



**City of Scottsdale
Parks and Recreation Commission Special Meeting
MINUTES**

Wednesday, August 19, 2026, 4 p.m.
McDowell Mountain Ranch
Aquatic Center 15525 N.
Thompson Peak
Scottsdale, AZ 85260

PRESENT: Chair Michael Vreeland, Vice Chair Amy Arnold, Commissioners Jamie Alford, Sandy Kull, Eric Maschhaupt, and Susan McGarry

ABSENT: Commissioner Teresa Kim Quale

STAFF: Deputy Directors Kevin McKee, Chris Walsh; Parks and Recreation Managers Kyu-Bin Hyun, Valerie Budnick, Stephanie Tippet, Hezekiah Allen, Chris Hawes; Financial Services Director Ryan Fielder; Principal Planner Eileen Baden; and Executive Assistant Rosalind Williams

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Vreeland called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members present as listed above.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no members of the public who wished to speak nor any written comment cards provided.

SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

1. WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Kevin McKee, Parks and Recreation Deputy Director, provided opening remarks and an overview of Commission roles and the Parks & Recreation and Preserve Department. He reviewed department achievements and goals and requested input from the Commission regarding future meeting topics and areas of interest.

Mr. McKee recognized Commissioner McGarry, whose term ends in September, and presented her with a copy of *Scottsdale History* by Joan Fudala.

Mr. McKee reviewed the City Council Mission Statement, "Simply Better Service for a World-Class Community," and the following priorities as they relate to Parks and Recreation:

- Strengthen Public Safety and Emergency Response.
- Advance Transportation, Water and Infrastructure Planning.
- Strengthen Old Town's Economic Vitality and Tourism Strategy.
- Expand Community Engagement and Strengthen Internal Communications.
- Create Competitive Recruitment and Retention Strategies and Programs.

Mr. McKee reviewed the organizational structure of the City Manager's Office and the roles of City Manager Greg Caton and Deputy City Managers Judy Doyle and Kira Peters as they relate to Parks and Recreation.

Mr. McKee noted that, due to restructuring, the Parks and Recreation Department is now the Parks & Recreation and Human Services Department. He stated that the responsibilities of the Commission would not change and noted areas of crossover between the departments. He further noted that Human Services has its own commission. Commissioners were invited to request tours of programs and services.

Mr. McKee introduced Ryan Fielder, Director of Financial Services, who was in attendance but did not address the Commission. Mr. McKee also reviewed the Parks and Recreation Division organizational chart and introduced staff members in attendance.

Commissioners were provided an opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns regarding the City's organizational structure.

Mr. McKee clarified that the City Clerk is independent of the City Manager, similar to the Treasurer's Office, which interacts with other areas of the City.

Mr. McKee explained the overlap between Human Services and Parks and Recreation, noting that Human Services facilities serve as host sites for some Parks and Recreation programs. He provided senior centers hosting classes and on-site activities as an example. Parks and Recreation facilitates the related contracts, while programs occurring at Human Services facilities are primarily overseen by the Human Services Department.

2. COMMISSION BEST PRACTICES

Kevin McKee, Parks and Recreation Deputy Director, provided an overview of public meeting procedures and reviewed the Commission's roles and responsibilities.

Mr. McKee reviewed the Commission's advisory role to the City Council regarding parks, recreation, facilities, and maintenance-related matters. He also reviewed the Commission's new function, effective as of last July, as the Citizen Oversight Committee for the 51% Park Improvements capital budget funded through the Parks & Preserve Sales Tax.

The following areas were reviewed:

- Advisory Role
- Preparation
- Representation
- Collaboration

Mr. McKee reviewed the purpose and requirements of open meeting laws and their role in promoting transparency. He also reviewed the City Ethics Code and policies and provided an overview of Robert's Rules of Order, including the importance of clearly stating motions.

Mr. McKee concluded with tips for conducting successful Commission meetings.

3. FY 2025/26 ANNUAL REPORT

Kevin McKee, Parks and Recreation Deputy Director, reprised the creation and presentation of the Parks and Recreation Annual Report at the request of the Commission.

Mr. McKee reviewed department-specific goals and priority areas and noted the potential incorporation of the Master Plan in future reports. He explained the distinction between the Master Plan, which establishes long-term goals, and the Strategic Plan, which addresses short-term priorities and implementation.

Mr. McKee stated that the current Annual Report focuses on Strategic Plan priorities and reviewed the department's Vision, Mission, and Values.

The priority areas included:

- Inclusive, World-Class Recreation Programs and Events
- Environmental Stewardship
- Marketing and Communications
- Maintenance of Exceptional Parks, Facilities, and Spaces
- Reimagined Parks, Facilities, and Community Spaces
- Tourism and Economic Vitality

- Scottsdale Resident Access and Participation
- Invest in Parks and Recreation Workforce
- Parks and Preserve Sales Tax

Mr. McKee reviewed major achievements associated with each priority area. He discussed efforts to increase participation and reduce barriers to accessing facilities and programs and highlighted the Fall Festival, Railroad Park's 50th Anniversary, and National Grant partnerships supporting Special Olympics.

Mr. McKee reported that program surveys are now automated and have resulted in increased response rates. He also discussed the goal of pursuing a National Gold Medal Award through the National Recreation and Park Association.

Mr. McKee reported that Parks and Recreation is piloting QR code-based signage to streamline reservations and has received its 44th Tree City USA designation. He reported that the City planted 450 new trees in parks, spaces, medians, and rights-of-way.

Mr. McKee reviewed the expansion of social media efforts, the department's Arizona Parks and Recreation Association Media Award for the Indian Bend Wash campaign, and the planned rollout of the new Parks and Preserve Tax webpage.

Kyu-Bin Hyun, Parks and Recreation Manager, provided information regarding the popularity of the recently introduced river walking program at McDowell Mountain Ranch Aquatic Center.

Stephanie Tippet, Parks and Recreation Manager, reported that the McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park would begin offering birthday packages and indoor parties effective September 1.

Chris Hawes, Parks and Recreation Manager, provided an updated tree-planting total that included an additional 100 trees currently being added, partially in conjunction with Scottsdale's 75th Anniversary celebration.

Commissioners were provided an opportunity to ask questions and make comments.

Mr. McKee clarified that the Aquatics team recruitment social media post incorporated a popular trend and that staff regularly incorporate relevant trends into social media efforts.

Regarding the feasibility study, Mr. McKee noted the need to balance immediate maintenance needs with long-term facility replacement. He discussed locker room replacements and related determining factors.

Mr. McKee stated that QR code signage could potentially streamline reservations, including court reservations. He noted that tennis court processes have already been streamlined, with implementation dependent upon booking windows. He stated that ensuring facilities are reset and ready for use remains a key goal. He noted that similar solutions have been implemented in other cities and in some areas by Scottsdale staff.

Mr. McKee stated that the Commission would continue to receive updates regarding the National Gold Medal Award application, which is due in early March.

RECESS

4. GOALS AND VISION FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026/27

Kevin McKee, Parks and Recreation Deputy Director, presented the department goals:

- Build the Workforce of the Future
- Design Major Park Renovations
- Upgrade Sports Courts and Play Structures
- Build an Urban Forestry Team
- Complete Bond 2019 Projects
- Pursue National Gold Medal Award
- Pilot Technology Enhancements
- Advance Water Efficiency Initiatives
- Expand Party Rental Packages at McCormick

Mr. McKee provided additional information regarding design projects and identified Eldorado Park as a major initiative. He stated that the Commission would continue to receive project updates and would be notified of upcoming public meetings.

The Commission was asked to provide feedback regarding the following:

- Issues or challenges that deserve greater attention.
- Programs, facilities, or services about which Commissioners would like additional information.
- Opportunities for the Commission to assist the Parks & Recreation team.
- Opportunities the Commission would like to champion.

Chair Vreeland asked what the Commission could do to expedite the design of the Aqua Linda Park. Chris Walsh, Parks and Recreation Deputy Director, reported that Parks and Recreation had received approval to proceed with the Aqua Linda design contract.

Eileen Baden, Principal Planner, provided updates regarding design timelines and phases for Eldorado, Paiute, and Aqua Linda parks.

Chair Vreeland discussed the significant community impact of the Paiute Facility due to its location on Osborn. Mr. McKee stated that the rebuild would incorporate recreation classes and programming.

Chair Vreeland requested clarification regarding whether the neighborhood center would be funded through the 2019 Bond rather than the sales tax, with the park itself funded through the Prop 490 sales tax. Ms. Baden stated that any additional request for the use of Prop 490 funds would be brought before the Commission.

It was noted that Pima Park was not the result of a discussion; however, conceptual designs had been completed that could assist with the process for other projects, including Eldorado Park.

Chair Vreeland asked about the Commission's role in advancing Cactus Park and the lifecycle replacement project at Eldorado Park.

Mr. McKee stated that one of the Prop 490 projects previously approved by the Commission was the Eldorado Aquatic Center Improvements project. He stated that the primary focus would be replacement of the water play structure, which is believed to be original to the pool. Additional improvements may include furnishings, signage, and stair resurfacing.

Commissioner Maschhaupt identified equitable access and increased participation as areas deserving greater attention. He asked about key success factors for strategic planning and priorities and how those factors are measured.

Mr. McKee stated that staff incorporate strategic and master plan priorities into annual performance goals assigned to staff.

5. COMMISSION SCHEDULE AND TOPIC PLANNING

Kevin McKee, Parks and Recreation Deputy Director, provided an overview of the following:

- Email Updates
- Engagement Opportunities
- Commission Meeting Format
- Tentative Future Agenda Items

6. PARKS AND HISTORICAL PRESENTATION

Kevin McKee, Parks and Recreation Deputy Director and lifelong Scottsdale resident, provided an overview of Scottsdale's historical foundations and their continued influence on current design and planning efforts. He emphasized the importance of understanding historical context as the City incorporates historical considerations into planning and design.

Mr. McKee reviewed key points in Scottsdale's development history:

Early Roots (1890s)

Winfield Scott established the community, which became a popular destination, including attractions such as the Hole-in-the-Rock.

City Incorporation (1951)

The Sunshine Festival, now known as the Parada del Sol, began during this era.

Original Scottsdale Stadium (1955)

Construction of Scottsdale Stadium supported seasonal baseball tourism and contributed to the City's growing identity as a visitor destination.

Civic Center Development

The Civic Center complex emerged as the City's first major park area.

Population Growth

By 1970, Scottsdale's population had grown to approximately 68,000 residents.

Expansion of Parks and Greenbelt Concepts

Growth continued in Indian Bend Wash (IBW), where the greenbelt concept began to take shape. The City acquired land for park development, including Eldorado Park, Scottsdale's first community park.

IBW Greenbelt Initiative

Historic flooding led the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to propose concrete flood-control structures. Community members, including Bill Walton, advocated for a central park vision for Scottsdale. The greenbelt project was ultimately funded through voter approval and became one of the City's significant initiatives.

1980s–1990s Preserve and Open Space Efforts

The City expanded its commitment to open space and developed facilities supporting community needs similar to those served by traditional parks. The McDowell Sonoran Preserve became a defining feature of Scottsdale's environmental stewardship.

Major Recreation Developments

- WestWorld and the Horse Park
- Club SAR, opened in 1986
- Chaparral Park's accessible "wheelchair exercise course," established in 1988

2000s Recreation and Community Services

The City expanded services with a stronger "desert vibe" design philosophy. Scottsdale's first senior center was located in Chestnut Park, highlighting the City's longstanding focus on serving older adults.

Tourism & Adaptive Recreation

Mr. McKee noted that tourism has long been a central part of Scottsdale's identity and that the City has been a leader in adaptive recreation programs.

Funding & Future Direction

Bond and sales tax approvals have supported the addition of new parks, including Ashler Hills. Mr. McKee stated that Scottsdale aims to continue enhancing signature events, promoting environmental resilience, addressing drought impacts, guiding redevelopment efforts, and managing resources effectively.

Mr. McKee concluded by noting that the information was based on a working chronology provided by local historian Joan Fudala.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner McGarry moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Kull seconded the motion, which carried six (6) to zero (0), by roll call vote, with Chair Vreeland, Vice Chair Arnold, and Commissioners Alford, Kull, Maschhaupt, and McGarry voting in the affirmative.

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 6:01 p.m.