

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 January 12, 2006.

Members Present:

John Dyer
Russ Gillard
Don Goodrum
Dina Lopez
Bud Page
Marilyn Wilson

Staff Present:

Darla Armfield
Tim Barnard
Mike Holste
Diane Rogers
Bob White
Sherry Woodley

Members Absent:

LeRoy Brady, excused
Connie Gullatt-Whiteman, excused
Jeff Kirk, unexcused
David Martinez, excused
Bernadine Mooney, unexcused

Items on the agenda were discussed out of order but for reasons of clarity will remain as listed on the agenda.

The meeting was called to order at 12:04 p.m. by Bud Page, Chair.

Approval of Minutes

John Dyer made a motion, Russ Gillard seconded, and it was unanimously carried to approve the minutes from the meeting of November 10, 2005.

Public Comments

Joshua Watler, Head Community Organizer for Mesa ACORN, said his organization addresses issues for low and moderate income residents. One of the issues is the City of Mesa budget crisis. Families visit parks and are concerned that the parks will not be maintained as they should be. Since education is the key, ACORN is organizing people to educate other citizens in the community on the City's budget issues. ACORN recently organized the candlelight event at the Mesa Library. ACORN is targeting about 25-29 precincts in Mesa to increase voter turnout. It is an important time in Mesa's history.

Mr. Page thanked Mr. Watler for his comments.

Carson Aquatic Complex Construction/Bricks Program

Tim Barnard reported that in July 2005, City Council approved the Parks Board recommendation to replace the existing Carson Pool and construct a new pool at Smith Junior High School using Quality of Life funds. Versar, Inc. was selected to be the design consultant and Low Mountain was contracted for construction following the construction manager at risk method.

Since July, staff have been working with Mesa Public Schools (MPS), Versar, and Low Mountain on facility design. Plans for the Westwood-Carson Aquatic Complex are 60% complete. In December, Engineering received direction from City management to discontinue all work on the Smith pool due to the City's budget shortfalls and the pending vote on future financing for the City.

The aquatic complex will serve Westwood High School, Carson Junior High, and the community. The City of Mesa will have shared use of the pool with MPS. Also, MPS is contributing to the parking area costs. Carson Pool had structural defects and it was deemed that it would be fiscally responsible to build a new pool.

Darla Armfield reported that a public input meeting was held January 10, 2006 in the Carson Junior High Auditorium. The 15 citizens in attendance were asked to provide input on water play features. Selected features include slides, spray features, and other water-based recreation amenities. This facility will be similar to Brimhall Aquatic Complex and will include a small water polo course.

The Foundation for Mesa Parks and Recreation is working on selling bricks to be placed in the complex entrance area. Proceeds from brick sales will be used to support swim lessons and recreational team equipment.

The project is on track to be open for the Summer 2007 swim season. The existing Carson Pool is currently scheduled for demolition during Spring Break 2006. Recreational and school swim activities will be diverted to other pools during this construction period.

Marilyn Wilson asked about amenities being determined by only 15 citizens.

Ms. Armfield replied that the choices presented at the public meetings were amenities that were cost effective and would provide diverse recreation experiences.

Mr. Barnard added that many budget meetings were held concerning pool projects, including two Parks Board meetings at neighborhood locations. Staff believes there has been significant public involvement in this process.

Mr. Barnard also reported that the pool is estimated to be completed for the 2007 swimming season. Demolition of the current pool will occur at the end of the school year (May 2006), with a construction period of 8-10 months. The City will work with bus companies to transport aquatics users to other pools this summer.

Mr. Gillard asked if having fewer pools this summer would have a negative impact.

Ms. Armfield replied that programming at Carson will be moved to Kino and Powell pools.

Mr. Page asked about responses to the Buy a Brick program.

Ms. Armfield said several bricks were sold at the Merry Main Street event and staff is receiving 1-2 orders a week. Also, Westwood High School has approached staff about wanting to help market the Buy a Brick program.

Division Fees and Charges

Sherry Woodley reported that the Fees and Charges Subcommittee, which is comprised of appointees from the Parks and Recreation Board and division staff members, reviews recommended fee and range increases on an annual basis. Last year, fees were raised nearly unilaterally per Council direction. The mandate to increase cost recovery continues for FY06-07 and beyond. The Parks and Recreation Board will review and approve the FY06-07 fee recommendations at the February 9, 2006 Board meeting. The Board's recommendation will be forwarded to the City Finance Committee. The Finance Committee's recommendations on fee adjustments will then be forwarded to City Council for final approval.

The subcommittee requested additional information on several areas of the division:

Red Mountain Multigenerational Center (RMMC)

In the current fee preparation, which includes an estimate of cost recovery as well as fee comparisons with other local entities, several segments of the services are not line items within the budget. These services include the climbing wall, Kids Club, and facility rentals. The subcommittee requested an estimate of budget allocation for these three areas. Staff is preparing estimated budget and cost recovery amounts.

Another area within the RMMC that generated questions was facility usage. The subcommittee requested numbers concerning daily, monthly, and annual passes in order to better assess usage and assign fair fee increases accordingly.

Reservations/Rentals at Amenity Pools

The division's amenity pools (Brimhall, Shepherd, and Stapley) carry higher fees in all areas (public swim, swim punch tickets, family passes) except one: pool reservations/rentals. The subcommittee has proposed increasing the costs of renting amenity pools to generate additional income. It was discussed that reservations/rentals were more "luxury" oriented than public swim, and that it would be a fair way of increasing revenue without impacting public swim users. Current rental rates are \$21 per hour, with the number of staff varying according to the size of the pool and number of attendees.

Restructuring After School Programs

The subcommittee was concerned that after school programming was on the City's list of potential cuts if the property tax option does not receive voter approval. Staff has struggled with the cost recovery issue for youth programs as increasing fees for total return on investment would be prohibitively high, especially for those users who may most need the program and be least able to afford it.

Ms. Woodley further reported that subcommittee members have asked program staff to consider revamping the programs to be less costly to produce while still offering some sort of after school activity. Options include fewer sites in operation, fewer materials-based options (such as crafts) and more physical activities. Division staff will brainstorm on new opportunities and will also be meeting with Mesa Public Schools staff to explore other options for continuing after school activity.

Mr. Gillard said he strongly supports a higher fee structure at amenity pools.

Mr. Dyer said amenity pools also cost more to operate because of the additional water that has to be pumped and the increased electrical usage for the amenities.

Mr. Page asked about the after school program restructuring.

Mike Holste said program participation and revenue are decreasing. Many participants use the free lunch or reduced lunch fee and also staff is looking at whether the purpose of the program is being met. The purpose is to provide after school care and it used to operate for three hours after school; it is now operating for just one or one and a half hours. Since about 50 schools are served, an option is to reduce the number of schools.

Don Goodrum asked for participation numbers.

Mr. Holste replied that elementary is serving about 50 a year, and junior high is serving 1,500-2,000 a year. *(I'm checking these numbers with Mike)*

Ms. Woodley also reported that the community youth groups in Mesa have proposed to staff that they would voluntarily pay a minimal hourly fee for field usage due to the City's budget problems.

The groups don't want the City to cut programs. The groups feel strongly about keeping these programs available and having the fields available. A fee range could be created so the fee could be reduced if the property tax passes.

Bob White said it is the City of Mesa's policy that programs will be available and affordable for youth. Many other communities are passing along costs to youth groups. That is why a range would be created; it can be used if needed.

Ms. Woodley advised that the Fees and Charges Subcommittee will meet again next week and a full report and recommendation will be presented at the February Board meeting.

Board Work Plan

Mr. White said the status of most of the action steps in the FY05-06 work plan are budget and fees and charges driven. He asked that Board members review the action steps and measures and provide input on the status.

Meetings and/or Events Attended

Mr. Gillard reported that he attended the Merry Main Street event in early December. He worked the booth for the Foundation for Mesa Parks and Recreation, distributing flyers on the Buy a Brick program and soliciting support for parks and recreation programs. It was a great event.

Mr. Page asked about attendance at Merry Main Street.

Mr. White replied that about 43,000 people were in attendance; it was extremely busy.

Mr. Holste said 105 volunteers donated 471 hours at the event, several sponsors donated about \$50,000, and the trolleys had over 700 riders.

Dina Lopez said Xicanindio was also active at Merry Main Street. Youth were given the opportunity to make Christmas cards. The booth stayed active during the entire event.

Ms. Wilson said she visited Mountain View Park with her grandchildren and the new playground equipment at the park is very nice.

Mr. Page said he attended the City's retirement events for Mike Hutchinson and Joe Holmwood.

Mr. Dyer said he attended meetings of the Foundation for Mesa Parks and Recreation and Mesa Parent Youth Athletic Association.

Staff Updates

Ms. Armfield reported:

- Recruitment for the aquatic program is underway; about 350 seasonal staff are hired each season.
- Gene Autry Tennis Center recently held a winter national tennis event, with 132 participants. Coaches from many well known universities were in attendance. The tournament had a large economic impact on Mesa.

Mr. Barnard presented capital project updates, including:

- The City successfully acquired 58 acres of land at McKellips and Ellsworth (northeast corner), adjacent to Zaharis Elementary School.
- The City is attempting to acquire land at Broadway and Longmore.

Mr. Holste reported:

- Breakfast with Santa at the Red Mountain Multigenerational Center (RMMC) had 675 participants.
- On January 28, the City will host Reed Park Skate Fest.
- RMMC will host Parents Night Out on February 14.
- Senior softball began last week, with 48 teams comprised of players age 60 and older.

Ms. Woodley reported:

- Staff is working with the Mesa Convention and Visitors Bureau to develop a formula to measure economic impact during tournaments and events conducted by Parks and Recreation.
- Registration has started for spring programs.

Director's Report

Mr. White reported:

- Patricia Sorensen has been appointed as Acting Community Services Manager. Ms. Sorensen previously was the Library Director. She began service with the City of Mesa in the office of Quality and Organizational Development.
- Christopher Brady, Mesa's City Manager, recently visited the Parks Administration Office. He met office staff and, due to a meeting that was in progress, engineers from Versar and Low Mountain, contractors for the Carson aquatic project. He also met with staff at the Mesa Convention and Visitors Bureau.
- The frequency of emails sent to Board members from the director's office will increase in the coming months due to critical issues and the need for information sharing.
- At the February meeting, fees and charges recommendations will be presented to the Board. It is an important Board meeting.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 1:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Bob White
Parks and Recreation Director