

**City of Mesa  
Parks and Recreation Advisory Board  
Minutes**

DATE: Wednesday, May 8, 2024  
TIME: 5:00 PM  
LOCATION: 708 W Baseline Road Bldg. #4, Board Room, Mesa, AZ

Pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.02, notice is hereby given that the Mesa Parks and Recreation Advisory Board will hold a meeting open to the public at the date and time above.

BOARD MEMBERS: Chair Troy Campbell; Board Members Nina Fader; Jacob Martinez; Brent Maldonado; Orchidia Peterson; Amelia Romney; Melanie Narish; Michelle Streeter; Benjamin Manning and Jeff Rush

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Campbell called the meeting to order at 5:06 PM.

**2. ROLL CALL**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairperson Troy Campbell, Board Members: Nina Fader, Benjamin Manning, Brent Maldonado, Jacob Martinez, Melanie Narish, Orchidia Peterson, Amelia Romney and Michelle Streeter

**BOARD MEMBER EXCUSED ABSENCES:** Jeff Rush

Director Moore presented Member Martinez with a plaque for serving out his full 2 terms on the board.

**3. PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR**

Chair Campbell called for the Election of Chair and Vice Chair.

Member Manning nominated Troy Campbell for Chair, seconded by Member Martinez  
Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:  
AYES: Nina Fader, Brent Maldonado, Melanie Narish, Amelia Romney, Orchidia Peterson, Troy Campbell, and Michell Streeter  
NAYES: None

Member Martinez nominated Brent Maldonado for Vice Chair, seconded by Member Manning  
Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:  
AYES: Nina Fader, Melanie Narish, Troy Campbell, Brent Maldonado, Orchidia Peterson, Amelian Romney, and Michelle Streeter  
NAYES: None

**4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

It was moved by Member Narish and seconded by Member Peterson to approve the regular meeting minutes from March 13, 2024. The motion passed unanimously.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES: Troy Campbell, Nina Fader, Benjamin Manning, Brent Maldonado, Jacob Martinez, Melanie Narish, Orchidia Peterson, Amelia Romney, and Michelle Streeter

NAYES: None

## 5. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments were received.

## 6. NEON GARDEN AT THE POST: PROJECT UPDATE AND SITE PLAN REVIEW

Zac Koceja – Supervising Engineer and Brandon Erno – Deputy Director

Koceja stated that the Neon Garden will be directly West of the Post and is about 10,000 square feet which will include programmable space for food trucks, small concerts, farmer's markets, and other small events. It can be rented out with the Post or by itself. The City has a collection of old neon signs from Main Street that will be restored and become part of the site features.

Kojeca continued with a description of the Neon Garden location which included the adjacent Eco Mesa residential apartments with attached parking garage, which will be screened off. There will be the refurbished Dairy Queen, Bill Johnson Big Apple, and Ford neon signs in front of Eco Mesa. The refurbished Watsons Flower sign will be on the South side along with the new Diving Lady Mesa sign. Along the alleyway will be a point of entrance for deliveries with easy access to the garden along with pedestrian entrances on the North side. There will be an expanded loading dock with an ADA accessible ramp off to the left of it. The interior will be concrete with a durable center greenspace.

### Neon Garden Estimated Schedule

Design Completion: May/June 2024

JOC Pricing & Contract: April/May 2024

Construction: May – December 2024

Project Acceptance & Closeout: December 2024 - January 2025

There will be a Mayor/Council update on May 16<sup>th</sup> with a slideshow and Q and A.

Member Fader inquired if there would be an option to have the signs on or off for events. Kojeca stated that, yes, there would be the option to turn them on/off individually with the possibility of adding dimming capabilities. The signs will only have neon lights visible from the front face and will not be double-sided.

Member Streeter asked if the history of the signs will be shared somehow. Kojeca stated that he was working with the Mesa Preservation Foundation to see if the base of the signs can have an interpretative plaque with a QR code. They are still working on the details.

Member Maldonado confirmed that the Diving Lady Mesa sign is a small version of the original one. He asked if there will be shade by the neon signs. Kojeca stated that on the west side there is a trellis that would provide some shade and have some accent lighting,

but they are looking at eliminating that feature based on the cost and shade already provided within the area from Eco Mesa.

Member Narish asked if there was a reason why the turf was not symmetrical on one side. Kojeca stated that due to the stage being pulled forward, the center area was elongated on one side to balance out the stage and soften the concrete area.

Member Fader asked if the QR codes on the plaques could also reference other signs that the city has. Kojeca answered that it could be a possibility.

Member Narish asked if there was any collaboration with the sign museum in Tucson. Kojeca said that they had reached out to see if they wanted to take the lead on refurbishing the signs, but the museum would need to move the signs to Tucson. Mesa decided that would be too difficult.

Member Streeter inquired if there was any intention to add more signs to the garden to which Kojeca stated there have been discussions.

## **7. ADAPTIVE PROGRAM PRESENTATION – Oscar Venegas – Recreation Supervisor**

Venegas started the presentation by explaining that Adaptive Recreation is an opportunity for the City to provide opportunities to everyone regardless of their abilities or disabilities. They deal predominantly with cognitive disabilities and impairments, and partner with AZDS to work with physically challenged individuals.

The Adaptive program puts on an annual off-Broadway play with 60 individuals with cognitive disabilities. This year the play will be based off Madagascar Jr. Each staff will shadow up to 5 participants to help facilitate their participation. They work with Red Mountain High School and Mesa Public Schools to help accomplish this production. The preparation started in January and the play will be performed in June.

The Adaptive Team includes Nina Bernardo - Recreation Coordinator, Josh Underwood – Recreation Programmer and 30-70 part time staff depending on seasonal programming. Nina holds the Therapeutic Recreation Specialist Certification for the department.

Demand for adaptive programming has been increasing and many programs are filling up the day they open registration. Mesa has been increasing the number of Adaptive activities provided, this year they have had 3075 registrations in 178 programs/activities. Revenue generated totaled \$150,160. Some of the activities currently being offered are:

Special Interest Classes - Yoga, Bulldog Fitness, Art, Nutrition, Off Broadway, Fashion Show, Zumba, Water Aerobics

Outdoor Recreation - Hiking, Rock Climbing, Kayaking, Snowboarding, Camp Carley, Fishing, Archery

Social Programs - TGIF, Mistletoe Magic, Decade Dance

Summer Camps - Camp Fiesta, Wiggles and Giggles

Sports - Swimming, Track, Volleyball, Golf, Basketball, Disc Golf, Floor Hockey, Curling, Cheer, Boccia, Soccer, Bowling, Pickleball

Inclusion Services - Average 50 Requests/ Month

Member Streeter asked how long Camp Fiesta is and Venegas responded that it is a 10-week program.

Member Romney asked how many volunteers are involved with Adaptive. Venegas stated that there are about 300 volunteers with additional people helping from the Special Olympics and other partnering cities.

**8. DIVISION UPDATES – Recreation, and Planning & Operations**  
Recreation – Aimee Manis – Deputy Director

Deputy Director Manis started her presentation with Aquatics updates. Nearly 200 individuals trained in Lifeguarding and Water Safety Instruction. They processed 71 new hires. Spring Learn-To-Swim lessons had almost 300 participants. All the pools are preparing for a soft opening on May 18<sup>th</sup> and the official opening on May 25<sup>th</sup>. Summer Membership Pass sale ends May 25<sup>th</sup>.

For Adaptive, Camp Fiesta's registration is full with 60 participants for summer. The team Mesa Bulldogs participated in the Special Olympics AZ state basketball tournament. The Off-Broadway Theatre program will perform Madagascar Jr. with a cast of nearly 60 and Desert Challenge Games are coming up at the end of the month at ASU.

The Park Rangers collaborated with Mesa PD for the Cops and Bobbers event with 175 attendees fishing at Red Mtn Park. There was a Homelessness Outreach event with Mesa PD helping guide unhoused individuals to resource providers. Manis also mentioned there were 15 ride-a-longs this past month with the Mesa Leadership Academy.

The front desk already had 10,981 summer registrations with \$ 626,108.78 in revenue. The new phone system helped guide inquiries and reduce customer wait times. In March, there were more ramada rentals than over the past 3 years at 557 rentals.

Recreation Centers had the Red Mountain Center's 25th Anniversary Celebration with nearly 500 attendees. Tri-Centers held spring break camps with 135 participants. Nearly 6,000 participants utilized group fitness classes in the month of March and the renovated gym floor is almost complete at Eagles Center.

The Mesa Tennis and Pickleball Center had over 1000 court rentals and over 4,150 individuals visit in April. Athletics hosted an MLB sponsored Playball event for 70 youth from Rec Center camps and 124 Adult teams registered for Spring Softball and Volleyball – approximately 1500 participants.

In March, Fun N Fitness engagement had over 2000 people. Team Leadership Academy has 12 participants which was funded through the NRPA Mentorship Grant. They meet for 16 weeks learning leadership skills to mentor 1st year participants and prep for paid positions. Boredom Busters and Summer Adventure camp planning is underway.

Park Planning and Operations – Brandon Erno – Deputy Director

The Red Mountain Park Expansion is almost complete. The contractor is finishing up punch list items and turning over the site to the City in the beginning of June with the opening planned for August. The Mountain Vista Trail project at Thomas and Recker is starting on May 13th with a tentative completion date for winter of 2024. It will include a 0.1-mile concrete loop, a 0.86-mile earthen trail, and parking lots. The City of Mesa Park Trails project on McKellips East of the 202 will include 0.25 and 0.31 earthen trails, 0.98 earthen perimeter trail and a simple parking lot. The construction started in May 2023 and will be complete this month. The Courts at Eastmark will have a public open house on May 15th at 6:00 PM to get feedback, including to determine if there should be an RC track or walking track included in the project. Design is continuing with construction starting in late January or early February. The components of the project include basketball courts, 2 tennis and 8 pickleball courts, 2 sand and 2 concrete volleyball courts, play equipment, a Ninja Warrior Course, exercise equipment, restrooms, ramadas, and the RC course or exercise track.

Member Martinez asked if this was a parks project only or if it included the Eastmark HOA. Erno responded that it is a City of Mesa Parks project with the community facilities district paying for it.

#### **9. DIRECTOR'S UPDATE – Andrea Moore - Director**

Director Moore started with the Commercial Division update as Luis Ruiz resigned. There are 3 concerts coming up at the Amp, one each in August, September, and October. Staff are evaluating proposals for the strategic plan for the Convention Center. The Dobson Golf Course had over 9000 rounds in March.

Member Martinez asked if there were any plans to upgrade the concrete paths at the golf course. Director Moore stated that they are doing small repairs but that they had invested over \$300,000 more than what they had scheduled to, so they are keeping an eye on things as they go.

Member Narish asked if the sign in front of the Amphitheater was going to be repaired. Director Moore stated that they are working on it and will double check its progress.

The Proposed 2024 Bond Program is going to Council on May 16<sup>th</sup> at the study session with a plan to call for the election on Monday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>. The Bond Program will be between \$200-300 million combined. Results are still being tallied from all the public outreach meetings and the survey that was sent out.

The PRCF FY 24/25 Operating Budget is set at \$50 million for Parks and \$22 million for Facilities. We are doing some enhancements to make a part-time position full-time in Special Events, we are increasing the tennis operating budget which is offset by their revenue and adding staff to Adaptive to increase programs.

We have reached an agreement with Mesa Public Schools to update the Cooperative Use Contract and the Adaptive Program Agreement with them, they will go up for Council adoption on May 20th. A big component of that is to change the Aquatics shared responsibility to the City as the schools can no longer fund the utility payments for non-instructional use. The school district will pay for all use of the pools with a fee structure going forward. In 2022, the estimated utility cost for the 9 pools was \$1.2 million.

For volume of participants in programs, Adaptive sees about 300 participants, Athletics sees about 8000 participants and Aquatics sees about 600,000 participants.

The Courts at Eastmark public open house is on Wednesday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, at 6pm. The grand opening plans for the expansion of Red Mountain Park should be in September. The Appreciation Breakfast for board members is June 5<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 AM at The Post, please RSVP to Deanna by May 15<sup>th</sup>. There will be no Parks Board Meeting in July. We will meet again in September, and there should be some new appointments to fill the vacancies on the board. The Mesa Sprint Triathlon is on Saturday, September 21, 2024, and they are looking for volunteers.

Member Martinez asked if there are any plans to continue to work with the homeless in the parks and with the Diversion Program. Director Moore stated that the City has bought a hotel to house homeless residents and will continue to do Off the Streets and the Diversion Programs. They will also continue park engagement programs with the Fun N Fit Program and have additional Park Rangers in the parks.

Chair Campbell asked if feedback was needed for anything pertaining to the bond or the budget. Director Moore stated that the feedback window is closed in terms of the proposed projects, but after next week there will be opportunities to share input or any concerns that arise from the bond election.

## **10. REPORTS OF MEETINGS OR EVENTS ATTENDED**

Member Narish attended the Social D and Bad Religion Concert at the Mesa Amphitheater. She stated that it was a wonderful venue with a positive atmosphere.

Chair Campbell signed himself and daughter up for lessons at Mesa Tennis and Pickleball Center. They both attended their first lessons, and the staff was wonderful and very patient. He also attended the Savannah Banana game at Sloan Park and saw Member Peterson there. He also had his daughter's birthday party at Shepherders Park.

Member Maldonado attended Celebrate Mesa and sold tickets for the foundation. He attended the Willie Nelson concert at the Amphitheater. He also played Pickleball at Monterey Park. Maldonado spoke of the fact that Mesa Leadership is an eye-opening program, and it is a great way to get more involved with the city.

Member Peterson attended Celebrate Mesa.

Member Narish went to a park where the Rangers were handing out stickers to all the kids and thought it was great to see that outreach and the kids loved it.

## **11. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on September 11, 2024, at 5:00 PM.

## **12. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn by Member Fader; seconded by Member Peterson. Approved 10-0 without objection. The meeting was adjourned at 6:27 PM.