

**REGULAR MEETING OF
THE COCONINO COUNTY
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
PURSUANT TO A.R.S. § 38-431.02
October 1, 2020
4:00pm
Internet/Web Based Video Conference Call
Microsoft Teams**

Minutes

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:03pm by Chair Steve Mongrain. Vice Chair Michelle Wesson and Commissioners Mary Hendricks, Ellen Parish, Joshua Stackhouse, and Pam Foti were present. Commissioner Brian Blue was excused. Staff in attendance was Cynthia Nemeth (Parks and Recreation Director) and taking minutes Mark Yarnall (Administrative Specialist III)

2. Parks and Recreation Commission Purpose

The purpose in establishing the Coconino County Parks & Recreation Commission (PRC) is to provide a citizen body responsive to the communities and people of Coconino County and to recommend a policy regarding the development and operations of a well-balanced system of parks, programs, trails, and events.

3. Approval of the minutes from past meeting dates

- August 6, 2020

No amendments were made to the minutes. Commissioner Ellen Parish made a motion to approve the August 6, 2020 minutes. Vice Chair Michelle Wesson seconds the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

- September 9, 2020

No amendments were made to the minutes. Commissioner Ellen Parish made a motion to approve the September 9, 2020 minutes. Commissioner Pam Foti seconds the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

4. Public Appearances/Introductions/Call to the Public

There was one member of the public present. Board member Dave Nash from the Friends of Coconino County Parks attended.

New Business

1. Turf Paradise Horse Racing Proposal (75 minutes)

Cynthia Nemeth, Parks and Recreation Director shared her Turf Paradise Proposal presentation developed following the second proposal submitted by Turf Paradise. Director Nemeth's presentation included the general proposal, considerations, pros/cons, and potential revenue scenarios. She welcomed any, and all feedback from the Commissioners with the goal of seeking an overall recommendation from the commission to share with the Board of Supervisors at their next meeting with this topic on the agenda.

A quick background of horse racing at Fort Tuthill County Park was presented with horse racing starting in 1955 and came to an end in 2010 due to the closure of Yavapai Downs, a critical partner which led to financial difficulties and unable to continue operations. Along with the background Director Nemeth shared the financial history from 2006 – 2010 of profits and losses.

Proposal highlights presented included positive economic impact for the Flagstaff area. Turf Paradise seeking a ten-year agreement with renewal options. Turf Paradise would invest in track repairs and internet line installation at the grandstands. Their 4-day live meet event can be flexible which best fit Coconino County dates, and the County would not be responsible in planning or operating the live meet but would give the County the option to manage admissions, parking, and food & beverage operations.

The Turf Paradise proposed responsibilities presented by Director Nemeth are supplying technical and racing staff, three temporary structures for the racing office (1) and jockey quarters (2), and all licenses/permits related to video production and simulcast. They would also supply a track superintendent during jockey training and race days as well as two tractors, cutting harrows, a float, water truck, and security guards for restricted areas and the facility. Other Turf Paradise responsibilities Director Nemeth mentioned were production of the racing program, managing horse manure at the stables, and provide EMTs during training and live event.

Turf Paradise's proposed responsibilities for Coconino County include removal of dirt and water tank from chute, option to manage food & beverage sales, admission/parking sales with retaining 100% of the revenue, and providing added security as needed for alcohol sales. Comments that were made by the Commissioners included; *Need to understand vast difference in wagering income between proposal #1 and #2; Any requirements needed to conduct horse racing should come at no cost to the County; A precedent has been established with other private-public partners in that they have been responsible for all improvements necessary for their operations and the expectation of this partner should be the same; It would be great for the City of Flagstaff, the County and its residents to see horse racing return, but at no expense to the County; What is meant by a 'Boutique Race Meet' and by 'Invitation Only'; As with most County private-public partners, most participants are from outside the area offering a boost to local sales tax; This is a revenue generating opportunity for the Parks and Recreation Department and funds could be used for improvements at Fort Tuthill County Park; Improvements to the facility made by Turf Paradise will benefit other users and demonstrate a commitment on the part of Turf Paradise for a long term relationship with the County; Consider the reputation this sport has and that it may incite animal advocates to protest and may foster an unfavorable public perception; Ask for a greater revenue share up front and if Turf Paradise proves to be a good long-term partner*

then consideration could be given to lowering the percentage – make the agreement worthwhile at the onset and to the benefit of all that use the facility; More discussion to take place with Turf Paradise before concluding whether to move forward or not; Facility improvements that are deemed important to Parks and Recreation, regardless if they are to Turf Paradise, should be paid for by the partner if they are using them i.e. office and storage rooms, addressing uneven asphalt.

The Commission unanimously recommends that the Board of Supervisors further engage Turf Paradise as a public-private partner in offering horse racing at Fort Tuthill County Park under the conditions that they 1) pay for all facility improvements deemed necessary by the Parks and Recreation Department and Turf Paradise; 2) pay a minimum of 2% of the net handle with the option to reduce the ratio at the time of renewal; and, 3) the revenue share be used for capital improvements at Fort Tuthill County Park.

2. Funday at the Fort Update (5 minutes)

Commissioner Parish shared the Funday Subcommittee continues to hold regular meetings and are currently working on the budget to help give insight and progress from the preliminary discussions and development of the event. As more development occurs the subcommittee will be looking for interested parties in various areas to help contribute in the event and bring the community together post COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Parks and Recreation Community Needs Matrix (15 minutes)

Director Cynthia Nemeth discussed the community needs matrix she created based of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The matrix identified different areas of parks and recreation activities and amenities that are important to the communities in Coconino County. For example, some areas that were common in the communities included trails & connectivity, programs, events, and courts & ball fields. Director Nemeth addressed the next steps moving forward with the matrix is to identify the communities where there are areas to help them reach their parks and recreation goals as knowledgeable resource. Director Nemeth used the Parks Community as an example stating there are residences expressing interest and they have current facilities but need upgrades and renovations. Director Nemeth's underlining question was *what other communities have parks and recreation assets and community energy where the county can help them help their selves?*

4. Upcoming Board of Supervisor Agenda Items*

October 6, 2020 at 2:15pm – North Pole Experience Contract (executive session)

December 1, 2020 at 11:00am – Amphitheater RFP (discussion item)

January 2021 – Parks and Rec. Fees Cost Recovery Policy Review

January 2021 – Fort Tuthill North Entrance Access

January 2021 – Amphitheater RFP

**Confirm agenda item dates and times before attending. Board agenda is subject to last minute changes.*

Reports (10 Minutes)

1. Director's Report

The new cell phone tower (pine tree replica) should be completed by the end of October and the current providers, AT&T and Verizon will complete their aspect of the connectivity.

A reroute of the Soldiers' Trial is approaching completion that was funded through a recreation trails grant.

The FUTS trail Sheep Crossing segment is still under construction to connect the Ponderosa Pines neighborhood.

The wastewater project has slowed down a little bit around the Mountain Dell community due to hitting a large rock.

CCPR staff member Geoffrey Gross is constructing metal interpretive work at Sawmill Park for a children's play area as well as a wildlife viewing area. Along with Sawmill Park conversations started with the Literacy Center, a local nonprofit to develop a story path targeted for kids 3 to 5 years old.

2. Commissioner's Report

Vice Chair Wesson expressed her enjoyment with the smoothing out of the Soldiers' Trial construction when running on the trail.

No reports from Commissioner Hendricks, Foti, Parish. Commissioner Parish added she will keep the PRC updated with the Funday at Fort Tuthill event.

FCCP board member Dave Nash shared the ice skating rink research development is coming along with more news to come as it develops more.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 5:52pm.

Notice:

Next Friends of Coconino County Parks Meeting: October 14, 2020, Microsoft Teams

Next Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting: November 5, 2020, Microsoft Teams

**Coconino County
Parks & Recreation Commission**

**Coconino County
Parks & Recreation Department**

Steve Mongrain

Steve Mongrain, Chair

Mark Yarnall

Mark Yarnall
Secretary to the Commission