

**MARICOPA COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT**  
**PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING**  
Regular Meeting of September 17, 2024

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**LOCATION:** Cave Creek Regional Park

**COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:** John Crane, Megha Budruk, Eric Mears, and Isabel Chavez,

**COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT:** Shelby Scharbach, Jack Stapley

**STAFF PRESENT:** R.J. Cardin, Director, Jennifer Waller, Deputy Director, Kara Currie-Gonzales, Finance Manager, Juanita Armstrong, Natural Resources Specialist, Teresa Retterbush, Developmental Superintendent, Bill Klewer, Volunteer Coordinator, Natalie Harper, West Superintendent, Betsy Pregulman, Deputy County Attorney

The official correspondence and staff recommendations in the Commission folder are entered as supportive material to the official minutes of the September 17, 2024, Parks and Recreation Commission regular meeting.

**PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING**

**ITEM #1 – CALL TO ORDER – John Crane, 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.

**ITEM #3 – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**ITEM #4 – APPROVAL OF COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES MAY 21, 2024– John Crane, Chair, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Commission**

- Chairman Crane called for a motion of approval for the May 21, 2024, meeting minutes, moved by Commissioner Mears and seconded by Commissioner Budruk. All in favor and none opposed. Motion passed.

**ITEM #5 – DIRECTORS SUMMARY OF CURRENT EVENTS– R.J. Cardin, Director, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department**

- Director Cardin informed the commission that he was in error about the director summary in the past, and after a discussion with the attorney, he now has a better understanding, if anyone has a question reach out after the meeting.

**ITEM #6– FY24 CIP PROJECT STATUS – Teresa Retterbush, Developmental Superintendent, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department**

- Mrs. Retterbush recapped the CIP (Capital Improvement Projects) In 2024 Parks had 41 projects at approximately 49 Million dollars. In 2025 Parks has 27 projects at approximately 46 Million dollars.
- Adobe host's sites and the pump station upgrades are complete. The new well drilled at Agua Fria is operational. Construction of 2 host sites at Buckeye Hills starts in October. Cave Creek water system improvements are in progress. Desert Outdoor Center shelving countertops, roof repairs, and well rehab are complete—Estrella's campground development and turf improvements project received bids. Hassayampa interpretive signs were installed and Wildlife Viewing Platforms around the lake were completed. Lake Pleasant's Roadrunner campgrounds construction is completed, and the septic renovations and wind warning installation are completed. McDowell's design for Bike Park is complete. Pump Station upgrades are complete and campground construction is underway. San Tan Trailhead and Box Culvert projects have started. The Usery Park demo is completed and Ramada construction is underway. Vulture Phase 2 and 3 went out to bid together with the low bids totaling \$26,897.00. White

Tanks Area 4 is 90% complete. Parking lots are completed. Bids were received for the Horse Staging Trailhead, but the job has not been awarded.

- Commissioner Chavez asked if the wind warning was effective for the last big storm. Deputy Director Waller stated that the new system is much brighter than the old one and signs at the boat ramps warn boaters of high winds, but that it comes down to educating the public on boater safety and the public making the right decisions. Commissioner Mears noted he is glad to see more safety training in the write-ups, and asked about contractor pricing and if it has started to level out. Mrs. Retterbush stated that contractors have not come down on prices. Director Cardin agreed that prices have not dropped.

**ITEM #7 – FY24 VOLUNTEER PROGRAM UPDATE – Bill Klewer, Volunteer Coordinator, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department**

- Mr. Klewer stated that the lower volunteer numbers were due to the Roadrunner campground construction, and some last-minute cancellations from camp hosts. Recruitment started early this year and the parks have a stand-by list for last-minute host cancellations. There is a new program for shoreline volunteers. Parks is involved in the community restitution program allowing individuals the opportunity to work off community service hours. Commissioner Chavez thanked Mr. Klewer for the presentation and his hard work with this program. Chairman Crane noted that these programs and events don't happen without volunteers, and thanked Mr. Klewer for his involvement.

**ITEM #8 – FY24 NATURAL RESOURCES PROGRAM UPDATE – Juanita Armstrong-Ullberg, Natural Resources Specialist, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department**

- Mrs. Ullberg announced that DD (Desert Defenders) hosted 86 removal events, removing almost 7000 pounds of invasive plants. Cave Creek had 48,000 invasive plants removed. Spur Cross had 52,500 plants removed. McDowell Mountain had 3000 plants removed, and Utery had 236,000 invasive plants removed. Estrella had 340,000 removed and White Tanks had 87,000 invasive plants removed. Parks hosted 26 native seed harvesting events. The interpretive signs are going in at Estrella. Crews are working on shaded fuel breaks. Butterfly monitoring for fall 2023 totaled 42 and for the spring of 2024 81 total butterflies. Parks and OET-GIS are working to monitor and document invasive species at the parks. Vice Chair Budruk asked if any of the monitored information was related to heat. Chairman Crane asked if the saguaros are repopulating due to the use of the preemergence. Mrs. Ullberg stated that the preemergence was specifically designed for the invasive grass. Chairman Crane commented on the loss of saguaros as a real devastating problem. Commissioner Mears said the public is unaware or uninformed about fires and the impact on the saguaros and their survival rate.

**ITEM #9 – UPDATE FY24 INTERPRETIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM REVIEW – Natalie Harper, West Superintendent, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department**

- Reviewed feedback collection plan for Interpretive Park Programs. Feedback will be comprised of 3 perspectives: Peer, evaluator, and visitor feedback. Implementation began in Q1 FY25, with continuing rollout until Q4 FY25. Commissioner Mears noted how lean the program is and it shows the respect you give the team members. Commissioner Chavez stated how impressive all the technical advances are and how the department has embraced this. Chairman Crane agreed this is impressive.

**ITEM #10 – SOUTHWEST WILDLIFE CONSERVATION CENTER UPDATE – Presentation**

- The two main components are the rehabilitation of the animals and a sanctuary for the animals that can't be released back into the wild. The sanctuary is a public space, whereas the rehab portion is not open to the public for the safety of the animals. The project is being done in phases and the CMAR is currently developing a design to put together a realistic cost. Fundraising starts in 2025 for phase 1. Southwest Wildlife Chairman announced a Gala for the 30-year celebration, on November 8<sup>th</sup>. Tickets are on sale. Director Cardin encouraged everyone to take a tour of Southwest Wildlife's current facility.

**ITEM #11 – COMMISSION EMERITUS RECOGNITION – R.J. Cardin, Director, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation**

- Commissioner Stapley is donating funds for the Emeritus Recognition Awards. The idea of a walking/hiking stick was mentioned as something that could be displayed or used. Chairman Crane stated this is a terrific idea, better than a plaque or bench. Director Cardin stated November will be busy, and thinks January may be better for the celebration. Commission agreed.

**ITEM #12 – PARKS VISION 2030 IMPLEMENTATION SUBCOMMITTEES – R.J. Cardin, Director, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation**

- Director Cardin asked the Commissioners if there was a specific focus for anyone. Commissioner Mears stated the focus is growth and noted the sub committee is to help the commission push through certain issues. Director Waller and Chairman Crane will discuss the focus for the Sub committee.

**ITEM #13 – SET NOVEMBER COMMISSION MEETING LOCATION AND START TIME – John Crane, Chair, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Commission**

- November 19, 2024 at 10:00 AM. Hassayampa River Preserve/Tour of Vulture Mountain to follow. Chairman Crane made the motion. Commissioner Mears 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion. All in favor. Motion passed.

**ITEM #14 – CALL TO THE PUBLIC**

- Scott Burley proposed a White Water Center for the Estrella Park.

**ITEM #15 – CALL TO COMMISSION**

- Commissioner Chavez volunteered for the Subcommittee.
- Director Cardin announced his retirement as of November 1, 2024.
- Commissioner Mears stated that Director Cardin may be leaving, but leaves behind a legacy. Commissioner Chavez agreed with Commissioner Mears and that a lot things would not have happened without Director Cardin's Leadership.
- Vice Chair Budruk noted what a legacy Director Cardin leaves behind, and thanked him for his time.
- Chairman Crane commented on the culture of Parks and that is a direct result of Director Cardin's leadership and his team.
- Director Cardin took a moment to praise his team and that its all of the Parks dedication to the vision.

**ITEM #16 – ADJOURNMENT**

- Chairman Crane asked for a motion to adjourn. Commission Mears so moved and Commissioner Chavez 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion. All in favor. Motion passed