



## MINUTES

### **Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee**

22358 S. Ellsworth Rd., Queen Creek, AZ

San Tan Conference Room

June 21, 2011

6:00 p.m.

1. **Call To Order and Roll Call:** Meeting started at 6:04pm. PRAC Members present: Daniel Babcock, David Dobbs, Eileen Koceja, Dawn Oliphant, Michael Shirley, Nancy Uptain (by phone), Jason Weber, and Barbara Young

**PRAC Members absent:** Dru Alberti, Eric Kerr, and John Lewis

**Staff present:** Debbie Gomez, Adam Robinson, Tracy Corman, Troy White, and Richard Purcell

2. **Introductions:** Chairman David Dobbs welcomed new Committee Members Council Member Dawn Oliphant and Eileen Koceja.
3. **Public Comment:** None.

4. **Items for Discussion**

*A. Consideration and possible approval of the October 12, 2010 meeting minutes*

**Motion: to Approve:** Daniel Babcock

**Second:** Mike Shirley

**Vote:** Unanimous

*B. Update on Wash Improvements and Trail Development*

Troy White, Public Works Manager, presented an update on wash improvements and trail development within Queen Creek Wash and Sonoqui Wash.

David Dobbs asked why pictures of the Sonoqui Wash had fencing in them. Troy White replied that the fencing is in place during construction, but will be removed once construction is completed.

Jason Weber asked when the Sonoqui Wash work would be done. Troy White answered the work is being done in two phases. Troy indicated that Phase 1 is Chandler Heights to Riggs Roads, and once that is complete the work will be stopped to allow MCDOT put in the bridge. He added that once the bridge is completed, Phase 2 will begin, and the project will be completed by late spring or early summer of 2012.

*C. Update on Roots and Boots*

Adam Robinson, Recreation Superintendent, gave an update on the Roots n' Boots event.

Nancy Uptain stated that everyone did a fabulous job on the event. She said she was proud of the whole thing, and that it really was excellent. She said that Queen Creek has the premier rodeo in the state.

David Dobbs thanked Adam Robinson, and said that he looked forward to next year. He said that it was great to see these events happening.

*D. Department Updates*

Debbie Gomez, Parks & Recreation Director, presented updates on the following topics:

**a. 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Report**

Daniel Babcock asked what PM-10 violations were. Debbie Gomez answered that they are dust control infractions, and that the Town did not receive any during the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter period.

Dawn Oliphant asked if there was a Boy Scout troop that cleaned the Queen Creek Wash behind the Will Rogers subdivision in May. Debbie Gomez responded there was, and the project would be listed in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter report.

**b. Update on Budget Reductions**

Debbie Gomez stated that the Town had a \$4.7 million budget gap for FY11/12, and reductions were made in the Town's operations and in the support to non-profits to close that gap. She said that the Boys and Girls Club was funded at a reduced amount, and that the impact was a reduction in operations hours. She said that the Kiwanis Club 4<sup>th</sup> of July event was funded in in-kind services, London's Run was funded at \$900 of in-kind services and \$1,600 monetary, the Holiday Festival and Parade received the same funding level as last year in in-kind services.

Debbie Gomez said that the Town also made cuts to the operations budget to close the gap. She said that the Parks and Recreation Department saw a reduction in approximately 13 FTE's. She explained that Parks Maintenance would be outsourcing several of the low visibility areas for ongoing maintenance, and would be reducing the maintenance service levels for both high and low visible areas. She stated health, safety, and playground maintenance would remain top priority. Debbie Gomez also said the Park Ranger program eliminated one full-time position and 4 part-time positions. She said full-time Park Ranger service coverage was reduced and the new Park Ranger services would be from 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. on Mon-Friday, and 1 p.m. to 11 p.m. on weekends. She stated that the biggest impact to the Park Ranger service is a reduction in visibility and customer service. She said that other departments will now be responsible for filling in gaps in security, such as, the Water Department conducting water well security checks.

Debbie Gomez said that the Recreation Division saw a reduction of approximately \$159,000, with the elimination of 3 FTE's, special events, and youth basketball. She explained that with the elimination of all Town hosted special events the Council would like to make an effort to put on Trunk or Treat and Passport to Discovery, but the events would have to be totally funded by raised revenues. She said the events may be held at lower level of service, or pieces of the events, or the entire events, may be partnered out. She said that any opportunities through partnerships to bring the other events back will also be looked at. She also explained that in terms of Trunk or Treat that certain things would need to be solidified by September 1<sup>st</sup>. She said that in the past, the Trunk or Treat event typically costs \$18,000 to produce, with \$9,000 provided from the Town's General Fund and the remaining through raised revenues. She said that it will be challenging to raise full production cost amount by September 1<sup>st</sup>, and that if enough funds are not raised by a predetermined deadline, the decision would have to be made to either not hold the event or look at eliminating parts of the event.

Debbie Gomez said that historically the Passport to Discovery has cost \$17,000 to produce, with \$8,000 provided from the General Fund. She said that funds would need to be raised by January in order for the event to go forward. She said that the department continuously seeks partnership opportunities, and have seen success in the past. Adam Robinson stated that their goal has been to use partnerships in order to grow the events over the years, and that all of the growth in the events have been due to partnerships, vendors, and sponsors. He said going forward they would look for partners in order to continue to produce the events at the same level.

Barbara Young asked what the thought process was for the Town eliminating special events but still sponsoring non-Town events such as the Boys and Girls Club Christmas event and London's Run. Debbie Gomez stated that she could not answer this question, and would need to speak to the Town Manager to fully understand the Budget Committee's thought process behind their direction.

David Dobbs said that he would have liked this committee to have had some input into the budget decisions to help make these tough choices. He said that he understood that during the budget process things are happening fast, and he was not saying that anyone did anything wrong, but would like this Committee to be more involved in the future.

Debbie Gomez continued the update on the budget reductions by saying that the Administration Division was reduced by approximately \$62,000, a reduction of an administrative assistant and reduction to various line items. She also said that the main Parks and Recreation customer service area would be relocating to the existing Library Recreation Annex building starting July 18. Debbie added, the Town was undergoing a reorganization that would be discussed at the all staff meeting later this week, and that she would bring the results of the reorganization back to the committee at their next meeting.

Michael Shirley asked if there were other youth programs cut for the next fiscal year, such as soccer. Debbie Gomez stated that soccer was not cut. She said that the Youth and Teen Center and the soccer program would continue to be offered. Michael Shirley asked if basketball was a huge cost. Debbie Gomez stated that the basketball program typically does not recover costs as much as the soccer program. She said that this was primarily due to the cost of paying for the use of School District facilities. Michael Shirley asked if there was any consideration given to raising the program fees. Debbie Gomez replied that a fee analysis was done and the Town's fees are already at the high limit of what could be charged based on the market. She said that the Town was successful in having Boys and Girls Club offer a basketball program, but is not sure what level of success they are having this year due to the marketing of the program coming out so late. Michael Shirley stated that they Boys and Girls Club were charging an additional \$20 for Club membership, and asked if that amount would have put the Town's program out of the market. Debbie Gomez stated that compared to other programs, it would have put the Town out of market with programs in the neighboring cities of Mesa and Gilbert. She also cautioned that it is difficult to compare the Town to those cities because the Town is much smaller in population. She explained that because the budget had to be reduced in order to close the gap, and because the soccer program recovered more of its costs, the decision was made to cut the basketball program.

Jason Weber asked whether Roots n' Boots was a Town sponsored event. Debbie Gomez replied that it was, and that it was on the Council's agenda at their last meeting. Adam Robinson explained that the Council directed staff to spend 12 hours of staff time to work with the Friends of Horseshoe Park and Equestrian Centre to look at options for putting on the event at a reduced staff and budget cost.

Michael Shirley asked what was going on with the Town's other partners, such as Little League. Debbie Gomez answered that the Town would continue with these partnerships, and would be looking at increasing partnerships and policies to facilitate partnerships. She said with the budget reductions that the Town would need to be more creative at looking for ways to bring in services that have been cut. She said that the Parks Trails and Open Space Master Plan calls for forming partnerships to provide programs and focusing on building parks and trails. She said that although the Department has made progress toward the master plan goals, the Town is in an awkward position. She explained that when the Town was small programs were offered to draw people to the community, and now that the Town has grown there are more opportunities for partnering out the programs. She said that if the town had continued to grow and the economy continued to be vibrant, that at this point in time, the Town would have been focusing on building facilities, unfortunately the economy has taken a downturn and population growth along with the revenue stream has slowed considerably; thus has the need for construction of facilities along with the reduction in revenue to build and operate the facilities. She stated that currently there are no facilities identified for design or construction within the approved 5-year Capital Improvements Plan. She said that the Committee would need to be creative in discussing ways to partner and

produce services that have been lost, and that up to this point the Town has done a good job in partnering with the Boys and Girls Club, Little League, and the San Tan Football League.

David Dobbs said that he was glad to see the higher number of participants in the soccer program. He suggested that the Town may need to look at relaxing residency requirement in order to get the number of participants even higher. He said that it has worked well with the program in the past when it was just starting out. He said that he is hoping that this Committee can come up with ideas on how to keep some of services and programs in creative ways, and work more with partners for more help to reduce burden on maintenance. He suggested that maybe an example could be that Little League could do more of the facility clean-up, or something similar. He said that there has been a lot of talk and interest in helping with maintenance, and would like to see if we can get a little more from existing partners. He said that the Committee may need to meet a little more frequently, and that they should be willing to go out and talk with people in the community.

**E. Schedule future meeting**

Debbie Gomez stated that the next regularly scheduled meeting would be on August 9, 2011. She said that the reductions in staffing may delay this meeting until October. She asked the Committee to call Adam Robinson if they had any ideas on Trunk or Treat.

David Dobbs said that Trunk or Treat is an event that a lot of people look forward to. Barbara Young said that it is a signature event. Debbie Gomez said that the main cost driver is the candy. Adam Robinson stated that the candy costs \$6,700. Dawn Oliphant said that the candy is what kids come for. Debbie Gomez said that the rest of the event is covered by partners and vendors, and people come for the candy and because it is a safe way to celebrate. Jason Weber asked if the Town could have people bring candy to hand out. Debbie Gomez explained that the Town's liability is an issue because they would not know what people would be handing out. Adam Robinson said that 6,000 people attend, and that amount of candy would be really expensive for individuals to bring enough. He explained that the Town buys the candy in bulk, at cheaper than retail.

David Dobbs said that the Committee should probably meet as soon as possible to work on Trunk or Treat, and that there should be a meeting in August to work on this event. Debbie Gomez stated that in the mean-time, due to staffing cuts and people being reassigned, to contact Adam Robinson for any questions they may have regarding recreation programs or events and he would direct them to the correct person.

Barbara Young asked how much the Parks and Recreation was reduced overall. Debbie Gomez said that the Department was reduced by almost \$700,000. Barbara Young stated that even though current times are tough, she hopes management and the Council supports parks and recreation and the value they bring the community. She said that she feels that they are right up there with public safety and schools. She said that she understands it is very tough to make decisions, but hope that they

understand the value. Michael Shirley agreed, and said it is especially important to understand that in a fringe community there are less opportunities and people have to travel farther when programs are not offered by the Town. Barbara Young said that everyone has different needs and preferences and may not want to go to the Boys and Girls Club or the YMCA instead of the Town's programs and people need choices.

Debbie Gomez stated that she will update the Committee on Trunk or Treat at the August 9, meeting. She said that another agenda item may be regarding a piece of trail that the Town currently maintains. She said that there may also be an opportunity to review some of goals in the Parks Trails and Open Space Master Plan to get the Committee familiar with them. David Dobbs said that the Committee doesn't need fancy presentations, and that items could be quick updates and very informal. He said that he wanted to keep the Committee involved. He said that he really appreciated all of staff's efforts, and understood that it is tough times and that staff will not be able to present everything the way the Committee was used to.

5. **Announcements:** None

6. **Adjournment at:**

- A. **Motion:** Barbara Young;
- B. **Second:** Jason Weber.
- C. **Vote:** Unanimous
- D.

Meeting adjourned 7:34 p.m.

PREPARED BY: Tracy Corman, June 21, 2011

PASSED AND APPROVED ON: August 9, 2011.

  
David Dobbs, PRAC Committee Chair