Palo Verde Park

Neighborhood Association

<http://paloverdeparkneighborhood.com/>

**Minutes, May 15, 2019**

**regular meeting**

Present:

*Mike Southworth, Vice President*

*Andy Weiss, Treasurer*

*Rhonda Bodfield, Secretary*

*Ariel Gilbert-Knight, zone delegate, Old Pueblo and Thomas Bengford, alternate*

**Regular order of business:** Meeting was gaveled to order at 6:37 p.m. and roll call was taken.

Without a quorum of the Council, since only three board members were in attendance at the start, it was announced that no formal action would be taken.

The code of conduct was shared and gratitude expressed to our hosts, Fountain of Life Church. Neighbors were asked to greet someone they did not know.

**President’s/officer’s report:** Mike shared that the resignation of Toni Lopez Krause will be officially acknowledged at the next Council meeting, so there will be an opening for a Mañana Vista delegate if anyone is interested.

He also shared that a public art project will be coming to the pool area at Palo Verde Park. The theme of the mural has not yet been shared.

The Council is exploring whether a coalition of east side neighborhoods might be interested in hosting a mayoral forum in advance of the November Mayor and Council elections.

He also shared we are still working to get more donations for signage. Community Medical Services has agreed to sponsor a sign and we are grateful for the contribution.

Treasurer Andy Weiss : Balance 1678.40. A few hundred will be set aside for ParkFest and the rest is available for neighborhood investment.

**Minute approval:** Will be held until the July meeting.

**Guest presentation:** City Parks Director Brent Dennis came to share information about the state of the city’s parks and the future for Palo Verde Park.

Ward 2 has a number of high activity parks, including Udall.

Prop. 407 bond initiative is a promise to the voters so when something changes we have to take it to a public process, including a citizens oversight panel. The City takes its promise very seriously, he said, and Parks wants to deliver projects on time and under budget and wants to exceed expectations with high quality projects that reinvest in the parks that have been neglected over the last decade. When the economy tanked, it was harder to raise money.

Pickleball: One solution to concerns at Fort Lowell about sound is to possibly add additional pickle ball at Udall. Ward 4 discussions trying to find solution to the fact they are park-poor to be able to add an 80-acre large scale regional park. New park also in the works at The Bridges complex on the south side.

Five components that are important in city parks:

* Pickleball courts
* Dog parks: Absent well designed dog parks, they turn all of the parks into dog parks.
* Skate parks: Without a well designed skate park, causes damage to existing parks infrastructure
* Splash pads: The baby pool at Palo Verde Park is being replaced with a splash pad. No lifeguard will be required.
* Outdoor fitness courts: Tucson qualifies for a national grant to put them in each of the wards; social outlet that allows people to exercise together; went through a rigorous process. Challenged each of the council members to identify the best park in their ward for one. Mr. Dennis said introducing positive activation in the parks tends to reduce problems that may occur in parks that don’t have a lot of activity and neighborhood engagement in them.

Next semester the UA architecture program will update the city’s parks master plans to look at all of these five components.

Mr. Dennis said he did come to ParkFest and thought it was a success.

Council member Cunningham was very pleased about his accomplishments at Jesse Owens park with impact fees and other funding mechanisms and wants to hit another home run at Palo Verde Park. Challenging when there are more than 120 parks across the city and all are competing for resources.

The parking lot is being redone and was in prop 407 and funded through other creative means. If he was at this meeting, he would share we may be able to reinvest those resources in another project at the park. He has asked that we email ideas although Council member Cunningham wants to make sure of sustainability: Putting in LED lights on fields, upgrading irrigation, adding shade.

**Comment:** There are fewer trees in the park than there used to be and we should have more on the east side. It seems like Jesse Owens or Udall get more attention than we do. It needs drastic attention.

Mr. Dennis responded that Prop 407 should be able to help with that. He mentioned that every time they do construction projects, parks staff tries to incorporate shade, from structures to trees.

He also shared that neighbors can tap into the Parks Foundation and donate items to the park, such as a bench or other amenities. “The more involvement you have in that park, the more you care about it, there is a noticeable decline in graffiti, tagging, vandalism, loitering, etc.”

Mr. Dennis said he would like to see neighborhood engagement in designing some of the parks projects and wants parks to retain their own flavor.

Council member Cunningham arrived, coming from the Indian Ridge annexation meeting.

He said that pickle ball is a little louder and may need an acoustic area and the problem with lack of visibility is the potential for squatting in the park.

Goal is to finish lights softball field, resurfacing basketball and tennis courts, moving fences back on pool with a grassy knoll, and finish irrigation project by 2021 if possible.

**Comment:** People are driving into the park to support youth athletics and that weight may be impacting the sprinkler system.

Council member Cunningham said signage and concrete barriers may be a solution. Jesse Owens does not allow them to park on the lots.

**Comment:** Neighbor curious about the origin of the bond projects: how they were determined.

Council member Cunningham shared it was a lengthy planning process in preparation for a County bond package. There were $700 million in needs identified across the entirety of the parks system.

Sentiments expressed by residents they would like to be engaged in those kinds of projects and plans.

**Comment:** Resident concerned about the bathrooms in the park.

Mr. Dennis shared that’s an example of the unmet needs. Other funding would have to be identified to be able to fix the bathrooms but maybe the road funding could be funneled into that.

**Comment:** Would be nice to have a longer pool season.

Council member Cunningham indicated that usage plays a role but once the splash pad and the sitting area is in place, it will increase interest.

**Comment:** Lack of shade in the small dog park is problematic.

Mr. Dennis said that was a common comment he heard at ParkFest and that he is aware of the need.

**Comment:** Parking lot on the Southside is pitch black when the field lights are off.

Council member Cunningham said that’s a lower capital ask and it can improve park safety, so he will look into it.

**Comment:** Tree line grows fast.

Mr. Dennis said Department of Corrections crews are starting to work in parks now. They are supervised and they have lower level offenses so it is a safe, fiscally responsible option for the community. They are not replacing parks jobs with correction labor, he said.

**Comment:** Will begging help us get a fitness court here?

Mr. Dennis said to work through the Council office.

**Comment:** City should ask Boy Scouts to volunteer for lifeguard staffing

**Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 7:32 p.m. There will be no regular June meeting but instead, we have Movie Night on May 24 and a pet microchip event coming up on June 1.