

Parks and Recreation Board
Planning Meeting

The Parks and Recreation Board of the City of Mesa met in a planning meeting at the Parks and Recreation Administration Office, 100 North Center Street, on November 12, 2002.

Members Present:

LeRoy Brady
Robert Brinton
Dina Lopez
Bud Page
David Peterson
John Storment
Robin White

Staff Present:

Tim Barnard
Diane Eft
Joe Holmwood
Wayne Korinek
Terri Palmberg
Bob White
Mark Woodward

Members Absent:

John Dyer, excused
Joseph Fu, unexcused
Fernando Guerrero, Jr., excused
Don Thompson, excused

Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:14 a.m. by Robin White, Chair.

Approval of Minutes

John Storment made a motion, Robert Brinton seconded, and it was unanimously carried to approve the minutes from the meeting of October 10, 2002.

Public Comments

No public comments.

"Getting to Know One Another"

Bob White conducted an "ice breaker" exercise about conflict strategy.

Role of the Board

Joe Holmwood discussed the role of the Parks and Recreation Board, which includes:

- advise the City Council on parks and recreation policy issues
- interact with citizens on parks and recreation issues and mediate where necessary
- act as a sounding board for staff on parks and recreation operational matters
- be knowledgeable about the benefits that parks and recreation services provide within a community
- have ongoing citizen/neighborhood contact within area of influence
- view issues from a "big picture" and "greater good" perspective
- recognize outstanding citizen volunteers
- be a cheerleader for parks and recreation in the community

White said all Board members should have received an invitation from Mayor Hawker to attend an October 24th meeting with the Mayor and City Council. White was one of three board chairs to speak to

the group. She spoke about construction of the indoor aquatic center, the need for a bond issue, the master plan, and several other items of importance.

White also said that she believes that Board members should ask themselves if they are doing enough to make a difference in parks and recreation, and if the answer is no, ask why not and what should be done to change it. She also reported that she met with a representative of the Tribune concerning publicity for parks and recreation issues. The Tribune representative will talk to members of the newspaper staff concerning this. White felt it was a positive meeting. White also reported that she and the Mayor presented the opening comments at the Skyline Park grand opening celebration on November 2 and Robert Brinton will be in attendance at the Enid Park opening on November 16.

Next Two Budget Years

Holmwood reported that staff attended the City's budget kickoff meeting last week. The next two budget years for the City of Mesa will be lean due to many factors, including state-shared revenues received by the City being reduced and revenue received from sales tax probably being less than expected. The City may see reductions in service levels, such as less watering of parks and retention basins, as well as recreation programs. The reductions, however, will not be across-the-board; priority will be placed on public safety (Police and Fire). As more information concerning the budget becomes available, the Board will be kept informed.

Parks and Recreation 2025 Master Plan and Future Bond Issue

Holmwood reported that the City receives revenue from several sources, including sales tax, utility funds (utility, gas, electric, solid waste), state shared revenues, grants, fees and charges, and licenses and permits. Many of these funds, such as the Quality of Life, are earmarked for specific City services and projects. Concerning park bonds, the last two initiatives did not pass and the bond funds that are currently in the budget (about \$2 million) were approved in 1996, primarily for park acquisition and park development.

Robin White asked what was being done to bring new business and revenue in to Mesa.

Holmwood replied that City's Economic Development Office is responsible for attracting new business. Their staff are constantly looking at new opportunities for commercial development; Williams Gateway is also a focus area for development.

Holmwood also reported that the City Council adopted the Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan and it became part of the City's overall General Plan with voter approval on November 5, 2002. It is a document that will be our guide for the future. It will be a major source of information when planning begins for the future bond package for parks and recreation.

Brinton asked about renovation of current parks as opposed to acquisition of new park land.

Holmwood said in the master plan the recommended number of acres of new park land is divided into west and east Mesa. There is very little land available for purchase in west Mesa. Renovation of older facilities is a concern, and while not specifically being addressed in the master plan, it is something of importance that we must all remember as future parks projects are considered.

Brinton suggested that renovation be included in the bond package so there is buy-in from the community. If new park development is only in east Mesa, west Mesa residents will probably not vote in the affirmative for the bonds.

Storment said part of the process of educating the public will be to ensure their understanding of what constitutes parks and recreation, and a definition of what needs to be done.

David Peterson said Mesa Public Schools will build probably one more junior high and a couple of elementary schools. The next elementary school will be built in 2006. Also, in Mesa, about 10,000 youth attend charter schools, which use the same facilities as public schools, so the need is great.

Bud Page asked if the charter schools use parks and recreation facilities.

Palmberg said yes, the facilities are open to the public. Students are driven to the parks and recreation sites by bus.

Storment said students using the facilities during the day is good because the parks are not utilized as they should be during the day. Holmwood added that it is important that the necessary park maintenance can get done without interference.

Parks Board members agreed that a subcommittee should be formed to work with staff on parks and recreation projects to be included in a future bond election. Subcommittee members are Robin White, John Storment, Bud Page, and Robert Brinton. White will contact John Dyer about his interest in serving on the subcommittee.

Robin White said that she believes the City needs to acquire park land but since no funds are available for this, it is realistic to use bond money for park acquisition.

Peterson said that on the west side of Mesa, there are some very old buildings and it would probably be better to raze a site and build a park rather than renovate.

Palmberg said Section 4 of the Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan outlines 12 key value areas. The division is establishing teams to begin addressing these areas.

At this point, lunch was provided and the Board viewed the City's Citizen Advisory Board/Committee Orientation video.

Division Fee and Charge Issues

Palmberg reported that a subcommittee, comprised of division staff and Board members, has been established to conduct the annual review of the division's fees and charges. The cost recovery goal within the next five years, according to the Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan, is 30%. Last year's fee increases caused minimal outcry from the public, and fee assistance is available for selected programs.

Palmberg reviewed the division's Administrative Regulation, the goals of fees and charges, and the schedule of fees and charges. She also reviewed the park event use guidelines which help in the understanding of the carrying capacity of facilities.

A matrix of partners report was distributed which includes information on the relationships the City maintains with community organizations, either by sponsorships or written agreements. The report is an effort to begin identifying partnerships with the City. The larger partnerships should be reviewed by the Board, which would involve representatives from each partnership providing a status report to the Parks Board.

Storment asked about agreements and/or partnerships involving dedicated land by developers.

Holmwood replied that the dedication of land is negotiated. For example, Continental Homes in the past worked with the City regarding a retention basin that is mandatory in the development. The City acquired five acres adjacent to the retention basin so a larger open space area was the result.

Educating the Public

Holmwood said there are a number of strategies the division is already involved in for education of the public about parks and recreation. Last year's Board workshop included a demonstration of public service announcements (PSAs) for the division video. Also, the division's TimeOut brochure is used as an information source to relay information to the public about parks and recreation programs and facilities and to provide notice of upcoming special events and park openings.

Brinton asked about the status of taping and broadcasting Parks Board meetings on Channel 11. He believes it is a way to get the message to the public about what the Board does and what parks and recreation provides. Also, a broadcasted Board meeting would be a way to get the message out concerning the bond election.

Holmwood said staff had targeted January for the televising of a Board meeting. However, word has been received from the City Public Information Office that with the City's current budget situation, new televised programs are not being added because of lack of manpower to operate the equipment.

Stormont asked for specifics on what the Board could do about educating the public.

Dina Lopez said the Mesa Arts Center (MAC) makes use of a special committee that attends various community events to distribute information and could be used as an example of what the Parks Board could do.

Holmwood said the Foundation for Mesa Parks and Recreation could assist in such an effort. Also, the bond subcommittee will determine what should be recommended in a bond issue, then a marketing campaign can be created.

Wayne Korinek said an issue has been raised by a citizen concerning a voter initiative that would require City Council to review all capital improvement projects over \$1.5 million. If successful, this initiative would affect bond projects.

Youth Athletics and Associated Issues

Bob White distributed background material about community youth groups that the division interacts with on a daily basis. He said field allocation is determined according to the division's Administrative Regulation concerning qualifying of the groups to participate at parks and recreation facilities. Many youth groups request use of City parks and recreation facilities due to a \$4.00 fee that is being charged by Mesa Public Schools.

Brinton asked if most calls received from youth groups concern scheduling of fields.

Bob White replied that most calls are for field maintenance and conflict resolution. The youth groups used to have one representative per group who would contact staff; however, recently coaches and board members are also calling. Also, if conflicts cannot be resolved, splinter groups are the result.

Bob White also reported that lights remain off at some fields due to lack of manpower to turn them off and on. Many times staff has received a call from a passing community group member wanting to know if they can use the field. Staff then must explain the reasons for the unlit fields.

Bob White said the Mesa Parent Youth Athletic Association (MPYAA) is a 501(c)(3) organization created in 1951. It consists of individuals to guide and protect positive programs for youth in the city. City staff will be working closely with the MPYAA to better utilize fields, address lighting issues, and focus on scheduling. Also, the City will enter into a formal agreement with each Little League this spring.

Palmberg said City staff does an excellent job of interacting with youth sports group, which is only a portion of staff's job responsibilities. City staff also believes that Mesa Public Schools does its best to appropriately allocate fields and to ensure that youth have access to the fields. Changes that youth groups could implement include more Saturday activities, earlier start times, and realizing that not every request can be approved.

Robin White asked about having the lights on timers.

Palmberg said staff has researched the option of a computerized lighting system but the initial cost is great.

Bob White said a comment was received from MPYAA complementing Mesa Public Schools and thanking them for providing opportunities for youth in Mesa.

City/School Cooperative Agreement

Bob White reported that a meeting was recently held to discuss finalization of the documents for the City/School cooperative agreement. Holmwood, Korinek, and he will be meeting with Mesa Public Schools representatives Dave Eagleburger and Jim Servis on November 19.

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph H. Holmwood, Director
Parks and Recreation Division