



PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

In-Person and WebEx

Location: Government Center, 2001 S. State Street SLC, Utah 84190

November 8, 2023 | 11:30AM-1:00PM

In Attendance

Board Members: Carl Fisher, Chris Hill, Lynette Wendel, Connie Burgess, Robynn Masters, Soren Simonsen, Lisa Dean, Danny Schoenfeld, John Warnas, Jaren Cooper

Absent: Nate Salazar, Mont Millerberg, Jerry Cordova-Ong

Staff: Martin Jensen, Danielle Calacino, Doranne Pittz, Eliza Schofield, Brent Laulusa, Patrick Leary, Callista Pearson, Walt Gilmore, Jon Ruedas, Jerry Brewster, Jan Donchess, Liz Sollis, Dustin Pimm, David Johnson

Citizen Participation: Steve Van Maren, Elliot Mott

Call to Order

Carl Fisher calls for the introduction of all attendees.

Public Comments:

Elliot Mott, volunteer coordinator of outdoor events, thanks the Parks & Recreation division and Advisory Board for being involved in improvement projects throughout Salt Lake County. Mentions he's looking forward to a resolution of a river take out on 2100 South. He wants the group to consider a water park in one of our canyons.

Steve Van Maren mentions that a Sandy resident told him she really appreciates the reconstruction and additional parking at the dog park on 300 East and Dimple Dell Park.

Lynette asks that with the Butterfield Canyon Road being closed for the winter, does that impact the access to the trails throughout the season. Martin explains that the trails were not designed to be accessible from the road due to a safety issue, so the trails are working exactly how they are designed to, and they are accessible all season.

Business Item – Approval of Minutes

Carl calls for a motion or any discussion on the September 2023 minutes. Lynette Wendel motions to approve the minutes, Chris Hill seconds.

The board agrees to meet in December, on Wednesday the 13th.

Director's Report

Martin discusses division-wide updates:

- 2024 Budget. Reviews that the mayor has presented her budget, and the council is now reviewing the budget, which will hopefully be approved the following Tuesday. Robin Chalhoub and Joey McNamee will be presenting the Community Services Department's budget to council.
- Discusses the budget direction that was given from the mayor's office in July and explains that we are working with a tight budget in 2024. Continues to explain that the County is prioritizing employee compensation and benefits, and there is extremely limited funding for ongoing requests.
- There's still ample money for capital projects and deferred maintenance due to the non-countywide property tax funds, which are ZAP (Zoo, Arts, and Parks tax) and TRCC (Tourism, Recreation, Culture, and Convention tax).
- Discusses two things the mayor has proposed that will impact us:
 - A hiring freeze for full time, merit employees. It's not forever but we don't know how long it will last. If and when we have vacancies, staff will have to shift and be nimble to cover those vacancies while we're not able to fill them.
 - Tighten our belts and reduce spending. The county is healthy financially, but revenue coming in is slowing, so we will be reducing spending. He explains that the county calls it a CONTRA account and we must cut 2% of our Parks & Recreation budget for 2024. We aren't actually cutting the money out, but we have to identify areas where we will save and underspend. Our goal is to not cut services to the public, and not impact our employees' employment.
- Mentions another non-countywide property tax fund called the Fourth Quarter Fund, which can be used for transportation and trails. It's quite healthy and we have used it to build a lot of the new trails and trailheads, such as finishing the Butterfield trailhead.

Chris asks if the situation with inflation and taxes changes next year, such as if the tax we receive goes up and inflation steps down, is that when we can propose new projects again. Martin says yes, and that is a good point to be brought up.

There is a discussion about the hiring freeze, and losing positions but not being able to fill them feels like a net loss, with Martin agreeing and says it's a big challenge. Martin also mentions that he's grateful that employee compensation is being prioritized, and after meeting with his peers he has learned that nationwide everyone is going through something similar.

Chris asks if the board can be informed every quarter of how many employees Parks & Recreation loses, Martin agrees to provide that information every month.

Community Engagement Updates

Liz informs the board about public open houses and events coming up:

- Bingham Creek Regional Trail Master Plan Public Open House on 11/8/23
- Dimple Dell Regional Park Master Plan Public Open House on 11/29/23
- Planning to have a Creekside Regional Park Master Plan Public Open House in January
- Planning to have a kickoff or ribbon cutting for the Salt Lake County Athletic Fields in spring 2024
- Still working with the US Forest Service on the Tri-Canyon Trails Master Plan

Liz shares some emails from constituents with the board, per the request from last meeting.

Lynette asks how we are going to use these types of stories, and Liz says that we use our social media to highlight these patron stories and highlight employees. Lynette also asks if there's a way to post these in the facility, and Doranne said we could do so on our community boards.

My County Rec Pass

Martin presents the My County Rec Pass to the board:

- Beginning in 2024, Salt Lake County school-aged children (ages 5-18) will have access to County-operated facilities year-round. Must be a county resident and taxpayer. The kids will register and get a My County Rec card that will allow them access into the centers.
- As the program grows, we'll offer targeted programming such as STEM, cultural, or sports programming also for free, but requires registration.
- This program will put youth on an equal playing field by reducing access barriers, and we know that there will be community benefits long-term.
- Will help connect families to social services that are needed.
- Still a lot of unknowns and things being worked on, but Martin wants the help of our school board advisory board members to spread the word on this program.
- If the County Council approves it, the summer of 2024 is when the program will hit the ground running; and use of the school communication channels will be crucial to help spread the word.

He addresses the challenges to making this program a safe and healthy environment, starting with the structure that does come at a cost.

Martin details the statistics of this program:

- An extra 1-2 full-time staff members per center.
- One new position; a full-time recreation manager who oversees the whole program.
- There will be a loss of revenue, losing the revenue of youth pass sales.
- Total annual program cost: \$2,240,611.
- Anticipating serving between 2 to 300,000 kids.
- Covered by the TRCC fund, and not going to cost any taxpayer extra money.

He mentions that after conversations with Denver regarding the program, he was told that we will lose revenue in years 1 and 2, but by years 3 and 4, we will start making up the lost revenue and start getting ahead.

Robynn asks if the policies regarding a child being too young and needing adult supervision won't change under this program, and Martin confirms that they will not change at all, and we already have policies and procedures in place that will welcome these kids in.

Martin is hoping that the current low times our centers see will see shift, and we will see constant use and be serving more people.

Soren says there are capital improvements that we need to think about in rolling this program out, although not immediately, such as an adequate number of bike racks at the centers.

Martin tells the board that Mayor Wilson is 100% behind this program, is proud of it, and lead with it in her budget proposal.

He tells the board that they can help by reaching out to the 9 council members, either individually or with a formal letter to show their support for the program.

There is a discussion about the Council budget hearing process, when this is being heard by the council, and how the board should show up and support.

Martin mentions that he and Robin Chalhoub presented this program to the TRCC Board in a public meeting, which is made up of mayors in the community and at-large members, and they unanimously supported to fund it. He continues that the TRCC Board recommendation will go to council along with any letters of support.

Carl suggests that each board member take action to show support on their own accord, whether that's writing a letter of support or making public comment.

Connie asks if she can start openly talking about this program in other meetings, and Martin tells her she can now that it's being discussed in a public meeting.

Liz says she will send the board a link to TRCC and the Council agenda page.

Carl says he's proud of the county for going in this direction and mentions that people are being priced out of our natural environments while we are opening spaces for people with this program. He says it would be great if there's a way to partner up with UTA to give these youth with the My County Rec passes a form of transportation to get to and from the facilities.

Martin says that as of right now there isn't a lot of opposition, and as it sits, he thinks it will potentially pass. He says that supporting and making this program happen is really making a difference as a board member.

Associate Directors 2023 Recap and Moving Forward to 2024

Agenda item is moved to the December Advisory Board meeting due to running overtime.

Board Business

Carl announces that December will be his last meeting as a board member and board chair as he is moving out of the state.

Adjourn

Soren Simonsen motions to adjourn, Lynette Wendel seconds the motion.