



Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

Monday, October 28, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.

MEETING MINUTES

Lake Havasu City Municipal Courthouse – Council Chambers

92 Acoma Blvd., Lake Havasu City, AZ 86403

www.lhcaz.gov

1. CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Chairperson Cox called the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairperson Cox led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

Cheri Kowalski conducted a Roll Call of the Board members:

Board Members Present: Kyler Cox, Mercedes Kaiser, Jason Mitchell, Ashley Pascual, and Alex Ross

Excused: Shannon Murray, Phillip Shannon, Ally Stader

Absent: Karen Cooper

Parks & Recreation Staff Present: Gabby Vera and Cheri Kowalski

4. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

N/A

5. MINUTES

5.1 Approval of September 23, 2024, Meeting Minutes

- Board member Pascual made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of September 23, 2024, as written, seconded by member Kaiser, and carried by the following vote:

AYE 5: – Cox, Kaiser, Mitchell, Pascual, and Ross

6. COMMUNICATIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, STAFF REPORT

6.1 Staff Report

- Parks and Recreation Director Gabby Vera updated the Board on upcoming programs and events.



7. PUBLIC HEARING

7.1 Discussion: Downtown Catalyst Project Update on the Naming Process

Director Gabby Vera reminded everyone that November 1 is the last day to turn in your suggested names. From there, the department will scan through the list of names, which currently has well over 500 submissions. It has been great to receive the response; we have received some really great names. After that, we will dwindle it down and open it up to the public to vote on their favorite name.

Board member Pascual asked if Vera had an update on the project's progress. Vera responded that we are completely on schedule and should open in Spring 2025.

7.2 Discussion: Sports Lights Schedule for Public Use

Director Gabby stated we received some feedback from the community, wanting to know if we could have the lights on the sports fields left on a little later in the evenings. We are looking into that to ensure there is no ordinance regarding how close some of these parks are to the neighborhoods. We are still doing some research. She has talked to the parks staff about that, and we do not see an issue with that as long as there is no ordinance that would hinder us from being able to do that.

Chairperson Cox stated that this was an item that quite a few people had approached him. Some of the concerns and comments were that we have these beautiful parks and Lake Havasu gets a little warmer in the summer. This would give these families and kids an outlet to give them somewhere to go after hours when it cools down a little bit. It gets dark earlier in the wintertime, and this would give them a place to go. Some of the other concerns and thoughts are that it will help with some of the vandalism that is going on in the parks.

Mr. Gomez asked if we could also have the lights on weekends. Director Vera responded that we are looking at it on weekdays and weekends. At this point, we know weekends would be more popular because most parents are off work or people are not working, and that is when they are trying to enjoy the parks.

Board member Pascal stated she believes it would be more helpful to have a bit more information for the Board if this is a discussion we want to have and if there is any recommendation that we may want to make. If there are any city ordinances, that would be helpful information for the Board to have for this discussion. If the city is already or could look into harvesting some data based on cell phone records and things like that. Many other companies use that to track visits and usage to see which parks are used more heavily in the evening or are on weekends or certain weekdays. Also, a reminder of which parks have lights already available, so if those aren't scheduled to be used. This would help the Board to have a sense of which parks we are discussing. Pascual thought it would be helpful to have some historical information. Being part of this Board, when Cypress was opened, and lights were put in, there was a lot of canvassing and discussions with the neighborhood and



neighbors around the park, and no promises are ever made in public management, but agreements were had about the fact that those lights would not remain on if the field was not in use. For us to have any discussion on this, we need a bit more information. Director Vera responded with great suggestions, and we will make sure that when we come back, we have all of that information.

7.3 Discussion: Future Development Plan for Fields and Courts

Director Gabby stated this was an agenda item that was brought up with us, and we wanted to make sure we gave the community a space to talk about it. Right now, hopefully, within this next fiscal year, we will be starting our master plan process. For those of you who are not familiar with the master plan for a Parks and Recreation Department, that is what sets our foundation possibly for the next 5 to 20 years, and in that process, we take community input from focus groups, community members, different stakeholders within the community and this is a perfect time for community members such as yourself you would find those opportunities to speak, use your voice and help build the future of our department. That could look like fields, recreation centers, future trails, paths, walkways, playgrounds, and anything related to the park department. That is what that would entail.

Chairperson Cox opened this agenda item to the public. Several coaches, parents, and members of sports organizations spoke on this topic. Each speaker repeated the main issue: the teams have outgrown the available field space. The number of children participating in sports is increasing, and the number of fields and facilities are the same. Coaches have had to be creative when scheduling practices, including cutting down on practice times, sharing fields, and practicing on unmarked fields. Some organizations say they will work with the city to invest time and funds to help solve this issue. There have been some recent improvements being made by the Parks and Recreation Department to existing fields; however, the real need is for new facilities. Organizations stated if we have additional facilities that, the city could benefit by hosting more tournaments and bringing additional revenue for hotels and restaurants.

Director Vera acknowledged this on behalf of the Parks and Recreation Department. Thank you for coming out, speaking your truth, and sharing some of your wants and needs. She understands that we are growing, and that is something that she has seen in the short time she has been here; she is a parent as well, and those are some of the things that she considers moving her own family over to Havasu. She does hear the concerns, and she does want to acknowledge that she does have her team inside the room right now. More so than just her, she stated that we genuinely care about getting things done for you. Behind the scenes, we are working and trying to see what they can pursue with the school district. See how we can get some additional field space there and get those fields up to par. Vera stated her door is always open; she has had the Havasu Lyons come in and the Stingrays come in as well. We have already had some of these discussions about the growing need for the community. Next year, one of our big goals is this master plan. That will be a key factor in growing and expanding. That will be an opportunity for the community to come out and use their voices. It is not about the money but the logistics, where we are going to put these fields, and how we are going to operate them. It is really important that you all use your voices and the platform



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that you are given. We will continue to work together as a department, as a city, and as a community to ensure we get you what you need. It will take some time.

Board member Pascual thanked everyone for sharing their thoughts with the Board and said seeing the youth involved in some civic advocacy is awesome. She is inspired; they are the Park and Recreation Advisory Board, and she stated you heard the Director speak, and she advised that they as a Board continue to have these discussions and push some recommendations up to the City Council. She wanted to recognize that all of you, and most of you, are volunteering in your capacity for these sports, so thank you for that. This community has incredible wealth, and she wanted to share her appreciation for all of you. She also wanted to acknowledge and give kudos to our Director and Superintendent and their staff for keeping the fields so beautifully maintained despite the over-usage. That does not mitigate the fact that we do need more. She really appreciates the economic argument that has been shared before, and it hasn't gotten a lot of traction for what tournaments could bring to this town.

Councilmember Lane urged those who spoke to work together to determine their needs, devise a solution to the problem, and bring those back to the Board.

Chairperson Cox stated that the purpose of this Board and the reason that they sit there is to give the public an avenue to talk and be heard. Cox specified that it was awesome to see the showing for today and this topic and show how important it is. He stated he is a firm believer in structuring our youth, and our youth is what's going to make our community great or not so great. As a community, we need to do everything we can to provide discipline and structure to these kids.

8 FUTURE DISCUSSION ITEMS

- Direction of future Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Meetings

9 FUTURE MEETINGS

- November 25, 2024 – Canceled
- December 23, 2024 - Canceled

10 ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.