites in Mesa. Historically, the youth sports programs have operated their leagues and practices on these

school sites. In October 2002, Mesa opened its first facility dedicated to youth sports activities at Quail Run Park (four soccer and four baseball/softball fields).

These volunteer non-profit youth sports organizations provide a valuable service to the City of Mesa by planning, organizing, and conducting youth sports programs. Their individual operations are self-funded. The City's role has been to provide access to the outdoor/indoor athletic facilities in partnership with MPS because most of the facilities available are located on school property.

While there is a need for consistently available indoor gymnasium space, the primary deficiency seems to focus on outdoor ballfields. More than ever before, staff is receiving year-round demands for outdoor athletic fields by baseball, softball, and soccer groups and individual teams. In FY01-02 approximately 16,800 participants were recorded. In FY02-03, this number is expected to increase substantially, especially in baseball, softball, and soccer. The City has historically provided for the design, construction, maintenance, and operation costs for ballfield lights located at schools where community youth athletic groups are permitted to play.

There is a new phenomenon taking place in the youth sports world. In the past, the various sports seemed to focus on "their" particular season and the most challenging time and highest demand for athletic fields was during the March through June period. More and more youth sports leagues are trying to extend seasons to year-round or almost year-round. For example, "fall" youth baseball has tripled in size to over 800 youth, and staff is receiving requests from year-round competitive club teams and new non-affiliated leagues for access to fields year-round. There simply are not enough City or school fields to accommodate.

Issues that needs to be addressed include:

- Insufficient staff available to provide customer service (i.e., lighting control, facility access, etc.) to prospective field users for night use on school lighted facilities.
- Insufficient staffing resources to operate City-owned facilities (Quail Run, Red Mountain Baseball) to meet year-round, six-day-per-week free use demands from the various youth groups and teams.
- City budget shortfalls may force Mesa to begin charging for facility use. (MPS has determined it a necessity to charge youth groups a \$4.00 per participant surcharge to help with facility maintenance costs generated by the impact of continuous community use demands year-round.)
- Land acquisition funding for future sites is not available (recent bonds failing to pass). Mesa cannot meet current/future demand with its present number of facilities for youth sport programs year-round.
- Youth groups, teams, and parents find it difficult to understand some of these limitations and are frustrated.
- The year round scheduling/coordination with MPS and youth groups continues to be a challenge due to lack of sufficient City and School staff to properly communicate with, monitor, guide, and train the large numbers of community non-profit youth sport coordinators to safely and efficiently access facilities.

City staff continues to be proactive in facilitation, collaboration, and service deployment with a "shared use" concept to meet the sports needs of not only youth but also Mesa-based adult sports participant enthusiasts. Mesa has been a leader in popular adult sport recreation programs. The Division's mission supports that recreational opportunities for all ages in Mesa continue to be available.

Terri Palmberg said the youth sports programs face continuing challenges in using school fields. Many groups do not want to use MPS facilities because of the \$4.00 per participant surcharge. In addition, State high school athletic seasonal stipulations have been lifted so several sports can now be played year-round, which presents a challenge because the City lights fields at schools for community use and school programs sometimes want to use the fields year-round.

Storment asked about the committee that was formed in conjunction with MPS.

Holmwood replied that a committee was formed about 1½ years ago and was comprised of City and MPS staff. The initial committee meetings were to open up lines of communication between the upper level management staff of both organizations. The committee focuses on "big picture" items impacting the City and Mesa School District in an effort to cut the "red tape."

Storment asked Peterson, Director of Operations for Mesa Public Schools, for his comments on this matter.

Peterson said he believes this is an issue that needs to be explored further. MPS and the City needs to have a good working relationship. Part of the problem is that the fields are used heavily by MPS programs and some school coaches who do not recognize fields as community resources. The \$4.00 fee is used to recondition fields. MPS provides the labor and the \$4.00 is used to buy the product for the fields. Also water rates are being raised so it will cost more to keep the fields green.

Holmwood advised that this issue will be placed on the agenda for the Board's November planning meeting.

Dyer said these issues are close to his heart. He is preparing a memo from a user standpoint to educate the Board as to how the user groups view these issues.

### **Meetings and/or Events Attended**

Holmwood advised that two park grand openings will occur in November...Skyline Park on November 2 and Enid Park on November 16. Invitations will be sent to Board members.

White said an email was received from the Mayor's Office, followed by a letter from Mayor Hawker, concerning an advisory board member meeting with the Mayor and City Council on October 24.

### **Director's Report**

Holmwood gave the following reports:

#### November Board Meeting

Several weeks ago Board members were queried about their date and time preference for a Board planning meeting. The consensus of the Board was November 12 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Material will be sent to the Board prior to the meeting.

### Golf Courses

Recently a new contractor, Walton Construction, was retained to complete the golf pro shop project at Dobson Ranch Golf Course. The previous contractor declared bankruptcy.

Overseeding at Dobson Ranch Golf Course is completed and is underway at Riverview Golf Course. A City committee was established and has been meeting to discuss water conservation. Some areas in the City will not be overseeded but the committee felt that facilities that generate revenue, such as the golf courses and Hohokam Stadium, should be overseeded.

The food and beverage concession agreement for Dobson Ranch is being finalized. The agreement is with the existing concessionaire.

### Wayne Korinek Retirement

Korinek will be retiring from the City on November 30, 2002. On November 19 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., a retirement celebration will be held. Board members are invited to attend.

### Broadcasting Future Board Meeting

Staff is working toward determining a date for taping and televising a Parks Board meeting. An agenda item for that meeting could be the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Board members will be advised when the date is finalized.

White suggested that the Indoor Aquatic Center be an agenda item as well.

### Subcommittee

Two Board subcommittees are needed; 1) for the Division's annual fees and charges analysis; and 2) for the spring training catering contract.

LeRoy Brady, John Dyer, Joseph Fu, and David Peterson agreed to be on the fees and charges subcommittee.

Robert Brinton, Dina Lopez, and Bud Page agreed to be on the catering contract subcommittee.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 1:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph H. Holmwood, Director  
Mesa Parks and Recreation Division