

**MARICOPA COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT  
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING**  
Regular Meeting of August 17, 2021

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**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:** Jack Stapley, Eric Mears, Robert Branch, Megha Budruk, John Crane, Shelby Scharbach, Isabel Chavez

**COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**STAFF PRESENT:** RJ Cardin, Director; Donna Southard, Recorder; Dawna Taylor, Public Information Officer; Jennifer Waller, Operation Manager; Aimee Upton, Administrator; and Betsy Pregulman, Deputy Maricopa County Attorney

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The official correspondence and staff recommendations contained in this Commission folder are hereby entered as supportive material to the official minutes of the August 17, 2021, Parks and Recreation Commission regular meeting.

**PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING**

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

- The regular meeting was called to order at 10:01 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 overview of the August report to include recent Board of Supervisor approvals; contract administration updates, employee and volunteer safety training hours increased approximately 25% over last fiscal year; volunteer hours increased approximately 6% over last fiscal year; new capital improvement projects; the completion of the native seed garden to help restore burned or degraded park areas; park projects; and FY21 Park Performance Measure results.
- Commissioner Crane inquired if the transfer of the water rights at Spur Cross Conservation Area has any significance for the Town or Parks or if this is a procedural process. Director Cardin explained that between Parks and the Town, it’s a continuation of the current partnership. The transfer will give Parks “Standing” with Arizona Department Water Resources to protect the water rights at Spur Cross.

**ITEM #4 – APPROVAL OF COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES: MAY 18, 2021 – Jack Stapley, Chair, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Commission**

- Chair Stapley called for a motion to approve the May 18, 2021, meeting minutes (regular and executive session) as presented. Commissioner Scharbach motioned, seconded by Commissioner Crane. With all in favor, none opposed, the motion passed.

**ITEM #5 – USERY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL PARK CONNECTOR TRAIL UPDATE – R.J. Cardin, Director, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department**

- Director Cardin reiterated to the Commission on the request from the Hawes Trail Alliance (HTA) presented at the May Commission meeting to build a new connector trail within Usery Mountain Regional Park from the parks’ north border to the HTA trail system. Staff held several meetings with stakeholders including the Bureau of Land Management, Maricopa County’s Department of Transportation and Flood Control District, the Tonto National Forest, the City of Mesa and the Usery Archery group. Issues with the requested route includes congestion at the Nature Center, limited available parking, crossing the Park

road conflicting with all incoming traffic, and safety in the congested area. An altered proposed route was presented to HTA and the Commission. Next steps would be concept of execution: Parks would flag the route, HTA field review, HTA pay for Cultural Resource Survey, Parks would rough cut trail with equipment, and HTA would perform trail finish work. The Blevins Trail to Area C and D would be built by Parks and welcome HTA's assistant with finish work.

- Commissioner Budruk inquired if there were any concerns that these users would not be directed to the Nature Center. Director Cardin informed the Commission that the proposed alternate route was presented to the HTA; their response said they were indifferent on the changes with their primary concern stating that the proposed trail was not as direct to the HTA trail system as their proposal, adding .4 miles to the route.
- Chair Stapley inquired if HTA expressed any concerns about the congestion on the Maricopa Trail portion of the route. Director Cardin acknowledged that congestion is a concern, but by using the portion of the Maricopa Trail beyond the Wind Cave Trail section, which is the busiest section of the trail in the park, congestion is alleviated as much as possible.
- The proposal will be uploaded to the Parks' website to solicit other trail users and the general public's comments. Director Cardin noted that the proposed route adds three additional loops within the park which is a frequent request from users. Chair Stapley asked if there were any other attendees in the meeting that wanted to speak; there were none. He congratulated the County and staff for working with the public and HTA to meet the needs of the users. Director Cardin said that pending no major concerns from the Commission or the public, the final step would be to obtain the Board of Supervisor's approval for the plan amendment request.

#### **ITEM #6 – PARKS VISION 2030 SYSTEM MASTER PLAN UPDATE – Eileen Baden, Park and Open Space Planner, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department**

- Ms. Baden provided an update to the Commission regarding the Parks Vision 2030 process since their last meeting in May. Staff has begun drafting the Strategic System Master Plan (introduction chapter, existing conditions, and outreach efforts). Values or Plan Elements were identified in previous outreach meetings and will be used as the guiding principles in the plan. Maricopa County Parks hosted a presentation by Ian Dowdy from The Center for the Future of Arizona (CFA). Mr. Dowdy provided a deeper look at the data collected in the 2020 Gallup Arizona Survey. CFA developed 42 actions to Drive Arizona Forward which Parks shares seven public values. Feedback forms were used to solicit responses and input to help guide the future direction of the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department. A total of 113 forms were submitted from the Executive Team, staff and area stakeholders. The results were presented to the Commission. With the reinstatement of the mask mandates, staff is working out the best option to hold public meetings. When the draft plan is completed, it will be presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission for review and endorsement followed by the Board of Supervisor's approval.
- Commissioner Scharbach commented that she was glad to see that staff was working with CFA as they will also be giving a presentation to the Board of Supervisors in the near future.
- Commissioner Mears inquired how the demographic data and experiences with parks will affect future planning efforts for Parks. Director Cardin said that by protecting and reimagining river corridors, this provides a great opportunity to connect people to nature much closer to their homes. Commissioner Mears asked if the urban or micro park concept is part of the current process? Director Cardin informed the Commission that the current plan process will offer recommendations for future partnerships much like the County has done with the Maricopa Trail. The river corridors will also need to include agreements with private entities such as sand and gravel companies to reclaim areas after they are done.
- Chair Stapley complimented staff on the huge undertaking is taking place to reach out to the number of stakeholders and the number of meetings that have been held to collect the data for planning the future of our parks.

#### **ITEM #7 – CALL TO THE PUBLIC**

- None

#### **ITEM #8 – CALL TO THE COMMISSION**

- None

**ITEM #8 – CONSULTATION FOR LEGAL ADVICE REGARDING VOLUNTEER POLICY. THE COMMISSION MAY VOTE TO CONVENE IN EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS THIS MATTER PURSUANT TO A.R.S. §38-431.03(A)(3).**

- Commissioner Branch motioned, seconded by Commissioner Scharbach, to convene into an Executive Session. With Commissioners Stapley, Branch, Scharbach, Budruk, Chavez, and Crane in favor, and Commissioner Mears opposed, the motion passed.

**ITEM #17 – ADJOURNMENT**

- The Commission meeting was reconvened. There being no further business, Commissioner Scharbach motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner Mears. With all in favor, none opposed, the meeting adjourned at 12:03 pm.