

MARICOPA COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
Regular Meeting of January 19, 2021

LOCATION:	Virtual Meeting via <i>GoToMeeting</i> (live feed and telephone). Maricopa County Parks Headquarters, 41835 N. Castle Hot Springs Road, Morristown, AZ 85342
COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:	Jack Stapley, Robert Branch, Megha Budruk, Shelby Scharbach, Eric Mears, Isabel Chavez and John Crane Previous Commissioner, Thomas Rhoades
COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT:	None
STAFF PRESENT:	RJ Cardin, Director; Donna Southard, Recorder; Ken Vonderscher, Planning and Development Manager; Dawna Taylor, Public Information Officer; Jennifer Waller, Operations Manager; and Betsy Pregulman, Deputy Maricopa County Attorney

The official correspondence and staff recommendations contained in this Commission folder are hereby entered as supportive material to the official minutes of the January 19, 2021, Parks and Recreation Commission regular meeting.

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING

ITEM #1 – CALL TO ORDER – Robert Branch, Chair, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Commission

- The regular meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m.

ITEM #2 – ROLL CALL – Roll Call taken - a quorum was present

- Chairman Branch addressed the Commission regarding the System Master Plan Update (SMP) and the impact the past year's events regarding Covid-19 had on Parks. Parks was deemed an essential service, therefore putting the "need" for parks at a high priority. As the SMP process begins again, emphasis needs to be placed on what we learned during this past year and how that can shape the vision for the future. He encouraged the Commissioners to talk with their respective Board of Supervisors to encourage funding to promote Parks as an essential service and to acquire the open spaces to meet the public's needs. He also thanked staff and volunteers for their service and expertise during the pandemic, the wildfires, and concessionaire issues; Parks not only survived but thrived during 2020.

ITEM #3 – PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION APPOINTMENTS AND RE-APPOINTMENTS – R.J. Cardin, Director, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department

- Director Cardin announced that Commissioners Eric Mears and Jack Stapley were reappointed by the Board of Supervisors for another two-year term. John Crane, District 2, was appointed as a new member to the Parks Commission.
- Commissioner Rhoades introduced Mr. Crane and thanked the Commissioners for the past three years of working together.
- Director Cardin thanked Commissioner Rhoades for his service, board involvement, and being a sounding board on issues within his district.

ITEM #4 – NOMINATING SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT AND NOMINATIONS OF 2021 OFFICERS – Megha Budruk and Thomas Rhoades, Subcommittee Members, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Commission

- Commissioners Budruk and Rhoades met with Director Cardin and are nominating Jack Stapley as Chair and Eric Mears as Vice-Chair.

ITEM #5 – ELECTION OF 2021 PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION OFFICERS – Robert Branch, Chair, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Commission

- Chair Branch called for a motion. Commissioner Chavez motioned to elect Commissioner Stapley as Chair and Commissioner Mears as Vice-Chair. Motion seconded by Commissioner Scharbach. With all in favor, none opposed, the motion was approved.
- Chair Stapley thank Commissioner Branch for his leadership during 2020. He is excited about the history and the future of the award-winning Parks system and planning for the next 50-years.
- Director Cardin thank Chair Branch for his leadership in 2020 and continual support of Parks.

ITEM #6 – DIRECTOR’S SUMMARY OF CURRENT EVENTS – R.J. Cardin, Director, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department

- Director Cardin informed the Commission that staff has begun working with the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) to update the agreement to manage the 24,000 acres at Lake Pleasant Regional Park. The current agreement terminates in 2040 and has another 50-year option to renew. A Request for Proposal has been released and one concern of potential concessionaires is enough time to recoup their development costs by 2040. Discussions will include long-term agreement options and updating the parks’ 1992 master plan with BOR’s involvement during the process.
- The Parks System Plan Update, *Parks Vision 2030-Continuing the Legacy* continues to move forward. Six Focus Group meetings will be held during the next month with over 150 park and recreation professionals, planning professionals, and non-profit groups to map out the next 10-20-50 years for Maricopa County Parks.
- Director Cardin provided a brief overview of the Summary report.
- Chair Stapley expressed his appreciation to the Park staff and volunteers for handling a 32% increase in visitor attendance through the Covid-19 situation. Commissioner Chavez visited Lake Pleasant Regional Park several times over the summer and said that the opportunity to educate visitors with handouts on why fees are charged, park rules, and protocols for new/first-time boaters/hikers/visitors is important.

ITEM #7 – APPROVAL OF COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES: NOVEMBER 17, 2020, REGULAR MEETING – Jack Stapley, Chair, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Commission

- Chair Stapley called for a motion to approve the November 17, 2020, regular meeting minutes as presented. Commissioner Sharbach motioned, seconded by Commissioner Crane. With all in favor, none opposed, the motion passed.
- Ms. Pregulman, Deputy County Attorney, recommended that as a new member, Commissioner Crane not motion to approve the November minutes. Chair Stapley called for another motion to approve the November 17, 2020, regular meeting minutes as presented. Vice-Chair Mears motioned, seconded by Commissioner Scharbach. With all in favor, none opposed, the motion passed.

ITEM #8 – MARICOPA COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COVID-19 VISITOR SURVEY STUDY RESULTS – Megha Budruk, Ph.D., School of Community Resources and Development, Arizona State University

- Ms. Budruk explained that from previous reports provided at the Commission meetings, the opportunity presented itself to study park visitor experiences within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Ms. Budruk explained the study’s purpose, methods, and results. Following Covid-19 safety protocols, the survey was conducted online only and was sent to 2,846 randomly selected Parks’ annual pass holders, yielding a 25.4% response rate. A brief overview of the results were presented.
- Commissioner Mears inquired if the demographic results reflect the visitor demographics or only those that chose to complete the survey. Secondly, the survey showed that visitors felt safe in the Parks during the pandemic but wondered if the employees had the same level of confidence. Ms. Budruk would need to compare the demographics of the survey respondents, the annual pass holders (if available), and the previous general visitor study before providing that information. Director Cardin and Operations Manager, Jennifer Waller, both shared that generally, they feel that staff may feel less safe only due to the large number of contacts they encounter each day. Staff and Volunteers are continually supplied with PPE (personal protective equipment), hand sanitizers, and additional features such as plexiglass shields have

been installed. Many of the Core Volunteers, after leaving early in the pandemic (Spring 2020), returned in the fall to work during the winter/spring busy seasons (2020/2021).

- Commissioner Chavez inquired if Park staff will receive priority in receiving the vaccines as parks are deemed an essential service. Director Cardin explained there is a group with a higher priority that will receive the vaccines first, but a request has been submitted for all frontline staff and volunteers to be able to receive them during the second round.
- Commissioner Crane commented that the 25% completion rate by annual pass holders of the long survey reflects how committed they are to Parks and that survey provided possible future procedures/processes that could be implemented before another similar situation occurs.
- Commissioner Branch requested an off-line discussion regarding research methods for future surveys.

ITEM #9 – INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT PLAN – Ken Vonderscher, Planning and Development Manager, and Juanita Armstrong, Natural Resource Planner, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department

- Mr. Vonderscher explained that an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan is a working plan for staff to address threats such as invasive species, environmental (i.e. wildfires), insects, and economics. Ms. Armstrong further explained that it is an ecosystem-based strategy focusing on long-term prevention using a combination of techniques.
- Commissioner Mears inquired why treatment will only be done along trails. Ms. Armstrong informed that much of the invasive species are growing along the trails and that treatment creates a wider fire break in the event of a wildfire. Commissioner Mears asked if grazing could be used as an option. Ms. Armstrong explained that some grazing animals such as goats carry diseases that could be detrimental to the bighorn sheep population and cattle could destroy natural resources without significant management.
- Commissioner Crane inquired if the list of herbicides and chemicals are available to the general public for use on personal property. Ms. Armstrong would provide links to available data.

ITEM #10 – LEAVE NO TRACE PROGRAM – Amber Gore, Interpretive Ranger, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department

- Ms. Gore explained the Leave No Trace (LNT) program, its history, and the implementation plan within Maricopa County Parks. Visitor engagement and programs include social media posts, press releases, signage, website information, informational brochures (English/Spanish), self-guided activity brochures, and a Jr. Ranger Guide. The Seven Principals of LNT can be used across the country in any environment/ecosystem with consistent messaging.
- Commissioner Chavez thanked staff for the development of this foundational program for the Parks' future success and preservation.
- Director Cardin would like to take this program to the Board of Supervisors for their formal adoption as an official environmental program and message to visitors. Chairman Stapley and Commissioner Crane both expressed their support for this program. No Commissioners expressed any opposition.

ITEM #11 – DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2021 COMMISSION AGENDA ITEMS – R.J. Cardin, Director, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department

- Director Cardin asked Commissioners to let him know if they would like any items added to the agenda.

ITEM #12 – CALL TO THE PUBLIC

- Director Cardin read an email from Mr. Jim Drew requesting the consideration for Maricopa County residents to make reservations earlier for the park campgrounds than out of state users. Commissioner Chavez and Mears asked that this item be placed on an upcoming agenda for discussion. Chair Stapley asked that an overview of the current process be sent out with the meeting documents so the commission can be prepared to discuss it.

ITEM #13 – CALL TO THE COMMISSION

- Chair Stapley asked if the next meeting in March will still be held at Utery Mountain Regional Park. Director Cardin suggested that due to the current Covid situation, the meeting be changed to a virtual. The Commissioners agreed with that recommendation.

ITEM #14 – ADJOURNMENT

- There being no further business, Commissioner Mears motioned and Commissioner Crane seconded to adjourn the meeting. With all in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 12:22 pm.