

**SUMMARY MEETING MINUTES**  
**PHOENIX PARKS AND PRESERVE INITIATIVE (PPPI) OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**  
**January 27, 2025**

Phoenix Council Chambers, 200 W. Washington St., & Virtual on WebEx

**Committee Members:**

Patricia Duarte, Chair  
Ira Feldman  
John Furniss  
Sarah Porter  
Gary Kaasa

**COP Staff:**

Cynthia Aguilar  
Martin Whitfield  
Brandie Barrett  
Theresa Faull  
Todd Shackelford  
Jarod Rogers  
Kenneth Haack  
Mary Alejandro  
Tannia Ruiz  
Robin Kelley  
Ray Ficcaglia  
Wendy Jankunas  
Jackie Jacquez  
Sylvia Hockey  
Scott Coughlin  
Seidy Dominguez  
Jana Benson

**Others Present**

Rachel Ormsby, Forvis  
Josh Findlay, Forvis  
Timothy Sierakowski  
Jerry Van Gasse  
Jessica Dobbs

**Absent:**

None

**1. Call to Order**

Chairperson Patricia Duarte called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

**a. Phoenix Parks and Preserve Initiative Oversight Committee Summary Minutes – January 19, 2024**

Committee Member Furniss made a motion to approve the January 19, 2024 minutes with one correction to page 4. The correction was to change the reference to “Council” Member Kaasa to “Committee” Member Kaasa. Committee Member Kaasa seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

**3. Approval of the 2024 Independent Accountant’s Report on Examination of an Assertion**

Chairperson Duarte provided a brief recap of PPPI since its approval in 2008. She also acknowledged representatives Rachel Ormsby and Josh Findlay of the accounting firm Forvis Mazars were in person this year and then directed attention to Parks and Recreation Director Cynthia Aguilar.

Director Aguilar introduced the representatives from the accounting firm.

Rachel Ormsby reminded the Committee regarding audits vs. examinations. She stated today's focus was on examining the Phoenix Parks and Preserve Initiative (PPPI) funds for compliance, pending committee approval. Ms. Ormsby explained that their finding is based on actual results, with 70% of expenditures tested.

Josh Findlay presented the Independent Auditor's Report, confirming that they found full compliance with the use of the funds, awarding the Parks and Recreation Department an "A." He also clarified the funds listed on the auditor's page, representing last year's expenditures.

In response to a question from Committee Member Feldman, Ms. Ormsby responded that the report was not an audit and different thresholds are used. She recalled that last year the Committee had questions regarding the value of the projects tested so the examination approach had changed from previous years in which randomizers were employed.

Committee Member Kaasa requested two additional columns for percentages and completion dates be added to the report. He also asked for clarification on the columns. Ms. Ormsby explained they represented actual expenses and the items under the Expense Recovery column include expenditures that did not occur and therefore are credited back to the project.

Committee Member Furniss confirmed his understanding of the requested format changes and inquired if they were comfortable with the changes. Ms. Ormsby stated they were comfortable and that the format could be adjusted if requested by the Committee.

Mr. Findlay added that statistics could be included, if needed.

Committee Member Furniss indicated in the previous year's report, the examination review was 25% of the projects, which resulted in a significant range in project values with some being very low values. He emphasized the Committee's desire to ensure accuracy.

Ms. Ormsby explained that an examination does not look at transactions but instead reviews expenditures to ensure the proper use of the funds.

Committee Member Kaasa suggested that most of the larger expenditures could be added to the report.

Ms. Ormsby noted that they would work with the Committee to ensure the correct format is used for the report; and they could perform a hybrid method to include projects with high expenditures and random selections.

Chairperson Duarte thanked Ms. Ormsby and Mr. Findlay.

During the presentation, Public Speaker Jerry Van Gasse had questions, but he was informed that it was not yet the time for public comment.

With the conclusion of this discussion, Committee Member Furniss made a motion to approve the report. Committee Member Feldman seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

#### **4. Review of FY 2023-24 Phoenix Parks and Preserve Initiative Projects.**

Director Aguilar provided an overview of the Parks and Recreation Department's inventory which included flatland parks, recreation centers pools, preserve acreage and trails. She also shared that 2024 marked the 100th anniversary of the South Mountain Park/Preserve.

Director Aguilar highlighted the completion of various project throughout the park system. The projects included the following:

##### Playground Replacements

- Encanto Park ADA Playground
- Cave Creek Larkspur and Sweetwater Playgrounds
- Little Canyon Playground

##### Completed Park Renovations

- Roadrunner Park
- Hoshoni Park
- Falcon Park
- La Pradera Park

##### Community Centers

- Paradise Valley Community Center
- Deer Valley Community Center
- Maryvale Community Center
- Sunnyside Community Center
- South Mountain Visitor Center
- Pecos Park Community Center

Additionally, Director Aguilar highlighted ADA upgrades to several parks and community centers, including improvements to parking lots, LED lighting and drinking fountains. Director Aguilar concluded by inviting members of the Committee to tour the upgraded parks and facilities.

Deputy Director Todd Shackelford provided details on projects currently in design and/or construction for FY 2024-25. The projects included the following parks:

- Pierce Park
- Santa Maria Park
- Piestewa Park
- South Mountain Activity Complex
- Granada Park
- Sun Ray Park
- Sweetwater Park
- Sunridge Park
- Esteban Park
- Surrey Park

Chairperson Duarte thanked staff for their hard work on the park upgrades.

Committee Member Furniss recalled a presentation by Deputy Director Joe Diaz a few years ago regarding upgrades with the funding identified. He asked if future reports could include how projects are identified through the process and to understand the 60/40 funding split.

Committee Member Kaasa noted the significant impact of the improvements to the public and also stressed the importance of open space. He suggested open space projects be included in future presentations.

Committee Member Feldman expressed that Horse Lovers Park and Reach 11 require additional improvements. He further stated public safety concerns at Reach 11 at Tatum Boulevard due to traffic issues.

Director Aguilar stated the Street Transportation Department has been informed of these concerns. She also confirmed that Horse Lovers Park has had upgrades, with more improvements planned.

Deputy Director Shackelford shared that funding for lighting improvements at Reach 11 is forthcoming.

Committee Member Porter expressed that additional information on the selection of projects would be beneficial.

Chairperson Duarte closed with additional praise of staff for their excellent work on the park upgrades.

## **5. Chairperson's report**

No report provided; however, Chairperson Duarte expressed that she enjoyed serving on the Committee and mentioned this would be her last meeting. She thanked staff and the accounting firm for their hard work and assistance with understanding the reports.

## **6. Comments from the Committee**

Committee Member Furniss requested a clearer, more individualized explanation of the projects and their funding.

## **7. Call to the Public**

Public Speaker Jerry Van Gasse stated that he verified his time registration to speak for Item 4 of the agenda. He expressed that he believed there was a lack of public notice and input on the report. Mr. Van Gasse expressed that the Committee should be dissolved.

Public Speaker Timothy Sierakowski requested an explanation of the PPPI funds. He noted that the funds were intended to be used to improve the parks, but he believed they were being diverted elsewhere within the department. He advocated for the funds to be listed on the website for greater transparency.

Public Speaker Jessica Dobbs had registered to speak but declined when called to the podium.

Chairperson Duarte expressed trust in the process and the Committee.

## **8. Adjournment**

Chairperson Duarte adjourned the meeting at 10:56 a.m.