

**CITY OF PHOENIX
PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD
SUMMARY MINUTES
February 26, 2026**

Virtual meeting hosted on Webex.

<u>Board Members Present</u>	<u>Staff Present</u>	<u>Community Members</u>
Tony Moya, Chair Aubrey Barnwell Jessica Fotinos Rick Naimark Sarah Porter Emma Viera Leon Thomas	Cynthia Aguilar Martin Whitfield Brandie I. Barrett Todd Shackelford Dustin Cammack Jarod Rogers Tricia Balluff Tannia Ruiz Cynthia Peiz Jana Benson Ray Ficcaglia Luzivette Broderick Dalia Adams	Colin Tetreault Michael Norton Ron Roedel Jeremy Schachter Michael Martin

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Moya called the meeting to order at 4:59 p.m. with Board members Barnwell, Naimark, Viera, Fotinos, Porter, and Thomas in attendance.

2. INFORMATION ONLY

No formal presentation on these items. Information only.

2a. Safe Medical Treatment in City Parks Ordinance

Board Member Naimark requested an update regarding the City Council’s recent actions related to the Safe Medical Treatment in City Parks Ordinance. He asked whether the Board would need to take action on any park rule changes following the anticipated adoption of the ordinance in June.

Deputy City Manager Aguilar explained that once the City Council adopts an ordinance, it supersedes any existing park rules. However, the Parks and Recreation Board would later need to update the Parks Code of Conduct to align with the ordinance. She then provided an overview of the ordinance and the City’s ongoing stakeholder engagement. She noted that the City Council adopted the ordinance on December 17 with an 8–1 vote and set a delayed effective date of March 30 to allow for stakeholder outreach. Staff is recommending extending the implementation date to June 1 to allow additional time for engagement and refinement.

Deputy City Manager Aguilar continued by describing the conditions that prompted the ordinance, including increasing reports of syringes, medical waste, and unsafe wound-care materials left behind in parks. She noted that while many service providers are well-intentioned, some activities create health and safety risks for park users. She also explained that some organizations distribute harm-reduction kits containing syringes, pipes, and other supplies associated with drug use, prompting questions about whether parks are the appropriate location for such activities.

Board Member Barnwell asked whether the City is examining data on individuals who have died in parks and whether that information is being considered.

Deputy City Manager Aguilar stated that the City does have access to that data, though it is indirectly related to the ordinance. She emphasized that because elements of the ordinance intersect with First Amendment protections, implementation must be equitable across all parks. She noted that service providers use this data to determine where to conduct outreach and that the City is aware of approximately 30 parks where such activity occurs regularly.

Board Member Porter expressed concern that the Parks and Recreation Board had not been engaged earlier in the process. She stated that historically, issues of this magnitude would have come before the Board for discussion and public input prior to Council action. Ms. Porter noted that the Board serves as a venue for park users to share concerns and for the Board to provide recommendations to the City Council.

Board Member Fotinos asked for clarification regarding the ordinance's definition of "harm reduction," noting that some cities distinguish between harm-reduction kits and basic wound-care kits. She expressed concern that the current definition might unintentionally prohibit the distribution of simple first-aid materials.

Deputy City Manager Aguilar responded that this is one of the primary issues under review and that revisions will likely narrow the definition to focus on items that pose safety risks, such as needles and medical waste. She noted that both outside counsel and the City's Law Department are working to refine the language to avoid unintended restrictions.

Chairman Moya asked if there were any further questions. Hearing none, he thanked Deputy City Manager Aguilar for her responses.

3. CONSENT ITEMS

No formal presentation on these items. Consent and request for approval only.

3a. Parks and Recreation Board Summary Minutes – January 22, 2025

3b. Request to Vend at City Parks

Board member Barnwell moved to approve consent items 3a through 3b, with Board member Nemark seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

4. INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

Information and discussion items will be presented verbally to the Parks Board and are for discussion only. No action will take place on these items at this meeting.

4a. Parks Foundation Update

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Brandie I. Barrett introduced Phoenix Parks Foundation President Colin Tetreault to present on the Foundation's vision and programs, and Administrative Assistant II Jana Benson to present on the Foundation's 2025 mini-grant program.

Phoenix Parks Foundation President Colin Tetreault provided an overview of the Foundation's history, mission, and recent work, explaining that the organization was established in 1979 as a 501(c)(3) and is a pass-through partner to the City that focuses on expanding park access, recreation opportunities, and community pride through public and private partnerships. He noted that the Foundation does not operate an endowment but instead directs outside funding from regional businesses and financial institutions into City approved projects, particularly those supporting underfunded or underutilized parks. Mr. Tetreault highlighted past collaborations such as community events, trail maintenance, and various park improvements, and shared that nearly four million dollars has been directed through the Foundation over the past six years to advance parks and recreation initiatives.

Administrative Assistant II Jana Benson provided an update on the Foundation's 2025 Mini Grant Program, which was reinstated last year to offer up to \$5,000 for staff-developed park improvement projects. The program received 21 applications requesting more than \$70,000 in total funding. After a review by internal staff, the Parks Foundation selected seven proposals based on creativity, community benefit, and their ability to address unmet needs. Funded projects included audio equipment for park activations, scholarships for youth to attend Camp Colley, GIS tools for monitoring tree health at the Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area, accessibility upgrades and educational signage at the Mountain View Park Community Garden, replacement of damaged WalkPHX signage, portable educational equipment for Park Rangers, and educational board games for youth nature programs. Ms. Benson noted that these projects have already strengthened programming, accessibility, and environmental education across multiple parks and recreation centers.

Mr. Tetreault concluded the presentation by expressing his interest in significantly expanding the Foundation's impact over the next decade and strengthening partnerships with the Board, the Parks and Recreation Department, and community organizations.

Chairman Moya thanked the presenters and opened the floor for questions.

Board Member Naimark asked how the Phoenix Parks Foundation compares to similar organizations in cities such as Houston or Philadelphia.

Mr. Tetreault explained that because the Foundation operates as a pass-through rather

than an endowed organization, direct comparisons are difficult. He noted that benchmarking is an area the Foundation may explore as it grows.

Board Member Naimark also emphasized the importance of the Foundation's support for programming and park activation, noting that these areas often lack sufficient City funding.

Chairman Moya thanked the Foundation for its continued partnership and its role in enhancing the community's experience in Phoenix parks.

4b. Mayor's Monarch Butterfly Pledge Update

Assistant Director Barrett introduced the Mayor's Monarch Pledge and explained that Mayor Kate Gallego signed the National Wildlife Federation's pledge in 2021, committing the City of Phoenix to creating and conserving monarch and pollinator habitats. She noted that the Office of Environmental Programs leads these efforts citywide and then introduced Parks and Recreation Deputy Director Jarod Rogers and Environmental Programs Manager Tricia Balluff, to provide an overview of the importance of pollinators and highlight related successes across the city and within the Parks and Recreation Department.

Programs Manager began the presentation which outlined the City's progress under the Mayor's Monarch Butterfly Pledge, a national program that supports monarch and pollinator conservation. Monarch populations have experienced severe declines due to habitat loss, pesticides and climate change, and Arizona's location along major migration routes makes local conservation especially important. Ten city departments, led by the Office of Environmental Programs, collaborate through a working group to implement a rolling five-year plan focused on habitat creation, policy updates and public education.

Deputy Director Rogers explained that Parks and Recreation has played a significant role by installing monarch gardens, expanding native plantings, supporting citizen science, reducing pesticide use and offering educational programs for youth and families. Recent efforts include habitat installations at multiple parks, volunteer events, school programming and training partnerships with local organizations. Phoenix remains committed to expanding biodiverse habitats and supporting monarchs along their three-thousand-mile migration.

Chairman Moya thanked staff for the informative presentation and opened the floor for questions.

Board member Thomas asked whether restoration efforts include the use of native seed mixes and conservation methods to ensure that native milkweed species are incorporated into habitat projects.

Deputy Director Rogers responded that native seed mixes are included in restoration efforts, including at the South Mountain Activity Complex and other park sites.

Chairman Moya thanked the presenters again. No further questions were raised.

4c. Capital Improvement Project Update

Assistant Director Todd Shackelford presented an overview of the Parks and Recreation Department's Capital Improvement Program, explaining that it includes the design and construction of new parks, renovations to existing facilities and upgrades to lighting, irrigation, playgrounds, ramadas, restrooms and ADA accessibility. He noted that the Department is managing more than 40 capital projects across the city and described the size of the park system, which includes 189 flatland parks, 33 community and recreation centers, 29 pools and more than 41,000 acres of desert parks and preserves with over 240 miles of designated trails.

The presentation reviewed recently completed improvements, including major renovations at Desert West Park, Maryvale Community Center, Madison Park, Surrey Park and Eastlake Park, as well as the opening of Laveen Heritage Park, the 189th park in the system. Projects currently in design or construction were also outlined, such as Inspiration Mountain Park, Granada Park, Christy Cove Park, Sweetwater Park, Hayden Park and the U.S.S. Phoenix Cold War Memorial. Additional updates included progress on pocket parks, neighborhood park renovations and the South Mountain Activity Complex, along with early design work for several GO Bond projects.

The presentation concluded with systemwide updates, including LED lighting upgrades, parking lot resurfacing and the installation or repair of chilled drinking fountains at multiple parks. These improvements enhance safety, accessibility and long-term maintenance, and it was emphasized that capital investments must be distributed across the city.

Chairman Moya thanked staff for the presentation and invited public comment.

Public speaker, Michael Norton addressed the Board and stated that he represents the Laveen community near the Rogers Ranch area. He explained that the neighborhood was established in the 1990s through the State Land Trust and expressed concern that the Rogers Ranch Park property has remained undeveloped for thirty years. He stated that it should not take decades for a park to be built and urged the City to prioritize funding for long-standing undeveloped park sites, noting that the lack of progress has negatively affected the surrounding community. He encouraged the Board to address what he described as a broader funding issue affecting multiple areas of the city and asked that the Rogers Ranch community receive long overdue attention.

Chairman Moya thanked Mr. Norton for his comments and opened the floor for Board questions.

Board Member Sarah Porter thanked staff for the presentation and asked for additional clarity regarding the asset replacement system and how parks are prioritized for development. She noted that several sites had been labeled "future park" for many years before development occurred and asked how the City determines when it is time to move forward with construction.

Assistant Director Shackelford responded that Rogers Ranch is an example of an undeveloped park site and explained that new parks rely on impact fee funding. As fees accumulate in an area, the City can begin design and eventually move to construction. He noted that design funding for Rogers Ranch is programmed for fiscal year 2028–29, but

construction funding has not yet been identified.

Board Member Sarah Porter asked whether impact fees are restricted to specific parks within the vicinity of the development that generated the fees.

Assistant Director Shackelford confirmed that this is correct.

Board Member Porter asked whether Rogers Ranch is an example of a site where there is enough impact fee funding to begin design but additional fees must accrue before construction can begin.

Director Whitfield responded that this is correct and stated that Rogers Ranch is also identified for 3PI funding, with \$1.5 million programmed between now and fiscal year 2029, but additional funding will be required to complete construction.

Board Member Porter stated that this approach appears consistent with how urban development often functions, where growth helps pay for growth. She asked whether areas that develop more slowly take longer to accumulate impact fees, which in turn delays park development.

Assistant Director Shackelford confirmed that this is correct.

Board Member Viera thanked staff for the presentation and encouraged the Department to continue exploring innovative park design strategies that support heat mitigation. She suggested reducing asphalt, increasing shade and tree canopy and expanding desert adapted landscaping in new parks. She added that these approaches can create high quality, comfortable spaces that support recreation while helping reduce heat impacts.

Board Member Naimark reflected on his long experience with park funding and noted that general obligation bonds were once the primary source of funding before impact fees and the Parks and Preserve Initiative were introduced. He asked how long the initiative would continue and was informed it is authorized through 2038. He emphasized the importance of completing bond funded projects in a timely manner to avoid backlogs that could affect future bond requests and asked how the Department is ensuring that all bond funded projects are progressing, as well as how involved the Office of the City Engineer is in managing park projects.

Director Whitfield responded that the Department received \$64 million for its 10 General Obligation Bond projects and is ahead of most other departments in initiating its projects. He stated that nearly all ten projects have already begun, positioning the Department well for the upcoming bond cycle.

Assistant Director Shackelford explained that the Department works closely with the Office of the City Engineer, which oversees administrative aspects of each project, while Parks Development Project Managers handle day-to-day construction activity.

5. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Ron Roedel, a longtime resident near Coronado Park, thanked the Board for recent improvements such as LED lighting, restroom upgrades, tennis court repairs and landscaping. He shared concerns about ongoing issues at the park due to its open layout and long operating hours and noted that many residents may not be aware of the extent of the problems. He praised the park rangers' approach to enforcement and requested an increased ranger presence.

Jeremy Schachter, a Willow neighborhood resident and board member, informed the Board of the recent passing of neighborhood president Brad Brower and described his significant contributions to the community. He stated that the Willow Board would like to rename Walton Park in Brower's honor and asked about the process for doing so. Staff explained that an individual must be deceased for five years before a park can be named after them and noted that they would follow up with additional guidance.

Michael Martin, the father of a child with neurodevelopmental and intellectual disabilities, expressed concern about safety at Telephone Pioneers Park following the removal of the exterior wall. He explained that some children may leave a safe area due to sensory overload, impulsivity or difficulty recognizing danger, which makes a secured perimeter essential given the park's proximity to fast moving traffic on Morningside Drive. He stated that the wall had provided important protection and that its removal creates a foreseeable risk. He asked the Board to clarify how perimeter safety will be restored, to provide a timeline for those measures and to involve disability advocates and families in the process.

6. BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Chairman Moya thanked Board members for attending in person and noted how meaningful it was to have everyone together. He highlighted the upcoming Lunar New Year event at the Deer Valley Community Center on February 28, 2026, from 5 to 8 p.m., a free family celebration featuring cultural activities, a lantern-lighting ceremony, entertainment, and food.

He also announced the 2026 M3F Festival at Steele Indian School Park on March 6–7. The ticketed two-day event will feature live music, art installations, and multiple stages, with gates open from 1 to 11 p.m. on Friday and 12 to 11 p.m. on Saturday. Additional details and tickets are available at M3Fest.com.

7. BOARD COMMENTS/REQUEST

Board Member Porter expressed confidence in staff's work and thanked them for looking into the concerns raised at Coronado Park and Telephone Pioneers Park. She requested an update at an upcoming Board meeting and noted the value of receiving a clear chronology of recent incidents.

8. DIRECTOR'S BRIEFING

Assistant Director Shackelford reported that Steele Indian School Park hosted the Arizona Matsuri Festival of Japan on February 21–22, a free two-day cultural event that drew an

estimated 25,000 attendees. He noted that the Dove Community Center held its first youth pickleball tournament on February 21, with teams competing in two age divisions and prizes awarded to the top finishers. He announced the launch of the 2026 lifeguard recruitment season, with plans to hire more than 200 lifeguards for summer pool operations. Certification courses are available for \$20, and applicants can register through the City's website.

Assistant Director Barrett reported that the community gathered on February 2 to celebrate recent upgrades at Dynamite Park, including a renovated playground, new shade structures, drinking fountains and refreshed court striping. She highlighted the 30th annual National Trail Trek at South Mountain Park and Preserve, where about 350 participants completed the 15.5-mile hike with support from Park Stewards and staff. She also noted that the South Mountain Community Center continues to offer twice weekly karate classes for youth and adults.

Director Whitfield reported that on February 16 the City of Phoenix hosted the CBS Survivor 50 Challenge at South Mountain Park and Preserve, where more than 1,000 fans participated in accessible trail activities celebrating the show's milestone season. He also announced that Todd Shackelford has joined the Department's executive team as Assistant Director, noting that he has been with the City since 2018 and most recently served as Deputy Director over the Parks Development Division.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Moya adjourned the meeting at 6:31 p.m.