



To: Inger Erickson,
Deputy City Manager

Date: November 2, 2022

From: Cynthia Aguilar,
Parks and Recreation Director

Subject: ITEM 26 – PHOENIX PARK RANGER PROGRAM ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION

This report provides additional information regarding staff efforts to address the continued item regarding the Phoenix Park Ranger program and proposed security services pilot program and related requests from the Oct. 12, 2022 Formal Council Meeting.

BACKGROUND

An item titled Phoenix Park Ranger Update was originally scheduled for discussion and possible action by the Community and Cultural Investment Subcommittee on Oct. 5, 2022. This item was withdrawn to allow staff time to perform further research and analysis as requested by subcommittee members.

On Oct. 10, 2022, Councilwoman Ann O'Brien, Councilman Jim Waring, Councilwoman Debra Stark and Councilman Sal DiCiccio submitted a request to the City Manager to place this item on the Oct. 12, 2022 Formal City Council agenda for the City Council to consider a vote to immediately place additional security services in the Phoenix park system. This item was continued to the Nov. 2, 2022 Formal City Council Agenda.

DISCUSSION

Direction Received

At the Oct. 12 Formal City Council Meeting, staff was directed to return with a holistic pilot program ensuring security and safety in City parks and to work with each Council office during the continuance to ensure all voices are heard to create a well thought out plan. During the continuance, staff performed additional research to further the development of a pilot program and actively worked to meet with each Council Office to gather feedback on the potential pilot program.

Current Ranger Program

The Parks and Recreation Department Natural Resources Division houses the City's Park Ranger program. Phoenix Park Rangers are divided into two related yet distinct assignments: (1) rangers assigned to the mountain preserves and (2) rangers assigned to urban parks. There are 88 full-time Park Rangers and 11 part-time Park Rangers throughout the park system. At the time of this report, there are 15 Park Ranger vacancies: two on the urban team and 13 on the mountain preserve ranger team.

Park Rangers assigned to urban parks support the City's urban park system, which consist of 185 flatland parks and designated bike paths and pedestrian tunnels throughout the City. Rangers assist in the proactive education and enforcement of the public on a daily basis, addressing the Code of Conduct Policy as well as other common issues such as loitering in the park after hours, illegal vending, shopping carts, dogs off-leash, smoking, drugs and paraphernalia, and unattended belongings. Rangers monitor and enforce park rules, regulations and ordinances related to City park use and educate park patrons not complying with these rules. Criminal citations for violation of City Code ordinances or trespass notices through the Parks and Recreation Department's Code of Conduct are issued when necessary. Rangers also assist park users with various questions and requests and perform educational programming activities. Less than a quarter of all public contacts made by Park Rangers are Code of Conduct related. Ranger patrol coverage is seven days a week from 4 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Park Rangers assigned to the urban parks include one Park Supervisor, one Park Manager, four Park Ranger III supervisors and 24 full-time Park Ranger IIs. A total of eight of the 24 Park Ranger II positions were added during the Fiscal Year 2022-23 budget process. When fully staffed, six Park Ranger IIs will cover the morning shift from 4 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., and six Ranger IIs will cover the afternoon shift from 12:30 p.m. to 11 p.m. During a typical shift, this equates to having a total of six Park Rangers who ride in pairs patrolling 185 parks throughout the city.

The Parks Rangers are an integral part of the PHX Community Action Response Engagement Services (CARES) initiative, which focuses on efforts to reduce the impact of homelessness in the City and addresses resident concerns related to unsheltered individuals in neighborhoods. Rangers work with police and Community Bridges, Inc. (CBI) staff on coordinated outreach opportunities utilizing a strategic approach that identifies priority patrols via input from Parks and Recreation Department staff throughout the City and Phoenix Police Department service calls. Ranger patrols afford the opportunity to increase direct contact with individuals requiring services and the ability to immediately provide information directly to the PHX CARES program and other City departments, including Police, Human Services, Neighborhood Services and Street Transportation.

The presence of Park Rangers helps improve guest satisfaction, as well as park safety, attractiveness and usability. Objectives include maintaining safe and welcoming parks for all residents and visitors. With Phoenix encompassing over 500 square miles and

185 urban parks, it continues to be challenging for Park Rangers to frequent parks in a consistent manner.

Challenges in Phoenix Parks and Activation Efforts

Despite the efforts of the Phoenix Park Rangers to educate and enforce the Parks and Recreation Department's Code of Conduct, Phoenix parks and facilities still experience significant challenges associated with illegal or negative behaviors. These behaviors include, but are not limited to drug use, violent crimes, theft, trespassing, vandalized and damaged park property and equipment, excessive littering and debris, and misuse of park amenities. Many of these behaviors can be disruptive and pose health and safety risks to the surrounding community. They can also cause damage requiring costly repairs or complete reengineering of park amenities.

As a part of efforts to address these challenges, the Parks and Recreation Department has sought to activate park spaces for positive behaviors and uses. These efforts are aimed at engaging the local community, promoting the enjoyment of City parks and facilities, and ensuring parks provide a welcoming and safe place for recreational activities.

Moving forward Parks and Recreation staff will continue to work with Mayor and Council to identify and implement additional park activation efforts to promote positive activities in City parks. This will include farmers markets, food truck events, community events and mobile recreation programming.

Current Security Services and Proposed Pilot

Although Park Ranger and activation efforts have assisted with reducing dangerous and disruptive behaviors in Phoenix parks, they have been unable to address overnight violations and illegal activity. Most City of Phoenix parks are closed between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. Urban Park Ranger coverage is only available from 4 a.m. to 11 p.m., as their primary role is to engage with park users and perform educational activities and necessary enforcement during park hours. In addition, park activation efforts are only performed during regular park hours and are unable to address overnight challenges in parks.

The Parks and Recreation Department currently utilizes security services provided by Surveillance Security, Inc. in three parks, including Civic Space, Margaret T. Hance and Heritage Square parks. All three parks use overnight roving security services from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. each night. As a part of the City's operating agreement for Civic Space Park, security service patrols are also utilized from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. and from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. Through the roving security model, security guards work in pairs and drive to each park where they then get out on foot and patrol the park grounds. The security presence has contributed to minimal issues with crime and vandalism in the three participating parks.

To further support efforts to maintain clean, safe and accessible parks, the Parks and Recreation Department has conducted preliminary research into the use of security services in additional parks. In an effort to reduce negative behaviors, staff have identified several parks that may benefit from enhanced measures, including but not limited to after-hours security, based on a combination of criteria. These criteria include the number of Park Ranger visits and the number and types of Code of Conduct violations and trespass notices issued throughout the City, as well as in each Council District. Below are three options for consideration.

Option 1: Top eight parks citywide based on identified criteria.

<u>Park</u>	<u>Council District</u>
Cortez	1
Washington	5
Pierce	8
Cielito	4
El Oso	5
Perry	8
Cesar Chavez	7
Maryvale	5

Option 2: Top eight parks based on identified criteria in each Council District.

<u>Park</u>	<u>Council District</u>
Cortez	1
Paradise Valley	2
Sunnyslope	3
Cielito	4
Washington	5
Los Olivos	6
Cesar Chavez	7
Pierce	8

Option 3: Top eight parks citywide based on identified criteria and parks with greatest need in City Council Districts without a park in the top eight.

<u>Park</u>	<u>Council District</u>
Cortez	1
Washington	5
Pierce	8
Cielito	4
El Oso	5
Perry	8
Cesar Chavez	7
Maryvale	5

Sunnyslope	3
Paradise Valley	2
Los Olivos	6

As part of a six-month pilot program, security services would be provided seven days a week at the identified parks between the hours of 8 p.m. and 10 a.m. Security guards would be assigned to rove between two to three park locations and would perform duties such as patrolling the park, educating the public about park rules, addressing Code of Conduct violations by notifying Parks and Recreation staff, opening and closing restroom facilities and/or park gates where applicable, ensuring the park is clear of users upon park closure, relaying information to PHX CARES, contacting Park Rangers for assistance, and calling Phoenix Police for emergency purposes or crimes occurring within the park.

Once the final list of parks to be included in the pilot program has been identified, staff will work with the current security provider, Surveillance Security Inc. to determine patrol routes and final costs. Based on staffing availability of the current security provider, it is estimated that it would take between four and six weeks for the pilot program to begin. During the pilot, staff will also work to identify other security providers who may have additional tools to safely provide services in parks.

Halfway through the six-month pilot program, the Parks and Recreation Department will engage with the communities surrounding the participating parks to share information on the results of the security services and to obtain community feedback on the program.

Outreach Services

To support individuals in or around the parks, if the pilot security services program is approved, the Parks and Recreation Department will work with the Office of Homeless Solutions to return to the City Council with a plan to add additional outreach services focusing on behavior health outreach. These services would include two teams of two individuals who would be focused on connecting individuals to the appropriate behavioral health services during and after park hours.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff has met with each City Council Office as directed to ensure all voices were heard and, based on that information, recommends implementation of a six-month security services pilot program in select parks. Additionally, staff seeks City Council authorization to amend the existing contract with Surveillance Security, Inc. for an additional amount up to \$800,000 to deliver these services. The final cost will depend on the number and location of parks selected for the pilot program. Funding is available in the Parks and Recreation Department budget.