

MINUTES

Washoe County Open Space and Regional Parks Commission July 7, 2015

Commissioner Thomas Guinn called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

1. **Roll Call.**

Members present: Scott Pierson, Anne Buckley, Thomas Guinn, Nathan Daniel, Janet Davis and Al Sheakley

Board of County Commissioners Liaison: Jeanne Herman

Staff present: Jennifer Budge, Dave Solaro, Eric Crump, Dennis Troy, Cheryl Surface, Deputy District Attorney Stephan Hollandsworth and Joanna Schultz

2. **Public Comments**

No public comment

3. **Election of Open Space and Regional Parks Commission Chairman and Vice-Chairman for a term of July 1, 2015 through December 31, 2015**

Commissioner Buckley nominated Thomas Guinn as Chairperson and Nate Daniel as Vice Chairperson. Second by Commissioner Davis. Motion Carried.

4. **Approval of the Agenda for the Open Space and Regional Parks Commission Meeting of July 7, 2015**

Commissioner Guinn said item #9 will not be heard.

Motion by Commissioner Daniel to approve the Agenda for the Open Space and Regional Parks Commission Meeting of July 7, 2015. Second by Commissioner Pierson. Motion Carried.

5. **Resolution of Appreciation and recognition of service for Sue Burkhamer and Dennis Sorensen**

Commissioner Buckley read and presented a Resolution of Appreciation and Recognition of Service for Susan Burkhamer.

Bill Wallace, Chairman of the Robert Z Hawkins Foundation said that everything said today can be doubled as far as they are concerned. They hold Ms. Burkhamer in high regard for what she has done for the Hawkins Amphitheater. Ms. Burkhamer has done such wonderful work and they are disappointed that she isn't continuing.

Commissioner Daniel echoed everyone's comments. He thanked Ms. Burkhamer for her service.

Commissioner Guinn read and presented a Resolution of Appreciation and Recognition of Service for Dennis Sorenson.

6. Presentation by May Arboretum Society on programs and events at the Wilbur D. May Arboretum and Botanical Gardens

Eric Crump, Operations Division Director introduced the President of the May Arboretum Society, Lynn Ann Bethel.

Ms. Bethel gave a presentation.

Commissioner Guinn thanked the May Arboretum Society for all their work.

In response to Commissioner Guinn regarding what phase of construction is the fencing at, Mr. Crump said Phase II is complete with the exception of the large gate.

Commissioner Daniel thanked the Wilbur D May Arboretum Society.

7. Presentation, discussion and possible action on closure of the multi-use pasture at Rancho San Rafael Regional Park due to severe drought conditions

Eric Crump, Operations Division Director said he wanted to give a history of the pasture, how it's managed and staff's decision making process to temporary close the pasture.

The pasture was historically a grazing and hay pasture dating back to the original ranch. The current main pasture on the south side of the park is approximately 33 acres and commonly referred to as the multiuse pasture. It is flood irrigated from the Highland Ditch, a diversion of the Truckee River and only source for irrigation.

In the 1990s Park Master Plan and subsequent 2002 Rancho San Rafael Regional Park Implementation Plan there is reference to preserving the values of the last ranch in Northwest Reno and preserving the open space of the park. All of the development maps within the Implementation Plan show the pasture as being preserved. Though the pasture is used for haying, a decision to designate the area was made over 10 years ago. The multiuse has occurred with relatively minor conflicts and has provided the citizens an exceptional place to bring their pets off-leash.

As recreation providers and land managers of our County's public lands we are responsible for balancing recreation uses while protecting and preserving Washoe County's public lands for future generations. The decision to temporarily close the pasture was not an easy one, but was made based on sound management principles. Protection of the plant, ground, turf grass is vitally important and the best way to do this is to limit access. Staff looked at other options including alternative irrigation options and a temporary off-leash area somewhere else in the park, but couldn't come up with any viable options. Piping and trucking in water would require significant Capitol expense and poses other challenges including Water Rights. We asked ourselves if that truly is the best use of water during a drought.

In anticipation of the closure, signage was placed at the entrances noticing the public of the upcoming closure and listing alternative locations within the community that offer dog parks. Press releases were also sent out with several media outlets covering the story. An FAQ sheet was also made available on our website, www.washoecountyparks.com. This temporary closure is to meet the long term demands of the area. We fully understand that this is a terrific and

popular area for many dog owners and we just want it to be in a condition to be enjoyed by everybody. The decision of when to open the pasture will be based on overall health of the pasture and its ability to withstand the use again.

Though the decision to close the pasture has already been made, we wanted to offer this Commission and citizens the opportunity to understand the reasoning behind the decision, ask questions and weigh in on the subject.

In response to Commissioner Davis regarding are there other dog parks available, Mr. Crump said City of Reno has Whittaker and Virginia Lake parks, Link Piazza Dog Park at Hidden Valley Regional Park and City of Sparks has the Sparks Marina. Most federal land including Bureau of Land Management and US Forest Service which we are most surrounded by in this community also allow dogs off-leash, but they must be under control.

Commissioner Daniel said closure is the right decision for the long-term.

In response to Commissioner Pierson regarding what is the enforcement in place, Mr. Crump said the entire area is mostly fenced with a few key entrances. We posted those with clear signage and it has been closed for several weeks now. We got ahead of this with the media, user groups and notices so there have not been any problems. Most people when they heard about it were upset and unhappy about it, but understood why and that it was temporary.

Motion by Commissioner Davis to support the closure of the multi-use pasture at Rancho San Rafael Regional Park due to severe drought conditions. Second by Commissioner Sheakley. Motion carried.

8. Presentation and discussion on Fees and Charges Policy (requested by Commissioner Buckley)

Eric Crump, Operations Division Director reviewed the Fees and Charges Policy.

In response to Commissioner Buckley regarding what is the recovery on Level I, Mr. Crump said on most of these we would actually get zero revenue. There is the opportunity on outdoor interpretive programs where we may charge a small fee, but we don't typically. General these are free services provided by the County.

In response to Commissioner Buckley regarding why 50% recovery for Level III, Mr. Crump said we do charge fees. We offer some of the services, but not all due to economic downturns and may in the future. We charge fees for:

- Athletic field permitting
- Youth recreation and sports is different from field permitting. We don't operate the leagues, but rent the fields to these groups.
- Admission fees for the May Museum for the exhibits
- Special events

These are traditional type of activities provided by or through Parks and Recreation organization so often times they are subsidized to certain level. It's kind of a best practice and if it is the pleasure of this Commission to make the recommendation to the Board of County Commissioner to adopt a different range that can be discussed.

In response to Commissioner Buckley regarding if the Washoe County Sheriff's office uses the Regional Shooting Facility they are not charged, Mr. Crump said they are not charged. Commissioner Buckley added the Sheriff's office is pretty well funded and Parks isn't, seems a little unfair.

In response to Commissioner Buckley regarding reciprocal use and if a facility is reserved under this policy and a paying customer wants the same date, the reciprocal user could be bumped, Mr. Crump said yes. We have identified other governmental and quasi-governmental agencies that we offer reciprocal use to for virtually all of the County facilities for business purposes only. The School District does get 50% of Camp WeCheMe and Robert Z. Hawkins Amphitheater reservations if they want to do programming there. He doesn't know when the last time they reserved. If we have a paying a customer that wants a date a reciprocal user has reserved, that entity does have the ability to either pay full price or release their date.

In response to Commissioner Buckley regarding does the County use school facilities as a reciprocal use, Mr. Crump said we currently do not very often. We do hold some meetings at school facilities, but there is not a high demand because we have so many facilities within Parks. When we've asked, we've been allowed to use facilities.

In response to Commissioner Buckley regarding there is a cost for use of a facility for cleanup, supplies, staff etc. so when they are using County facilities and there is not much call to use their facilities isn't the County subsidizing their meetings? Mr. Crump said some could argue this, but the spirit of the Reciprocal Use Policy was that these are community based, governmental or quasi-governmental agencies doing good for the community and the County wanted to support that effort.

Commissioner Buckley said that we are operating at a 2008 budget level with more facilities, more people and no more money. She doesn't like that we provide services for free to other entities that are better funded than Parks.

In response to Commissioner Buckley regarding full range of costs for each facility, Mr. Crump said we do. The budget is not based on activities provided but we can pull those costs associated with offering services.

Commissioner Buckley would also like to know what the total fees that Parks puts into the General Fund. Mr. Crump said we can put those together. We operate in a couple of funds: General Fund where many of these activities are operated through this fund and the revenue goes back into this fund. There is the Enterprise Fund, which is the golf courses and the Special Revenue, which the May Center operates out of.

Commissioner Buckley said she can understand fines not going into the Parks budget, but she thinks fees that are supposed to cover the maintenance should be reallocated back to Parks as well as the subsidies that are run and cannot make money. If they are diligent picking up the fees and making good use of them that should be reflected in their budget allocation.

Mr. Crump said he understands and has heard this a lot. He thinks it's how you look at General Fund budget because in essence we are getting the fees back out through the General Fund. We receive more in General Fund funding than we receive in fees.

Commissioner Buckley said she understands this, but the amount of funding Parks receives through the General Fund is miniscule compared with other departments at the moment and much too low if Parks is to operate and offer a reasonable standard.

In response to Commissioner Guinn regarding with a year like this, the drought, are the fees that are paid for water reallocated or saved to use towards irrigation or sod to repair the area affected by the drought, Mr. Crump said for example the golf course operates in an Enterprise Fund, much like a business, hopefully in good years we have cash reserves and in bad years when we don't have a revenue coming in we dip into those reserves to cover that gap. The way the course is irrigated during the main part of the season we use potable TMWA water and pay for that, but the ditch water regardless of its availability we pay for it as they are Water Rights. There is still an expense associated with those rights, even though the water isn't there. Because we have relied on TMWA water this year during times when we typically haven't, the expense for watering the golf course this year is much more that it has been historically.

Commissioner Guinn said that the Commission would like staff to bring back facilities costs and total fees received.

Mr. Crump clarified that we will identify the cost of the different services we provide under each level, total revenue generated by the department and the percentages of cost recovery in the different service levels.

Commissioner Buckley said yes.

Commissioner Guinn would like to know the cost due to the drought.

9. ITEM PULLED: Update, discussion and possible recommendation to the Board of County Commission on proposed changes to County Code Chapter 95 – Parks and Recreation

10. Parks Reports

Jennifer Budge, Park Operations Superintendent highlighted reports.

11. Director's Report

Dave Solaro, Director of Community Services reviewed Board of County Commission actions.

Commissioner Jeanne Herman said she had, at the last Board of County Commissioner meeting, requested staff give a timeframe for when we will be getting our budgets back.

Commissioner Guinn said he was also at the last Board of County Commissioners' meeting with Commissioners Davis and Sheakley and appreciates Commissioner Herman trying to get Parks more funding. Our funding is just so low and what staff is doing with the limited funding is pretty remarkable.

12. Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Guinn would like to add the Pledge of the Allegiance to this Commission's agendas.

Commissioner Sheakley said he liked that we held some of these meetings at different parks. He would like if we could hold meetings at different parks.

Commissioner Daniel said he spoke with Kent Ervin with the Peavine Trail Safety about continuing concerns with the shooting on Peavine Mountain. It is outside of the realm of the Parks Commission because most of the land is Federal, however, most of the trails that lead up onto Peavine do come off of Washoe County parkland. He doesn't think it needs to come back to this Commission, but thinks it's worth reiterating that it is a concern and personally thinks it's time to address signage and re-designating congested boundaries. This issue has come before this Commission as well as to the Board of County Commissioners and is an important issue.

13. Public Comments

No public comment

Adjourned at 3:31 p.m.