

**MARICOPA COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING**
Meeting of March 17, 2015

LOCATION: Estrella Mountain Regional Park, 14805 W Vineyard Avenue, Goodyear, AZ 85338

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: **Anne Lynch, Rod Jarvis, Carl Yoshioka, and Dr. Robert Branch**

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT: Jack Stapley, Denise Merdon, and Devin Del Palacio

STAFF PRESENT: RJ Cardin, Director; Donna Southard, Recorder; Jennifer Waller, Operations Manager; Michele Kogl, Planning and Development Manager; Dawna Taylor, PIO; 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 March 17, 2015, Parks and Recreation Commission regular meeting.

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING

ITEM #1 – CALL TO ORDER – Rod Jarvis, Chair, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Commission

- The regular meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m.

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

ITEM #3 – APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 20, 2015, PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING – Rod Jarvis, Chair, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Commission – ACTION ITEM

- Commissioner Lynch motioned to approve the minutes of the January 20, 2015, meeting as presented.
- Commissioner Branch asked the status of the action item that was tabled at the last Commission meeting regarding the Flood Control disposal of an easement in Paradise Valley Park. Director Cardin informed the Commission that after the last Commission meeting, the Flood Control District (FCD) decided to pull the request to dispose of the easement. FCD will still move forward to sell the land to the community college, but will keep the easement on the land. The land use is proposed for a parking lot and the easement can remain on that land. The FCD did not want to go through the Parks process of public hearings for removal of the easement.
- Commissioner Branch seconded to approve the minutes of the January 20, 2015, meeting as presented.
- All in favor, none opposed, and the motion was approved.

ITEM #4 – DIRECTOR’S SUMMARY OF CURRENT EVENTS – RJ Cardin, Director, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department – INFORMATION/DISCUSSION ITEM

- Director Cardin presented highlights of the staff and volunteers’ current events over the past two months. The “Go Wild for Flowers!” media campaign was launched on seven digital billboards around the valley, including a full electronic campaign on social media sites like Facebook, Pinterest, and other government websites and the print media picked up the press release in many area newspapers. The electronic billboards were found to be more cost effective than the traditional billboards. Revenues and park visitor numbers are up year-to-date. The increase in attendance numbers reflect new visitors coming to the park which is meeting the Parks Department’s vision and mission.

- The FY16 proposed budget has been submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Parks is requesting an increase of \$587,000 for additional revenue and expenditure authority; primarily to cover increased central service costs. The increase is structurally balanced and conservative. Parks is also seeking approval to increase operating expenditures through the General Fund for the first phase of the Vulture Mountain Recreation Area.
- Staff has finished the final draft of the Use Management Agreement for review by the County's legal department and by Estrella Youth Sports. A Use Management Agreement is being drafted for expansion of the Victory Lane Sports area by Legacy Sports. Expansion of the Maricopa Trail continues as new easements are obtained through purchase or agreements. Through the department's point of sale system (POS), staff is now able to pull statistical data to see what types of products are selling which will assist in future ordering of products. The volunteers continue to provide a vital asset to park operations and to our visitors. The campgrounds in all of the parks are full with additional campers filling the overflow areas. Renovations on the Lake Pleasant Visitor Center will begin in late March. San Tan Park has seen over a 30% increase in park visitor attendance in the last six months. Volunteer hosts at Spur Cross have sold over \$3,000 in souvenir merchandise during January and February by setting up a table at the park entrance.
- Commissioner Branch confirmed that the \$500,000+ operating expenditure increase request is funded through Parks fees.
- A member of the audience asked for more information about the type of amenities that will be at Vulture Park. Director Cardin explained that Vulture Park will have trails, campgrounds, and group-use areas along with the Hassayampa River Preserve area that has a unique riparian area and will also include an off-highway vehicle area which had been pre-set by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

ITEM #5 – VOLUNTEER PROGRAM – RJ Cardin, Director, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department – PRESENTATION ITEM

- Director Cardin recognized and thanked Gayland Lockridge for his 20+ years of stewardship and outstanding volunteer assistance at Estrella Regional Park.

ITEM #6 – 100 MILES IN 100 DAYS CHALLENGE RECOGNITION – Dawna Taylor, PIO, and Jennifer Johnston, Parks Superintendent, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department – PRESENTATION ITEM

- Ms. Johnston and Ms. Taylor provided an overview of the program. A Facebook page was added for the 2014/2015 Challenge as a way to allow participants to motivate each other and share their photos and milestones throughout the program. 163 participants completed the Challenge and recorded a total of 21,538 miles. All participants completing the challenge were placed in a raffle; the randomly drawn winner received a one year Annual Pass and a \$25 gift card to a Nature Center's souvenir shop. Several participants completing the Challenge with more than 200 miles were in attendance and recognized for their accomplishments: 200+ miles – Kelly Barnes, Roger Dzugola and Misti Flahpohler; 300+ miles – Dave Cotey; and 500+miles!! – Jerry Grant.
- Commissioner Branch asked if the 100 Mile Challenge was the award winning program previously reported. Director Cardin confirmed that the program had won a national award.

ITEM #7 – PARK CAPITAL FINANCING OPTIONS – RJ Cardin, Director, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department and Dee Frankfourth, Conservation Finance Director – West, The Trust for Public Land – INFORMATION/DISCUSSION ITEM

- Director Cardin informed the Commission that the last Parks Capital Improvement Bond passed by voters was in 1986. In 2006, another bond funding option was explored and supported by the Commission and initially by the Board of Supervisors, but was tabled when the economy drastically declined.
- Director Cardin introduced Dee Frankfourth from The Trust For Public Land (TPL); TPL assists communities, counties and regional park districts from around the county with financing options to develop parks and protect open space.
- Ms. Frankfourth informed the Commission that TPL is a 501c3 organization established 20 years ago to work with town, county and state governments to identify funding options. A brief overview of TPL's

history, goals and services was presented. TPL's services include feasibility research, public opinion surveys, program recommendations, and assistance with ballot language and campaigns resulting in an 81% success rate. Key elements for conservation funding starts with elected leadership inviting TPL to provide technical services (TPL does not lobby); there needs to be a compelling force for a measure to advance to a ballot; and there needs to be an On-the-Ground campaign presence. If public opinion polls reflect less than 50% support, TPL does not recommend moving forward with a ballot.

- Director Cardin shared with the Commission that he has been impressed with TPL over the years because they do their homework, they are transparent in their work, and they follow a very rigid process to allow the County to make good decisions at critical milestones based on their research.

ITEM #8 – ASU ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY – Leigh Johnson, Planner, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department and Deepak Chhabra, PhD, Senior Sustainability Scientist and Dale Larsen, Professor of Practice and Honors Faculty, School of Community Resources and Development, Arizona State University – INFORMATION/DISCUSSION ITEM

- Ms. Johnson informed the Commission that Parks had asked ASU to conduct an economic impact study to find the value Maricopa County Regional Parks provides in the greater community.
- Professor Larsen thanked Maricopa County Parks and Recreation and the Central Arizona Conservation Alliance for funding the research project. The study's objective was to calculate the financial impact, the environmental benefits, the community development impact and the quality of life impact of public lands in and around their area.
- Dr. Chhabra explained the study method used data acquired from the recent Maricopa County Parks and Recreation's Visitor Study. The study was unique because it also included retained spending figures for local residents living in the study area for each park. IMPLAN software, the most commonly used software to determine economic impacts of recreation and tourism in the United State, was used to establish the economic values in the study.
 - Key results in the report are broken down by local gateway regions (approximately 10 miles around each park) and by the metropolitan statistical area (MSA). Leverage ratios are provided by park, gateway areas and by MSA.
 - Total spending by the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department (visitor expenditures and operational expenses) in the Phoenix MSA within Pinal and Maricopa Counties supported \$24.2 million in output, \$20.8 million in gross regional product, \$14.2 million in labor income and 301 jobs. The parks leverage ratio, or the amount generated from each county dollar invested in net operating cost by Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department (MCPRD) for the Phoenix MSA is 1:1.72; resulting in over a 70% return on investment.
 - Further breakdown of economic contributions shows that visitor spending generated \$12.5 million in sales, \$8.1 million in gross regional product, \$5.1 million in labor income, 153 full time jobs, \$1.0 million in total federal tax contributions, \$.8 million in total State/local tax contributions. Economic contributions of operational expenses are \$16.7 million in sales, \$12.7 million in value added, \$9.1 million in labor income, 148 full time jobs, \$1.7 million in total federal tax contributions, and \$.6 million total in State/local tax contribution.
 - The top five industries significantly impacted by visitor spending are wholesale trade businesses, retail stores (food & beverage), hotels and motels, equipment rental companies and miscellaneous retail stores (souvenir vendors). The top industries impacted by MCPRD expenses include employment and payroll, commercial and industrial equipment repair and maintenance, food services and drinking places, real estate establishments, facilities support services, miscellaneous retail and general merchandise retail stores, health practitioner offices, private hospitals and employment services.
 - Dollars spent by visitors in the form of entrance fees, permits and camping fees are forwarded to MCPRD and do not directly enter the local economy through visitor spending. Because of this limitation in the study, it is highly likely that the economic impact assessed by the study is underestimated.
- Professor Larsen clarified that this study analyzes complete expenditure dollars which directly results in a \$1.70 return on economic impact. Unlike other large event economic impact estimates, this study does not take into effect variables like property home values around the parks, volunteer hours, etc., it provides a conservative, bottom-line study result.

- Commissioner Yoshioka asked Dr. Chhabra what additional information could have been collected in addition to the current survey data used in the study. Dr. Chhabra responded that more expenditure questions would have helped to provide more realistic impact numbers.
- Director Cardin explained that the secondary data from the Visitor Study was a good initial source of data and was used due to limitations of funds needed to conduct a full economic study. He also pointed out that of the approximate \$8.1 million dollars in operating expenditure used in the study, only \$560,000 is actually from the County's General Fund, the remaining monies are generated by park visitors, which would also increase the leverage ratio and resulting economic impact. Director Cardin thanked Dr. Chhabra and Professor Larsen for their work and the Conservation Alliance for their partnership in this study.

ITEM #9 – PARKS STRATEGIC SYSTEM MASTER PLAN ADDENDUM 2014 APPROVAL – Leigh Johnson, Parks Planner, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department – ACTION ITEM

- Ms. Johnson provided a brief summary of the final updates for the Parks Strategic System Master Plan. The final addendum had been previously presented to the Commission, but not placed on the agenda for approval. Today's action item is a formality to approve the updates.
- Commissioner Lynch motioned to approve the Parks Strategic System Master Plan 2014 Addendum as presented. Commissioner Branch seconded. With all in favor, none opposed, the motion passed.

ITEM #10 – ESTRELLA MOUNTAIN PARK HIGHLIGHTS – Don Harris, Park Supervisor, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department – INFORMATION ITEM

- Mr. Harris provided the Commission with a brief history of the park. Estrella Park is the oldest in the regional park system. Activities at the park include golf, rodeo and horse concessions, riparian areas, a variety of wildlife and flora, educational events, camping, picnics, hiking, biking and special events. Community partnerships include plans for a 17-mile recreational waterway area. Recently, trail renovation work has been completed and new trails have been added within the park. Current facility renovations and repairs occurring in the park include painting and repair of the restrooms, new information kiosks, ramada painting, grill repairs, new playground equipment, campsite and amphitheater improvements and an update to the park master plan.

ITEM #11 – CALL TO THE COMMISSION

- Commissioner Branch clarified that the news report from several weeks ago that someone had run over saguaro cactuses at the White Tanks did not occur on park property.
- Commissioner Jarvis thanked all the presenters for their great information. He wanted to ensure that Parks is providing a means of letting Phoenix area resort visitors know about the hiking trails throughout the park system.

Item #13 – CALL TO THE PUBLIC

- Ms. Beute from the Conservation Alliance informed the Commission that the Alliance is in the early stages of working with the County to help redirect visitors from very busy trails towards similar experiences in other parks on less used trails. Brochures and resort magazines will be used as a means to spread this information.

Item #14 – ADJOURNMENT

- There being no further business, Chairman Jarvis called for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Lynch motioned, Commissioner Branch seconded. With all in favor, none opposed, the meeting was adjourned at 10:57 am.

RJ Cardin, Director

Rod Jarvis, Chair