



Minutes

Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee
22358 S. Ellsworth Rd., Queen Creek, AZ
San Tan Conference Room
June 12, 2012
6:00 p.m.

1. **Call To Order and Roll Call:** Meeting started at 6:10 pm.

PRAC Members present: Daniel Babcock, David Dobbs, Eileen Kocuja, Dawn Oliphant, Sylvia Tarin, and Barbara Young.

PRAC Members absent: Dru Alberti, Eric Kerr, Michael Shirley, and Nancy Uptain

Staff present: Debbie Gomez, Adam Robinson, and Marianne Fulton

2. **Introductions:** None
3. **Public Comment:** None.
4. **Items for Discussion:**

- A. *Consideration and possible approval of the March 13, 2012 meeting minutes*

Motion to Approve: Sylvia Tarin

Second: Dawn Oliphant

Vote: Unanimous

- B. *Discussion and possible recommendation on existing partnership guidelines, field allocation process, and fees for youth sports organizations.*

Debbie Gomez, Parks Special Projects Coordinator, thanked the Policy Review Working Group appointed by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee for their work in reviewing and making recommendations to the existing Youth Sport Partnership Guidelines. Ms. Gomez provided the committee with the history of the current Youth Sports Partnership Guidelines and the purpose of updating the guidelines.

Ms. Gomez stated the existing guidelines were established during a time when the Town and the neighboring Pinal County were growing rapidly and the demand for athletic fields was high. Ms. Gomez stated the present funding for recreational services and the change in demand for athletic fields has prompted the need to review the existing guidelines and develop a policy which best serves the current needs of the citizens, accelerates partnerships, preserves existing partnerships, and decreases the amount of

Town subsidy provided for recreation programs. Three key areas of the policy are the criteria for partnership, field allocations, and fees. Debbie Gomez defined the purpose of the Youth Sports Partnership Policy as follows:

Ensure fair distribution of sports fields in Queen Creek among qualifying youth sport organizations who serve the residents of Queen Creek. The Sport Organizations Partners are those organizations whose goals are closely aligned to the philosophy of the Town of Queen Creek Recreation Services Division, whose programs and services are nonprofit in nature, based in Queen Creek, and open to the public with the sole purpose of providing organized athletic activities for Queen Creek youth. The partnership status is open to any organization that complies with the listed requirements in the partnership policy; facility usage is based upon availability.

Partnership Criteria Recommendation

Debbie Gomez presented the committee with a list of partnership criteria that the Policy Review Working Group did not propose changing as well as a recommendation to change the residency requirements that youth sports organizations must fulfill. The current partnership guidelines call for youth sport organizations to serve 80% of residents (including non-residents living within the Queen Creek Unified School District boundaries). The Working Group recommended changing the requirement to 40%.

The rationale for the recommendation is that of the Town's three current partners only one reports meeting the residency requirement at this time and the other two have had difficulty meeting the 80% residency requirements. Debbie Gomez explained that the current partner who reports meeting residency requirement did not meet the requirement when the partnership was formed however was granted partnership with leniency on the resident requirement to make for a viable league. Ms. Gomez stated the other two partners of more than five years, have also been granted leniency on the resident requirement for the same reason. The general consensus of the Committee throughout the years was to allow the organizations to be the suppliers of youth sports with the Town acting as the coordinator rather than the provider and leniency on the resident requirements was necessary to produce viable and sustainable leagues.

The Policy Review Working Group felt the Town is still in its infancy, growth has slowed, non-resident participation assists in producing multiple teams making for quality leagues, and would like to see the Town partners continue to produce quality programs which are viable, benefit the residents of Queen Creek, get children active, bring visibility to our community, and encourage retail sales. The Working Group felt the 80% residency requirement makes it difficult for youth sport organizations to achieve and produce viable, sustainable leagues and could be a barrier to future partnership attempts for the Town's youth soccer program.

Discussion:

The committee discussed the proposed changes and expressed the following:

- How did the recommendation of a 40% residency requirement come about? Mr. Dobbs, Chairman of the Committee, responded by stating that the current need to maintain existing partnerships was taken under consideration. Adam Robinson, Recreation Superintendent, reported Queen Creek Little League served 90% of residents, Queen Creek Heat Softball Little League 44%, San Tan Youth Football League 48%, and the organization chosen for providing the Youth Soccer Program is anticipating approximately 50%.
- Should the economy change, can changes to the new proposed policy be amended? The committee agreed to review the policy every two (2) years to ensure that any changes in the demand for services and/or fields meet the needs of the residents.
- Discussion on what the definition of “youth” is. Committee asked staff to ensure a clear definition by age was defined in the policy.
- Dialogue regarding the number of partnerships that could arise as a result of lowering the residency requirements and the need for policy language that clearly states the Town only carries one partner for baseball, softball, football, and soccer. The need to state in the policy that should a partnership terminate for any reason the Town reserves the right to seek a new partner via a Request for Proposal (RFP) process.

Recommendation

Because of a time overlap between the Working Groups final recommendation discussions and the responses received from the on Request for Proposals (RFP) for youth soccer program services, staff felt it was necessary for the committee to re-evaluate the requirement that 50% of the youth sport organizations board, commission, or governing body must be Queen Creek residents.

Discussion

Dialogue took place regarding the need to have Queen Creek residency representation on governing boards, the average size of boards, who serves as members on a board, and the differing operating structures of youth sport organizations. It was noted that some organizations such as Little League are local with governing boards that serve for specified boundaries comprised of serving only the citizens in those boundaries and games are typically played in fields located within those boundaries. Some organizations manage several locations, as in the example of the current top contender for services for the Town’s Youth Soccer Program in which the organization group is an East Valley organization serving Queen Creek and other east valley cities. The committee felt representation on the boards is important however 50% residency may be difficult to acquire, therefore recommending an amendment be made to the 50% residency

requirement to state Queen Creek residency representation must be on the board, commission or governing body.

Field Allocation Recommendation

The recommendation from the Policy Review Working Group was to set specific dates for “In-Season” field allocations to ensure fair distribution of athletic fields in Town-owned facilities, avoid overlapping of sports organizations on fields, and to charge appropriate fees for the use of the facilities. The committee concurred with the recommended dates as follows:

- Baseball/Softball – March 15 through July 31
- Football – August 1 through the first Saturday of December
- Soccer – Second Saturday of December to Second Saturday of March

Fee Recommendations

Debbie Gomez stated the Policy Review Working Group evaluated the following during fee development discussions;

- Evaluated the estimated facility costs of Town-owned athletic facilities that are directly incurred by youth sport programming.
- Compared fees charged to youth sport organizations by other municipalities.
- Evaluated the cost that may possibly be passed on to program participants as a result of increasing fees for youth sport organizations at Town facilities.

As a result the Working Group is recommending a change from the current fee of \$9 to \$15 per hour per field for use of lights and a change from the current fee of zero dollars to \$7 per hour per field charge for the use of fields to qualifying youth sport organization partners. A notation was made that this policy relates to Town-owned facilities and the Town will no longer subsidize costs incurred at facilities that are not owned by the Town.

The rationale behind the recommendation is that the Town can no longer afford to subsidize youth sports organizations in the amounts that it has in the past. Currently the costs to the Town for lights are \$18.35 per hour per field and the Town is subsidizing approximately 50%. The cost per hour per field for field maintenance is \$7.23 and the Town is subsidizing 100%. The current leagues have not experienced a price increase in five years.

Discussion

Dialogue took place regarding the impact that the cost increase would have on participants, the change in operations by youth sport organizations to play more games during daylight hours, comparisons to other charges by municipalities, the perception that tax payers are paying for non-residents, comparison rates by other league producers, the cost for use of facilities in the Queen Creek market and the fact that the Town cannot control the amount charged by other facility providers.

The committee asked the Policy Review Working Group and staff to provide more information with regard to the pass through costs to participants as a result of the Town

not subsidizing costs incurred at other facilities not owned by the Town. In addition, the committee asked the Working Group for comparison information on participation fees of surrounding youth sport organizations to the potential participation fees of Town partnering organizations as a result of the cost increase by not subsidizing field costs at Queen Creek schools.

The committee placed the proposed fee increases on hold for further evaluation but made a motion to adopt the changes proposed for partnership criteria and field allocations.

Motion: To change ratio of residency in partnership criteria from 80% to 40%. To change the 50% residency board requirement to stating governing boards shall have Town resident representation. Change sport "In Season" timeframes to Baseball/Softball March 15 to July 31, Football August 1 through the First Saturday of December, Soccer Second Saturday of December to Second Saturday in March.

Motion to Approve: Barbara Young

Second: Eileen Koceja

Vote: Unanimous

C. *Discussion and possible recommendation on existing policy for recreation programming fees.*

Debbie Gomez, Parks Special Project Coordinator presented a proposal from staff to eliminate non-resident fees for recreation programs and maintain the Town's policy which allows residents to register prior to non-residents. Ms. Gomez stated the current fee policy increases recreation program fees and facility reservation fees by 50% for non-residents. The recommendation from staff on the elimination of non-resident fees is not being recommended for facility reservations. She added the policies were adopted during a time when the Town was rapidly growing and the Town was in need of a method to control volume for popular programs and facilities, and the Town Council's desire to implement a non-resident fee at a policy level.

The basis for the recommendation is that today non-resident fees can be a barrier to registering for a class and possibly be an impediment to increasing revenue. In some cases non-residents are needed to meet the minimum number of participants for a viable program or a special interest class to take place. Elimination of non-resident fees is anticipated to help increase department revenue. Specific rationale includes:

- The fee charged should reflect the value of the program. Potential non-resident customers may ask why they must pay more than the program is worth. For example, currently we set the value of a program at \$50 but charge non-resident customers \$75 (\$50 + 50% increase for the non-resident).
- Eliminating non-resident fees will help us achieve our mission to support economic development. Attracting customers from the surrounding county area and other neighboring cities may result in auxiliary spending in Queen Creek businesses, particularly Town Center businesses.

- Non-resident fees deliver a message of exclusion that may carry over to other Queen Creek offerings, including business purchases.
- Non-resident registrations allow some programs to meet minimum registration amounts so the program is viable and will not be canceled, which may lead to more opportunities for residents.
- Many non-residents participate through their friendship with a resident. Some work in Queen Creek and convenience play as a factor.
- The process of questioning residency is time consuming for staff. Staff can use this time working to increase revenue, securing new classes, and enhancing marketing of other revenue generating services such as facility rentals.

Staff presented a second option for providing quality programs at affordable prices to all registrants, retaining and attracting new customers and to increase revenues. The option presented is to lower the percentage increase from 50% to a non-resident progressive fee structure and maintain the Town's policy which allows residents to register prior to non-residents.

The committee discussed the current fee split between contracted instructors and the Town for special interest classes, what costs program fees cover, and success rates for special interest classes. The committee asked for clarification by staff regarding non-resident fees for Adult Softball program. Staff responded that currently there is not a non-resident fee charged for participants of the Adult Softball program. Staff indicated the league was too small consisting of 8 teams and the staff time involved to administer the non-resident fee in this program is not efficient. Staff clarified that the non-resident fee elimination proposal only applies to Special Interest Classes. Other than Adult Softball, the remaining programs currently offered by the Town do not have fees for participation.

Motion

To eliminate non-resident fees for Town recreation programs and maintains the Town's policy which allows residents to register prior to non-residents.

Discussion: Council Member Oliphant commented she could not support a total elimination of non-resident fees and felt non-residents should pay more for participation. Further discussion by the group initiated with discussion surrounding the amount non-residents should pay and the goal of the Town to increase participation, bring visibility to the Town, and other points of rationale brought up by staff in their recommendation.

Motion: Withdrawn by Barbara Young

Further discussion on the lowering of the percentage increase from 50% to a non-resident progressive fee structure vs. a flat fee took place. The recommendation by the committee to staff is to recommend a proposal to council to reduce the non-resident fee and impose a flat fee and maintain the priority resident registration period to allow residents the opportunity to participate in a class.

Motion: To set \$10 non-resident fee policy for Town Special Interest Classes

Motion to Approve: Barbara Young

Second: Sylvia Tarin

Vote: Failed

Motion: To change the 50% fee increase to non-residents for participation in Special Interest Classes to a flat \$10 fee increase and maintain the resident priority registration policy.

Motion to Approve: Barbara Young

Second: Daniel Babcock

Vote: Approved Unanimous

D. Recreation Services update

Adam Robinson, Recreation Superintendent informed the committee the RFP process for youth soccer program has been completed and Arizona Soccer Club has been selected to be the Town's partner and the Youth & Teen Summer program is averaging 80 kids a day.

E. Schedule Future Meeting

Tentative date has been set for July 10, 2012

5. Announcements:

Debbie Gomez, Parks Special Project Coordinator announced the resignation of Jason Weber from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee and thanked Mr. Weber for this volunteer service commitment to the Town of Queen Creek.

Barbara Young thanked the Policy Review Working Group for their work on the review of the Youth Sports Partnership Policy.

6. Adjournment:

A. **Motion to adjourn:** Dawn Oliphant

B. **Second:** Eileen Kocaja

C. **Vote:** Unanimous

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Meeting adjourned at 8:39 p.m.

PREPARED BY: Marianne Fulton June 15, 2012

PASSED ON APPROVED ON: Aug. 14, 2012



David Dobbs, PRAC Chair