

**CITY OF PHOENIX
PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD
SUMMARY MINUTES
April 24, 2025**

Virtual meeting hosted on Webex.

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| <u>Board Members Present</u> Kelly Dalton, Chair Aubrey Barnwell (virtual) Ed Zuercher (virtual) Sarah Porter (virtual) Dorina Bustamante Tony Moya | <u>Staff Present</u> John Chan Dustin Cammack Brandie Barrett Martin Whitfield Jarod Rogers Enrique Bojorquez-Gaxiola Danielle Poveromo Regina Iversen Tannia Ruiz Cindy Peiz Jana Benson Laura Borson | <u>Community Members</u> Jes Dobbs Timothy Sierakowski Jerry Van Gasse Charles Darr Scott Macpherson Jake Miller Trent Martin Timothy Ward Cody Rosenthal Julia Taggart |
| <u>Board Members Absent</u> Emma Viera | | |

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Dalton called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. with Board members Barnwell, Moya, Zuercher, Porter, and Bustamante in attendance.

2. INFORMATION ONLY

No formal presentation on these items. Information only.

2a. Quarterly Code of Conduct Update

3. CONSENT ITEMS

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

3a. Parks and Recreation Board Summary Minutes – March 27, 2025

3b. Event and Vending Requests in City Parks

3c. Approval of Telecommunication License at South Mountain Communication Towers to Bridge News

Board member Moya made the motion to approve consent items 2a, 2b, and 2c. Board member Porter seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

4. INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

4a. RIO PHX Planning Initiative

Deputy Director Jarod Rogers introduced Planning and Development Planner III, Enrique Bojorquez-Gaxiola. Mr. Bojorquez-Gaxiola explained the Rio Reimagined regional project, which involves six cities and two tribal communities, including the City of Phoenix. The project goal is to transform a 55-mile corridor that stretches from the Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community to Buckeye to achieve improved health outcomes for residents and attract more positive investment in the area. RIO PHX focuses on updating the land use plan for the portion of the corridor that lies within the City of Phoenix boundaries, specifically the Rio Salado Habitat Restoration area.

Mr. Bojorquez-Gaxiola reviewed the community planning efforts of the program. Step one of the study involved looking at existing community plans along with local, state and federal reports to understand the current conditions of the neighborhood. The team also looked at examples of similar projects in other locations around the country. Step two was to work with the community to craft a vision for the future, consisting of three community workshops to learn about the needs and wants of the area and get feedback for proposed plans. Data was collected from over 900 residents at the workshops and was combined with over 500 community survey responses.

Mr. Bojorquez-Gaxiola explained that the project is currently in step three, the implementation phase. He displayed maps and master plans created by the project's consultant after community outreach. He reviewed the project timeline, noting the final goal is to take proposal to City Council for approval in Fall 2025. Finally, he presented the implementation roadmap, which includes partnerships with the community, City of Phoenix and businesses to achieve the vision for the plan.

Chairperson Dalton praised the community outreach conducted with this project and asked what outreach was done with the leadership of the Gila River Indian Community.

Mr. Bojorquez-Gaxiola responded the Gila River Indian Community awarded the Planning and Development Department a grant to conduct their research and they plan to keep engaging them as the project moves forward.

Chairperson Dalton requested that the Parks and Recreation Board be able to see the plans or a report before it goes to City Council.

Mr. Bojorquez-Gaxiola responded affirmatively.

Board member Barnwell inquired about the project brochures, specifically how the eight locations were chosen and if the Board could have brochures to distribute.

Mr. Bojorquez-Gaxiola explained brochures were placed in public libraries and facilities along the Rio Salado Habitat Restoration area, and he would be happy to provide additional brochures to increase awareness about the project.

Chairperson Dalton praised the quality of information available on the project's website.

4b. Camp Colley Update

Deputy Director Rogers described the location of Camp Colley, about 50 miles north of Payson, and displayed maps of the 30-acre site and facilities on the campground. He explained that Camp Colley has been serving the community since the early 2000s with the mission of providing transformative overnight outdoor experiences for underserved youth including STEM learning to develop social and emotional learning skills.

Deputy Directors Rogers reviewed camp improvement efforts and operator history since its inception in 2001. He explained that the pandemic and wildfires resulted in closures during the 2020 and 2021 seasons, leaving no operator from 2022 to 2023. In 2024, the H.E.A.R.T. Center, a non-profit recreational therapy program, signed a two-year initial operating contract at Camp Colley, to be followed with three one-year options. The role of the City of Phoenix in this contract is to ensure the camp is in working order by trimming trees, making improvements to equestrian paths, and repairing fences and tents as needed.

Chelsea Harden, Executive Director and founder of the H.E.A.R.T. Center, explained the use of horses to teach kids life skills at Camp Colley. She detailed the daily routine of campers, including a wide variety of activities including horseback riding, fishing, hiking and archery meant to improve confidence, connection and abilities. The H.E.A.R.T. Center handles programming, staffing and transportation for camp participants. To ensure high standards of camper care, the team works with American Camp Association (ACA) to guide their decisions.

Ms. Harden showed a cost comparison for Camp Colley and similar camps, noting the desire to keep this program accessible through grants and scholarships. Overnight summer camps cost on average \$173 a day, while Camp Colley is only \$175 for 3 days. She highlighted Camp Colley's 2024 victories, including acceptance into the ACA Leadership Pathways grant program, hosting 265 youth participants and providing over \$25,000 in scholarship funds. Plans for 2025 include increased participant numbers and longer camping options. Already this year, the H.E.A.R.T. Center has secured \$28,000 for scholarships and developed a formal Counselor in Training program.

Chairperson Dalton commented on the wonderful work being done at Camp Colley and encouraged continued pursuit of scholarship funds. She asked when registration for the 2025 season opened.

Ms. Harden responded that registration opened in April, earlier this year than previous years.

Chairperson Dalton inquired about the capacity of the camp.

Ms. Harden explained that ideally 40 to 50 campers a week allows the most intentional programming, but the camp can accommodate up to 60 campers a week. During the full season, this would be ideally about 300 youths, or a maximum capacity of 400 to 450.

Chairperson Dalton questioned what are the ACA standards for an equine therapy camp.

Ms. Harden clarified that the H.E.A.R.T. Center is not yet an ACA accredited camp, they are currently an ACA member camp, but they are considering this option. Other organizations govern the use of horses for therapy, and camp staff go through required certification and training.

Board member Barnwell asked where to find the list of donors for Camp Colley.

Ms. Harden replied that she could provide a list of the donors who provide funds for scholarships. Red Panda, a technology company, donated \$15,000 to this year's summer camp.

Board member Bustamonte applauded the work that is being done at Camp Colley.

Board member Moya asked for clarification about the contract length.

Deputy Director Rogers responded the contract was two years initially, with options to extend for 3 more years. This summer will be the second year of the contract.

Board member Moya would like to learn about expectations for participation and funding over the next three years if the contract is renewed.

Chairperson Dalton requested that Ms. Harden thank the donors on behalf of the Board.

4c. 2025 Parks and Recreation Summer Programs

Assistant Director Brandie Barrett explained the importance of summer programming in Phoenix and introduced Deputy Director Danielle Poveromo. Deputy Director Poveromo described the 26 PHXPlays summer camps, which operate eight to ten weeks matching schedules with adjacent schools. Camps run Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and participants are broken into groups based on age. The staff to participant ratio is 1 to 15. Community focused marketing entails communication with schools and neighborhood associations, flyers and social media.

Deputy Director Poveromo noted that registration for the 2025 summer season opened on March 20 and many of the larger camps are already full. Participants can register for daily, weekly or monthly camps and prices vary from free to \$80 per week. She displayed a chart comparing Phoenix Summer camps with other similar camps, noting that Phoenix is the most affordable. She explained how meals are delivered daily for free while in the program and take-home food is available for the weekend, if needed. Summer camp activities include field trips, theme weeks, sports, arts and crafts, and team building and STEM activities.

Deputy Director Poveromo discussed communication with families including parent and participant orientation, weekly newsletters, events calendars and a participant satisfaction survey. The survey uses a QR code and enters those who complete the survey into a drawing for tickets to the Phoenix Zoo. Based on feedback from last year's survey, the Department added the weekly sign-up option.

Assistant Director Barrett provided an update on the 2025 Aquatics Program. The City of

Phoenix has 29 pools, and multiple recreation centers that transport youth to nearby pools. As part of the voter approved General Obligation Bond program, five pools were identified for conversion into splashpads. Two pools will be renovated into regional pools with improved amenities like heaters, slides and shade structures.

Assistant Director Barrett explained the effects of the pandemic on the Aquatics Program staffing. Based on current staffing levels, 20 pools will open for the 2025 season, up from 18 in 2024. Recruitment for the 2025 season began in March 2024 and includes enhanced training and certification programs for assistant and pool managers, new structured head lifeguard opportunities and shallow water lifeguards. A variety of recruitment methods were used to hire for aquatics positions of cashier, lifeguard, swim lesson instructor, assistant pool manager and pool manager. These include visiting high schools, career fairs, swimming dive teams, sporting events and use of social media. To retain staff in the off-season, team members were engaged in off-season events like Trunk-or-Treat, the APS Electric Light Parade and the Polar Plunge. Increases in aquatics wages, retention incentives, and promotion opportunities have also been used to improve staffing. These efforts resulted in 65% of the 2024 Aquatics team returning for the current season.

Assistant Director Barrett described how the Department selects which pools will be open during a given season. This includes consideration of geographic location, attendance and amenities to maximize community access. This year 16 pools will remain open all summer, with four additional pools open for one month. From June to August, Ability 360 will operate the Telephone Pioneer Park pool and provide adaptive programming.

Aquatics Recreation Coordinator III Regina Iversen explained that the 2025 pool season will run from Memorial Day, May 24, to July 27, and eight pools will remain open on weekends August through Labor Day. The “pool kids” program allows children under 17 to swim for free at most pool locations and provides discounted swim lessons. Long standing partners of this program include the Milwaukee Brewers and the Salt River Project, who together donated more than \$70,000 for these opportunities. The Arizona Diamondbacks and Presidential pools also donated to provide discounted swim lessons. Swim teams will be offered at five pools and Aquafit, a low impact aquatic fitness workout, will be available at select locations. Swimming lessons are available for individuals aged 6 months to adult and the City of Phoenix will be offering these classes at 19 pools. Lessons are \$15 for a 30-minute session, with the sponsor discounted rate of \$3 per lesson. Registration for these classes opened today.

Chairperson Dalton commended the summer programming opportunities that are making a positive impact on the community, highlighting the importance of affordable meals, water safety and outdoor recreational opportunities during hot summer months.

Board member Moya inquired when the splash pads will open.

Brandie Barrett explained the schedules for various pool conversions. Maryvale Park construction is scheduled for fiscal year 2025-2026. Harmon pool construction is scheduled for fiscal year 2026-2027 and includes the splash pad conversions at Alkire, Grant, and University Parks. The pools will be closed until the construction is complete.

Board member Moya praised the number of pools opening and the length of the pool season. He asked if opening certain pools for only one month is cost effective.

Assistant Director Barrett explained this is being done to ensure that people have access to pools across the entire city.

Board member Moya asked about pool safety other than swimming lessons.

Assistant Director Barrett described the Parks Department's close relationship with the Phoenix Fire Department and the dissemination of water safety information videos.

Board member Moya requested to continue and expand this program to decrease avoidable water deaths.

Board Member Bustamonte asked about swimming lesson enrollment numbers.

Ms. Iversen related that the Deer Valley swim lessons and Paradise Valley swim teams are currently full.

Board member Bustamonte commented that the summer camp survey QR code is not working.

Deputy Director Poveromo explained that the survey will be open for feedback once the camps have begun.

Board member Bustamonte asked about the length of the pool season and if it is related to staffing.

Assistant Director Barrett confirmed it is the availability of qualified staff.

Ms. Iverson added that eight pools will be open on the weekends in August through Labor Day because many of the aquatics staff go back to school and can only work on the weekends.

Board member Bustamonte asked if there are pools open from June throughout the summer.

Assistant Director Barrett confirmed there are. They are listed in the report and designated with an asterisk. All other pools are on rotating schedules.

Board member Bustamonte inquired if there is a maximum age for lifeguards.

Ms. Iverson responded there is no age limit. She added that participants' parents are often present at swimming lessons to learn CPR and pool safety.

Board member Bustamonte asked if there is a junior lifeguard program.

Ms. Iversen replied the program is on hold this year due to staffing but the City will offer

classes this summer in its place.

Board member Porter applauded the report and comments of the Board members. She discussed the importance of pools to deal with the urban heat in Phoenix. She thanked park staff for their efforts to recruit and train lifeguards. She suggested that heat awareness be at the forefront of the master plan and stressed how important it is for kids to have physical activity options during the hot summer months. She asked the Department to investigate what it would take to expand water recreation activities and programs to extend beyond just the summer months, for both children and adults. She suggested shifting to larger investments in water recreation.

Chairperson Dalton agreed.

5. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Jess Dobbs spoke about the ongoing South Mountain Centennial and North Mountain Improvement projects, and a new project that was supposed to be completed two years. She mentioned about the lack of community notification.

Tim Sierakowski spoke about the financial reports for the South Mountain Improvement project. He asked how much money the City put up for these projects besides the 3PI money. He suggested charging to park at the zoo to raise funding.

Jerry Van Gasse criticized the lack of public notification from the Natural Resources Division. He spoke about the new project at the Ocotillo Ramada at Piesewa Peak trailhead. He asked for the contract, 404 permit, environmental assessment, and building and dust permits.

Charles Darr from Cowtown Skateboards explained that the company holds park activation events and gives away skate related items in the parks for community building and park activation from skateboarding. He requested small skate amenities as a standard in every park.

Scott Macpherson requested the master plan update to include cost effective skateboarding elements into the parks, to save money on unused green space maintenance and active the parks.

Jake Miller advocated for small skate features like ledges and rails in parks to accommodate the growth in skateboarding around the country.

Trent Martin, one of the founders of Cowtown Skateboards, has partnered with the City of Phoenix in the past. He requested something skateable in every neighborhood, and noted that Cowtown is willing to match the funds that the City provides.

Board member Barnwell left the meeting at 6:20pm.

Timothy Ward runs a non-profit called Skate After School, which worked with the City to have Perry Park skate park constructed. He requested skateboarding plans be included in the parks master plan with small, inexpensive, accessible elements in the parks.

Cody Rosenthal has worked in the skateboard industry since he was 16. He spoke about trends in skateboarding and expressed gratitude for the new large skate parks. He noted that skateboarder demand can be met with smaller skate parks, citing the difficulty with transportation, the urban heat effect, and lack of shade and water at the larger parks.

Julia Taggart requested the Parks Board or a park ranger give an update to the public on the North Mountain renovation plan. She requested the Parks Board visit North Mountain Visitor Center to see the volunteers who run the facility. She requested exhibit upgrades and a water bottle refill station. She thanked the Board for the sunscreen dispensers.

6. BOARD COMMENTS/REQUEST

There were no additional Board member comments or requests at this time.

7. DIRECTOR'S UPDATES

Assistant Director Martin Whitfield reviewed the Pecos Park ribbon cutting and Pecos Kids Triathlon in April, which had 135 participants. He displayed pictures from the grand opening of Farmland Park, the City's 188th city park, and described the park amenities. This is the second of three parks planned to be opened in Laveen by 2025, following Harvest Park.

Assistant Director Barrett discussed the grand re-opening of Perry Park and thanked Cowtown Skateboards for their partnership at the event which included Folklorico dancers and vendors. She reviewed the efforts of the Forestry team and volunteers at Cesar Chavez, Rose Mofford Sports Complex, and Turtle Rock Basin Park during tree planting season. She discussed park ranger efforts at graffiti removal on National Trail at South Mountain Park/Preserve. She thanked ASU School of Community Development for their partnership.

8. ADJOURNMENT:

Chairperson Dalton adjourned the meeting at 6:32 p.m.