



**APPROVED SUMMARIZED MINUTES**

**CITY OF SCOTTSDALE  
PROTECT AND PRESERVE SCOTTSDALE TASK FORCE  
REGULAR MEETING**

**4:00 p.m., Wednesday, May 31, 2023  
Eldorado Park, Room 1  
2311 N. Miller Road  
Scottsdale, Arizona 85257**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The regular meeting of the Scottsdale Protect and Preserve Task Force was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT:** Cynthia Wenstrom, Chair  
Raoul Zubia, Vice Chair  
Carla  
Nicholas Hartmann  
Daniel Schweiker  
Mark Winkleman  
John Zikias

**ABSENT:** James Eaneman  
Jace McKeighan

**STAFF:** Gina Kirklin, Enterprise and Finance Director  
Jeff Walther, Chief of Police  
Sonia Andrews, City Treasurer/Chief Financial Officer  
Bill Murphy, Assistant City Manager  
Brent Stockwell, Assistant City Manager  
Joe Padilla, City Deputy Attorney  
Greg Bestgen, Human Services Department Director  
Mike Lopach, Human Services Manager  
Carol Banegas-Stankus, Admin Assistant Senior

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no public comments.

### **1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Request approval of minutes of the May 10, 2023 Regular Task Force Meeting.

**Task Force Action:** Discussion and action

Chair Wenstrom called for corrections to the minutes. It was noted that Joe Padilla, City Deputy Attorney, should be added in attendance. There were format changes noted. One grammatical correction was made.

MEMBER ZIKIAS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF MAY 10, 2023 AS AMENDED. VICE CHAIR ZUBIA SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED 7-0 WITH CHAIR WENSTROM, VICE CHAIR ZUBIA AND MEMBERS CARLA, HARTMANN, SCHWEIKER, WINKLEMAN AND ZIKIAS VOTING IN THE AFFIRMATIVE WITH NO DISSENTING VOTES.

### **2. HUMAN SERVICES ACTIVITIES IN THE INDIAN BEND WASH GREENBELT AND OTHER PUBLIC PARKS**

Greg Bestgen, Human Services Department Director, with the assistance of other staff, will provide an overview of the Human Services Department activities in the Indian Bend Wash Greenbelt, other public parks related to the Task Force Work Plan, including without limitation, efforts to address homelessness in the city's parks.

**Task Force Action:** Information and discussion, and possible recommendations to staff

Greg Bestgen, Human Services Department Director, provided a historical review of the rise in the homeless population in the City. In fiscal year 2020, the identified population was 102, increasing to 114 in fiscal year 2022 and decreasing to 64 in fiscal year 2023. The decrease was a result of AZ Cares COVID funding. Regionally, there is a 7 percent increase in overall homelessness. Sheltered counts increased by 18 percent due to investments of local and tribal governments in shelter beds funded through COVID dollars. One significant challenge is with the elderly population, many of whom are living on very fixed incomes with challenges of higher rents and cost of living.

Scottsdale had the foresight decades ago to employ social workers at the City's community centers. These social workers have the opportunity to engage with residents who may otherwise have fallen through the cracks. Although the goal is to relocate these individuals within Scottsdale, oftentimes available resources necessitate their relocation outside of Scottsdale. This is particularly difficult for those who have a long history of residency in the City and have established relationships with doctors and community members. The City has provided outreach, navigation, case management and wraparound services to this vulnerable population. However, with the absence of shelter and housing options in Scottsdale, the homeless population is increasing in parks and open public and private spaces. A review of programs initiated by the Arizona Cares funding was provided. This included a six-month temporary hotel shelter program. Community Bridges provided intensive case management to every participant. Approximately 72 percent of those assisted were able to acquire other forms of permanent housing.

Mike Lopach, Human Services Manager, discussed the Phoenix Rescue Mission (PRM) Will Work Program. Homeless individuals are trained in the process of creating compressed earth blocks at a warehouse located in the City. Two meals are provided during a shift. The individuals are paid for their work and are able to interact with case managers from PRM. This includes a housing assessment, behavioral health assessment and work history. There have been 121 unduplicated participants, with 43 moving on to positive housing outcomes. Another program, Day Relief Centers, are via collaboration with faith communities in the City. Day shelter services are offered. In addition, individuals are connected with Community Bridges for navigation to other services. Since inception in early 2021, 485 individuals have utilized the centers. A total of 199 of them have engaged with Community Bridges staff to utilize comprehensive case management services. Of these 199, 130 have secured housing.

Mr. Bestgen provided an overview of program costs and services:

- Day Relief Center agency staffing: \$275,000: Navigators provide staffing for the Day Relief Centers to offer case management and wraparound services
- Will Work Program: \$88,000: Provides day labor opportunities while working on case plan to end homelessness
- Outreach and navigation services: \$500,000: Navigators interact with people who are unhoused in City parks, encampments, streets and businesses; provides the connection to resources to help end their homelessness
- Annual cost of temporary bridge/emergency housing: \$900,000: 70 to 80 percent of clients who were provided temporary housing with wraparound case management reached a positive outcome (stable housing, shelter, treatment programs); supportive services and navigators provide wraparound case management services

Member Carla noted that COVID funding is temporary and asked whether additional funding comes through Parks or Community Services. Mr. Bestgen stating that current RFP funding will be derived from opioid settlement funds. Services must include specified levels of case management and screenings to include opioids and substance abuse. Approximately 90 percent of the individuals moving through the programs have substance use challenges. There will have to be some creative approaches to fund costs for the temporary housing program, as not all of these individuals have challenges with substance abuse. Alternative funding is being sought via grant opportunities with Maricopa County. This will assist with bridge housing and affordable housing. None of the funding for these programs comes from the Parks budget.

In response to a question from Member Hartmann, Mr. Bestgen confirmed that there is some migration of homeless individuals to Scottsdale, particularly to desert areas in the northern portion of the City. Work is ongoing with the area commander to address outreach.

In response to a request from Member Hartmann, Mr. Bestgen stated that he would provide a percentage comparison between the number of senior citizens facing homelessness versus substance users facing homelessness.

In response to question from Member Schweiker, Mr. Bestgen estimated that the opioid settlement funds should provide funding for approximately three years.

Member Winkleman sought clarification on whether homelessness is an issue charged to the Task Force for action. Chair Wenstrom stated that the original connection relates to calls for service in the parks specific to homelessness issues. The Task Force is not dealing with

homelessness as one of its tasks. Mr. Bestgen added that there is much work done in tandem and that park rangers will and are anticipated to have nearly daily contact with police personnel. Both departments serve the same population and must work together.

Member Hartmann commented that homelessness in the parks is a symptom. The problem in some instances is that seniors are falling through the cracks and in other cases, substance abuse is the problem. In order to address the symptom of homeless people in the parks, there is also a need to address the underlying problems. Member Carla added that particularly in southern Scottsdale, those who are surveyed about park concerns will often report homelessness as a problem. As representatives of the community, the Task Force should have discussions about concerns expressed by residents.

Bill Murphy, Assistant City Manager, commented that there are costs to the Parks Department in addressing these issues. The Parks Department maintains the downtown area. For example, homeless-related issues occur in parking structures and often require clean-ups and maintenance. There is currently an influx of all-age range homeless individuals in the parks. According to federal law, an individual may be asked to leave the park when it closes at night, but they are free to return when the park reopens in the morning.

In response to a question from Chair Wenstrom, Mr. Bestgen confirmed that the City continually seeks out and applies for applicable grant opportunities.

### **3. PUBLIC SAFETY ACTIVITIES BY THE POLICE DEPARTMENT IN THE INDIAN BEND WASH GREENBELT AND OTHER PUBLIC PARKS AND IN THE MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE**

Jeff Walther, Chief of Police, with the assistance of other staff, will provide an overview of the police department activities in the Indian Bend Wash Greenbelt, other public parks and the McDowell Sonoran Preserve related to the Task Force Work Plan, including without limitation, details about the Park Ranger Unit and workload.

**Task Force Action:** Information and discussion, and possible recommendations to staff

Jeff Walther, Chief of Police, provided an overview of the Park Ranger Program:

- The Police Park Ranger is an Arizona Peace Officer Standards and Training (AZPOST) certified position which patrols designated areas of City parks, Preserve, greenbelt, and trails to protect life and property, to prevent and deter crime, enforce laws, respond to citizen requests for assistance, and perform investigations
- Patrols in parks, the Preserve, the greenbelt and available to assist in Special Events as needed
- Will patrol on bike, trucks, specialized vehicles and eventually, on horseback
- Recruitment has concluded and interviews are scheduled for end of May 2023 with seven candidates invited to interview

The current operational assignment is to the mounted unit, reporting to the mounted unit sergeant. The proposed assignment includes a requested extension of the unit to include a dedicated sergeant. Operations will be out of the mounted unit barn at WestWorld. The budget for the proposed expansion was reviewed. Salaries and benefits for rangers are currently funded with Prop 207 funds (marijuana tax). Some contractual services are funded through tourism

development funds. The proposed expansion will add three additional park rangers, one sergeant and a real-time crime center technician. Total budget for the proposed expansion is \$1.28 million.

In response to a question from Member Schweiker, Chief Walther confirmed that ongoing expenses are proposed to come from the Preserve Tax.

Member Zikias asked about the method for determining the ratio of time a ranger will spend in the Preserve versus other parks. Chief Walther stated that there will be review of calls for service history as well as on the job data gathering on calls for service to determine an appropriate ratio. One primary goal is to have dedicated and visible ranger time in the Preserve.

Member Carla asked whether there would be an extra cost for ranger education regarding protecting the Preserve's assets and treasures, such as archeological sites. Chief Walther said this will be included in the normal training budget.

Member Zubia asked for clarification that the requested six rangers and a sergeant would be sufficient to cover Preserve, open spaces and parks and what the goal number is for a full unit in the future. Chief Walther stated that any requested personnel increases would be based on call volume and activity level.

Member Carla asked about plans for funding growth over the next 30 years. Sonia Andrews, City Treasurer/Chief Financial Officer, stated that the Task Force will propose the time period for a potential tax from 10 to 30 years. Staff will be working on a proforma to map out the expected details for various time periods, particularly in regards level of support projections. Chief Walther added that he does not request additional resources based on population, but on workload.

Chair Wenstrom referenced the debate between calling the personnel park rangers or police rangers. Much hard work was done to differentiate parks from the Preserve. The title, Police Ranger, is very supportive of the department and carries weight and authority. Chief Walther clarified that the actual title is Police Park Ranger.

Chair Wenstrom noted that the park ranger position is identified as being for special events. She asked whether this is specific to the parks and Preserve area, open space areas or throughout the City. Chair Walther stated that it could be both. There is an all-hands approach for all major special events.

In response to a question from Chair Wenstrom, Chief Walther stated that currently, calls for service are weighted more towards park over Preserve. At this time, calls related to parks are related to an influx of homeless individuals in Scottsdale and around the Valley. Parks will always yield calls in reference to unleashed dogs. The intent is to also have significant dedicated time in the Preserve.

Chair Wenstrom asked about the pay rate comparison of rangers to police officers. Chief Walther stated that three of the current employees will simply be moving into their new positions at their current pay rate. The City utilizes a step pay system based on experience. Only internal candidates or lateral police officers transferring from other jurisdictions looking for this specific job will be considered.

In response to a question from Chair Wenstrom, Chief Walther stated that the threshold for utilizing a motorized vehicle into the Preserve for rescue purposes would be in a situation of potential loss of life for an injured person.

#### 4. **IDENTIFICATION OF POSSIBLE FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

The Task Force may request proposed topics for future agendas, but the Task Force may not discuss, deliberate, or take legal action on any matter in the “Identification of Possible Future Agenda Items” unless the specific matter is properly noticed for legal action. Additionally, the following previously requested items may be placed on a future agenda:

- Presentation from Tourism on visitor’s survey and visitor’s use of parks
- Presentation by city staff on city’s partnerships with the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy and other nonprofits and agencies for the McDowell Sonoran Preserve and the programs offered by these nonprofits and agencies
- Discussion related to funding operations of the parks (Tentatively mid-late June)
- Presentation from Public Safety on the activities and concerns of police and park rangers within the parks and the McDowell Sonoran Preserve (Tentatively May 31<sup>st</sup>)
- Information on Human Services’ current efforts to address homelessness in the city’s parks and the role of park rangers (Tentatively May 31<sup>st</sup>)
- Brainstorming session on areas and topics to survey community opinions (Tentatively June 14<sup>th</sup>)
- Sales tax revenue projections

**Task Force Action:** Information, discussion, and possible action

The following agenda item was identified:

- Discussion regarding a potential funding request related to homelessness and how it would fit into a potential bill

#### 5. **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved by Member Schweiker and seconded by Member Winkleman, the meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

AYES: Chair Wenstrom, Vice Chair Zubia, Members Carla, Hartmann, Schweiker, Winkleman and Zikias.

NAYS: None

SUBMITTED BY:

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