



## PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

In-Person and WebEx

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

March 13, 2024 | 11:30AM-1:00PM

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### In Attendance

**Board Members:** Robynn Masters, John Warnas, Chris Hill, Jerry Cordova Ong, Lynette Wendel, Soren Simonsen, Jaren Cooper, Connie Burgess, Danny Schoenfeld

**Absent:** Lisa Dean, Nate Salazar

**Staff:** Danielle Calacino, Patrick Leary, Callista Pearson, Jon Ruedas, Liz Sollis, Robin Chalhoub, Adam Johnson, Eliza Schofield, Amelia Watts, Grace Hanley, Brent Laulusa

**Citizen Participation:** Elliot Mott, Steve Van Maren, David Coyne, Jane Waterstradt, Rachel Jepperson, Shauna Ayres, Katie Balakir, Courtney Peterson

### Call to Order

Jerry Cordova Ong calls the meeting to order and for everyone present to introduce themselves.

Robin Chalhoub gives the board an update about the division director position, and that it has been posted. It's a national recruitment and will be open until April 15. She also mentions that Julie Peck-Dabling and Jerry Brewster are both acting as interim division director, and thanks them for stepping up to help lead the organization over the next few months.

Jerry Cordova Ong asks that they take 10 seconds of silence for the passing of Mont Millerberg, Canyons School District Representative on the Advisory Board.

### Public Comments:

Elliot Mott, volunteer organizer for outdoor recreation activities. Elliot tells the board that there is currently a blockage on the Jordan River between 3300 south and 1700 south, and there's not a way to get off the river north of 3300 south. He mentions that the County has presented a project proposal to alleviate the blockage, which Salt Lake City likes but County Flood Control is currently blocking the development of. Elliot continues to tell the board that they need a pool to practice kayaking roll practice, and there currently is no dedicated pool that allows this. He also suggests a white-water park, which would help promote water travel.

Soren Simonsen quickly adds that there is a large release coming out of Utah Lake and it is flowing into the Jordan River in the Bluffdale, Draper and Riverton areas. He says that although the water is cold, it has created a rare opportunity to go paddling in these stretches of the river that typically don't have high water flow.

### Business Item – Approval of Minutes

Jerry Cordova Ong calls for a motion or any discussion on the February 2024 minutes. Chris Hill motions to approve the minutes, Connie Burgess, and Soren Simonsen second, all approve.

### **Director's Report**

Julie Peck-Dabling, Interim Division Director presents Soren Simonsen with a plaque and personalized street sign to thank him for his time serving on the board, as it is his last meeting as an active board member. Soren thanks Salt Lake County Parks & Recreation for the opportunity he has had serving on the board and says what an honor it's been for him to work with everyone.

Julie shares with the board that Danielle Calacino attended Mont Millerberg's viewing to share condolences on behalf of the division and the Advisory Board. Julie also says it would be nice to give Mont's family a street sign as well.

Julie talks about her stepping in as co-interim division director along with Jerry Brewster and is happy knowing there will be full coverage for everything going on in the division while they recruit a new division director.

Julie also touches on recruiting and interviewing new candidates to fill the vacancies on the Advisory Board. She tells the board they have been interviewing many candidates and are looking for what new perspectives and diversity they can bring in to continue having robust conversations.

### **My County Rec Pass Update**

Eliza Schofield, Recreation Section Manager gives the board a quick update on the My County Rec Pass program. She highlights what recreation has been working on behind the scenes, which has consisted of many trainings to make sure staff are ready to go. She says that they have been having sharing events with all the recreation centers to discuss ideas and they are finalizing each centers' plans. She touches on their ideas to have the "Just Try It" events, mentions they have existing contracted classes and are working out logistics with those contractors, and are hoping to host structured events. She tells the board that the hope with the structured events is with the anticipation of having more people in the center, they can time different activities and have groups of kid continually rotate through each activity, so everyone has the chance to play. Eliza says that they are putting calendars together for each center, and they will be available on May 1.

Liz Sollis tells the board that her and Callista Pearson have been working with the school districts to make sure word is getting out to those kids in that age range of 5-18. She says the schools have been happy to share flyers and display information on their digital monitors. They are continuing to work on general promotion of the program, and intend to have flyers, posters, and window clings going out to our facilities.

Jerry Cordova Ong chimes in and says he knows that this program means a lot to our staff, and he has grandkids eligible for this program and is excited that it allows him to take his grandkids to our centers.

Eliza mentions that Doranne Pittz, Associate Director of Recreation, is down at the annual URPA (Utah Recreation and Parks Association) conference and is presenting on the My County Rec Pass Program. Eliza shares from Doranne that her presentation went well, but the other parks and recreation agencies in Salt Lake County are anxiously awaiting to see how the program goes and that they grilled her with many questions. She also tells the board that they have hired the Outreach Program Manager who will oversee the program, and her name is Taylor Abegglen. Taylor previously worked at the Sports Office and ran Corporate Games, and they felt she was the perfect person for this role.

### **Master Plan and Public Open Houses Update**

Jon Ruedas, Senior Park Development Project Manager gives the board an update on the 2025 Facilities Master Plan. He tells the board that they have completed all their area open houses and will most likely have one more public open house later this year to present the final draft of the master plan.

He says they have completed their review of chapter 3 and have five total chapters they are continuing to work on and finalize with the consultant. Jon says they hope to present the draft to the board and receive comments in July and hope to present it to the mayor in late July before taking the draft to council in September.

Elliot Mott asks how they plan to incorporate the Bonneville Shoreline Trail in the master plan. Jon tells him that they discuss regional trails within the plan, and the BST is referenced in there. Elliot asks if we've received pushback from Kennecott. Jon says that the Oquirrh Mountains is a much larger discussion, but they've had preliminary discussions with Rio Tinto, and they anticipate it to be a long-term project. Julie asks Jon if he thinks Rio Tinto allowing us to partner with them for the building and using of trails is a move in the right direction, and Jon says yes, they are happy to have good relationships with them right now and hope to continue to strengthen them.

Jerry Cordova Ong asks how many people show up to the public open houses on average, and Jon says if he had to guess, about 30 to 40 people on average attend but says it depends on the location of the open house. Also, what parks people live around and if they have specific questions related to those can affect attendance.

He quickly mentions the Tri-Canyon Trails Master Plan and public open houses for those taking place tonight at Sandy Library from 5-7pm, and Wednesday, March 20 from 5-7pm at Wheeler Farm. Callista adds that there is also a public open house on Tuesday, March 19 from 4-6 pm at the Taylorsville Library for the Valley Regional Park Master Plan.

Patrick Leary mentions that we are also in the process of working on the master plan process for the Jordan River Regional Park and will be hiring that consultant over the next six weeks to start that. This master plan will cover a lot of ground and many municipalities, and a very important part of the river.

Liz tells the board that Salt Lake County Parks & Recreation along with the US Forest Service received the Regional Foresters Award for outreach efforts specific to the Tri-Canyon Trails Master Plan. They held public outreach events called "Let's Talk Trails", that included many community groups' input.

Liz also tells the board that the community doesn't completely understand how the master plan process works and suggests that the board members help us educate on the process. She gives more details about the master plan process and how funding for the master plan happens through the ZAP (Zoo, Arts, and Parks) tax reauthorization, and moves us forward to creating the Recreational Facilities Advisory Board and going for the GO (General Obligation) bond. Liz says that we wouldn't be doing any actual work based off the master plan until 2027, and it takes about 10 years to finish all the different projects.

Julie quickly tells the board that further discussion on the bridge naming that was discussed in the December 2023 meeting will be on the agenda in April. She says there's support from the Bluffdale Mayor and County Council, but in the transition of leadership we haven't addressed it yet and will next meeting.

### **Park Policy Proposal**

Sophie Schwankl, Skyline High School Student and Councilmember for the Mayor's Youth Government presents on the dangers of airsoft guns in public parks to the board. Sophie wants to protect public parks and created this presentation to bring awareness to the issue in efforts to make the community safer.

Sophie begins her presentation by discussing a post on the Nextdoor app from a concerned parent regarding airsoft guns in parks. The parent's post explains that at her 6-year-old son's lacrosse practice at a public park there were teenagers running around with what appeared to be rifles. The mom details that multiple parents raced over to ask the teenagers to stop, and the teenagers told them they were airsoft guns which are legal to use in public. Due to this post, Sophie wanted to start advocating for the prohibition of using airsoft guns in public parks. She shows the board examples of how realistic airsoft guns look to real firearms, and although airsoft guns are sold with an orange cap on to

distinguish from real firearms, many users will either remove them or spray paint them. Sophie also mentions that airsoft guns cause an environmental issue due to their use of plastic pellets, which are not biodegradable and can affect the water and wildlife.

She continues to explain to the board that although airsoft guns use plastic pellets and not bullets, they can still be very harmful and can cause many injuries; she then shows them a list of airsoft gun related deaths.

She also mentions that the orange cap on airsoft guns is very easy to remove, but even if they aren't, they are difficult to see from a distance and anyone could assume it's a real firearm.

Robynn Masters says she doesn't understand why they're legal and asks if there are currently any regulations on airsoft guns. Sophie tells her that South Jordan, Ogden, North Ogden, South Ogden, and Centerville all have laws restricting the use of airsoft guns in public places but that is it so far for the state of Utah.

Sophie also explains that airsoft guns are not considered firearms and they don't go under amendment rights because they claim they can't be used to protect oneself and their sole purpose is to be used for target practice.

Sophie says that she met with Patrick Leary and Martin Jensen before about her proposal, and they supported it but wanted her to do more research into enforcement and how that would work. She then had discussions with her school police officer Brian Johnson, officers at the Unified Police Department, Detective Matt Peterson with the County Sheriff's Office, South Jordan City's Police Chief Jeff Carr, and the owner of the Tactical Airsoft Supply store to get more information on enforcement and education provided to airsoft gun owners.

Sophie ends her presentation by asking the board to please consider the banning of airsoft guns in public parks, and in this case, specifically Salt Lake County parks. She also provides a QR Code to a Google form to receive feedback.

Jon Ruedas asks Sophie in her conversation with the owner of the Tactical Airsoft Supply store if she asked if they've asked manufacturers to make guns look not so realistic and maybe more colorful to help discern them better. Sophie tells him that didn't come up in conversation but she's also hoping to pursue making it a law to ban the removal of the orange cap on airsoft guns, specifically if they're going to be used in public places.

Jerry Cordova Ong asks if they know how many airsoft guns are purchased in the state annually, and Sophie doesn't have the numbers but tells him they are very easy to buy, as you can even buy them on Amazon, so it makes it difficult to track.

John Warnas mentions that regarding his daughter and her school, many high schools play a game called Assassins, where the students shoot each other with nerf guns. He goes on to say that at her daughter's school specifically, it got out of hand and students started using airsoft guns, which caused a lot more destruction and injury than was intended.

Jerry Cordova Ong tells Sophie the information she has provided is good and he thinks the board will want to discuss it further and encourages her to bring more facts back to them. Chris asks what's the ideal thing to happen if the board supports Sophie's goal for airsoft guns to be banned. Julie says starting with the County is ideal because airsoft guns are used in parks, and if we can create something for County parks, it can expand from there.

Jaren Cooper worries about the unintended consequences that could happen if airsoft guns are banned from parks, and that it would cause the guns to be used in streets and within neighborhoods instead. He prefers in that case they should stay limited to use in parks but doesn't have an answer to what should be done overall.

Liz thanks Sophie for bringing awareness to this issue and thinks it's important to have David Johnson from the DA's office in the next conversation. She also says that the direction we've been given when it comes to signage is that we

can only state there is no illegal discharge allowed from firearms, because of the open carry laws the state of Utah has in place.

Lynette agrees that it's important to get legal eyes on this discussion because airsoft guns not being classified as firearms and therefore not listed under the 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment means they shouldn't be protected, and that the public has the right to make a determination for their safety. She believes that there is an obligation and responsibility by other users in a public facility for that assumption of safety.

Lynette motions that they move to discuss this further with legal counsel involved on next month's agenda, Robynn seconds, all approve.

#### **Acknowledgement of Out-Going Board Members**

Julie Peck-Dabling presents a plaque and personalized street sign to Jerry Cordova Ong to thank him for his time serving on the board, as it is also his last meeting as an active board member.

Jerry Cordova Ong shares his gratitude for his time serving on the board and the positive impact they have had on the community. He reflects on his experience and says he will miss everyone greatly.

#### **Board Business**

No other business was discussed.

#### **Adjourn**

Chris motions to adjourn the meeting, Robynn seconds, all approve.