



**CITY OF SCOTTSDALE
PROTECT AND PRESERVE SCOTTSDALE TASK
FORCE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**Monday, February 27, 2023
Community Design Studio
4506 E. Indian School Road
Scottsdale, Arizona 85251
4:00 p.m.**

CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Scottsdale Protect and Preserve Task Force was called to order at 4:08 p.m.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Cynthia Wenstrom, Chair
Raoul Zubia, Vice Chair
Carla
James Eaneman
Nicholas Hartmann
Jace McKeighan
Daniel Schweiker
John Zikias

ABSENT: Mark Winkleman

STAFF: Kimberly Campbell, Senior Assistant City Attorney
Brent Stockwell, Assistant City Manager
Bill Murphy, Assistant City Manager
Nick Molinari, Parks and Recreation Director
Sonia Andrews, City Treasurer/Chief Financial Officer
Carol Banegas Stankus,
Senior Administrative Assistant, Treasurer's Office

PUBLIC COMMENT

David Smith urged the Task Force to focus its efforts on Scottsdale Arts and Culture venues and offerings. Arts and culture have been endorsed by Scottsdale citizens as an important element of the City's quality of life, for which the Committee was formed to protect and preserve. He commented that Scottsdale is losing its edge to surrounding communities in terms of investments in arts and culture. All arts and culture organizations are desperate for sustainable funding. Federal tax law changes that have increased the standard deduction are discouraging small donor contributions. A dedicated tax referendum to fund arts and culture would garner endorsements from community leaders and generate broad support from Scottsdale citizens. Scottsdale cannot fund arts and culture from the local permanent sales tax, which is the lowest such tax of any city in the state. Many arts and culture organizations seek funding from the Tourism Development Commission, however, this is an imperfect and temporary solution.

Sonnie Kirtley urged the importance of the Task Force to have a focus on citywide parks and recreation areas and open spaces. The Task Force should represent the whole City. The Coalition of Greater Scottsdale (COGS) will provide support for the continuation of the tax to fund these vital open space areas of the City.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Request approval of minutes of the February 8, 2023 Regular Task Force Meeting

Task Force Action: Discussion and action

Chair Wenstrom called for corrections to the minutes, and none were noted.

MEMBER EANEMAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 8, 2023 AS PRESENTED. MEMBER ZIKIAS SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED 8-0 WITH CHAIR WENSTROM, VICE CHAIR ZUBIA AND MEMBERS CARLA, EANEMAN, HARTMANN, MCKEIGHAN, SCHWEIKER, AND ZIKIAS VOTING IN THE AFFIRMATIVE WITH NO DISSENTING VOTES.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT RELATED TO THE TASK FORCE WORK PLAN

Bill Murphy, Assistant City Manager, with the assistance of other city staff, will provide a history and overview of the Parks and Recreation Department related to the Task Force Plan, including without limitation, recent proposed Department projects and a summary of the Department's master planning and strategic plan development.

Task Force Action: Information and discussion

Nick Molinari, Parks and Recreation Director provided a brief overview of the Parks and Recreation Department:

- Mission: To create remarkable recreation places and experiences that support a healthy, inclusive, and active community.
- Vision: A community exercising its spirit of activity and togetherness
- Department budget: \$24,831,799 (Fiscal Year 2022/23 General Fund)
- Department revenue: \$6,732,335 (Fiscal Year 2022/23 General Fund)
- Employees: 506 (145 full-time, 361 part-time)

Components of the Parks and Recreation System include 45 parks; 5 urban lakes; 37 playgrounds; 74 athletic fields; 21 pickleball courts; 3 equestrian facilities; 49 tennis courts; 2 tennis centers; 35 volleyball courts; 39 basketball courts; 1 baseball stadium; 4 aquatic facilities, 2 skate parks, 5 spray features, 1 railroad park and a total of 982 acres. In addition to these facilities, the Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for the maintenance and management of Scottsdale Civic Center; Downtown Scottsdale maintenance (90 acres); approximately 500 acres of medians and rights-of-way; management of professional and amateur baseball operations and four golf courses.

A review of the Parks and Recreation Department organizational chart was provided with six managers overseeing operations. The Department is the largest in the Community Services Division, which also includes the Scottsdale Public Library System, WestWorld, the Preserve and Human Services. While not shown on the organizational chart, the Department also includes and the McCormick Stillman Railroad Park.

Indian Bend Wash is a collection of parks, lakes, pathways and golf courses that transformed a significant flood hazard into one of the Valley's top residential and recreation areas. A short video on the Wash was played.

Indian Bend Wash Parks include:

- Chaparral Park: 100-acre community park
- Camelback Park: 32-acre passive park
- Indian School Park: 50-acre community park
- Eldorado Park: 60-acre community park
- Vista del Camino Park: 71-acre community park

In response to a question from Chair Wenstrom, Mr. Molinari stated that passive parks are those without planned activities or active amenities.

Indian Bend Wash amenities include:

- Sports fields
- Dog parks
- Passive parks
- Lakes and urban fishing
- Skate park
- Community centers
- Volleyball and tennis courts

Timelines of Master planning and strategic planning for the parks were reviewed:

- Community Services Master Plan: 2015
- Indian Bend Wash Master Plan: 2018
- Indian School Park Master Plan: 2023/2024
- Parks and Recreation Master Plan: 2023/2024
- Parks and Recreation 5-Year Strategic Plan: 2023-2028

Indian Bend Wash Master Plan: 2018:

The Indian Bend Wash Master Plan, completed in 2018, included all City of Scottsdale managed areas from Thomas Road to McKellips Road. This public process included a number of open houses, community survey, workshops and community engagement process. The Master Plan identified resources, needs, maintenance improvements and amenities. Elements of the Master Plan area were reviewed. Through the Master Plan process, in 2019, when the City was developing its bond program, one portion of the Master Plan was approved through the Bond 2019 program, a \$23 million project to repair the lakes and irrigation within the Indian Bend Wash. While the Bond 2019 program included one significant need identified in the Master Plan, Plan resulted in a significant collection of unfunded projects.

Types of unfunded needs include:

- Maintenance and operations
 - Staffing
 - Contractual support
 - Commodities
- Lifecycle replacements
 - Playgrounds
 - Sport courts
 - Exercise equipment
- Capital projects and major replacements
 - Indian Bend Wash Master Plan Improvements
 - D.C. Ranch Neighborhood Park, Phase II
 - Pima Park pickleball courts
 - Cholla Park parking lot improvements
 - Eldorado Park soccer field lighting
 - Indian School Park Master Plan improvements (future)
 - Chapparal Park irrigation improvements

Funding for Parks and open-space can come from various sources, projects included in Bond 2019 include:

- Scottsdale Civic Center: \$27,317,840
- Splash pad and walkway improvements at McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park: \$917,207
- Tennis court replacements at Indian School and Scottsdale Ranch Parks: \$3,497,104
- Cactus Aquatic Facility replacement: \$31,229,600
- Indian Bend Wash lakes and irrigation replacement: \$23,512,804
- High efficiency sports lighting: \$1,224,304
- Indian School Park Field 1 lighting: \$696,072
- Thompson Peak Park off leash area: \$4,637,357
- Multi-Use Sports Fields – Bell94 and WestWorld Sports Complex: \$40,000,000
- Ashler Hills Neighborhood Park: \$6,097,659

Chair Wenstrom asked for clarification that there are projects from Bond 2019 that still require funding. Mr. Molinari confirmed this understanding. When the bond program was put together for 2019, all estimates for the projects were completed in approximately 2018. Project costs were substantially affected by inflation and supply chain delays from the COVID-19 Pandemic and shutdown, making many of the original estimates no longer adequate. Additionally, not all of the

elements of the Indian Bend Wash Master Plan 2018 were included in the Bond 2019 program and remain unfunded needs.

Vice Chair Zubia inquired as to the status of the Bond 2019 projects. Mr. Molinari stated that Civic Center is expected to be completed in March or April, 2023. The improvements at McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park are in the design phase. Tennis court replacements at Indian School and Scottsdale Ranch Parks are complete. The Cactus Aquatic Facility replacement has not yet begun. The Indian Bend Wash Lakes and irrigation replacement is in the design phase. All sports lighting projects were completed at the Indian School Park. The Thompson Peak Park off leash area is in the design phase. One of the sports field complexes was completed. The WestWorld Sports Complex is currently under construction.

Member Carla commented that neighbors have asked about inclusion of funding for the small park at Historic Rose Garden downtown. Bill Murphy, Assistant City Manager, stated that this is included in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) project list. Preliminary design was completed a year ago and presented to City Council for feedback. This is currently an unfunded project.

Member Carla asked about the plans for addressing the presence of homeless individuals in the downtown parks. Mr. Murphy stated that they have been working to address the issue for the past three years in conjunction with Human Services staff. They have contracted with navigators from nonprofit groups who have experience with homelessness. The City is currently under some constraint through decision from the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. Current law allows the homeless to be in any open park during working hours, but must leave after closing hours. The City has operated a hotel program, where homeless individuals are housed and provided resources to assist them in finding homes and services. Work is also ongoing with the Police Department to develop a park ranger program with three rangers with funding from the marijuana tax. Member Zikias commented that three rangers don't seem to be sufficient.

Vice Chair Zubia addressed maintenance and operations unfunded needs and inquired whether hiring additional staff would reduce the need for contractual support. He cited the example of tree service. Mr. Molinari stated that the Department has maintained a relatively consistent staffing level even though amenities, parks and new areas of maintenance have been added. Some cities maintain their tree inventory through a team of urban foresters and certified arborists. A relatively complicated risk assessment takes place, as these individuals climb trees and operate chainsaws in trees. As heat mitigation strategies and shade canopies become a more widely discussed topic, more cities are looking at urban forestry divisions within their parks and recreation department to manage inventory. Currently the City maintains this through contractual services, which is relatively expensive.

Vice Chair Zubia asked if the City is contractually required to maintain the San Francisco Giants practice field at Papago Park. Mr. Murphy stated that Scottsdale has a lease with the City of Phoenix, and the Giants are also under the lease with Scottsdale. The Giants organization is responsible for its own maintenance.

Member Zikias inquired about funding for additional staff. Mr. Molinari stated that for funded projects or projects recommended through the CIP, they have not included requests for additional staff. Some projects through the Bond 2019 program have an associated staffing element. For example, for the Ashler Hills Neighborhood Park, one full-time position was included in the request. Most of the listed unfunded projects will not include additional staffing.

In response to a question from Member Zikias, Mr. Murphy stated that there are some grant opportunities for projects that involve forestry needs. Mr. Molinari added that there are very limited grant opportunities in other areas, however, these are typically very competitive. Thus far, they have not seen much success in securing grants for recreational amenities.

In response to a question from Member McKeighan, Mr. Molinari stated that McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park operates out of the special revenue fund. Revenue that the park takes in, in the form of train ticket sales, food and souvenirs, all stay within the operations of the park. This \$2.5 million annual budget is relatively self-supporting.

Member McKeighan asked if there other dedicated funding mechanisms in place for the projects presented today, other than the Bond 2019 program. Mr. Molinari stated that there are no other dedicated funds, with the exception of applying for CIP funding annually. There were also projects identified with funding through the Bond 2000 program, including Ashler Hills Neighborhood Park Project. Due to cost escalation, the project was not completed and it was moved into the Bond 2019 program.

Member McKeighan inquired as to whether the City carries a valuation on the parks and improvements overall. For example, the McDowell Sonoran Preserve is referred to as a billion-dollar asset. Mr. Molinari stated a valuation of park amenities was done in the 2015 Community Services Master Plan. These numbers can be provided to the Task Force. Through the Parks and Recreation Master Plan beginning this year, a valuation of current and new assets will be included.

In response to a question from Member McKeighan, Mr. Molinari stated that the Parks and Recreation Commission has a significant role in the operation of the Department. It recommends approval of municipal master site plans to City Council and provides recommendations on other specified parks and recreation matters. The Parks and Recreation Commission has not historically served as a budget approval body.

Member Eaneman asked whether the Department manages its own contracts or whether all contracts are managed in a central department within the City. Mr. Molinari stated that generally speaking, the Department serves as its own contract administrator.

Member Eaneman inquired how the Department requests additional funding for projects affected by inflation and other factors. Mr. Molinari said that for the current fiscal year, the Department asked City Council for additional funding to make up the negative balance for existing projects. This is done through the current CIP. The CIP for the 2023/24 budget submitted by the Department includes new project estimates that would fund the negative balances for some projects included in the Bond 2019 program.

In response to a question from Member Carla regarding the potential for a tax extension, whether the project list will be expanded. Mr. Molinari said they anticipate that the results of the upcoming Parks and Recreation Department Master Plan would result in a number of new projects throughout the City's park system.

3. IDENTIFICATION OF FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The Task Force may request proposed topics for future agendas, but the Task Force may not discuss, deliberate, or take legal action on any matter in the “Identification of Future Agenda Items” unless the specific matter is properly noticed for legal action.

Task Force Action: Information, discussion and possible action

The following items were identified for possible future agenda:

- Direction and discussion on community survey process
- Identify scope of “other needs”, as referenced in the public comment, on arts and culture
- Discussion on the level of detail necessary related to “funding strategy”
- Sales tax revenue projections
- Request for Human Services to provide an overview of homelessness issues and how City park rangers may be used
- Guidance from legal regarding ballot process
- How residents use the parks and Preserve
- Information on the unfunded needs of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve
- City finances specific to funding operations, the parks and Preserve

4. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved by Vice Chair Zubia and seconded by Member Eaneman, the meeting adjourned at 5:36 p.m.

AYES: Chair Wenstrom, Vice Chair Zubia, Members Carla, Eaneman, Hartmann, McKeighan, Schweiker and Zikias.

NAYS: None

SUBMITTED BY:

eScribers, LLC