

MARICOPA COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
Regular Meeting of September 15, 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, Jack Stapley, Robert Branch, Megha Budruk, and Shelby Scharbach

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT: Eric Mears and 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 September 15, 2020, Parks and Recreation Commission regular meeting.

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING

ITEM #1 – CALL TO ORDER – Jack Stapley, Commissioner, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Commission

- The regular meeting was called to order at 10:08 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

Chairman Branch joined the meeting at 10:11 am.

- Director Cardin provided a brief overview of the Director’s Summary Report including Parks’ August Board of Supervisor agenda items; staff and volunteer safety training status; increase in volunteer hours; post-fire re-seeding progress; and the development of the Floristic Quality Assessment tool.
- Jennifer Waller, Operations Manager provided highlights of park updates: continued repairs and improvements are occurring on the Lake Pleasant 10-lane boat ramp; maintenance is occurring on approved dirt road access for specific areas at Lake Pleasant and efforts to stop user-made temporary routes by placing boulders to prevent access; three Southwestern Willow Flycatcher fledglings were spotted at Hassayampa River Preserve; staff is approving a limited number of foot-race and mountain-bike special use permit events that include a COVID-19 plan with staggered start times and social distancing strategies; a new fire occurred within McDowell Regional Park burning approximately 615 acres, and; maintenance repairs and deep-cleaning is occurring throughout all the parks.
- Director Cardin reported that visitor attendance during the first two months of FY21 increased by 41% over the same period last year.
- Commissioner Scharbach inquired how much CARES funding was received by the Department. Aimee Upton, Administrator, estimated that between \$600,000 to \$700,000 has been received for a variety of capital improvement projects and operational supplies.

ITEM #4 – APPROVAL OF COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES: APRIL 21, 2020 SPECIAL MEETING; MAY 19, 2020 REGULAR MEETING; AND AUGUST 18, 2020 REGULAR MEETING – Robert Branch, Chair, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Commission

- Commissioner Stapley called for a motion to approve the April 21, 2020, special meeting; the May 19, 2020, regular meeting; and the August 18, 2020, regular meeting minutes. Commissioner Rhoades motioned, seconded by Commissioner Budruk. With all in favor, none opposed, the motion passed.

ITEM #5 – DISCUSSION FOR 2021 COMMISSION MEETING SCHEDULE – Robert Branch, Chair, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Commission

- Commissioner Stapley inquired if there were any questions regarding the proposed 2021 meeting schedule. Director Cardin informed the Commission that the proposed schedule is essentially the same as 2020. The locations will be a combination of virtual and in-person meetings. No concerns or change requests were received, the final schedule will be presented at the next meeting for approval.

ITEM #6 – TRES RIOS GOLF COURSE UPDATE – R.J. Cardin, Director, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department

- Director Cardin provided an overview of the timeline of events with the receipt of the intent to terminate notification from Tres Rios Golf, LLC. On August 24 and 25, a Request for Proposal (RFP) was issued for a new Concessionaire to manage the golf course. On September 2, Tres Rios removed their last employee leaving the course with no mowing/irrigation maintenance staff. Estrella Park and Trades Crew staff have been working hard to keep the irrigation system running and the County secured a temporary maintenance contract for mowing/maintenance on the course. The County received five proposals and the evaluation committee narrowed the list down to a preferred proposal for a due diligence review. At the September 16, 2020, Board of Supervisors' (BOS) meeting, the Parks Department submitted recommendations for a settlement agreement with Tres Rios Golf, LLC, an Assignment of Use Management Agreement to with Southwest Golf Management, LLC, and amendment #5 restating and revising some of the terms in the Use Management Agreement. If the BOS approves the recommendations, staff anticipates the reopening of the golf course around the first week of November.
- Commissioner Stapley inquired if there are any lawsuits anticipated with the termination of the contract. Director Cardin stated that after many discussions with the Board of Supervisors and County Attorney, a settlement agreement was determined to be the best option. Part of the amended contract with Southwest Golf Management is the establishment of a reserve fund in the amount of \$50,000 that can be used to manage the property in the event of the concessionaire's early termination.

ITEM #7 – GOLDMINE TRAILHEAD UPDATE – Ken Vonderscher, Planning and Development Manager, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department

- Mr. Vonderscher provided a brief history of the Goldmine Trailhead at San Tan Regional Park: This trailhead offers a quicker access point to the park for the Town of Queen Creek and the existing parking lot is too small to accommodate the large number of park visitors. In 2015 and 2016, meetings were held to address the neighborhood concerns. In Fiscal Year 2019, funds were budgeted to develop design documents for a new construction project. In FY2020, electronic entrance gates were installed. The FY21 CIP funds have been pulled for this project due to the pandemic. Alternative solutions have been reviewed including a new interim parking area and trailhead. Challenges include the lack of a budget to complete the project to department standards, the Town of Queen Creek's concern about area drainage, and there is unknown participation from Pinal County. CARES funding has been secured by Parks to conduct a grading and drainage report study as requested by Queen Creek. Meetings will be held with the Town of Queen Creek to discuss other project components and cost-sharing opportunities.

ITEM #8 – VULTURE MOUNTAIN RECREATION AREA UPDATE – Ken Vonderscher, Planning and Development Manager, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department

- Mr. Vonderscher informed the Commission that the 100% design documents have been completed and are permit ready. The design approach has been divided into four phases. Phase I included park access, the roadway system, mass grading, and utility infrastructure with an engineer's estimate of \$6.6M for the park. Phase II included the Nature Center and Day-use areas for an estimate of \$13.8M. Phase III

included the campground areas for an estimate of \$5.7M. Phase IV included the OHV (off-highway vehicle) area improvements including, an entry station, skills training area, primitive camping, and a restroom for a \$6.06M estimate. The original start of Phase I construction was scheduled for Fall 2020/Spring 2021. With the economic uncertainties with the pandemic, many County projects have been postponed; MCDOT projects have been postponed to FY24. Parks will continue to submit annual requests to begin Phase I. Parks has notified project partners of the delay and will continue to meet with the Bureau of Land Management on the next steps at Vulture Mountain Recreation Area.

ITEM #9 – OCTOBER PARK OPERATING PLANS – Jennifer Waller, Operations Manager, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department

- Ms. Waller provided a three-phased plan to begin increased visitor interactions following the CDC, State, and County guidance. Phase I is scheduled to begin October 5th with the reopening of the Nature Centers, picnic ramadas, and playgrounds along with outdoor interpretive programs for groups less than 10 people. Phase II will allow the increase of groups up to 20 people and Phase III up to 30 people with those implementation dates to be determined. Plans for Phase I include sneeze guards, spread out souvenir items, removal of displays or props that can be handled, and a limited number of programs offered by pre-registration only and reservations required for use of the picnic ramadas. Playgrounds will be open with signs “play at your own risk”. Each phase will be continuously monitored and adjusted as needed.

Commissioner Budruk left the meeting at 11:06 am.

ITEM #10 – CALL TO THE PUBLIC

- None submitted via email or via the live virtual session.

ITEM #8 – CALL TO THE COMMISSION

- Commissioner Scharbach thanked Parks staff for the work on the meetings and operation of the parks. Chair Branch echoed her appreciation. Director Cardin acknowledged the excellent staff at all levels and locations to make the parks run as well as they are.
- Chair Branch thanked Commissioner Stapley for filling in for him at the beginning of the meeting as he worked through technical access issues.

ITEM #9 – ADJOURNMENT

- There being no further business, Chair Branch motioned and Commissioner Stapley seconded to adjourn the meeting. With all in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 11:19 am.

R.J. Cardin, Director

Robert Branch, Chair