

SUMMARY MEETING MINUTES

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE PHOENIX SONORAN PRESERVES AND MOUNTAIN PARKS/PRESERVES COMMITTEE

May 18, 2026 6:00 p.m.
In person and via Webex

<u>Committee Members:</u>	<u>City of Phoenix Staff:</u>	<u>Others Present:</u>
John Furniss	Jarod Rogers	Kelly House
Tice Supplee	Josh Parnell	
Trevor Harwood	Mike Faustich	
Bill Fallon	Claire Miller	
Scott Covey (virtual)	Isaac Pina	
	Joy Custer	
	Donald Domann	
	Justin Olson	
	Will Wright	

1. CALL TO ORDER

Committee Chairperson John Furniss called the meeting to order at 5:59 p.m.

2. Approval February 23, 2026, Meeting Minutes

Committee Chairperson Furniss called for an approval of the February 23, 2026, meeting minutes. Committee Member Bill Fallon made a motion to approve. Committee Member Trevor Harwood seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Committee Chairperson Tice Supplee requested item seven "Vernon" to be updated to "Verdin". All Committee members eligible to vote and present approved: Furniss, Harwood, Supplee, Fallon, and Covey.

3. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Committee Chairperson Furniss called for public comment. No comment from the public was made.

4. Brief Recap of Trails/Heat Update (Information and Discussion)

Deputy Director Jarod Rogers provided updates on hiker and heat safety and the background of the "Take a Hike. Do It Right." campaign which launched in 2015. Deputy Director Jarod Rogers reviewed the policies on which locations and at which times trails are closed during Extreme Heat Warning Days. The public is

notified about trail closures in a variety of ways including email lists, social media posts, and website updates.

Last year, there was a total of 31 days across three months that were classified as Extreme Heat Warning Days. The NWS data goes back to 2006 for Extreme Heat Warning Days, and the overall trendline is moving upward. This data helps NRD plan for which months will most affect rangers through closures and rescues. March made headlines with unprecedented heat and multiple records broken, stressing the need for closure policies.

Committee Chairperson John Furniss recommended that moving forward, the corresponding info for rescues should be included.

Committee Member Trevor Harwood asked if the Natural Resources Division is considering closing any new trails each year. Deputy Director Rogers said no. The division goes to the Parks Board at the end of each year with heat safety updates, and there were no recommendations made to add any additional trails this year. The Fire Department has also not approached the division with any concerns.

Committee Member Scott Covey said the progress that has been made in 5 years is incredible to see.

5. Donation for Dreamy Draw Park (Information and Discussion)

Parks Supervisor Josh Parnell discussed a potential donation to Dreamy Draw Park from the Daughters of the American Revolution. The Daughters of the American Revolution started in 1890 with a mission to provide historic preservation, education, and patriotism. The Arizona chapter, started in 1901, is one of the oldest in the country.

Dreamy Draw was set up as a mining community, and the Daughters of the American Revolution would like to donate an educational, non-memorial plaque to remember the history of the Dreamy Draw area. There are 3 Daughters of the American Revolution plaques at Papago Park. If approved by this committee, the request will move to Parks Board for approval. If approved, the Daughters of the American Revolution will work on securing funding and getting the plaque installed.

Committee Member Tice Supplee said it is a good idea to install something to signify the history of the site.

Committee Member Trevor Harwood asked if the plaque is attached to a rock, will the rock be from the site, or will it be a rock from off-site that matches the rocks already onsite. Parks Supervisor Josh Parnell said every effort will be made to keep it local and match the rock to the surrounding area.

Committee Member Bill Fallon asked what the pro is for the wedge style. Parks Supervisor Parnell replied that the ramada was meant to have 3 wedge styles, but they were never installed, so the wedge would match with the original designs. The wedge would also match the plaque design at Piestewa Peak. One wedge is intended to be a land acknowledgement, one is intended to highlight local flora and fauna, and the third could be this proposed plaque.

Committee Member Scott Covey supported the wedge style. He thought it would make sense to install the other two at the same time. Committee Member Covey would like to see the site match similar educational and outreach efforts as to what has been done at Piestewa Peak.

Committee Chairperson Furniss points out that the pedestal will probably be easier to maintain over 100 years than a brass plaque.

6. Code of Conduct in the Mountain Preserves (Information and Discussion)

Parks Supervisor Donald Domann provided an overview of the Code of Conduct specifically in the Mountain Preserves and Habitat Restoration Areas. Park Rangers have the ability to issue citations, trespass, and provide education but otherwise have limited enforcement abilities.

Parks Supervisor Donald Domann mentioned the City of Phoenix's plan to address homelessness. He highlighted common Code of Conduct Violations including storing unattended personal items, vandalism, campfires, and motorized vehicles on the trails. Pictures of violations in the Preserves showed a truck off-trail, driven by an intoxicated visitor at Dobbins Lookout in South Mountain Park, and a tree house encampment at Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area.

Parks Supervisor Donald Domann discussed the steps taken if an owner of an unhoued property is present and the steps taken if they are not present. On the initial contact, people can be trespassed for 30 days unless there is evidence of drug paraphernalia, then it can be a year. Typically, people only take a few items from the camp, and the Natural Resources Division and the Office of Homeless Solutions clean up the remainder of the camp. The Office of Homeless Solutions will collect personal belongings and store them.

Parks Supervisor Donald Domann pointed out that data is easily collected from Urban Park Ranger logs since they are digital, but he noted that Preserve Park Ranger logs are still on paper. Committee Member Bill Fallon asked why Urban Park Rangers are issuing citations in the Preserves. Parks Supervisor Domann responded that the citations were most likely after hours when there are not Preserve Park Rangers on duty.

Parks Supervisor Donald Domann shared the link and phone number to the 24/7 Code of Conduct Answering Service. Committee Member Tice Supplee asked

how many people are using the Code of Conduct Answering Service, and Deputy Director Jarod Rogers replied that approximately 5 calls a day are received.

Committee Member Trevor Harwood asked how they got the off-trail vehicle out at South Mountain Park. Parks Supervisor Domann replied that they used a tow truck.

Committee Member Bill Fallon asked if it seems like these numbers are increasing in 2026. Parks Supervisor Domann replied that it does seem like there are more camps, especially ones further into the Preserve and further away from services than what has been seen previously.

Committee Member Tice Supplee requested clarification on the definition of motorized vehicles since there are a lot of e-bikes. She followed-up by asking if the use of e-bikes is allowing people to penetrate further into the Preserves. Parks Supervisor Domann responded that at South Mountain Park, there is not as much of an e-bike presence as at North Mountain Park. At South Mountain Park, there are a lot more issues with full-size vehicles, such as the off-trail truck discussed earlier in the presentation. Parks Supervisor Claire Miller added that e-bikes can't get too far into a park because there is nowhere to recharge them. This means that in encampments, there are mostly traditional pedal bikes. She also mentioned that Rangers spend a lot of time cleaning up camps, but then other people come along and set up camp in the same spot.

7. South Mountain Park Land Donation (Information and Discussion)

Deputy Director Jarod Rogers provided a brief summary of recent acquisitions that have been added to the Mountain Preserves. There is an opportunity for the City of Phoenix to accept 10 acres of land adjacent to South Mountain Park, near Gila and Bursera Trails, at no cost to the City of Phoenix. There is a community that has already been built in the area, but the parcels around it have some potential for development – although, a lot of it is sloped and not ideal for development. There is a conceptual site plan with the intention for future development, but there have been significant hurdles – a major concern is the sewer system is already at capacity, and it would need to be routed over the mountain and back down.

The Parks and Recreation Department would like to use the land donation as a leverage point to have similar discussions with other nearby property owners. To have the opportunity to protect the small valley to keep the west side of South Mountain Park as open as possible would be ideal. The land donation will go to the May Parks Board meeting for possible approval. If approved, then it will go to the June City Council meeting for approval.

Committee Member Trevor Harwood asked if there are any downsides to this land donation. Deputy Director Jarod Rogers mentions that the land parcel is not immediately contiguous with South Mountain Park, but it is still worth protecting

because there might be an opportunity in the future to connect it directly to the Preserve. For example, there is an island of land that has not been connected to South Mountain Park for the past 50 years, and it will be connected in the next 6 to 9 months.

Committee Member Harwood followed up to ask if there is any infrastructure that will be needed in the area – fire hydrants, edge protection, etc. Deputy Director Jarod Rogers says there is no need for City of Phoenix infrastructure unless more homes are built up there, and there is no need for edge protection yet since there are not a lot of unauthorized entries in the area.

Committee Member Tice Supplee said that any effort to protect any land in that valley is worth it, especially toward the Estrella Mountains to the west. Deputy Director Jarod Rogers agreed and mentioned the nearby water catchment, emphasizing the importance of the area in protecting the overall health of South Mountain Preserve and nearby wildlife for the future.

Committee Member Scott Covey thought the land donation is positive, and he is hopeful about the parcel being contiguous sooner rather than later.

Committee Chairperson John Furniss asked the landowner representative Kelly House to please share with the landowner how much this group appreciates the donation and support of the Phoenix Mountain Preserves. Landowner representative Kelly House responded that the landowner is happy to donate and is a landscape architect by trade, so she understands the importance of protecting our natural landscapes.

8. Park Steward Update (Information and Discussion)

In answer to Committee Member Bill Fallon's request at the February 2026 meeting, Parks Supervisor Josh Parnell provided an update on the Park Steward program. The program had \$572,226 in volunteer value in 2025. Volunteers are able to support seven pillars of volunteer work: Desert Defenders, Camelback Navigators, Hike Patrol, Bike Patrol, Trail Work, Special Events, and Heat Stations.

Parks Supervisor Josh Parnell provided an update on the work that the Trail Work group has been doing to redo trails, remove invasive plants, upkeep existing trails. Additionally, Parks Stewards educate and help hikers, rendering basic aid during their hike and bike patrols. Heat Stations began this month and will run on Saturdays and Sundays at Pima Canyon, Echo Canyon, and Piestewa Peak to encourage hikers to make good choices.

Parks Supervisor Josh Parnell highlighted a handful of volunteers that put in hundreds of hours in 2025. The two volunteers with the most hours became Preserve Park Rangers within the past few months. Parks Supervisor Josh Parnell noted that it seems like people are using the Park Steward program as a

way to gain hands-on experience to become strong candidates for Park Ranger positions. He also emphasized that nobody seems to love the trails and love being out there more than these Stewards turned Rangers.

The Natural Resources Division is planning to add a new volunteer pillar for a saguaro monitoring program. Parks Supervisor Josh Parnell stated that this program will be spearheaded from within the Park Steward program in collaboration with the Bureau of Land Management, Desert Botanical Garden, Saguaro National Park, local agencies, and counterparts across the border. Using technology, GPS points, and handheld devices, the program will map and monitor the saguaros and see how they are doing year to year. In August, there will be a Saguaro Summit in Tucson to continue making an impact with the saguaros.

Committee Member Bill Fallon asked how opportunities to be a Park Steward are communicated to the public. Parks Supervisor Josh Parnell responded that the program is advertised on the trailers that hold tools, buildings, business cards (when groups are doing trail work), and the Parks and Recreation website. To become a Park Steward, there is a required online volunteer training that occurs a couple times a month and has been streamlined to an hour virtual meeting. The City of Phoenix also has a Corporate Volunteer Initiative that advertises for corporate groups. Parks Supervisor Josh Parnell meets with them weekly, and when a group comes into a park to volunteer, he pitches the Park Steward Program to them.

Committee Member Bill Fallon followed up asking if there are any screening requirements - for example, first aid. Parks Supervisor Josh Parnell said that the online orientation covers what to do if there is an accident, and there is a minimum number of hours Park Stewards must shadow Park Rangers before they can volunteer on their own.

Committee Member Trevor Harwood said that he is a Park Steward and really supports the program. He has noticed that it is difficult to get Park Stewards up North, especially to the Sonoran Preserve. Parks Supervisor Josh Parnell said that many Stewards volunteer in multiple areas, not just the ones closest to where they live. He also noted that the Park Steward Liaisons impact the success of the program in different areas. Committee Member Trevor Harwood asked if the Park Steward Liaisons reach out if they notice there are inactive Park Stewards. Parks Supervisor Josh Parnell said that inactive volunteers are removed from the list each year, but reaching out to inactive Park Stewards is something the Park Rangers can be better about.

Committee Member Tice Supplee said she loves the program.

Committee Member Scott Covey stated that he is very impressed with the program and liked that there are a variety of volunteer pillars for the Park Stewards.

Committee Chairperson John Furniss said that early on, the program was very dependent on the Ranger sponsors. He noted that it has now evolved to a structure that empowers team leaders which has helped this program expand. Committee Chairperson John Furniss also emphasize that recruitment and training are important, and it is necessary to do everything possible to retain volunteers.

9. Wildlife Presentation (Information and Discussion)

Committee Member Trevor Harwood originally compiled the info in this presentation to help support the argument for edge protection on the Preserve. Initially, he put a wildlife motion camera on his back fence to start recording wildlife near Skunk Creek. However, the battery did not last very long, so he switched to a Ring camera. He also added a Ring camera to his front porch.

The data from April 2020 to April 2026 totaled 1037 animals seen (564 coyotes, 295 javelinas, 91 raccoons, 85 bobcats, and 2 skunks). Committee Member Trevor Harwood noted that 2023 and 2024 were pretty active years for some reason, possibly because the overall environment was a bit more stable. In comparison, 2020 was a very hot year, which corresponds with a decreased number of animals sighted.

The data highlights that fall is the peak time for animal activity, and the months with the lowest numbers are typically March, July, and September. Wildlife is most active early in the morning between 5:00am and 8:00am, and the animals travel north almost twice as much as they travel south. There were more sightings captured in the open Preserve (back of house) than in the street (front of house).

Committee Member Trevor Harwood shared videos of 17 javelinas, 2 bobcats, 6 coyotes, and 6 raccoons that were recorded on his cameras. In addition to the animals listed earlier, there are a variety of other wildlife that have been picked up by the cameras. Toads end up in the pool, so Committee Member Trevor Harwood fishes them out and puts them back in the Preserve. He has even seen some bobcats with tracking collars pass through.

Deputy Director Jarod Rogers thanked Committee Member Trevor Harwood and emphasized that it is meaningful to associate the hot years with animal activity. As more cameras are added to the Preserves, there is opportunity for the Natural Resources Division to increase wildlife management.

Committee Member Tice Supplee asked if there is any water nearby. Committee Member Trevor Harwood replied that the wash has water in it some of the time but not all of the time. He also said some animals drink out of the pool.

Committee Member Scott Covey says this study shows very clearly that the wash is an important wildlife corridor.

10. Chairpersons' Report - Comments by the Chair on issues related to the Committee (Information only)

Committee Chairperson John Furniss had an opportunity to attend the South Mountain Activity Complex grand reopening. He called it an impressive facility and appreciated the educational and cultural elements. He said there was a question about the drainage off the roof, but he calculated that it is more than sufficient. Committee Chairperson John Furniss reminded committee members to be added to the recipient list for Parks Board packets.

11. Committee Comments/Requests/Future Agenda Items – The Chairperson will entertain Committee member comments or requests related to the Committee without Committee discussion. (Information Only)

Committee Member Tice Supplee shared that the Phoenix Parks Preservation Council held its annual meeting last week with approximately 40 people in attendance and noted that Parks Supervisor Claire Miller presented. Committee Member Tice Supplee was happy to announce that there was an Eagle Scout in attendance that is eager to work with the group.

Committee Member Bill Fallon requested an update on the North Mountain Park renovations at the next committee meeting.

Committee Member Scott Covey said that he was impressed and blown away with the South Mountain Activity Complex grand reopening. He also said that from a virtual attendance point of view, the presentation and photos for these committee meetings have stepped up and include great visuals for public outreach.

12. Deputy Director's Briefing – (Information Only)

Deputy Director Jarod Rogers provided an update on the South Mountain Activity Complex grand reopening and confirmed that the North Mountain Park renovations are still on schedule to start construction by the end of the year. The designs are currently at 60%.

Deputy Director Jarod Rogers discussed a new Parks ordinance that will affect 105 parks and allows medical treatment and food distributions in parks through a permitting process. He shared the website where people can visit to learn more.

He also provided information on a new fireworks ordinance that may be passed by City Council soon. There is a State statute that allows cities to restrict

permissible fireworks within a one-mile radius of a City's mountain preserves always and within a one-mile radius of a regional park or desert park during stage 1 or higher fire restriction. Deputy Director Jarod Rogers emphasized that any fireworks launched in the air are never legal in Arizona.

Committee Chairperson John Furniss asked if there are any exceptions to this ordinance. Deputy Director Jarod Rogers said that this is for consumer fireworks, so commercial operations are exempt.

13. Adjournment

Committee Chairperson John Furniss adjourned the meeting at 7:18 p.m.