

**CITY OF PHOENIX
PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD
SUMMARY MINUTES
August 29, 2024**

Virtual meeting hosted on Webex.

<p><u>Board Members Present</u> Tony Moya- Acting Chair Kelly Dalton (Virtual) Sarah Porter Emma Viera Ed Zuercher Dorina Bustamante</p> <p><u>Board Members Absent</u> Aubrey Barnwell</p>	<p><u>Staff Present</u> Jon Chan Cynthia Aguilar Martin Whitfield Jarod Rogers Felicita Mendoza Tannia Ruiz</p>	<p><u>Community Members</u> Julia Taggert Jerry Van Gasse Michael Norton Timothy Sierakowski Judith Arias A.J. Imperial Johnny Bultsma Terry Bultsma Jace Bultsma Phil Hertel John Furniss Elma Bolic Derek Wallin Jessica Dobbs John Furniss Judith Arias Kelly Cholieu Meeka Vigue Pam Selthun Phil Hertel Randy Woods</p>
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1. CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chairperson Moya called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. with Board Members Dalton, Viera, Bustamante, Zuercher, and Porter in attendance.

2. INFORMATION ITEMS

2a. Code of Conduct Update

Board Member Viera asked if there have been any changes made to park hours in any parks.

Parks and Recreation Department Director Aguilar replied, the department has not made any changes to park hours.

3. CONSENT ITEMS

No formal presentation on these items. Consent and request for approval only.

3a. Parks and Recreation Board Summary Minutes- June 27, 2024

3b. Request for Vista Canyon Park Drone and R/C Aircraft Pilot Program to Become a Permanent Park Amenity

3c. Proposed Renaming of the South Mountain Environmental Education Center

Julia Taggert expressed support for renaming South Mountain Environmental Education Center to South Mountain Visitor Center. She noted that the current name is confusing and suggests a research facility, whereas the new name would align better with the North Mountain Visitor Center, offering clarity to the community.

Jerry Van Gasse stated that the South Mountain Environmental Education Center should have already been renamed the South Mountain Visitor Center. He also raised concerns about the department's response to public records requests and transparency regarding funding.

Timothy Sierakowski expressed concerns about activities at South Mountain and supported renaming SMEEC to South Mountain Visitor Center. He suggested outreach to local schools to invite children to the center.

Board Member Bustamante made a motion to approve consent items 3a through 3c. Board Member Porter, seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 6-0.

4. INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEM(S):

4a. South Mountain Speedway

Deputy Director Jarod Rogers presented an update on the South Mountain Speedway, a 2.15-acre site used for children's quarter midget racing since the 1960s. He highlighted electrical and plumbing issues, with assessments identifying hazards and nonfunctional restrooms, prompting a reevaluation of the speedway's future. The site, now under Preserve status with increasing conservation concerns, has seen minimal renovations. Mr. Rogers outlined two potential next steps: issuing a Request for Information (RFI) to find an operator capable of funding repairs and ensuring public access or following the South Mountain Master Plan's recommendation to remove the facility and restore the land. The recent operator, Valley of the Sun Quarter Midget Association (VSQMA), has expressed interest in renewing the lease.

Judith Arias provided a historical overview of the speedway and spoke on behalf of generations of families who have used the track over the past 75 years. She expressed her opinion that demolishing the track is unnecessary and urged the City to allow for repairs instead.

A.J. Imperial, President of VSQMA and a 15-year member of the nonprofit, has served as a liaison between the organization and the City. He expressed willingness to collaborate with the City of Phoenix on necessary repairs to the speedway. He proposed forming a committee with stakeholders to discuss repairs and work towards resuming racing for the benefit of the children.

Johnny Bultsma, a VSQMA racer, stated that racing is his only sport.

Terry Bultsma commented children use the track to learn about racing and would like to continue giving the opportunity to race at the speedway.

Jace Bultsma commented he is a racer and VSQMA had an agreement that the speedway will not be taken down as long as kids still use it.

John Furniss commented on his submitted letter. He stated he never questioned the value of the racetrack for young kids. He questioned if it needs to be done in the preserve. Mr. Furniss shared his support in restoring the property to the natural grounds.

Phil Hertel commented he is an active member of the Laveen Village Planning Committee. He suggested the creation of a citizen's advisory committee to help determine the outcome of the speedway. Mr. Hertel also questioned the cost to the City for the demolition of the speedway.

Board Member Dalton stated she read through the provided letters and does not think a speedway is an appropriate use and shared the importance of restoring to the natural environment.

Board Member Viera emphasized the importance of considering the environmental benefits and agreed that the speedway is not an appropriate use of the preserve.

Board Member Porter inquired about efforts to identify alternative locations for the speedway and asked if there is a group within the City or an organization that could assist with this process.

Board Member Bustamante, who comes from a racing family, agreed that the preserve is no longer an appropriate location for a racetrack. She expressed a desire for the racing community to collaborate with the City on finding an alternative solution.

Board Member Zuercher emphasized the importance of discussing the issue and noted that if the speedway were a new request, it would not be approved. He agreed that restoring the site to its natural habitat is the appropriate solution and suggested Phoenix International Raceway as a potential alternative to address noise concerns.

Board Member Bustamante asked Director Aguilar if any partnerships could help bridge the gap and provide alternative options for the speedway.

Director Aguilar responded that they could explore opportunities outside City of Phoenix Parks and Preserves, seeking a location that makes sense. She noted the need for a unique site, away from residential areas, where sound and noise levels wouldn't pose a challenge.

Chairman Moya clarified that the presentation was for discussion, not for making a decision. He noted that enough information was provided to support future discussions and emphasized that, while no action would be taken today, the Board would be prepared to make a decision when the item returns for consideration.

Board Member Porter thanked the young men for speaking and commended them for their outstanding participation. However, she expressed concern that they were told the raceway would always be available for them to use. She emphasized that whoever made that promise did not have the authority to commit the land on behalf of the City of Phoenix.

4b. Parks Master Plan Update

Assistant Director Marty Whitfield provided history on the Parks Master Plan and introduced Special Project Administrator Felicity Mendoza and Michael Svetz from PROS Consulting.

Ms. Mendoza provided an update on Parks Master Plan, which is a long-term strategic initiative to guide future park development and improvements. The plan aims to enhance recreational facilities, address water conservation, crime prevention, and promote equity across the city's parks. A robust community engagement process, including events, focus groups, and online tools, has begun to gather input from various stakeholders. Outreach efforts and data collection will inform decisions on park improvements and sustainability. Ms. Mendoza let the Board know that Phase II is officially launching in September 2024, with further updates expected in November.

Michael Svetz from PROS Consulting also presented on the Parks Master Plan and he shared insights on his company's experience assisting agencies in various states and countries with master planning. He outlined PROS Consulting's approach, emphasizing the importance of community engagement to ensure geographic and demographic representation.

Ms. Mendoza concluded the presentation by demonstrating the launch of the Social Pinpoint Interactive Feedback Map which showed how the public can use the platform to provide feedback about their local parks.

Board Member Viera inquired about community engagement efforts, specifically asking if the City has utilized data from the Office of Heat Mitigation's existing heat response initiatives, which have already involved significant community engagement. She expressed hope that this data is being incorporated, given its recent data.

Director Aguilar agreed that this is an excellent point and noted that internal stakeholder meetings, including discussions with the groups involved in developing the heat and shade plan, are scheduled between now and November. She emphasized the department's intent to avoid redundant community outreach and instead build upon the data and feedback already gathered.

Board Member Viera asked if the website is available in other languages.

Mr. Svetz responded that yes, the website is available in multiple languages, and it is a setting feature the user can adjust on the website.

Board Member Viera asked what strategies for heat mitigation are being considered.

Director Aguilar explained that the department will align with the goals established in the Tree and Shade Master Plan. While the plan does not set a specific canopy target, shade needs will vary between parks depending on various factors. The focus will be on organic outcomes from community feedback, particularly related to connectivity, walking paths, and tree placement.

Board Member Viera emphasized the importance of prioritizing heat mitigation and advised against the use of artificial turf. She also encouraged incorporating environmentally friendly features, including in park designs and parking lots.

Board Member Bustamante commended the park staff for their work on this significant task, noting the importance of the Master Plan as a valuable guide for the department's operations. She expressed excitement about the extensive community engagement efforts and hopes the community actively participates and provides feedback.

Board Chair Moya asked Mr. Svetz how his approach differs when planning for a desert community like this one.

Mr. Svetz mentioned that his team is currently working on a Master Plan in Clark County, Nevada, which has a similar climate. They have gained valuable insights from that project and plan to apply those lessons to their work in Phoenix.

Board Member Porter recommended continuing the use of the Pinpoint application.

Board Member Dalton inquired about how the 24/7 hotline and emails are being monitored and expressed appreciation for the Pinpoint tool, asking if there is a video demonstration available for the public.

Ms. Mendoza explained that the consulting firm monitors the website and hotline, generating data and providing feedback to the City.

Mr. Svetz added that the application is user-friendly, with simple instructions available on the website.

Board Member Porter expressed satisfaction with the Master Plan's progress and asked how guidance would be provided and components prioritized.

Mr. Svetz emphasized the importance of addressing community needs and explained that the website offers a platform to explore how those needs can be expanded.

Chairman Moya inquired about how the department ensures successful representation through completed surveys and what the plan is if the target is not met.

Mr. Svetz explained that they are collaborating with the ETC Institute, which employs strong methodology, and will use council districts as sub-geographic areas to ensure demographic representation. He assured that they will keep working until the target is met, noting that achieving 1,000 surveys is easily attainable.

Chairman Moya stated that the collected data from community engagement is the most important. He asked about the frequency of updates to the board.

Director Aguilar stated it will be quarterly at a minimum.

Chairman Moya asked if Council or the Board will vote to approve the plan.

Director Aguilar stated the Board has authority over the plan.

Michael Norton questioned how funding will be identified and stated that funding should be the forefront of the plan.

Julia Taggart expressed her support for the Master Plan and emphasized the need for improved park maintenance. She voiced concern about individuals experiencing homelessness in the parks and noted that signs at the North Mountain Visitor Center require repair. She also highlighted the importance of budget considerations for ongoing maintenance.

5. **CALL TO THE PUBLIC**

Pam Selthun requested that the board reconsider extending the hiking hours for Piestewa Peak.

Derrick Wallin, a resident near Piestewa Peak, requested reopening discussions on hiking hours.

Julia Taggart shared news of the passing of a long-time parks patron who worked with the Phoenix Historic Preservation Society and announced an upcoming memorial. She also noted the need for updates at the North Mountain Visitor Center, including new drinking fountains.

Meeka Vigue expressed disagreement with the current hiking hours at Piestewa Peak, emphasizing the issue of access and the need for clearer and more reasonable trail hours.

Jessica Dobbs also opposed the current trail hours at Piestewa Peak and Camelback Mountain, stating that "sunrise to sunset" is too vague and advocating for clearly defined park hours.

Jerry Van Gasse highlighted his efforts to address park issues, noting a water shortage at Echo Canyon and recalling that park hours used to start as early as 4:30 a.m.

Randy Woods supported extending the opening and closing hours for Piestewa Peak and Camelback Mountain, emphasizing that encouraging hiking is in the City's best interest.

Timothy Sierakowski raised concerns about illegal dumping at South Mountain Preserve and voiced his belief that the public is not adequately represented by the board.

Kelly Cholieu stressed the importance of hiking for mental health and urged the board not to limit trail access, advocating for extended hours.

6. BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Chairman Moya highlighted upcoming events; Rattlesnake Garage, Downtown Phoenix Street Eats Food Fest, Rising Families youth sports program, and joining the Valley of the Sun YMCA for free family fitness classes.

7. BOARD COMMENTS/REQUESTS

Board Member Porter expressed interest in discussing future funding for undeveloped parkland.

Board Member Zuercher inquired whether the board has the authority to set trail hours.

Director Aguilar confirmed they do.

Board Member Bustamante asked about the hiking and heat safety policy.

Director Aguilar explained that when the board implemented the pilot hiking and heat safety program, later formalized as policy, the Parks Department committed to providing updates every October. This year's report will present data and allow for further discussion on potential modifications to the policy. She emphasized that the Parks Board has the authority to set park hours and has done so in the past.

8. DIRECTOR'S BRIEFING

Assistant Director Whitfield shared information regarding the 2024 Fabulous Phoenix 4th event and about the community building event Chase Bank hosted at Washington Activity Center.

Director Aguilar shared information on the upcoming ribbon cutting events, the APRA conference, summer programming and the 2024 aquatics season.

9. ADJOURNMENT:

Chairperson Moya expressed his appreciation to park staff and adjourned the meeting at 7:03 p.m.