

**CITY OF PHOENIX
PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD
SUMMARY MINUTES
May 22, 2025**

Virtual meeting hosted on Webex.

<u>Board Members Present</u> Tony Moya-Virtual Sarah Porter - Virtual Emma Viera Ed Zuercher Dorina Bustamante <u>Board Members Absent</u> Kelly Dalton Aubrey Barnwell	<u>Staff Present</u> Cynthia Aguilar Martin Whitfield Brandie I. Barrett Jarod Rogers Dustin Cammack Tannia Ruiz Jana Benson Cynthia Peiz Laura Borson Ray Ficcaglia	<u>Community Members</u> Julia Taggart – Virtual Brielle Carter - Virtual Karen De La Vina Charles Darr Scott Macpherson Laura Martin Juli Lussier Trent Martin Jess Dobbs Jerry Van Gasse Daniel Hyatt Tim Sierakowski
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1. CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chairperson Moya called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m. with Board members, Viera, Zuercher, Porter and Bustamante in attendance.

2. CONSENT ITEMS

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

2a. Parks and Recreation Board Summary Minutes – April 24, 2025

2b. Event and Vending Requests in City Parks

2c. Impact Melanoma Free Sunscreen Update

Julia Taggart asked when sunscreen dispensers would be installed at the North Mountain and South Mountain Visitor Centers. She also asked if the planned sun safety classes had already been held. She thanked Impact Melanoma and Biocastle Science for their partnership.

Director Cynthia Aguilar informed the Board that the Department continues to experience vandalism of sunscreen dispensers at splash pad locations. As outlined in the report, the dispensers will be relocated to the Visitor Centers, where staff can better monitor them. She also stated that the Department can work with Impact Melanoma to explore offering heat safety classes, although this is not included in the current agreement.

Board Member Bustamante asked for confirmation that the program is continuing under the existing agreement and that vandalism issues are being addressed.

Director Aguilar confirmed this is correct.

2d. Approval for Verizon Wireless Cell site License Renewal

Board Member Bustamante made a motion to approve consent items 2a through 2d. Board Member Viera seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

3. INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

3a. Parks Safety Update

Director Aguilar opened the Parks Safety item and spoke about the robust City of Phoenix Parks System. She then welcomed Assistant Director Martin Whitfield and Deputy Director Jarod Rogers to present the item.

Deputy Director Rogers began by providing an overview of Park Ranger operations. He explained that Park Rangers are divided into two classifications which are the Urban Park Rangers and Preserve Park Rangers. Both groups enforce the Department's Code of Conduct and address violations such as vandalism, after-hours park use, illegal drug activity, unattended belongings and misuse of shopping carts. Currently, 44 Urban Park Rangers patrol 188 city parks. Third-shift Park Rangers were added in September 2023 to provide 24-hour coverage seven days a week. Park Rangers also collaborate with the Phoenix Police Department and other City departments to enhance park safety and share data through a coordinated system.

Assistant Director Whitfield presented the Department's ongoing efforts to enhance park safety. He highlighted the overnight security program launched in February 2023 at 12 high-priority parks, where the contracted security vendor conducts daily patrols. He reported that the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)-funded Neighborhood Park Activation Grant Program has activated 39 parks with more than 200 events and programs since January 2024. He noted that mobile security cameras were installed at Cortez, La Pradera, Cesar Chavez and Perry parks to provide 24-hour video coverage. Additionally, he spoke about work underway as part of the Parks Master Plan process with 29 parks undergoing evaluations using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategies focused on lighting, visibility, pathways, landscaping and increased community use.

Assistant Director Whitfield concluded by stating that the Department remains committed to proactive safety measures, community engagement and innovative solutions to ensure Phoenix parks are safe and welcoming for all.

Acting Chairperson Moya opened the floor for board member questions.

Board Member Viera asked for a list of examples of Code of Conduct violations for which tickets are issued.

Deputy Director Rogers explained that many of the citations issued involve offenses such as dogs off-leash and loitering in the park after hours.

Board Member Viera asked what actions are taken in response to these situations. She inquired whether individuals are referred to social services or connected with other departments.

Deputy Director Rogers explained that the Department partners with the Office of Homeless Solutions to offer services to individuals in need. He added that Park Rangers build relationships with park users to help connect them with available resources if needed.

Board Member Viera further asked if Deputy Director Rogers could provide a list of examples of the types of calls typically received through the Code of Conduct answering service.

Deputy Director Rogers answered that calls frequently report large groups with tents in a park and dogs off-leash.

Board Member Viera asked whether Park Rangers are trained and equipped with Naloxone and what protections are in place for both the Park Rangers and the community.

Director Aguilar replied that the City of Phoenix has a citywide policy allowing employees to carry Naloxone on a voluntary basis. While it is not required, many Park Rangers choose to carry Naloxone and are trained in its use.

Board Member Zuercher asked about the current situation at Civic Space Park, noting ongoing challenges at the location. He mentioned observing some issues firsthand and inquired if an additional Park Ranger has been assigned to the park.

Director Aguilar explained that through a partnership between Downtown Phoenix Inc., the ASU Downtown campus and the City of Phoenix, two dedicated Park Rangers are assigned to Civic Space Park. Each partner funds one-third of the cost. In addition, through a separate partnership with ASU, the park also benefits from security services.

Acting Chairperson Moya asked if there is a way to track repeat offenders when individuals are trespassed or cited, and what actions are taken in those cases.

Director Aguilar explained that the Department tracks incidents in a database accessible to the Phoenix Police Department. Collaboration has increased over the past year to support incident responses. Repeat offenders face escalating trespass durations from city parks.

Acting Chairperson Moya noted that incidents are small compared to overall community interactions but emphasized the importance of monitoring these incidents for potential spikes as data is collected.

Board Member Bustamante stressed that the goal is to inform trespassers and offer services, not make arrests. She asked if the Department could track how often individuals are cited, connected to services or incarcerated overnight.

Director Aguilar stated that most Park Ranger contacts focus on education, with serious actions taken only in a small percentage of cases. Felony offenses result in immediate trespass. Additionally, the Code of Conduct includes an appeal process.

Board Member Bustamante supported the park safety program and was pleased that trespassers are offered services or the option to leave voluntarily rather than being automatically arrested.

Director Aguilar added that the Office of Homeless Solutions has dedicated liaisons assigned to geographic areas. These liaisons work proactively in parks both independently and in response to calls from the Parks Department when individuals in need of services are identified.

Board Member Bustamante stated that she believes this approach helps build strong relationships with the community and thanked staff for their work.

Acting Chairperson Moya stated that when the Code of Conduct was originally approved, the focus was on preventing negative interactions and ensuring people can enjoy the parks. He noted that it appears to be working as intended and thanked staff for their efforts.

Board Member Porter agreed with the comments and emphasized connecting individuals with services. She noted that community members have expressed concerns about parks being used in ways that discourage others from visiting. She acknowledged the challenge of balancing services with maintaining parks for recreation, nature and community use.

Acting Chairperson Moya thanked staff for a great presentation.

3b. Adaptive Recreation Update

Director Aguilar began the presentation by emphasizing the Department's commitment to adaptive recreation and to ensuring all residents have access to quality facilities and programs.

Assistant Director Whitfield shared that the Department's adaptive recreation program provides inclusive opportunities through partnerships with several organizations, including The Arizona Department of Economic Security, Ability360, ARCH, the H.E.A.R.T. Center, Special Olympics, and Diamond Dogz of Arizona. The program offers adaptive sports, enrichment activities and special events designed to promote life skills. Additionally, he noted that two Adaptive Recreation Coordinators oversee the program to ensure quality and compliance.

Assistant Director Brandie Barrett reported that the Department offers adaptive programs

including open gym access, adaptive sports, inclusive pickleball and adaptive cheerleading. She stated that the Department also hosts holiday events for individuals with mobility and visual challenges. Additional offerings include inclusive aquatics, arts and outdoor experiences through partnerships with Ability360 at Telephone Pioneer Park and the H.E.A.R.T. Center at Camp Colley.

Assistant Director Whitfield reported that, in addition to programming, the Department continues to invest in facility improvements to enhance accessibility. Many parks were built before the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the Department now allocates funding annually for citywide ADA upgrades. Recent improvements include a sensory room at Cesar Chavez Community Center and an ADA-compliant playground at Encanto Park developed in partnership with the Kiwanis Club of Phoenix. These efforts demonstrate the Department's ongoing commitment to providing inclusive recreational spaces and experiences for individuals of all abilities.

Acting Chairperson Moya opened the floor for the public.

Brielle Carter introduced herself as the Senior Manager of the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center and spoke about recent and planned adaptive recreation projects at Telephone Pioneer Park. She also mentioned that the park also hosts international wheelchair tennis and adaptive golf events. She thanked the City for its partnership and expressed a goal of making Telephone Pioneer Park a leading destination for adaptive recreation.

Acting Chairperson Moya thanked Ms. Carter and invited comments or questions from the Board.

Board Member Zuercher thanked staff for the uplifting presentation.

Board Member Bustamante expressed excitement that through the partnership with Ability360, the pool at Telephone Pioneer Park will be open.

Acting Chairperson Moya thanked staff for offering a diverse range of activities and a robust program and commended them for their hard work.

4. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Julia Taggart requested an update on North Mountain Park renovations, including parking upgrades, heat safety signage, exhibit funding and the potential installation of a chilled water bottle filling station at the North Mountain Visitor Center.

Karen De La Viña expressed support for including skate features in the Parks Master Plan. She noted that skateboarding provides an affordable way for children to build confidence.

Charles Darr stated that he supports the Parks Master Plan and noted that skateparks are often located on the outskirts of the city and are difficult to access. He suggested adding small skate features to neighborhood parks to improve accessibility.

Scott Macpherson supports the Parks Master Plan and proposed turning underused turf and stormwater areas into low-maintenance, accessible skate spaces.

Laura Martin thanked the Parks Board for their work and expressed her interest seeing more skate parks throughout the city.

Juli Lussier stated that skateboarding is growing in popularity in Phoenix. She supported adding small skate spots to promote health and bring new activities to underused park spaces.

Trent Martin supported adding small skate features in neighborhood parks to improve access for youth in the urban core.

Jess Dobbs stated that she is concerned about the destruction of the Piestewa Peak Nature Trail. She also noted that the South Mountain Activity Complex is still incomplete and that the promised remodel at North Mountain Park has not moved beyond the planning stage.

Jerry Van Gasse criticized the lack of public notice regarding the Piestewa Peak Trail project. He stated that the project wastes funding and creates visual blight on the preserve.

Daniel Hyatt stated that he supports the Parks Master Plan. He suggested adding skate features to parks that accommodate different skill levels and promote accessibility.

Tim Sierakowski states that the bridge project at Piestewa Peak harms the preserve and is an eyesore. He suggested that the funding for this project be used to repair the restrooms.

5. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Acting Chairperson Moya announced the upcoming opening of the 2025 aquatics season.

6. BOARD COMMENTS/REQUEST

Board Member Bustamante stated she appreciates the public comments and information.

7. DIRECTOR'S BRIEFING

Assistant Director Whitfield highlighted two items: the successful 2024-25 PAC School Year program and a recent youth baseball clinic held in partnership with the Milwaukee Brewers and PHX Plays Maryvale.

Assistant Director Barrett presented on the Perry Park Community Fun Tour, an eight-week series that included fitness classes, movies, music, a car show and a popular skate event. The series concluded with a water day attended by over 200 people. In total staff provided 210 hours of programming for more than 1,400 participants.

Director Aguilar provided an update on the opening of pools and splash pads for the 2025 aquatics season. She also thanked Kinder Morgan for their donation to the Phoenix Parks Foundation to support parks in District 3.

8. ADJOURNMENT:

Acting Chairperson Moya adjourned the meeting at 6:23 p.m.