

Minutes Neighborhood Advisory Commission January 10, 2024



Minutes of the Neighborhood Advisory Commission (NAC) Meeting held on Wednesday, January 10, 2024, hybrid meeting with in-person attendance option along with virtual component option via Microsoft Teams platform

(MEMBERS) Present: Brandon Abrahams, Lane Carraway, Martha Carter, Jan Doughty, Jana Lynn Granillo, Gabe Hagen, John Kozel, Kriste Melcher, Stacy Novis, Nancy Puffer, Joel Stern, Suri Wall, Duane Washkowiak, Brittany Wong

(MEMBERS) Absent: Annette Fields

City Staff: Elizabeth Thomas, Neighborhood Services Specialist; Shauna Warner, Neighborhood Services Manager; Keith Burke, Deputy City Manager; Alex Jovanovic, Deputy Community Services Director, Parks and Recreation; Ruben Wilkinson, Parks Administration-Community Services Manager; Michael Spykes, Park Ranger Supervisor and Michael Clark and Thomas LaMoure, Park Ranger Leads

Guests: One unidentified participant via phone

Agenda Item 1 – Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:34 p.m. by Chair Stern

Agenda Item 2 – Public Comment

Chair Stern confirmed receipt of a comment via email. Just prior to the meeting, a letter was emailed to staff from a local resident expressing concerns re: the process and proposed uses for the new Salvation Army location at the northeast corner of Rural and Alameda. Staff emailed the letter to all Commission members before the meeting and hard copies were made available at the Commission meeting.

Agenda Item 3 – Introduction of New Commission Members

At the December 21 City Council meeting, Commissioners Carraway (85288), Novis (85284) and Stern (85282) were reappointed and Commissioners Doughty (85282) and Wong (85281) were appointed to the Neighborhood Advisory Commission. Commissioners introduced themselves.

Agenda Item 4 – Call for nominations and election of Chair

Chair Stern opened the discussion of Chair nominations. He was the sole nominee and indicated his willingness to continue serving.

Motion: Vice Chair Hagen nominated Joel Stern for Chair

Second: Commissioner Carraway seconded the motion

Result: Joel Stern was elected Chair by a unanimous vote of all present, 14-0

Commission Member Ayes: Brandon Abrahams, Lane Carraway, Martha Carter, Jan Doughty, Jana Lynn Granillo, Gabe Hagen, John Kozel, Kriste Melcher, Stacy Novis, Nancy Puffer, Joel Stern, Suri Wall, Duane Washkowiak, Brittany Wong

Absent: Annette Fields

Agenda Item 5 – Call for nominations and election of Vice Chair

Chair Stern opened the discussion of Vice Chair nominations. Gabe Hagen was the sole nominee and noted his willingness to continue serving.

Motion: Chair Stern nominated Gabe Hagen for Vice Chair

Second: Commissioner Carter seconded the motion

Result: Gabe Hagen was elected Vice Chair by a unanimous vote of all present, 14-0

Commission Member Ayes: Brandon Abrahams, Lane Carraway, Martha Carter, Jan Doughty, Jana Lynn Granillo, Gabe Hagen, John Kozel, Kriste Melcher, Stacy Novis, Nancy Puffer, Joel Stern, Suri Wall, Duane Washkowiak, Brittany Wong

Absent: Annette Fields

Agenda Item 6 – Review and approval of meeting minutes: Dec. 6, 2023 NAC Meeting

Motion: Commissioner Carraway made a motion to approve the Dec. 6, 2023 minutes as presented.

Second: Vice Chair Hagen seconded the motion

Result: Minutes were approved by a unanimous vote of those present, 14-0

Commission Member Ayes: Brandon Abrahams, Lane Carraway, Martha Carter, Jan Doughty, Jana Lynn Granillo, Gabe Hagen, John Kozel, Kriste Melcher, Stacy Novis, Nancy Puffer, Joel Stern, Suri Wall, Duane Washkowiak, Brittany Wong

Absent: Annette Fields

Agenda Item 7 – Park Rangers Program Update – Alex Jovanovic, Deputy Community Services Director, Parks and Recreation

Alex Jovanovic provided an overview of the re-launched Park Rangers program designed to address Council Performance Measure 1.23 – Feeling of Safety in Parks. Alex noted that the city operated a previous version of the park ranger program years ago which was discontinued amid deep budget cuts following the Great Recession.

The new program, housed within Tempe's Parks and Recreation Division of the Community Services Department, will transition the city from a solely contracted security presence into a tiered response with 17 positions total. Two designated rangers and one lead will primarily handle patrol of the Tempe Beach Park and Tempe Town Lake areas. The other rangers will together serve all neighborhood, community, urban and regional parks working alongside other city departments such as the city's CARE 7 and HOPE team, Tempe Fire Medical Rescue and Tempe Police Department to dispatch resources as needed.

Ranger functions will emphasize education first and provide a:

- **Visible positive presence** for community and employees within parks and preserves
- **Community** connection and engagement through ambassadorship, outreach and education
- **Proper response** at the necessary level to enforce code of conduct, rules ordinances, policies and regulations

Ranger resources will be data driven responding to community calls, activity, trends, incidents and community feedback. Following five weeks of onboarding, classroom training and on the job training in the field, rangers started visiting parks and making

park ranger report entries in late November 2023. Rangers were instructed to make a report entry for all encounters. Of the 1505 report entries logged, 1387 were proactive. Education, warning and connections to services were provided.

Commission members had the following comments and questions:

Question: Where does ranger responsibility start and end?

Answer: Rangers will be able to issue city citations for park rules violations like dogs off leash or extended ramada use. Anything criminal in nature or an immediate safety threat should be handled with a call to 911 or a ranger can radio Police Department

Question: Have any citations been issued yet?

Answer: No citations have been issued yet. Education and engagement are the top priorities.

Question: What about dogs off leash or dogs behaving aggressively?

Answer: Rangers have received training from City of Tempe Animal Welfare Specialist Kristin Gwinn and representatives from Liberty Wildlife. Maricopa County Animal Control will be scheduled soon.

Question: Do most rangers have law enforcement training?

Answer: Some do. Their prior experience varies widely from former rangers, military and security to an arborist and a carpet layer. They are a well-rounded group with knowledge and expertise in various outdoor, recreation and first responder topics.

Question: Any women?

Answer: Unfortunately, few women applied. We have one female currently serving and another anticipated to be starting soon as a lead.

Question: Any diversity training? Any monitoring of unconscious bias?

Answer: Ranger training is ongoing. Rangers have received training from Hope and Care 7 Team and we will be coordinating a training with Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Office.

Question: Are you patrolling dog parks too?

Answer: Yes

Comment: The community sentiment survey post initially looked concerning to me. I wasn't sure about the source and questioned whether I should fill it out.

Response: Several social media platforms are being used. Staff can find out if it can be more clearly identified.

Question: How can we help?

Answer: Please fill it out and encourage others to do so. We were pleased that we received 427 responses all from Tempe residents the first month. 95.6% responded they were satisfied with their park ranger interaction and 85.2% reported an improved feeling of safety. Interestingly, 42% of respondents visit parks in the evening. The feeling of safety during daytime was 75.2% with night decreasing to 37.3% - an area we will be working to improve.

Question: Which parks were visited the most?

Answer: Regional Parks - Rio Salado Park and Kiwanis Park

Question: Does this survey mirror expectations?

Answer: Yes

Question: Where do we report issues like Meyer Park Basketball Courts which experience frequent usage and need resurfacing?

Answer: Alex agreed to follow up about the timing of where this court location falls on the parks schedule

Comment: Thank you for your help but I remain concerned about the ramada at Papago South where there are large numbers of homeless feeding and then staying in my neighborhood area. There are ongoing issues including drugs being used and seems when rangers clear them from the park they are just moving from one location to another. We also need more lighting in Women's Park, it's dark at night and provides a hidden hang out area.

Response: Yes, complex issues are involved when working to address these concerns. Many individuals are service resistant and may require 7 to 10 contacts before they will accept services. Our use of private security allows for improved monitoring of ramadas. Ramadas cannot be used for four hours or more without a reservation allowing for enforcement with a Trespass violation when needed.

Agenda Item 8 – Discussion of Neighborhood Celebration and Neighborhood Award Nominations

Staff provided a brief update noting that the current focus is the call for nominations which are open through Feb. 15 at 5 p.m. Staff will be forwarding out the letter from Chair Stern and Vice Chair Hagen to all boards and commission liaisons for sharing with their commission members. There are also ads, emails and social media posts going out.

Staff will forward out call for nominations graphics to NAC members for sharing and fliers for physical postings were provided at the meeting. All award descriptions, nomination forms and instructions (along with event information as available) are housed at www.tempe.gov/neighborhoodcelebration

Salt River Project has again committed to event sponsorship providing funding for elements like live music, decorations and awards. Members were in agreement for staff to pursue the same musical group and to again source breakfast tacos and print event stickers. The Playmobile and accompanying staff will again be helping to activate the green space with yard games and other activities. Members inquired about event t-shirts for this year or a future year. They also emphasized they want Mayor and Council to attend.

Agenda Item 9 – Neighborhood Advisory Commission Working Group Updates

No meetings were scheduled prior to or over the holidays. Chair Stern and Vice Chair Hagen plan to schedule them on an as needed basis.

Agenda Item 10 – Proposed Future Agenda Items

February 21 – Group review, discussion and decision making on neighborhood award nominations

Meyer Park December 2023 meeting updates

Business changes policy and process

Agenda Item 11 – Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

Prepared by: Elizabeth Thomas