

PRESCOTT WATER ISSUES
COMMITTEE MEETING
FRIDAY, JULY 9, 2010
PRESCOTT, ARIZONA

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PRESCOTT WATER ISSUES COMMITTEE held on Friday, July 9, 2010 in the LOWER LEVEL CONFERENCE ROOM of City Hall, located at 201 SOUTH CORTEZ STREET, Prescott, Arizona.

A. Call to Order.

Chairman Lamerson called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. Although the meeting had been scheduled for the Council Chambers, a conflict existed so doors of the Council Chambers were posted and the meeting was held in the Lower Level Conference Room.

B. Roll Call.

WATER ISSUES COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Chairman Jim Lamerson	PRESENT
Member Steve Blair	PRESENT (arrived at 9:08 a.m.)
Member Lora Lopas	PRESENT

Staff Present: Craig McConnell; Debbie Horton; Tim Legler; Liz Burke.

Guests Present: Chuck Budinger, Michael Byrd, Gary Worob, Gordon Bean; Jim Lawrence.

C. Approval of the minutes of the Committee Meeting of June 4, 2010.

The minutes of June 4, 2010 were approved by unanimous consent.

D. Presentation by Debbie Horton, Parks and Recreation Director, on parks and recreation uses of the lakes.

Ms. Horton gave a brief history of the lakes in Prescott, noting that Goldwater Lake was put under Parks and Recreation jurisdiction in the 1970's. At one time it was used as a water source for Prescott until a more abundant supply was found in Chino Valley.

She said that a bond was passed in May of 1998 to acquire the real property and water rights associated with Watson and Willow lakes. In August of that year a 15-person citizens' steering committee was formed to assist with design of a Master Plan for the 850 acres associated with the lakes to create a 1,300 acre public recreation area for the community.

She said that the steering committee and general public all agreed on the following as recreation components they hoped to develop: canoe/kayaks, educational interpretative center, fishing, hiking, trails, picnicking, and swimming.

Swimming was briefly offered in 2000, with water quality testing done by Bradshaw Mountain Lab. By the end of each day the level of E. Coli was about triple the acceptable level as they were reservoirs, designed to impound water with no current or flow in or out at most times of the year. Because of this swimming was discontinued.

Ms. Horton continued, stating that Watson Lake was to be managed as a “no wake” area except at designated times and in designated areas. Gasoline powered engines were/are allowed under the no-wake rule. Willow and Goldwater Lakes permit non-motorized and electric motors only.

She said that the current plans are to continue to maintain or provide, where applicable, boat launches, courtesy docks, a relationship with Arizona Fish & Game for fish stocking opportunities, ramadas, fish cleaning stations, restrooms, hiking trails, grills/picnic tables/volleyball courts, horseshoe pits and playgrounds, and campsites and showers.

Future plans, as funds allow, would include working with the new Tourism Director to market and expand the assets; expanding camping experiences and opportunities and increasing resources to accommodate growth with more picnic tables, shade structures, etc.

Ms. Horton said that they were going to use \$75,000 allotted from the park impact fees to increase the number of picnic tables and shade structures. Additionally, they put in for \$25,000 to conduct a water quality study, recognizing that the algae and other vegetation negatively impact use of the lakes. She said that funding was shifted over to the water department and they were all anxious to see the results.

Member Blair arrived at this time.

Mr. Worob asked if it would be possible, if Fish and Game agreed, to collaborate with them and use their weed harvester to cut the weeds during the summer to allow for sailing. He said that it would not diminish the use of the lakes.

Ms. Horton asked for clarification on what the equipment does. Mr. Worob said that it cuts the weeds. It is not a permanent or long-term solution but would provide some immediate relief during this time of the year. He said that it was not ideal, but at this time Willow Lake was not usable and Watson Lake was getting there. Ms. Horton said that it was not her area of expertise; however she has been told that when the blue-green algae is cut, it will bloom even more and that is why the study would help address these issues.

Chairman Lamerson said that at the last meeting the lady from ADEQ said that both of the lakes were impaired and it seemed incumbent to him that knowing that fact it would be best to get the study done as soon as possible before they start marketing the lakes to everyone.

Mr. Bean said that after the meeting they met with Ms. Fitch and she gave them a draft sampling plan where volunteers could gather the data. He said that part of that emphasis is going to be learning what is going on in the lakes, but that is going to take some time to do that. He said that the \$25,000 may be better used as a solution to what they discover.

Mr. Worob said that they spent five hours with two employees from Public Works and they would like to set it up as a permanent testing process. He said that the City already has the test equipment and they were hoping to be able to continue to volunteer with them.

Chairman Lamerson asked if they were not going to be having a presentation going before Council soon. Mr. Worob said that it was scheduled for next Tuesday at 2:00 p.m. The four citizen group members will be providing some history of the lakes, the committee and how they were formed, and their mission statement. He said that they would not be going to the meeting with solutions, but rather giving an update of the speakers they have heard from to date.

Chairman Lamerson said that he appreciated that and asked them to keep in mind that the structure of the Water Issues Committee was made up of the three Council members and they were there to work in a collaborative manner with the public. They will be recommending as a whole to the Council, and one of the things they have considered is the need for a study on the algae. He said that from what he has heard to date he was not sure that marketing the lakes was a good thing to do at this time.

Member Blair said that he agreed that it was premature to advertise as a recreational opportunity. He said that they know they have a problem and they need to determine the best way to address it. He said that as long as he has been there they have had problems with blue/green algae but this year it seems to be really bad. He said that they need to consider the creeks coming into the lakes as well.

Mr. Byrd said that was the correct perspective. They collectively were trying to understand what the degrading factors were. They know that the creeks flow and fill the lakes and there are things coming downstream in the creeks. Some of it may be leaking City infrastructure but they do not know what percentage that component plays. One of the things that Susan (Fitch) and Jay (Crocker) highlighted was that they have the input coming downstream, but they also have a cycle within the lake itself. As the algae and other plant life grow up and die that adds to the nutrients.

Those two things interact in the lake. He said that there will be lake-based solutions and creek-based solutions. The work that the subgroup and Prescott Creeks was doing is going to lead to those solutions. The challenge is what the timeline looks like. It sounds like Susan is hoping to have the first study done in a year or so. He said that is also around the time they hope to have the watershed group finishing up their work.

Mr. Byrd asked what type of timeline they were looking at for the City to have the study done. Ms. Horton said that they were in the new fiscal year and the money was available. She would imagine that they would proceed quickly. She asked Mr. Worob if Ms. Fitch had indicated that they would have recommendations or just results. Mr. Worob said that Ms. Fitch indicated a lot of excitement in wanting to move forward, but it will take time.

Mr. Budinger said that Ms. Fitch was gathering the data to determine the classification of the lake, its status and monitoring standards. He did not think there would be specific recommendations but different scenarios available. He said that they may want to wait to do a blue/green algae study until after they complete their study. Ms. Horton said that if they got enough results from Ms. Fitch it may be that the \$25,000 could be used toward a solution.

Mr. Byrd said that the results of the study Ms. Fitch was doing was a TMDL, total daily maximum load. She will look at different pollutants and give them targets. From that they will be able to build in strategies to achieve what they need to achieve.

Chairman Lamerson said that this brings him back to the issue of marketing the lakes. Mr. Budinger said that they need to establish the water quality standards for the uses they want. The next item on their list is to identify the strategies.

Mr. Worob said that Ms. Fitch is more than willing to come to the area and do sampling and the group should recognize that Public Works already has equipment and manpower, as well as the volunteer manpower. Member Blair said that he would like to volunteer as well. It was suggested that it be stated publicly that the City would be working collaboratively with ADEQ.

Further discussion was held on the \$25,000 budgeted in the City's 2011 budget. It was agreed that it should be held onto for the time being and redirect it as it comes along. Mr. Worob said that he would like to see, if they need Council approval, that the people in Public Works have the direction to work with ADEQ.

Chairman Lamerson said that he was hoping to hear in the presentation next Tuesday that the \$.75/month fee be considered in the future to address the many water quality improvements. He said that the Committee members will later be recommending the implementation of that fee once it has been presented by the

subgroup. Mr. McConnell said that it was considered to be a watershed protection fee.

Mr. Worob said that he saw the presentation as having two recommendations; that the City consider enacting the resolution from two years ago, the Watershed Protection Fee, and to have the City have Public Works working collaboratively with ADEQ. He said that collaboration would take a tremendous amount of pressure off the testing process.

Chairman Lamerson said that it is a health and safety issue regarding the water portfolio of the City and the water quality; the tourism aspect is secondary.

Mr. Byrd said that he had recently been talking with Mark Shaffer, Communications Director with ADEQ, and since they had a new director they were looking for an opportunity for the director to come up and talk to the City. He said that if it was the recommendation that the committee will make, to strengthen and formalize the direction of the City and ADEQ, they could have them do that.

Chairman Lamerson said that he thought that was a good idea. It was one those things that they need to understand that others were not going to bail them out of problems; they need to do it themselves. He said that the Council has the ability to move forward. They do not have to go to the public and ask for permission to raise the rates. If it is presented in this fashion, he thought they would have buy in.

Mr. Worob said that he had previously asked Ms. Fitch if they had models of success stories in Arizona and she had replied no. After talking with her further, they would like to see Prescott as that model for collaboration, testing, etc. and put it into a package to show it works. Mr. Bean added that they also need to include the collaboration with Fish and Game.

Mr. Worob said that they will be reviewing the mission statement on Tuesday. They know they will have to go after money. Member Blair said that they also need to put a value on the volunteerism. He said that it is not always about getting money; it is also a good recommendation by having so much volunteerism.

Mr. McConnell said that because of the ADWR funding cutbacks, they are going to get squeezed big time and can look forward to new, big costs for the water enterprise. He said that they could be a model for some things, but they are already a model for a complex water portfolio. Chairman Lamerson said that some of the \$.75/month may be directed toward those costs as well.

Ms. Horton said that she wanted to clarify, with regard to marketing aspects, that they were a long way from dumping money into advertising the lakes. She said that not everyone wants on the water. Many like hiking around the lakes.

Mr. Budinger asked if the committee members could get a copy of the Master Plan. Ms. Horton said she could do that.

Mr. Worob said that they have a lot of recommendations from the sailors on how to spend some of the \$75,000 and asked when it would be appropriate to discuss that further with her. Ms. Horton noted that the \$75,000 would need to be spent on growth-related items; it cannot be used for improvements. However, she would be happy to meet with the group at any time.

Mr. Budinger said that they had three different things going on where the \$25,000 may be used: the TMDL, the Prescott Creeks Watershed Improvement Study and the City's stormwater discharge permit being worked on by staff. He said that it would be a great place to put the \$.75 monies also. He said those all would help with the water coming into the lake.

Member Blair said that it would especially help with Willow Lake. He said that it is obvious that with 450 small lots on septic, and fractured rock in the area, there is a high likelihood that some of it is getting into the lake. Mr. Worob said that perhaps some of the \$.75 could go to assisting those that do not have funding and to help them understand the systems.

Mr. Bean said that he noticed kiosks were being installed at the entrances of both lakes and he heard there were increases in the costs. Mr. Horton said that the \$2 parking fee is the same. The annual pass has always been \$40, but they are selling passes for \$20/20 visits, \$40/60 visits or \$80 for unlimited.

Mr. Worob said that it goes back to the original statement that from a public viewpoint it appears that they were increasing the fees but the user was not getting his dollar's worth. If they were going to increase the fees there should be an increase in user ability. He said that Manzanita Outdoors has a lot invested with their businesses at the lake and they are not able to use them. Member Lopas said that it depends on what they were using the lake for. It was clarified that the \$2 is a parking fee.

Further discussion was held on whether they could attempt to cut back the weeds in the lakes for the short-term to allow for more use. Ms. Horton and Member Lopas agreed that they could do that as long as they received confirmation that it would not create a further problem in the future.

Chairman Lamerson said that he felt that water quality was more important than the businesses at the lake. He said that they need the right information to make the right recommendations. Member Lopas suggested that they have Ms. Horton speak with Andy about the possibility. Mr. Worob said that he would table that recommendation then until they have a chance to discuss that idea.

Mr. Budinger asked the committee members if they wanted the subgroup to also talk about where they were going next. Chairman Lamerson said that from a transparency perspective it was important that the public hear the thought process in what they were doing. In a sensitive way the public needs to be made aware that there is a problem in the lakes, that they were looking at them, it will be a long-term process, and it will cost money. He said that the lakes belonged to the City and they were stewards of them. They cannot depend on someone else to take care of the problems.

Mr. McConnell said that a question he heard was whether to provide the plan to the Council and public and the answer is yes. He said that they need to put it in the context of the presentation that the lakes are assets of the City, but the City does not operate them and are not responsible for them in a vacuum. They were subject to federal and state water quality standards. They are bound by a specific agreement entered into with CVID, SRP, etc. which is specific to the operation of them.

Mr. Worob said that the next question is how to approach SRP. Member Lopas said that she saw this as one part of a mitigation package. Member Blair said that he thought it would be correct to involve them at some point and suggested that they present it to SRP and leave it up to them as to when they choose to be involved.

Chairman Lamerson said that he thought it was important for the public to hear that they were interested in working with the other groups: Salt River Project, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, Arizona Department of Water Resources, Arizona Fish and Game, etc. They will leave the meeting with a message to the public that they have a plan, but plans are subject to change.

Mr. Worob asked who else they need to get involved. Mr. Budinger reminded everyone to keep an eye on the schedules. When they talk about stakeholder involvement they were looking at having a draft lake improvement plan by early Spring 2011. Member Lopas said that the timeline could change based on what comes out of the information they receive.

Mr. Budinger said that they need to start thinking about the stakeholders, but they have a core committee that is separate from the stakeholder process. They need more of a program before they start bringing in stakeholders. Others agreed.

Mr. Worob said that he was talking to someone recently that told him that Willow Lake used to come up to the road, and he asked where that went. Mr. McConnell said that Willow Lake existed and then there was a cross canal put in as an outlet for Willow Lake to send water out to CVID. There was an immediate lawsuit with SRP and a settlement was reached. Associated with that was the crosscut could only be a certain size and used only at certain times. That may explain why it was full at one time, but no longer is.

Mr. McConnell said that there is an operating agreement for operation of the lakes. They have dams with spillways, and the crosscut. There is a water delivery system and there are windows for when releases are authorized. Regardless of the history, that is the physical system that now exists.

Member Blair asked if SRP had any heartburn over the volume in the past versus now. Mr. Lawrence said that the capacity at Watson is slightly above the height of the dam. There is a specific capacity for both of them and there is a real restriction on the amount of dredging that could be done. It was all agreed upon based on the court case.

- E. Discussion of content for presentation to City Council on July 13, 2010.

Discussed above.

- F. Adjournment

Mr. McConnell noted that staff has been working on changes to the water conservation incentive program and they will need to have a Water Issues Committee in the near future to discuss a proposed ordinance.

There being no further business to be discussed, the meeting of the Water Issues Committee held on July 9, 2010 adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

JIM LAMERSON, Chairman

ATTEST:

ELIZABETH A. BURKE, City Clerk