

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Meeting

03/18/2021

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board held a meeting on March 18, 2021 at 6:01 p.m. via zoom webinar.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Members Present:

Cassie McClure – District 1
Stan Engle – District 4
Maryln Zahler – District 3
Megan Schuller – District 6
Jeff Thompson – District 2

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Members Absent:

Eli Guzman n- At Large
Eric Montgomery – District 5

Others Present:

Phil Catanach, Recreation Administrator, Parks & Recreation
Sonya Delgado, Director of Parks & Recreation
Silas Garcia, Certified Pool Operator, Parks & Recreation
Franco Granillo, Parks Administrator, Parks & Recreation
Catherine Mathews, Landscape Architect, Parks & Recreation
Hazel Nevarez, Senior Office Manager, Parks & Recreation
Robert Nunez, Youth Services Administrator, Parks & Recreation
Gregory Shervanick, Public

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Meeting of March 18, 2021 via Zoom webinar and was brought to order at 6:01 p.m. by Chair McClure and recognized as having a legal quorum.

1. Introductions

1.1 Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Members

Board members introduced themselves and stated the district they represent.

1.2 Parks and Recreation Staff

Staff introduced themselves and stated their position.

2. Conflict of Interest

No Conflict of Interest.

3. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Engle moved to accept agenda as presented, seconded by Ms. Schuller. There was no discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Schuller brought to attention minutes of February 18, 2021, section 4, the approved minutes reflect date of November 19, 2021, and should be January 21, 2021. Ms. Nevarez will review.

Ms. Schuller moved to approve minutes of the February 18, 2021 Parks and Recreation Advisory Board meeting, seconded by Mr. Engle. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Public Participation

Through the Zoom Q&A, Mr. Shervanick reported the Pomeroy Plaque will be installed Monday, March 22, 2021 and KRWG will film.

6. Action Items

There were no action items.

7. Discussion Items

7.1 Park Maintenance Impact – Franco Granillo, Parks Administrator

Mr. Franco Granillo gave a PowerPoint presentation on Maintenance Impact of New Facility. The presentation provided information to consider when a park is added. Information was provided on programs that assist with the maintenance of facilities, the Mano Y Mano program, and the utilization of inmate crews. Mr. Granillo discussed utilization of Adopt a Spot, developing public/private partnerships, extension of schedules, and categorizing parks as ways to offset maintenance issues resulting from added facilities.

Mr. Engle, District 4, commented Mano Y Mano sounds like a great program and asked why there is such a high turnover with the people who participate with Mano y Mano. Mr. Granillo said he is pretty sure Mano y Mano is set up on a lottery system, which means new people enter the program as the program progresses. Mr. Engle asked if there were any statistics to show actual benefits to the participants. Mr. Granillo said he doesn't have the information but will check with Natalie Green (from Economic Development) and will send forward what he finds out.

Ms. Schuller, District 6, asked if Mr. Granillo has put together a background history of what the number of employees have been to number of parks in the past compared to more recent number of employees with the increased number of parks, should this information ever need to be provided to City Council. Mr. Granillo said this was a good question and said he has been with the Parks Department since 2008, and staff has increased since then from 50 to 57. He also said that around this time, eight employees were lost during the recession which have never been

recovered. Ms. Schuller said this is good data to have for more ground to stand on to request more funds for staffing.

Mr. Thompson, District 2, asked when putting together expense for hiring a two-man crew/truck for the 40-hour work week per employee, what is the return on a per park basis, how many parks can this crew do during the course of a week. Mr. Franco said this was a good question and said when a two-man crew is hired, another 10 or 12 acres can be handled a week. Mr. Thompson asked how many acres has been added in the last five to six years without added crew. Mr. Granillo said in the Metro Verde area, from 18 to 24 acres.

Ms. Zahler, District 3, asked, addressing Ms. Delgado and Mr. Granillo, if the City Manager has been invited to a meeting on this issue. Mr. Granillo said there have been several meetings with the previous City Managers and Ms. Delgado has met with the current City Manager and Assistant City Manager, and they are aware. He said they are also aware staff works very hard to stay on top of things. He added that when developing budget, Parks and Recreation is mixed in with other departments such as Fire, Police, Public Works. Ms. Delgado added these issues have been discussed with Mr. Pili and Mr. Taumoepeau, City Manager and Assistant City Manager. She said the need for staff has been discussed because several acres continue to be added every year. Ms. Delgado added a lot of temps on the parks side of the house are utilized to ensure staff stays on schedule and all the property parks is responsible for is taken care of.

Ms. Zahler, District #3, suggested a meeting needs to be held with not only the City Manager but recommends the Mayor be there. Ms. Zahler said she would like to know what the City Manager and the Mayor has to say about this issue. Ms. Zahler said staff should also check if other Parks and Recreation departments in the country are in this situation and find out how they handle it. Ms. Zahler also suggested looking into another program other than inmate crews since guards have to be present. She referred to a program she watches called Pit Bulls and Parolees, where parolees are used, and no guards are needed. Ms. Delgado informed the Board a work session will be scheduled to discuss this topic and will let the Board know when it will be. Ms. Delgado said she will look into the parolee possibility as well as get information from Parks and Recreation departments across the country.

Ms. Zahler, District 3, asked if there was any objection to her meeting with the Mayor. Ms. Delgado deferred this to Chair McClure. Ms. Zahler said she would like herself and Chair McClure to meet with the Mayor. Ms. McClure said she would be happy to do so.

7.2 Water Circulation Systems – Phil Catanach, Recreation Services Administrator

Mr. Phil Catanach informed the Board he is partnering with Mr. Silas Garcia, Certified Pool Operator, to provide a two-part presentation.

Mr. Catanach gave a PowerPoint presentation on Splash Pad Water Systems, discussing their popularity, affordability to traditional pool facilities, and informed the Board of the two splash pad locations City currently operates, Metro Verde Splash Pad – a flow through system, and the

Plaza de Las Cruces Interactive Fountain, a recirculating system. Mr. Catanach discussed the two different types of systems along with their pros and cons. Mr. Catanach informed the Board all future City of Las Cruces Splash Pads will operate with recirculating systems as the New Mexico Environmental Department (NMED) and the Model Aquatic Health Code discourage non-recirculatory systems use. Mr. Catanach said there are two more splash pads in the planning process – Unidad Park Splash Pad on E. Hadley Ave. and Apodaca Park Splash Pad at Apodaca Park and added Councilors have discussed having additional splash pads at various locations.

Mr. Catanach introduced Mr. Silas Garcia to discuss maintenance of the splashpads.

Mr. Silas Garcia informed the Board staff currently maintains six facilities with three in the planning. He informed the Board currently there are three certified pool operators, and, in the summertime, there are three temps to maintain all six swimming pools and splash pads. Mr. Garcia discussed the scheduling from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and required maintenance of the six facilities to be in compliance with NMED as all the pools and splash pads require four-hour checks.

Mr. Catanach asked Mr. Garcia to inform the Board how the chemical checks at the splash pads works. Mr. Garcia explained the chemicals have to be checked every four hours which is basic and doesn't take very long unless they have to backwash depending on the bather load. He said sometimes they have to backwash two or three times a day because the interactive fountain is only a 1,200-gallon tank. Since the splash pads don't have lifeguards on duty, the Certified Pool Operators have to be at the splash pads every four hours to do the checks.

Mr. Catanach informed the Board besides the two fountains, staff also operates the Regional Aquatic Center, Frenger Pool, Laabs Pool, East Mesa Pool, and soon the new 15-meter pool with three Certified Pool Operators and sometimes three temps. He added it takes a lot of expertise to be a Certified Pool Operator to make sure the chemicals in the pools are safe and that they are operating at the right levels. He said Mr. Garcia and his crew are probably the best in the southwest and are good at what they do.

Mr. Thompson, District 2, asked if the Mesa Verde splash pad is the only flow-through system as far as splashpads go. Mr. Catanach said yes. Mr. Thompson asked if Mr. Catanach said it was due to be retrofitted with a filtration system. Mr. Catanach said no, there was a possibility, but it is very expensive, so he doesn't see this happening. Mr. Thompson expressed surprise that we use over 2 ½ million gallons of water annually and asked if it is known what the annual water consumption of the average household is. Mr. Catanach said he did not know. Mr. Thompson said he likes the idea there might be a catch tank where the water could repurpose and asked if this is possibly in the works. Mr. Catanach said this is something that has been looked into and costs as much as the splash pad but might be done in the future, especially if the pressure is there. Mr. Thompson asked if there was no initial outlay of cash for this splash pad because it was a gift from the builder. Mr. Catanach concurred. Mr. Catanach said this is why NMED is highly suggesting that flow through systems not be used for future splash pads. Mr. Thompson asked what the annual water usage is on the recirculating systems. Mr. Garcia said it is a 1,200-gallon

tank and during the non-peak season, the tank is drained once every two weeks and during the peak season, it is drained every other day.

Mr. Engle, District 4, asked to be reminded what the size of the crew was. Mr. Garcia said there are three CPO's with three temps during the summer. Mr. Engle commented that with the popularity of splash pads and with Councilors wanting them in as many parks as possible, more crew would be needed so could be the same issue as when parks are added, so unless there is more funding, staff would have to find efficient ways to use current staff. Mr. Garcia concurred, saying the hard part about this is to be in compliance with NMED, the splash pads have to be checked every four hours and it will all depend on when the splash pads are open seven days a week.

Mr. Engle, District 4, also asked on behalf of Mr. Montgomery, District 5, if staff can check for the presence of any bacterial or viral agents in the recirculating system, has any been found, and are there procedures to sanitize the system. Mr. Garcia said there are procedures that are followed - NMED requires the free chlorine levels be kept between 2 and 10 parts per million. He added the Regional Aquatic System also has along with the chlorine, a UV system which is a supplemental disinfection and now NMED is requiring this on all the circulatory systems going forward. Mr. Garcia said the Plaza de Las Cruces interactive fountain does not have a UV system but has a sand filtration system and the chemical levels are kept between specs. He said as far as testing for bacteria, no – the chlorine disinfects everything. Mr. Garcia said what has happened twice is loose stool, and the pool is shut down to super chlorinate the swimming pool and leave it shut down for 12, 13 hours. As for the deck at the splash park, the decks are disinfected every other day.

Ms. Schuller, District 6, expressed concern on amount of water being used and appreciates that as new splash pads come on, that they are recirculatory.

Chair McClure, District 1, asked if recirculatory is a recommendation but is it in our master plan for development too. Ms. Delgado said it is a requirement of NMED to have a recirculatory system. She said staff is aware that they would like to put a recirculatory system in at Metro Verde but will have to find a funding source and is on their list of many items.

Mr. Thompson, District 2, asked what the cost is to put in a splash pad. Ms. Delgado said it depends on the size and the amenities, but about \$550,000.00, which does not include the restrooms or showers that are also needed.

Chair McClure, District 1, commented she looked up how much water a residential customer uses which is about 5,000 gallons. Mr. Thompson, District 2, said he also looked this information up which is 3,000 gallons per month per person in a household, is the average and so the 2.5 million gallons would provide water for 173 households.

Mr. Engle, District 4, asked on the non-recirculatory splash pad, did the water go into the drainage or into the actual sewage system. Mr. Catanach said it goes down the drain into the City's sewage system. Mr. Engle asked if this is the one on the East Mesa. Mr. Catanach said yes. Mr. Engle

asked if this is the area where the sewage water gets reclaimed for landscape use. Mr. Catanach said he did not know and deferred the question to Ms. Catherine Mathews. Ms. Mathews said the wastewater in the Metro Verde area of town is not reclaimed but is slated for in the future in the Utility's plans. Mr. Engle did agree this is a massive waste of water.

7.3 Project Updates – Catherine Mathews, Landscape Architect

Ms. Catherine Mathews gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Parks and Recreation Department Capital Improvement projects for the current fiscal year and some of the park impact fee projects which are slated for next year. She reported the following:

Park Impact Fee (PIF) Projects – parks that are supported by Park Impact Fees:

- Apodaca Park Aquatic Playground & Multi-Use Path/Council District 1 – in planning process and will be receiving an Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program (ORLPP) Grant to tune of \$750,000. This amount will be matched by PIF. The National Park Service issues the grant through the State Parks. For the final approval stage, the State Historic Preservation office is evaluating our cultural resources study to make sure we've complied with all the requirements of the federal grant.
- East Mesa Public Safety Complex Park/District 6 – supported by \$100,000 of PIF. Project is in the planning stages trying to figure out how this project, which likely would be a trail head, would coordinate with the East Mesa Recreation Complex Go Bond Project.
- Highland Park/District 5 – supported by PIF as well as Hold Harmless Gross Receipts Taxes. There is about \$874,000 available which will go toward construction of this park which will be located adjacent to Highland Elementary School at Emerald Ave., north of Highway 70.
- Metro Verde Neighborhood Park/District 5 – As developer builds parks in the Metro Verde subdivisions and seeks agreements with City Council to reimburse for the construction, there is funding for this.
- National Fitness Campaign Outdoor Gym II/District – the second gym was supported by PIF. This gym has been completed and is located at the East Mesa Recreation Center on Porter Drive adjacent to the Fire Station, across the street from Sage Café and down the street from the East Mesa swimming pool.
- Pueblos at Alameda (Calle Abuelo Neighborhood Park)/District 6 – The last \$15,000 of PIF will be used to install play equipment. This project is near completion and it includes a piece of artwork called the Tree of Life Sculpture, selected by the City Art Board for this location.

Ms. Mathews said the amount of PIF designated for projects this fiscal year was just over \$2 million. Ms. Mathews provided aerial views of these projects in her PowerPoint.

Ms. Mathews said for this next fiscal year, new expenditures of PIF budget are not being proposed, but to continue with carryover of the Apodaca Park Aquatic Playground & Multi-Use Path, Highland Park, East Mesa Public Safety Area Park and Metro Verde Neighborhood Park. She said the budget has been expanded because the partnership is resulting in a lot of parks that meet our goals as outlined in the Parks & Recreation Masterplan, which goal is to have neighborhood parks

within a 10-minute walk or quarter mile distance from all residential development and is worthy of PIF.

Ms. Mathews also reviewed other FY21 Capital Improvement (CIP) Projects which will likely carryover to next fiscal year. She said she wanted to show other projects that are supported by other funding sources, i.e., City Bonds, State Legislative grants, other grants, and the like:

- Ballfield/Soccer Field Renovations – Provencio Van Dame lighting upgrades to allow space to be useful for nighttime play. Is near completion, have spent all but \$1,500 which will be spent on drinking fountains, also with the support of some of Parks & Athletics operating budget.
- BMX Track Parking Lot & ADA Improvements – there is budget available for this but Facilities Management, a section of Public Works, will be managing this project.
- Chandler Tank - has established budget from a Bond with the City. Will be used to design and construct park at Chandler Tank based on master plan developed in concert with neighbors.
- Meerscheidt Recreation Center Wood Flooring – Project has been finished and walkthrough to generate punch list has been completed just this week.
- Paz Ballfield Parking Lot Improvements – similar to BMX track parking lot improvements. Facilities Management will be leading this project.
- Skate Park Improvements – received \$245,000 legislative grant from 2020 legislative session. In process of evaluating the responses to request for proposals for design build. Anticipate in the next two to four months to get this under contract.
- Gomez Lot Parking Lot Improvements – similar to other parking lot improvements. Will need the expertise of Facilities Management.
- Tortugas Trail – in conjunction with the Dona Ana MOVE Trail – both received legislative grants which support a grant receive from the Paso del Norte Foundation to construct trails. Will be working with partners in Town of Mesilla and Dona Ana County to partner with Elephant Butte Irrigation District to construct trails that connect City trail systems thru other neighboring communities (Town of Mesilla and Dona Ana County).
- Current Multi-Use Field Lighting-PVD/Soldados – there is established budget for Soldados multiuse field lighting, \$52,000. Not enough to do much other than design.
- General Park Equipment and Renovations – remainder of legislative grant. Budget amount has been spent on dog poop bag dispensers.
- Interstate 10/Interstate 25 Interchange Erosion Control – legislative grant of \$418,000. City is seeking change to this grant requesting legislature reauthorize funding for use in landscaping medians within the City limits. It can support \$50,000 legislative grant for design and construction of medians landscapes on Lohman and Sonoma Ranch Blvd.
- Median Landscaping – above \$418,000 legislative grant will also support this which is funded by City Bonds and Hold Harmless Gross Receipts Tax funding that are expended on City Bond Median Phase 1, which is in construction and nearing close out. Working with contractor to finish punch list items on Phase 1 and leave \$850,000 to go into Phase 2, design.

- Nevada Ave. Cool Corridor – working on punch list items. Nearing completion of the close out processes.
- Park Security and Lighting – legislative grant in support of security cameras and additional lights at Veterans Memorial Park. Security cameras have been installed and electrical service has been upgraded so electrical system can support additional lighting. Have initiated planning process of installing additional pathway lights as requested by Veterans who use this park. Anticipate completion of this project this coming calendar year.
- Parks Smart Controllers and Booster Pumps - supported by a Water Smart Grant by the Bureau of Reclamation. Expended funds on installing smart controllers at athletic facilities on Hadley and installed booster pumps at Apodaca Park and Soldados Multiuse fields. Working on the planning process for analyzing the existing irrigation systems and determining the size required for those pumps. Anticipate completion of this project this summer.
- Pioneer Women’s Park Improvements – received additional \$200,000 legislative grant for repair/restoration activities of gazebo.
- Las Cruces Lateral RTP Trail – received from New Mexico Department of Transportation a Recreational Trails Program grant (RTP) of \$108,000 for design of the trail along the Las Cruces Lateral from University Ave. to Main St. Have solicited proposals, have selected contract consultant, negotiated scope of work and price for design work with assistance of Public Works. Anticipate contracting with consulting this coming week.
- Veterans Park Parking Lot - City acquired property north of Veterans Memorial Park. Budget established from City Bonds to design and construct parking lot. Design is nearly complete and anticipate bringing forward to Board at next months meeting.

Ms. Mathews said total of these projects total approximately \$9 million.

Ms. Mathews said in addition are two GO Bond projects being managed by Public Works and consulting with Parks and Recreation:

- Recreational Walking, Jogging, and Biking Trails - \$2,700,000 budget in design/construction phase.
- Improvements to Park, Including Sports Fields, and other Related Facilities - approximately \$17,000,000 budget in design/construction phase – include East Mesa Public Recreation Complex, other sports courts improvements, two dog parks.

Ms. Mathews said total Capital Improvement Projects total just over \$24 million.

Ms. Mathews also mentioned other non-CIP projects:

- Women Veterans Monument Lighting Renovations.
- Metro Verde Voluntary Assessment District (VAD) Sonoma Ranch Blvd. Mile 2 Landscape
- AARP Fit Lot Outdoor Fitness Area
- New Skate Park
- Metro Verde VAD Red Hawk Blvd. Landscape
- First Responder Memorial
- Branigan Park Master Plan
- Klein Park Basketball Court Renovation
- Trail and Park Wayfinding and Leave No Trace Signage

- Land Acquisition for Park in District 5

Mr. Engle, District 4, commented on median landscaping – he wants to make sure the design takes into account the runoff. Ms. Mathews concurred.

7.4 Covid-19 Updates – Sonya Delgado, Director of Parks & Recreation

Ms. Delgado had to leave for another meeting so on her behalf, Mr. Phil Catanach spoke on Parks & Recreation’s Covid-19 update. He informed the Board with New Mexico back in the Yellow category, lap lane swimming and fitness areas, and tutoring have opened. Parks and Recreation staff have been working on a Covid-19 vaccination registration promotion by going daily to grocery stores and encouraging the community to register for the vaccine. Mr. Catanach said in the first two and a half weeks of the program, up to 600 people were reached and have had up to 200 registrations. Mr. Catanach said staff is working hard to get programs going:

- Parks staff will be meeting with local leagues to open sports fields
- Meerscheidt Recreation Center will be open for fitness beginning March 22, 2021
- Frank O’Brien Papen will be open for Table Tennis and activities such as walking programs
- Expanded tutoring and After School Programs, outdoor youth activities, continued recording of Music in the Park.

Mr. Catanach said staff is excited to start adding activities and want to be ready when can open more programming.

8. Staff Member Comments

Mr. Catanach reported lap lanes are open at Regional Aquatic Center (RAC) and Frenger Pool. Fitness Center is open at RAC and will be open at Meerscheidt Recreation Center (MRC). Frank O’Brien Papen Community is getting ready to offer limited table tennis, are starting a new walking program, and are offering a virtual marathon – a six-week 26-mile walk/run/crawl and are going to start hiking again. Staff is working the vaccine promotions and helping at the vaccine distribution events. Mr. Catanach said he is very proud of his staff. He added Meerscheidt Recreation Center’s league gym floor was replaced, a full court gym that goes north, south, east, and west. He said the recreation section is getting ready to hire summer staff.

Mr. Robert Nunez said through Youth Services, the Juvenile Citation Program (JCP) continues to work virtually, classes have been filling up. He said Children, Youth & Families Department (CYFD) has provided a new platform to request monthly reimbursement, so supervisors and staff are working diligently on those items. Mr. Nunez said JCP is hoping to introduce in person community service with clients soon and will try to get more face to face with them as guidelines and changes permit.

Mr. Nunez informed the Board Keep Las Cruces Beautiful (KLCB) is preparing for the Great American Clean Up in April. He said KLCB is also looking to finish up the fiscal year with a few district clean ups through out the City, in May and June, before they are done with this year’s grant process. He added KLCB is working this weekend with Las Cruces Police Department (LCPD) and volunteers at Burn Lake for a cleanup.

Mr. Nunez informed the Board the Out of School Time program is providing tutoring throughout the day at various city locations. He said they have met with the schools today to see how they can get into to the schools in an abbreviated manner, following Covid-19 guidelines and Las Cruces Public Schools procedures to offer some type of after school program for families and youth in need with schools opening.

Mr. Nunez informed the Board the Youth Services section is looking to offer some type of spring break program for current youth in the program, following Covid-19 guidelines.

Mr. Catanach reported the Parks Department is working with the area Leagues and Associations for opening sports fields in the near future.

Ms. Nevarez said she has reviewed minutes from February and did see correction that needed to be made but would like to review recording to make sure the rest of information is correct and will have correction placed on next month's meeting agenda.

9. Board Member Comments

Ms. Zahler, District 3, said she will be in touch with the Mayor next week. She commented she watches Animal Planet on Saturdays on Cable, Channel 50 and will find out more information on Pit Bulls and Parolees.

Ms. McClure said she received comment from Mr. Shervanick passing along his hello to Ms. Zahler.

Ms. Schuller inquired on the Wi Fi status mentioned in a previous meeting. Ms. Schuller commented driving by the East Mesa Outdoor Gym and said there seemed to be a lot of people there with the nice weather, so gym is a great addition for this area.

Mr. Catanach responded to Ms. Schuller's inquiry about internet. He said just this week, Comcast Cable has put internet (Lift Zone Project) in at Meerscheidt Recreation Center and at Regional Aquatic Center. He added internet is wanted at all recreation centers, seven locations between Parks and Recreation and Quality of Life.

Mr. Engle thanked Park staff for all their hard work and acknowledged their work on getting the word out on the vaccines. He added wear your masks, get your shots.

10. Adjournment

Mr. Thompson moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Engle. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.