

**MARICOPA COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING**
Regular Meeting of May 19, 2020

LOCATION: Virtual Meeting via *GoToMeeting* (live feed and telephone). Maricopa County Parks Headquarters, 41835 N. Castle Hot Springs Road, Morristown, AZ 85342

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Thomas Rhoades, Megha Budruk, Jack Stapley, Robert Branch, Eric Mears, and Shelby Scharbach

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT: Isabel Chavez

STAFF PRESENT: RJ Cardin, Director; Donna Southard, Recorder; Ken Vonderscher, Planning and Development Manager; Dawna Taylor, Public Information Officer; Jennifer Waller, Operations Manager; Aimee Upton, Administrator; 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 May 19, 2020, 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 10:04 a.m.

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

ITEM #3 – DIRECTOR’S SUMMARY OF CURRENT EVENTS – R.J. Cardin, Director, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department

- Director Cardin provided an update on the East Desert Fire. The fire originated approximately 4-5 miles northeast of Cave Creek Regional Park. As the fire grew in size, campers were notified to be prepared to evacuate if needed. Overnight winds increased and the following morning the recommendation to evacuate the park was received. Campers were notified to leave and staff began moving out the critters located in the Nature Center, the computers, vehicles, and some of the horse concessionaire’s personal equipment (staff and horses were gone for the season). The fire did enter portions of the park burning over some trails, but did not reach any buildings, campsites or ramadas. Fire officials are hopeful the park can reopen in two days, but recommend inspection of the trails for fire damage and be aware that monsoon rains could cause further damage and mudslides. Three Hot Shot crews stayed in the parks’ campground and group campground areas.
- Commissioner Mears asked what is the Park’s strategy to handle fires within the County parks. Director Cardin stated that staff works with the local fire jurisdictions and they will take charge whenever a fire breaks out within or in close proximity to a park. The department does work pro-actively with the County’s Emergency Management Department and with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on programs such as fire fuels thinning.
- Director Cardin provided brief highlights from the Director’s Summary report. Chairman Branch inquired what the department is doing to keep volunteers engaged in supporting the parks. Parks Volunteer Coordinator, William Klewer, continued to communicate with volunteers through phone calls or emails. The Core Volunteer numbers remain relatively the same at this point.

ITEM #4 – SOUTHWEST WILDLIFE CONSERVATION CENTER UPDATE – Linda Searles, Executive Director, and Mike Nolan, Director, Planning and Development, Southwest Wildlife Conservation Center

- Director Cardin informed the Commission that the Use Management Agreement with Southwest Wildlife Conservation Center (SWCC) has been approved by the Board of Supervisors.

- Ms. Searles thanked the Commission and staff for their assistance in approving the agreement and is excited for the continued work in the partnership. Mr. Nolan provided a brief overview of the planning process during the transition phase. SWCC board is in the process of formally selecting an architectural firm to develop some designs considerations for the nature center and sanctuary buildings. Some site engineering studies have begun to better understand water flow/drainage in the area for the development of the site. A site master plan will be developed. The formal fundraising campaign to build the future site while maintaining current operations is expected to begin in approximately 1.5 – 2 years.
- Director Cardin expressed his appreciation to both Ms. Searles and Mr. Nolan for their partnership work and indicated this endeavor will be a huge asset to the park and moving forward Parks' conservation mission.
- Chairman Branch inquired if the future educational aspects for schools have been outlined. Director Cardin informed the Commission that this will be further developed in the Operations Plan stage. With the current programs offered by SWCC and Parks, he feels that McDowell Park will become a premier education site for youth in the future.

**ITEM #5 – ARIZONA STATE RIFLE AND PISTOL ASSOCIATION: JOE FOSS SHOOTING RANGE OVERVIEW
– Craig Joyner, GM, ASRPA Joe Foss Range**

- Mr. Joyner presented to the Commission an overview of ASRPA's history, their current activities and future plans at Joe Foss Shooting Range. ASRPA is the NRA's state affiliate and is a nonprofit 501(c)4 organization. ASRPA has been operating the shooting range with an all-volunteer, trained staff since September 2017 and to date, over 15,000 shooters have visited the complex. The cities of Buckeye and Goodyear Police Departments use the Joe Foss Shooting Complex as their home range along with 14 other user groups. Future goals include potentially improving the archery field if the program can be expanded; the creation of a future development plan for the complex; additional signage and a highway turn-in lane; a volunteer awards program; electronic gate access; and installation of security cameras, a 600-yard range; additional shotgun field(s); a Shoot House for law enforcement; an additional restroom facility; and a shooter's RV park.
- ASRPA Joe Foss Shooting Complex had developed an operations plan following the CDC guidelines to remain open during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Parks Department had approved the plan; however, complex volunteers expressed their personal safety concerns and subsequently the complex closed to the public from mid-March until the end of April (law enforcement training remained active). Mr. Joyner expressed his appreciation for the cooperation from the Parks Department. The range reopened at 50% capacity on May 1st and continues to follow all CDC guidelines. Online reservations are now required for shooters with data showing that approximately 33% are first-time visitors to the complex.
- Commissioner Stapley expressed his appreciation for the improvements and services offered at the complex.
- Commissioner Mears also expressed his appreciation for the work done by ASRPA. He inquired what is the strategy to deal with lead management. Mr. Joyner informed the Commission that it will be a joint responsibility; to date, no lead harvesting has been done since the range opened in 2008. Mr. Joyner is hoping that the organization hired to complete the complex development plan will offer an initial environmental assessment of the range. Commissioner Mears encouraged the board to understand the responsibilities of the range and begin setting aside monies for future clean up.
- Chairman Branch also thanks Mr. Joyner for their work. He has been a long-time advocate of the expansion of the complex as the west valley continues to grow.
- Director Cardin acknowledged the level of high professionalism and safety brought to the range by Mr. Joyner and the ASRPA.

ITEM #6 – 100 Miles in 100 Days Challenge Results – Dawna Taylor, PIO, and Dove Luidhardt, Park Supervisor, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department

- Ms. Taylor and Ms. Luidhardt recapped the program requirements, improvements, highlights and results. In 2020, 229 more individuals completed the program than in 2019 (639 total). The most popular trek was on the Maricopa Trail, followed by San Tan and White Tank parks. The Challenge webpage had over 9,301 hits and staff responded to over 666 emails. A new design was developed for the t-shirt logo which

included the program dates and the Parks' website address. Shirts were provided for participants completing the challenge.

- Commissioner Scharbach thanked staff for their work and was impressed by the new logo. Chairman Branch recognized that the 100 Mile Challenge is an award-winning program. He also challenged the Commission to participate in next year's challenge.

ITEM #7 – COVID-19 Status Update – Jennifer Waller, Operations Manager, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department

- Ms. Waller recognized the long, hard hours worked by staff at all the parks and headquarters in response to the pandemic. She briefly reviewed the timeline and how Parks prepared for and reacted to the constant change in events: closing of nature centers, group campgrounds, shoreline camping and picnic ramadas; canceling programs (288) and special user permits (17); ordering bulk personal protective equipment; website and social media updates; delivery of message boards and cones to the parks for closures; dealing with theft; daily check-ins with the Maricopa County Sheriff's office; daily virtual Operations meetings; and increased department cleaning frequency (Parks' guidelines were better than the CDC guidelines). Parks saw an overall 26% increase in visitors when parks were listed as an essential function by the governor, which caused widespread parking and safety concerns throughout the parks. With the governor's reduction of groups to 10 or less, Parks implemented reduced hours, some closures and a 50% park capacity to comply with CDC guidelines and due to lack of resources to staff the increased usage. Adjustments were made in cash handling procedures after receiving guidance from the Maricopa County Public Health Department. Staff will continue to monitor CDC, State and County guidelines and adjust as necessary.
- Ms. Waller provided an overview of visitor attendance comparison from the same period last year.
- Commissioner Budruk inquired if staff has considered any studies regarding behavior to assist in future planning. Ms. Waller informed the Commission that management has been discussing this option and would be interested in participating with ASU on a study.
- Chairman Branch inquired of Commissioner Budruk if she had seen any studies on COVID transmission rates in warm settings. Commissioner Budruk stated that most of the studies she has seen has been on visitor compliance regarding social distancing and recreating locations before/after COVID.

ITEM #8 – FY20 OPERATING BUDGET AND FY21 BUDGET PROJECTIONS – Aimee Upton, Administrator, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department

- Ms. Upton provided a forecast for the remaining fiscal year 2019-2020. The budget forecast is structurally balanced. Staff continues to closely monitor the Enhancement Fund to stay within the Board of Supervisors' approved expenditure authority. At this time, the Department is seeing higher revenues than originally budgeted. Fund 200 is a new fund that was developed for the CARES Act (COVID relief funds). Staff will submit for reimbursement of personal protective equipment that has been purchased during the pandemic and for new purchases related to COVID requirements. Annual Pass sales have significantly increased.
- Fiscal Year 2020-2021: the County's Budget Office has requested submittals of 3%, 5%, 10%, and 15% reduction scenarios for General Fund monies. As the Parks Department is 90% self-funded, any reduction impacts will hopefully be manageable.

ITEM #9 – CALL TO THE PUBLIC

- None submitted via email

ITEM #10 – CALL TO THE COMMISSION

- Chairman Branch inquired if the department has received clear guidance on how the CARES funding can be used? Ms. Upton explained that the County has set up the funding as a grant-based system. Expenses are submitted as a reimbursement. Future purchase requests are approved by a County-wide committee to ensure it meets the requirements of the CARES Act. Additional documentation and reporting codes are required.
- Director Cardin added that departments have been asked to compile a list of items that would assist with the current and possibly future COVID related incidents. The County's Government Affairs staff is working with the federal government to obtain further guidance on some of the additional items.

ITEM #11 – ADJOURNMENT

- There being no further business, Commissioner Stapley motioned and Commissioner Scharbach seconded to adjourn the meeting. With all in favor, none opposed, the meeting was adjourned at 12:38 pm.

R.J. Cardin, Director

Robert Branch, Chair