

MARICOPA COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
Regular Meeting of January 16, 2024

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

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Shelby Scharbach, John Crane, Jack Stapley, Robert Branch, Megha Budruk, Isabel Chavez, and Eric Mears

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: R.J. Cardin, Director; Donna Southard, Recorder; Jennifer Waller, Deputy Director; Kara Currie-Gonzales, Finance and Administration Manager, Dawna Taylor, PIO, and Wayne Peck, Attorney Senior Counsel 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 January 16, 2024, Parks and Recreation Commission regular meeting.

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING

ITEM #1 – CALL TO ORDER – Shelby Scharbach, Chair, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Commission

- The regular meeting was called to order at 10:12 a.m.

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

ITEM #3 – INVOCATION – Steve Gallardo, Supervisor, District 5

ITEM #4 – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ITEM #5 – PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION RE-APPOINTMENTS – R.J. Cardin, Director, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department

- Director Cardin informed the Commission that the Board of Supervisors reappointed Shelby Scharbach, Megha Budruk, and Dr. Robert Branch for another two-year team.

ITEM #6 – NOMINATING SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT AND NOMINATION OF 2024 OFFICERS – Eric Mears and Jack Stapley, Subcommittee Members, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Commission -

- Commissioner Mears, on behalf of the Subcommittee, recommended the nomination of John Crane for Chair and Megha Budruk for Vice-Chair.

ITEM #7 – ELECTION OF 2024 PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION OFFICERS – Shelby Scharbach, Chair, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Commission

- Commissioner Mears motioned to nominate John Crane as Chair and Megha Budruk as Vice-Chair, seconded by Commissioner Chavez. With all in favor, none opposed, the motion passed.

ITEM #8 – APPROVAL OF COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES FOR THE NOVEMBER 21, 2023 REGULAR MEETING – John Crane, Chair, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Commission

- Commissioner Scharbach motioned, seconded by Commissioner Mears to approve the November 21, 2023, regular meeting minutes. With all in favor, none opposed, the motion passed.

ITEM #9 – EMPLOYEE SERVICE AWARDS – R.J. Cardin, Director, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department

- Juanita Armstrong-Ullberg (5 years), Delson Alexander (5 years), Jake Carpenter (5 years), Kayci Green (5 years), and Roberta Rodriguez (10 years).

ITEM #10 – DIRECTORS SUMMARY OF CURRENT EVENTS – R.J. Cardin, Director, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department

- Director Cardin thanked Supervisor Steve Gallardo and the Board of Supervisors for adopting the *Parks Vision 2030 Plan* at their December meeting. The budget report is on track for this fiscal year with the Roadrunner campsites reopening at Lake Pleasant. Human Resources reports new hires, with some promotions and position transfers resulting in fewer vacancies. The Natural Resource Specialist is working with the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management to complete the fuel reduction plan at Utery Mountain Regional Park. The 2024 Desert Defender and Natural Resources program schedule has been completed.
- Development Superintendent Retterbush provided an overview of the Trades and Trails Crews activities.
- Deputy Director Waller provided a brief overview of the Parks' activities.
- Commissioner Branch inquired how many days of free entrance into County Parks are different than the State Park schedule. Director Cardin stated that he would include a report in the next Director's Summary.

ITEM #11 – RIO REIMAGINED PROJECT AND LOWER GILA RIVER COLLABORATION – Maggie Soffel, Rio Reimagined, and Kelly Wolff and Nichole Engelmann, LGRC

- Maggie Stoffel, Senior Director of the Rio Reimagined at Arizona State University (ASU), Kelly Wolff, Habitat Evaluation and Lands Program Manager for the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Region 6, and Nichole Engelmann, Biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services gave a joint presentation providing information on the Rio Reimagined Project and the Lower Gila River Collaborative and inviting the public to join working groups.
- In 1967, the first concept plan was established consisting of a 40-mile development master plan. Over the next couple of decades, various other master plans were developed. In 2018, six cities, two Native Nations, Maricopa County, and Salt River Project signed a Statement of Intent to form the Rio Reimagined partnership. In 2019, the project received a federal delegation letter of support for designation in the Federal Urban Waters Program. The Rio Reimagined Project is one of 21 different locations across the United States that receive funding allocated for urban waterways. In the last several years, Rio Reimagined partners have secured over \$30M in grant funding.
- The Lower Gila River Collaborative (LGRC) is the western segment of Rio Reimagined and envisions a healthy Lower Gila River system with sufficient water resources to support functioning habitat, engaged and resilient communities, vibrant local economies, and quality of life for present and future generations. The collaboration is made up of a leadership council, a coordinating team, and working groups. Four main goals have been established: enhancement, support, connect, and mitigate. The Strategic Action Plan (StrAP) guides the collaboration and helps leverage partnerships between agencies. The Lower Gila River Collaboration links to four priorities of the Parks Vision 2030 Master Plan.
- Chair Crane stated that it is an exciting time for both organizations with their momentum and collaborations with various partners. Commissioners Branch and Scharbach encouraged continued community engagement through bonds and private property owners' involvement.
- Director Cardin also recognized several County Departments for their support: the Flood Control District for their financial and staffing support of this project, the Office of Enterprise Technology for their GIS support, and MCDOT for their assistance.

ITEM #12 – JOE FOSS SHOOTING RANGE MANAGEMENT - R.J. Cardin, Director, and Emily Miller, Contract Administrator, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department

- Director Cardin informed the Commission that the Arizona Citizens Defense League Foundation (AzCDLF), a 501c3 non-profit organization, has successfully continued the operation with no disruption

to public use after the Arizona State Rifle and Pistol Association (ASRPA) terminated their agreement at the end of 2023.

- Commissioner Scharbach asked about the revenue sharing. Ms. Miller explained that the range is on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands and that all revenues need to go back into the park.
- Chair Crane acknowledged how fortunate it was to have the AzCDLF come in so quickly and inquired how long is the agreement anticipated to be. Director Cardin stated the years of the agreement usually correlate with the amount of investments planned to allow them to recoup their costs, usually a minimum of ten years. They are currently on a six-month agreement pending further discussions. He also supported keeping the range open to maintain a safe and controlled environment.
- Commissioner Mears stated that Lead abatement is important and that keeping this range open, it provides structure and safety to patrons instead of pushing them to other areas that may not be as safe.
- Commissioner Chavez inquired about the goals and the mission of the non-profit. Ms. Miller stated that their focus is on safety and education. Commissioner Chavez encouraged programming to be included in their plans.
- Commissioner Stapley inquired which cities use the facility, and if they are open for more users to come in. Director Cardin stated that Goodyear and Buckeye police departments currently use the range. Ms. Miller said that Avondale and Luke Air Force Base previously used the range too. The two current police departments using the range are excited about the proposed improvements by AzCDLF. Director Cardin stated that as long as they did not reduce public access, the department would encourage additional agencies to use the range.
- Commissioner Budruk inquired about any expansion of the hours of operation. Director Cardin stated that they would like to expand their hours and days. Staff also continues to work with the BLM to partner with this range versus them developing a new one five to eight miles away.
- Commissioner Branch inquired about any cost to the County if they were to leave. Director Cardin explained that there is an exit strategy in the agreement. Commissioner Branch also stated that AzCDLF plans to build a 1,000-yard range which will be well received by the law enforcement agencies.
- Chair Crane expressed that a future Commission meeting be held at the Joe Foss Shooting Range for the commissioners to see the area.

ITEM #13 – PARKS VISION 2030 SYSTEM MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION – R.J. Cardin Director, and Jennifer Waller, Deputy Director, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department -

- Deputy Director Waller stated the system plan is complete. The Goals and Objectives are located in chapter 5. Staff has broken them down into their perspective priority areas: existing system, new parklands, conservation, and funding. The goals and objectives were then prioritized and assigned to each area for tracking.
- Commissioner Mears inquired about the high medium and low priorities and why we are focused on the low. Deputy Director Waller stated that everything is in one place so as not to lose sight of the smaller goals and priorities and to check things off as needed but we are focusing on the high-priority objectives.

ITEM #14 – PARK COMMISSIONER EMERITUS MEMBERS RECOGNITION – R.J. Cardin Director, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department -

- Director Cardin stated that with the revised Commission Bylaws, it is time to recognize our past commission members with 10 or more years of service. At this time, we have identified 23 members. He encouraged the Commission to review the list and let staff know if they know of anyone who may have been missed. The idea is to locate as many former recipients and their families as we can and invite them to the next meeting to recognize them. Since Estrella Park is the first park within the system, it is proposed to hold the next meeting at Estrella and that a plaque with all the names be placed in the nature center. Director Cardin presented various ideas that could be presented to the recipients.
- Commissioner Stapley, as one of the recipients, stated that anything received would be greatly appreciated, but also feels that it should not be a financial burden on the department.
- Commissioner Branch suggested instead of awarding a small memento piece, a memorial bench be placed at the Vulture Mountain Recreation Area with the recipient names on it.

- Commissioner Mears suggested that if a plaque is made, one should be placed at every park.

ITEM #15 – SET MARCH 2024 PARKS COMMISSION MEETING LOCATION AND START TIME – R.J. Cardin, Director, Maricopa Parks and Recreation Department,

- Commissioner Chavez motioned to have the March 2024 meeting at Utery Regional Park on Wednesday, March 20, 2024. Seconded by Commissioner Scharbach. With all in favor, none opposed, the motion passed.

ITEM #16 – CALL TO THE PUBLIC - John Crane, Chair, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Commission

- Ms. Miller, Contract Administrator, introduced Mr. David Kass, CEO of the JNF (Jr. National Foundation), Tres Rios Golf Course in Estrella Mountain Regional Park.

ITEM #17 - CALL TO THE COMMISSION – John Crane, Chair, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Commission

- Commissioner Stapley shared an article in an insert of the *Arizona Republic* “Looking Ahead” about the updated system master plan, the Parks’ vision, future planned parks, and potential funding sources. He stated it is a great article and that he is proud to be part of Parks and glad to see this information getting out to the public.

ITEM # 18 – ADJOURNMENT

- There being no further business, Commissioner Mears motioned to adjourn at 11:57 a.m., seconded by Commissioner Chavez. With all in favor, none opposed, the motion passed.

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