



Minutes City Council's Neighborhood Parks Rehabilitation & Maintenance Committee May 20, 2009

Minutes of the meeting of the City Council's Neighborhood Parks Rehabilitation & Maintenance Committee held on Wednesday, May 20, 2009, 3:00 p.m., in the 3rd Floor Conference Room, Tempe City Hall, 31 E. 5th Street, Tempe, Arizona.

Committee Members Present:

Councilmember Joel Navarro, Chair
Councilmember Mark Mitchell

City Staff Present:

Mike Armfield, Rec Supervisor
Travis Dray, Dep Rec Mgr
Kathy Gasperich, Comm Rel
Jan Hort, City Clerk
Shane Isabell, Rec Coordinator
Eric Iwersen, Sr. Planner
Bob Pohlit, CIP Coordinator
Mark Richwine, Parks & Rec Mgr
Elizabeth Thomas, Neighborhood Pgm Spec
Sam Thompson, Dep Mgr, Parks
Mark Wittenburg, Network Ops Supervisor

Guests Present:

Don Watkins, Parks & Rec Board

Councilmember Navarro called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.

Agenda Item 1 – Public Appearances

Don Watkins, Parks and Recreation Board Member, suggested options for a volunteer program to assist in neighborhood park maintenance.

Mark Richwine added that staff has met and is beginning the process of developing an "adopt-a-park" program and would hope to engage neighborhood associations and community individuals or organizations that would be interested in working with the City in those efforts. Before it is rolled out, it is important that appropriate expectations are set and those individuals who commit know what is expected of them. It would be a great way to get the community involved.

Councilmember Mitchell suggested working with Shauna Warner and Mary Anna Bastin. He also suggested a "Friends of the Parks" concept.

Agenda Item 2 – Review of Minutes

The April 15, 2009, minutes were accepted.

Agenda Item 3 – Park Renovations

Bob Pohlit summarized park renovations.

- Athletic Field Lighting Improvements
 - Diablo Stadium Fields #1 and #2 – design started, with construction to begin in November
 - Daley Park – design started and instead of two ball fields, there will be one ball field and one soccer field, with construction to begin January/February of 2010
- Kiwanis Park Sprinkler System Replacement and Landscaping
 - Design is at 90%
 - CMAR contractor selected
 - Preliminary work (locate utilities and grass-kill) will begin in August
 - Construction will begin in October
- Park Restroom Renovation and Upgrades
 - Hudson Park – completed
 - Kiwanis Park Sister City Gardens – construction will begin in June
 - Daley Park – design is at 30%
- Kiwanis Park Ramadas Phase II
 - Design is at permitting level
 - Construction will begin in July or August
- Kiwanis Recreation Center Wave Equipment Replacement
 - Design will begin in June
 - Construction will begin in January or February 2010
- Diablo Stadium Scoreboard Replacement
 - Construction will begin in June

He continued with the impact of the CIP on the schedule of park renovations.

- Esquer Park – Construction completed last year.
- Hudson Park – Construction completed this year, with grand re-opening celebration last Sunday.
- Hallman Park – Design is at 60%, hope to begin construction this fall. There have been neighborhood issues, for example, the parking lot at the north end will be discontinued. Construction will begin this fall.
- Daley Park – Design is at 30%, with construction scheduled after the first of the year.
- Scudder Park – At preliminary level, with construction scheduled for spring, 2010.
- Goodwin Park – At preliminary level, with construction scheduled for July, 2010.
- Clark Park Swimming Pool – Designer will be selected during the next fiscal year, and construction will begin in 2011, with completion by 2012.
- Clark Park – Will follow after construction of the swimming pool.
- Svob Park – Construction scheduled for 2010/2011.

There was discussion concerning the budgeted funds in relation to park size. Mr. Pohlit added that one thing that makes Daley Park different from Corbell Park is that Daley is a destination park with more amenities and Corbell is basically a neighborhood park.

Councilmember Navarro asked if the budgeted numbers are presented during the neighborhood process.

Mr. Pohlit explained that when the master plan is not designed to a budget. The neighborhood designs to what they want to see within the park. When the final master plan is presented, they are asked to prioritize their wants so that if cuts are necessary due to the budget allocation, lower priorities are cut.

Mr. Richwine added that staff used an average based on approximately \$10 per sq. ft. of cost to renovate parks. Unfortunately, the largest parks are on the front end so the cost on the front end is greater. It is spread out over 45 parks over 15 years. There are a lot of parks that are two or three acres that should come in significantly less.

Councilmember Navarro asked if the goal is still three parks per year.

Mr. Pohlit responded that in this next year, there will be three parks.

Mr. Richwine added that it is more like nine, because there are parks in the master plan phase, parks in the construction document development phase, and parks in actual construction. It amounts to a three-year process.

Councilmember Mitchell asked if the numbers will change because of less money coming in.

Mr. Richwine responded that he didn't think so, provided there is still bond capacity. The goal is to still try to deliver three parks per year plus the Clark Pool renovation project.

Councilmember Navarro asked if the costs are going down.

Mr. Richwine responded that there has been a double effect. Pricing has gone down somewhat, but competition has increased significantly.

Mr. Pohlit added that there were eighteen proposals for Hallman Park and it was not unusual a few years ago to get three.

Councilmember Navarro asked if playground equipment can be replaced.

Mr. Pohlit responded that it can be replaced in kind, but cannot be change to something different. It involves maintenance vs. renovation and with renovation, accessibility needs to be addressed.

Councilmember Mitchell added that Hudson Park is phenomenal.

Agenda Item 4 – Phones in Parks

Mark Wittenburg summarized that there was a suggestion to install emergency phone services in the parks.

- This has been done at Kiwanis and for the Police stations.
- There are two choices of pedestal units available, a free standing pedestal unit with speakerphone and a similar unit with a flashing blue light activated when the red call button is pressed. Both of these are ADA compliant.
- The cost to install is approximately \$5,600, with \$182 per month maintenance.
- There is a phone at Creamery Park and a code blue phone at Kiwanis. The phone at Kiwanis has never been used. Cell phones are typically used for emergencies.
- The pedestal units are vandal resistant.
- Power options would need to be examined at each park. Solar is an option.
- Risk of liability for non-working phone during actual emergency, so would be necessary for the line to signal a non-working unit at the other end.
- Opportunities need to be weighed, such as enhancement of public safety.
- The unit is locked down so is specific to calling dispatch.

- Other options include Automated External Defibrillator (AED).

Councilmember Navarro asked if the AED units can withstand the heat from the sun. It would be a helpful option to include with the phones.

Mr. Wittenburg stated that he would contact the manufacturer of the AED unit to determine the temperature ratings.

Mr. Richwine asked for any statistics on the phone at Creamery Park.

Mr. Wittenburg responded that the phone at Creamery Park is regularly vandalized.

Mr. Pohlit added that some of the problems are that the phones are seldom used, they are vandalized, and they create nuisance calls. There used to be phones at the athletic fields but they were removed. US West would not maintain them because they were constantly vandalized.

Councilmember Navarro stated that he felt the phones would be helpful along the paths for runners who don't carry cell phones, particularly along the canals.

Eric Iwersen stated that he hadn't heard many requests for phones at neighborhood meetings.

DIRECTION: Follow up at the next meeting.

Agenda Item 5 – Neighborhood Connectivity

Eric Iwersen summarized current projects under design or construction or recently completed.

- Rio Salado Path Project - Another mile along the south bank has been completed from the Arts Center to Priest. This project was primarily federal funds.

Councilmember Navarro stated that his concern is with connectivity from the majority of the parks on major pathways. In addition, there are three main routes that go north and south, maybe via College Avenue, Hardy, Lakeshore, and Dorsey, and he would like to see if those that are established are connecting the parks onto those main avenues connecting to the downtown area. There is a great route down Lakeshore, and then it hits Rural Road and dead-ends. There is no signage on the street to show the connectivity.

Mr. Iwersen added that there are green and white bicycle route signs to show that the corridor continues. There is no signage to show which way to go to find the connectivity, however. There are some neighborhoods that don't want signage and staff has felt the bike system was discontinuous. It is finally starting to pull together so there may be some legitimacy to look at the way-finding system.

Councilmember Navarro suggested stamping into the concrete the name of the street or a sign to show the same information. In addition, as you are going along the canal, there could be a sign to show what park is ahead.

Mr. Iwersen responded that it is almost too late on the western canal path to stamp concrete, but signage is a possibility. He asked how extensive the information should be on the signage.

Councilmember Navarro clarified that it could include the park name with an arrow and the main roads, and in addition, painted arrows to direct to downtown or to parks where the trail ends.

Mr. Richwine added that he will work with Mr. Iwersen to develop something as part of the park renovation, where a triangular sign could include one panel recognizing the volunteers who are part of the “adopt-a-park”, and another panel could be the City's bikeway system map, a universal sign.

Councilmember Navarro added that it is a safety measure to know where you are.

Mr. Iwersen added that a lot of the intersections are signalized, even if they are just a pedestrian signal, and the signs will be illuminated. On the Western Canal there are two signal lights being installed. He continued with the current projects.

- Western Canal
 - Six miles, includes two signal lights, pedestrian crossings at Rural and McClintock.
 - Connects to Victory Park.
 - Chandler has a project to connect to the Western Canal path on the east. The obstacle is to cross the 101 Freeway. ADOT owns a maintenance bridge, but they don't have permission to open it up.
 - The County is considering connecting the pieces that the cities aren't doing.
 - Public art will be at each intersection to show where the path continues.
 - The connection at Kiwanis is at Baseline on the west side of the lake and ties into the pathway system.
 - All street connections have improved plaza areas with lighting and enhanced landscaping.
 - At Ken McDonald Golf Course, tee box 11 is elevated.
 - The path connects to the YMCA.
 - There is a connection to Stroud Park and some improvements as part of the path project.
- Funding available for continuation of the Rio Salado pathway system from McClintock into Mesa, under the 101 and the 202.
- An alignment connects Hallman Park to Moeur Park, through Papago Park following the alignment of the Crosscut Canal.
- Staff is working with the North Tempe neighborhoods associations to make good connections to their parks.

DIRECTION: Continue working on the connectivity north to south to make it more visible and report back to the committee.

Agenda Item 6 – Parks and Recreation Program

Mike Armfield summarized the recreation programs. Thanks to the Council's commitment to the citizens, the programs have remained strong both in adult and youth sports programs. Teams are coming from surrounding cities. Adult Sports offer soccer, softball, baseball and basketball. Mesa recently cut all adult soccer programs, so some of their teams have come to Tempe.

- Adult Soccer
 - Leagues have increased from 40 to 56.
 - Break even at \$695 per team (increased from \$555).
 - \$16,720 – increased revenue.
 - Total revenue of \$38,920.
- Adult Softball
 - 672 teams (288 Men's and 384 Co-Rec)
 - \$153,216 Men's and \$125,184 Co-Rec
 - Total revenue of \$278,400
 - Priority given to Tempe residents or Tempe sponsored businesses.

Councilmember Navarro asked if the cost covers maintenance of the fields.

Mr. Armfield responded that it covers administration, equipment, awards, lights, etc.

Mr. Richwine added that the only aspect of maintenance would be the lights which are factored into the cost to provide the service.

Councilmember Mitchell asked why the other costs were not considered.

Mr. Richwine responded that it would be difficult. Whether someone is playing on it, the field still has to be maintained. It has the same context as a park. It was difficult to say that as a result of softball programs playing there six nights a week for a period of four hours per night, how much of the 24-hour a day maintenance cost should be allocated to that use.

Councilmember Navarro asked if that would be worthwhile in the future.

Mr. Richwine responded that it could be. As a part of the budget process this past year, one of the challenges faced was those programs with a high revenue return, where the net fiscal effect of any reductions could either be "0" or negative. All of the recommendations that Parks and Recreation put forward were things that had limited revenue because the number to reach was fairly significant. They are trying to minimize the subsidy to the public.

Councilmember Navarro asked if we lose people because other facilities are nicer looking or is there a point of maintaining higher maintenance or adding another cost.

Mr. Richwine stated that staff would look at that. Compared to the peer communities, Tempe athletic facilities, particularly the premium ones, tend to be in better shape than the surrounding community. Some of the premium facilities in Scottsdale and Phoenix, which are only available for tournament activity, are at a different level than ours.

Mr. Armfield added that what is bringing the participation is better quality leagues. While the City's adult softball leagues are filled, Chandler's and Mesa's are not.

- Adult Men's Baseball
 - 20 teams (increased from 16)
 - \$4920 increased revenue
 - Total revenue of \$19,460.
 - Program has increased because no other neighboring cities offer baseball.
- Adult Basketball
 - 60 teams, \$515 per team.
 - No growth, but no decrease.
 - Total revenue of \$30,900.
- Youth Sports – experiencing growth
 - Softball/baseball – 11% increase
 - All City Athletic Conference – 678 participants, 8% increase
 - Flag Football – 49 participants, 32% increase
 - Basketball
 - Track and Field
 - Wrestling
 - Golf
- Youth Sports Partners
 - Tempe District 3
 - Tempe Union High School District
 - Kyrene Athletic Conference
 - Tempe Diablos

- Tempe Little Leagues
- Arizona Special Olympics
- Hook a Kid on Golf
- ASU
- Dick's Sporting Goods
- Arizona Diamondbacks
- National Football League
- Major League Baseball
- Hershey's Track and Field

Councilmember Navarro asked if we were getting any use from the school districts' fields.

Mr. Armfield responded that we are.

Mr. Richwine added that the City has intergovernmental agreements with the Tempe Elementary School District for the joint use of Connolly and McKemy where the City installed lights and sprinkler irrigation to extend the season. The City does not have intergovernmental agreements for access to other properties. Nothing is in place with Kyrene. There is room for improvement in our current relationship. The indoor spaces that are used by other departments of the City come at a pretty expensive price tag. From a reciprocal standpoint, we provide them support by running some of their intramural sports programs and we provide officials for their competitive sports programs, so with the elementary schools we might be giving a little more than we are getting. With the high school, we are getting an equal amount for what we are giving.

Shane Isabell continued with the demand for park reservations by showing a comparison between Spring 2008 and Spring 2009.

- 86 different user groups requested a field at least four times, with an increase of 25 groups.
- Non-paying fee groups consist of the city and schools.
- 41 youth sponsored Tempe-based organizations, soccer clubs, etc., do not pay a fee. Of those, the 41 groups comprised 82% of all field reservations.
- A softball club, for example, during off season, pays for use of a field, as well as adult sports groups or adult sports league. The fee is \$10/hour during the day and \$15/hour in the evening.
- There was an increase of 25 user groups, including two new school groups and new youth football groups.

Mr. Isabell added that one of the new football groups, National Youth Sports (NYS), has asked for football, softball, baseball and soccer for their entire league. They are not Tempe-based.

Councilmember Mitchell stated that it is important to take care of the Tempe residents first.

Mr. Isabell added that there is no charge for youth groups. There are no Tempe-based groups other than the YMCA and Little Leagues who are 50% Tempe residents.

Councilmember Mitchell asked if those non-Tempe groups would be charged.

Mr. Richwine responded that currently they are not charged, but that is something that could be explored. There has been an increase in demand by outside people on the adult level. There have been unprecedented requests for field allocations, but a large percentage of those unprecedented requests are to service groups and organizations which are predominantly not Tempe residents. The reason for the unprecedented requests is that some of the surrounding communities have restricted access to their fields by youth groups and organizations and mandate that they be predominantly residents of that community.

Mr. Isabell continued with boundary changes. It may have at one time been north Tempe, but now it includes Dobson on the east to 24th Street on the west. School boundaries many times don't match city boundaries. Other cities have added participation fees for youth plus light fees and rules have been implemented that drive teams away.

- Mesa: 80% residency for teams. \$4 per year per participant every time you go into the facility, plus a light fee.
- Chandler: user groups must be part of the Chandler Youth Sports Association which is composed of 90% Chandler teams and must have 75% Chandler residents.
- Phoenix: 70% residency requirement for teams to be considered Phoenix-based, plus fee of \$4/hr for youth or \$15/hr for adult groups.
- Kyrene School District - \$15 application fee, youth programs \$5/hr, adults \$30/hr.

Councilmember Navarro clarified that we don't have just the Tempe-established leagues like the other cities do.

Mr. Richwine responded that in those cities, and pretty much all of the surrounding cities, they have a policy that requires any group that requests the use of city facilities must meet the minimum residency requirement. Tempe does not. Generally speaking, because of how they are located, the use of their city facilities is largely by residents. Tempe's has always been more liberal because we've recognized that kids that live in south Tempe and kids in west Chandler go to the same schools. We have seen a gradual erosion of what used to be largely Tempe resident organizations are now predominantly non-resident organizations.

Councilmember Mitchell added that this is a huge drain on staff and our taxpayers. He suggested bringing recommendations to the Council.

Mr. Richwine added that their practice has always been that as long as they serve Tempe residents, regardless of percentage, we try to accommodate them. The other component that has been a challenge is that ten years ago when staff looked at whether there were enough field resources, at that time there were. That was when the play was seasonal and now we are pressured to keep the fields in use twelve months per year. Non-traditional sports are also requesting the same type of access to fields.

Councilmember Mitchell stated that he will continue to push for sports fields. We know we can fill the fields.

Agenda Item 7 – Future Agenda Items

- Possible fees, ideas to more efficiently schedule fields, and examine resources to meet existing plans
- Update on transit portion of connectivity
- Update on volunteer park maintenance
- Update Selleh Park

Next meeting will be in August.

Meeting adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

Prepared by: Connie Krosschell
Reviewed by: Sam Thompson