

**MINUTES**  
**Washoe County Open Space and Regional Parks Commission**  
**November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

**The Washoe County Open Space and Regional Parks Commission met in a scheduled session on Wednesday, November 20, 2024, in the Washoe County Commission Chambers, 1001 East Ninth Street, Reno, Nevada.**

**The meeting was televised live and replayed on Washoe Channel at: <https://www.washoecounty.us/mgrsoff/Communications/wctv-live.php> also on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/WashoeCountyTV>**

**Chair Joell called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.**

**1. Roll Call**

**Members Present:** Kevin Joell, Timothy Dake, Miles Gurtler (Zoom), Lisa Rode (Zoom), Mark Neumann, Neal Jones, Nicholas-Martin Kearney, Sean Hill joined in Chambers at 1:39p.m.

**Absent:** Michaelangelo Aranda, Mariluz Garcia

**Staff Present:** Brandon Roman, Colleen Wallace Barnum, Aaron Smith, Jennifer Roebuck, Lindsay Liddell, Bryan Harrower, Todd Harmon, Faye Marie Pekar

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

The pledge was recited by Commissioner Neumann

**3. Reading of Zoom Instructions**

Recording Secretary Brandon Roman read the Zoom instructions.

**4. Public Comment**

No public comment.

**5. Approval of the Draft Minutes for the Open Space and Regional Parks Commission Meeting of July 24, 2024.**

Chair Joell stated a correction needs to be made regarding the public comment concerning funds from the senator's office and the process that needs to be followed. Brandon Roman stated the correction will be made.

Motion by Commissioner Neumann to approve the Draft Minutes with corrections for the Open Space and Regional Parks Commission Meeting of September 25th, 2024, with the corrections. Second by Commissioner Jones.

No public comment. Motion carried unanimously.

## **6. Acknowledgement and recognition of Park Operations staff for their outstanding service and contributions to Washoe County.**

Eric Crump, Director of Community Services Department announced the retirement of Colleen Wallace Barnum, Park Operations Superintendent. Mr. Crump stated there is a resolution that can be read today while Colleen is in attendance, but action can be taken at the next meeting.

Chair Joell read the resolution.

Colleen Wallace Barnum thanked Chair Joell and stated it has been an honor to serve the citizens of Washoe County and appreciates everything staff has done during her career.

Chair Joell stated he has had the pleasure of working with Colleen on many projects, and from the first time they met her concern about Parks was apparent, and they were able to build trust over multiple events and many years of working together and is appreciative for her work.

## **7. Presentation, discussion and adoption of the 2024 Rancho San Rafael Regional Park Master Plan, which includes but it not limited to a prioritized project action list, implementation strategy, maintenance strategies, potential funding avenues for implementation and maintenance, and overall future park management. (For Possible Action)**

Faye Marie Pekar, Park Planner introduced Lauren Jarrett and Brandon Sobiech with Dig Studios. Lauren and Brandon gave the presentation.

In response to Commissioner Jones question about painting lines on the indoor tennis courts, Mr. Sobiech stated that a lot of programs will be developed as funding

sources become available and with Washoe County and UNR's take on what they are looking for. The intent of the Master Plan is to identify areas and the general scale of what will go there, the indoor courts and how they're broken down can be distilled further as it becomes reality.

In response to Commissioner Neumann's question about parking, Mr. Sobiech stated that new parking will be filtered in, some would be immediate, and some would be long term as this is a 1-20 year plan. One of the major recommendations is a true entrance off McCarran Boulevard. Parking will not be all day one, it would be done section by section as new developments come along. There could be some Day One parking improvement that could be made for existing lots to increase parking. For example, the parking lot in front of the Wilbur D May Museum is not efficient and the recommendation is to slightly expand the overflow lot to potentially double parking and allow bus pull in and drop off.

In response to Commissioner Joell's question about loss or gain of parking and whether larger events such as the Great Reno Balloon Race, Mr. Sobiech stated that Great Reno Balloon Race has been involved from the beginning and is one of the key stakeholders. If the facilities are fully built out, parking may be at a slight loss but access and immediate parking improvements from a functionality standpoint would be drastically improved.

There is ongoing discussion about whether the Great Reno Balloon Race event grows, the balance of how much of the need is placed on daily functions and aesthetics of the park versus potential other solutions that serve large events. Dig Studios has been working with Washoe County and Great Reno Balloon Race closely and they are supportive so far.

In response to Commissioner Joell's question about the maintenance yard area and relocating the Park office, Ms. Jarrett stated the yard is expanding and they have worked on site with Park staff, made a list and checked size requirements to ensure it works and is what they're looking for.

In response to Commissioner Hill's question about when the Master Planning Process started, Mr. Sobiech stated the contract began in March 2024 and the first stakeholder engagement meeting was in April 2024.

In response to Commissioner Hill's question about the Reno Sparks Indian Colony involvement, Mr. Sobiech stated that the RSIC was part of the stakeholder groups, and their feedback was to put their community next to newer features of the park where things are celebrated and not just near nature. It is important to their

representatives to have the ability to tell their story and be visible. Mr. Sobiech stated that Reno Sparks Indian Colony's ideas are represented in the Master Plan.

In response to Commissioner Hill's question about the special district, Eric Crump, Director of Community Services Department, stated that in 2017 there was enabling legislature to allow Nevada to create Park Districts and that is being worked on with City of Reno and City of Sparks, several items have been brought to Park Commission to the point of making a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners. The momentum has not been lost and it is being worked on at staff level with City of Reno and City of Sparks.

Mr. Sobiech stated the creation of a singular entity to accept philanthropy is something they've seen trending in public facilities. Having something in place overseeing the Park District, something from a naming or a large gift to the park, puts a group together to make sure funds are going to the appropriate places.

In response to Commissioner Hill's question about who oversees the board, and who that Board oversees, and who the participants are, Mr. Crump stated the Park District would have its own board and they would be elected. The legislation is very flexible, the district can be very small or very large. In meeting with staff and bringing the item to each jurisdiction's respective Park Commissions, the direction was that it doesn't work unless it is all of City of Reno, all of City of Sparks and all of Washoe County. Once determined, all staff would be working with that respective Board.

Motion by Commissioner Jones to adopt the 2024 Rancho San Rafael Regional Park Master Plan. Second by Commissioner Dake.

Public comment by Rod Dimmitt. Mr. Dimmitt stated that he is a member of the May Arboretum Society (MAS) who was a stakeholder that participated in the process and is on their board. MAS is the non-profit that supports the arboretum and was the beneficiary in 2016 of a \$5 million endowment donation. Since 2017, MAS has contributed \$1.5 million towards operation of the arboretum in the form of staff, upgrades, irrigation and education programs.

Mr. Dimmitt stated the May Arboretum is the only sanctioned arboretum in the state of Nevada, and is a level 2 of potential level 4, close to becoming a level 3 with the Morton Register of Arboreta, which is the sanctioning body for arboretums around the world.

Mr. Dimmitt stated that on behalf of the May Arboretum Society and their members, they loved the plan and the opportunity to participate, as well as the steps it went

through, they are 100% behind the vision of the Arboretum and Farms & Families area. The goal of the May Arboretum Society is to have the May Arboretum as a world class destination.

Chair Joell stated that he will abstain from the vote as some of the aspects relate to trails and he and his company may bid on future projects suggested in this plan.

Motion carried unanimously.

**8. Presentation, discussion, and possible recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to approve an agreement between Truckee Meadows Parks Foundation (TMPF) and Washoe County for the on-going upkeep and maintenance of the three-disc golf courses within Washoe County Parks at Rancho, South Valleys, and Sun Valley Regional Parks. The Reno Disc Golf Association (RDGA) is working with TMPF through a Disc Golf Course Stewardship Program. (For Possible Action)**

Colleen Wallace Barnum, Park Operations Superintendent introduced the item and Claire McHenry, Truckee Meadows Parks Foundation (TMPF) and Eric Wonhof, Reno Disc Golf Association (RDGA).

Claire McHenry and Eric Wonhof gave the presentation.

Colleen thanked Eric and Claire for their presentation and stated the agreement will be through TMPF with a sub agreement with Disc Golf Course Stewardship Program and RDGA. RDGA puts on 3 events per year and has requested a fee waive for those events based on the maintenance and upkeep of the courses, the new agreement would allow 6 events per year. The current financial impact is \$675,000 annually, which is a far cry from how much the association puts towards the courses with maintenance and upkeep. It is in Washoe County's best interest to have the agreement formalized.

In response to Chair Joell's question on the financial impact, Colleen corrected that the financial impact is \$675 annually, \$225 per event and 3 events per year. Colleen also stated that at the time of putting together the staff report, she was unsure of the 2025 Board of County Commissioners meetings, but the item would be brought to the January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025, meeting, and the agreement would be January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025 – January 14, 2030.

In response to Chair Joell's question about other disc golf courses and RDGA's purview, Eric Wonhof stated the three courses in the agreement are the ones with Washoe County, but RDGA has helped support and design a course with City of Reno that was grant funded. RDGA will make donations to other courses and offer advice or support as they are the biggest disc golf group within 100 miles. This will be RDGA's first formal agreement with another body through the TMPF.

In response to Chair Joell's question about the current agreement, Eric Wonhof stated RDGA was formed in 2008 at the request of Washoe County but never had a formal agreement. RDGA has signed waivers and coordinated piece work with rangers and Park staff, but never had an agreement

In response to Chair Joell's question about who is hosting future events, Colleen stated TMPF would be requesting the events on behalf of RDGA through the agreement.

In response to Chair Joell's question about fees and potential cost to TMPF, Eric Wonhof stated that all funding is proposed to be provided by RDGA and there would be no cost to TMPF. RDGA has committed to providing the best of their financial ability to TMPF to achieve sustainability requirements. RDGA has been managing the courses consistently for about 15 years, by replacing baskets and pads about every 5-10 years. RDGA makes around \$3000 annually in donations and with the exception of some administration costs, such as business licenses, all funds go to the local disc golf courses.

Motion by Commissioner Neumann to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners to approve agreement between Washoe County and Truckee Meadows Parks Foundation (TMPF) for the on-going upkeep and maintenance of the three-disc golf courses within Washoe County Parks at Rancho San Rafael, fees associated with up to 6 golf events per year for the term of 5 years commencing January 2025 through January 2030. Second by Commissioner Jones.

No public comment.

In response to Chair Joell's question to Deputy DA, Lindsay Liddell, about abstaining from the vote due to previous work he has done and donations he has made to Truckee Meadows Park Foundation, Ms. Liddell stated he can abstain if he'd like but does not see a conflict or ethical issue requiring him to abstain.

Motion carried unanimously.

## **9. Park/Program of the month: Robert Z. Hawkins Amphitheater season recap and updates by District Manager Bryan Harrower and Park Ranger Todd Harmon.**

Bryan Harrower, District Park Manager, gave a background on Hawkins Amphitheater, and introduced Park Ranger Todd Harmon. Bryan and Todd gave the presentation.

In response to Commissioner Hill's question about the future improvements budget and timeline, Bryan stated the improvements are outside of what the park's budget can support but that they are fortunate to have the support of the Robert Z Hawkins Foundation who has continued their support of the facility since it was constructed and meets with staff annually to discuss facility needs. Bryan stated that he can't say they will all be prioritized this year but would highly expect moving the speakers to be a number one priority. Bryan stated the foundation is always receptive to supporting the needs of the facility. Commissioner Hill thanked staff for their work.

In response to Chair Joell's question about opening the second gate near the School House during larger events, Bryan stated it is an accessible fire exit but is unsure how much it might divide traffic as cars would be put out about 100 feet from each other on the same road. Bryan stated that it is not something they've done before but could be considered an option.

## **10. Park's Report**

Colleen Wallace Barnum, Park Operations Superintendent, gave the report.

Truckee River Clean Up with KTMB took place on September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024, with 20 sites for Washoe County, including several parks.

Bowers Mansion hosted Living History Day, and Truckee Meadows Parks Foundation does a mansion tour on Nevada Day.

Collen highlighted upcoming events. Christmas Trees for Special Families harvest is tomorrow, November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024, and the trees will be given to the families on December 5<sup>th</sup>.

Dragon Lights Reno is still happening through November 30<sup>th</sup>, and about 63,000 people have purchased tickets.

Wilbur D May Museum is hosting Tuba Christmas on December 7<sup>th</sup>. The Museum also has a great gift shop which is a great way to support local parks.

In response to Commissioner's Dake's request for an update on Davis Creek, Colleen stated that there were two planting events, one at Galena Creek with the Sugar Pine Foundation where about 250 saplings were planted. There was another planting event on November 15<sup>th</sup>, and almost 800 plants were planted.

Several tests have been done at Davis Creek on facilities that suffered fire damage, currently awaiting bids for demolition on those structures. Once those structures are demolished, the power infrastructure can be redone and once the power infrastructure is reestablished, water infrastructure will be reestablished.

In response to Commissioner Neumann's comments about the Sun Valley Bike Park, Colleen stated the bid was awarded and construction should begin in December.

Colleen also stated that all the work at Hidden Valley Regional Park has been completed after the debris laden flood as of November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

Chair Joell thanked Colleen for her last park reports before retirement.

## **11. Director's Report**

Eric Crump, Director of Community Services Department, gave the report.

Eric stated that the Board of County Commissioners awarded a bid to Garden Shop Nursery and Landscaping Division for insulation of Washoe County's first all-inclusive playground.

The Board of County Commissioners awarded a bid to Resource Development Company for the reconditioning of the water tank systems at Bowers Mansion and Davis Creek.

The Board of County Commissioners awarded a bid for the Sun Valley Bike Park. The project is just shy of \$500,000 and will include beginner, intermediate and advanced tracks, trails, emergency access road, kiosk and storage facility.

The Board of County Commissioners approved an easement to construct a portion of the Sierra Front Trail. An easement exchange agreement was approved with Sunny Hills.

The Board of County Commissioners accepted a \$3.5 million grant from the William M Pennington Foundation for the development of South Valley Regional Park. The grant will allow for softball fields, concessions, restrooms and associated infrastructure. Mr. Crump thanked Collen for fostering the relationship with the foundation and helping secure the grant.

In response to Commissioner Dake's question about the South Valleys projects, Eric stated that the project bids are separate but will be one right after the other. A \$800,000 design and engineering contract was recently awarded DOWL Engineering for design of the entire park. DOWL has been designing in phases, and the first phase will have the construction bid out and awarded prior to the end of the year.

Commissioner Hill congratulated Eric on the Pennington funding and appreciates the updates from the Board of County Commissioners meetings that are relevant to Park Commission.

## **12. Commissioner Request for Future Agenda Items**

Commissioner Neumann announced that Commissioner Garcia is holding a community clean up in Sun Valley this weekend. Meeting at the Sun Valleys Scolari's Warehouse Market at 9:00am.

## **13. Public Comment**

Public Comment by Darla Lee. Ms. Lee stated that she agrees with Mr. Dimmitt's previous comments about the Rancho San Rafael Master Plan which she agrees is great. As a past volunteer at the Arboretum and a member of the May Arboretum Society, she wanted to speak about the Dragon Lights Event. Ms. Lee would like to urge the Commission to consider not hosting the event for several years. She realizes the event is enjoyable and profitable but is concerned about the damage that the set up and tear down does to the arboretum and the time it takes the arboretum to recover. Ms. Lee would like the Arboretum to remain a wonderful place and thinks that Dragon Lights not happening on a consecutive, yearly basis would be a better plan.

## **14. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at **3:14pm.**

**Respectfully submitted by Jennifer Roebuck, Office Specialist**

*Neal Scott Jones, L.S.*

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Chair Neal Jones