



The County of El Paso Parks, Golf and Aquatics Department

Quarterly Performance Report

Executive Summary

The Park, Golf and Aquatics Department operates under four strategic objectives established in our 2005 business plan. Our general objectives are to: 1) increase program participation; 2) increase the number of strategic alliances with individuals, organizations, and corporations; 3) increase park, golf, and aquatics revenue; and, 4) keep operating costs stable. Our annual operating goals help us meet these objectives during each fiscal year.

We are working on the final two elements of our capital projects. One is upgrading our Pavilion. The bid opening date for this project is July 20. Staff rejected the first round of bids when the base bid exceeded available funding.

The project architect, James Suerken of SMS Architects, revised the drawings. The current design includes basic upgrades to the facility along with new restrooms. The existing restrooms are not ADA compliant.

The new design provides a suitable space for a variety of meetings, parties, festivals, or fiestas. The kitchen can host catered events. Staff can add amenities to the facility over time as funds are available.

We have also completed the preliminary design work for the upgrades to the park entrance. Our design firm for this project is Sites Southwest. Sites Southwest is coordinating its efforts with RBM, our electrical engineering experts. RBM is designing the lighting portion of this project.

Road and Bridge engineers have designed a traffic-calming circle for the entrance. This helps guide traffic more efficiently and complements our new entrance. The circle will have landscaping that will beautify the entrance. Staff anticipates completion of both of these final projects in the spring of next year.

Mission Statement

The County of El Paso's Park, Golf, and Aquatics Department mission is to provide a safe, healthy, and enjoyable recreational environment for all El Pasoans.

Highlights of Current, Recent and Future Activities

The County began its accessibility work at the Park in June. The initial work requires

adding clearly defined handicapped parking in a small grassy area near the park entrance. In addition, Road and Bridge staff modified the entrance to the area to increase accessibility. Road and Bridge and Park staff have created new picnic space with modifications to the seating to ensure better access. Staff installed grills in the concrete slab for easier use. Road and Bridge staff established a visible, marked pathway to nearby restrooms to complete this area.

This work demonstrates the County's commitment to improving accessibility. The improvements to the entrance will include adding curb cuts to ensure easier access to the park for those using assistive mobility devices.

Progress on two new wells was very slow. The contractor did not reach the desired well depth of 350 to 400 feet on either well. Well #4 serves the park. It is now pumping at 350 gallons per minute. Road and Bridge staff installed a pad for both wells. Each is fenced for protection. Well #5 serves the golf course.

Once well #5 begins pumping to its capacity, staff will reduce the golf course reliance on reclaimed water. Since staff has used a combination of well and reclaimed water, it must now work on a new water distribution configuration.

Staff must consider how to manage the mixing pond. This was the location where both well and reclaimed were mixed for use in the irrigation system. Successful repurposing of the mixing pond is part of our longer-term strategy to reduce costs and increase reliance on our own resources.

The water level at Ascarate Lake is slowly rising. It had reached historic low water levels and staff was concerned about the lake's viability. With well #4 pumping, the lake looks better. Our well consultant from Road and Bridge, Edgar Jimenez, estimates that the water will rise to its normal level by fall.

Our next Kid Fishing event, hosted by our strategic partner the Ascarate Fishing Club, occurs on August 5. Fishing Club members were alarmed by the low water levels and had cancelled a fall event because of diminished water in the lake. They remain watchful and hopeful water levels return to normal even sooner.

Work on upgrading the lighting at the walking trail is proceeding. Trenching for the new conduit along the area where no lighting existed is complete. Light fixtures are on order. Staff worked with our design group, RBM Electrical Engineers, to select a fixture that would be durable and easier for staff to maintain.

Staff, RBM Electrical Engineers, and Beltran Electrical staff met at the park on June 16, 2011 to compare fixtures. Two different types of fixtures met our initial specifications. Because one of the fixtures appeared larger, staff wanted to be sure that the larger fixture did not appear out of scale with the supporting poles.

A visual comparison of the two fixtures allowed staff to select the larger fixture. This fixture has easy access features that allow changing bulbs without special tools. In addition to the easy maintenance features, the new poles and fixtures are wind rated to 90 miles per hour.

The fixtures require six weeks to manufacture after order. Beltran Electrical will begin changing out poles and light fixtures as soon as the new fixtures arrive. Staff anticipates that the new lights will be complete by the new fiscal year. The fixtures will match the new fixtures at the park entrance. This increases visual continuity, which is an important goal for staff through these various upgrades.

The YMCA, our new strategic partner for pool management, is reporting excellent utilization at all three pools. The Y is offering a range of swimming lessons at each of the County's pools. The County capped its contribution to the pools at \$160,000 for this fiscal year. The Y's job is to manage the pools with the efficiency necessary to cover all other costs.

The Y has scrupulously upheld all the County's pool regulations. At the end of the first pool season, Y and Park staff will meet to review any changes necessary for next year. The County requested that the Y observe its policies in the first year to ease the transition.

Thus far, the partnership is working. The Y's Westside branch managed the Canutillo pool. Its Loya branch on the Eastside manages the Fabens pool. The Y is managing the Ascarate Pool from its Northeast facility. The Y is prominently featuring swim lessons at all County pools on its website, www.elpasoyymca.org.

Ascarate Park is proud to host County employees on September 10 for this year's Annual Employee's Picnic. The Y will work with County staff to keep the pool open for this great event. In addition to the pool, the park will have the Delta 9 open for golfers.

Progress on Major Projects

The newly re-configured softball fields look great. Park staff seeded the fields in the fall and again in the spring. We anticipate a full schedule of utilization. Teams are already making plans to rent the fields for their leagues.

Our newest partner, the Rio Grande Racers, a model boat club had its first successful district event. A host site in San Antonio cancelled a district competition. This allowed the Racers to step forward as replacement hosts. The Rio Grande Racers combined the district race with their sponsorship of a benefit for the local chapter of the Autism Society.

The Racers were able to raise funds for the Autism Society and put a good foot forward for future district events. Members quickly built a reviewing stand and Park staff

prepared the launch site with gravel donated by the Racers for that purpose.

The “Just for Fun” Chili Cook-off at the Sportspark on April 30 was successful. There were several contestants and our own Commissioner Sergio Lewis took home a prize. The event allowed staff to call attention to the positive changes underway at the Sportspark.

Parkhill, Smith, and Cooper, our design firm for upgrading that facility, is working on a master facility plan. Road and Bridge staff recommended the exclusion of several elements from the PSC scope of work. Among these elements are the upgrading of the lighting and new field fencing.

After much discussion, PSC and staff agree on demolition of the existing clubhouse and building of a new facility. This provides the greatest opportunity to design a facility that meets future needs. As part of the PSC scope, they will design a new entrance along with a small administrative building.

This allows exclusive use of a new clubhouse for revenue generating activities. The new entrance will include new batting cages. A new location for the batting cages allows for the addition of cages.

Work on the lighting is proceeding with Musco Lighting. This group had a purchase order in the fall to update our lighting. Staff took the opportunity to add tournament lighting to the main fields to increase utilization when the Court decided to invest in the current facility. Musco will ensure that the upgraded lights meet the City’s dark sky compliance requirements.

As with the upgrades to Ascarate Park and the Golf Course, all these changes must occur while the facility remains open for operation. Staff will work with PSC to phase in elements of the project to support ongoing operation. New restrooms in the T-ball area along with a new concession stand will enable staff to continue play while the new clubhouse work is underway.

Budget Analysis/Financial Status

Park, Golf and Aquatics staff continues to watch its budgets carefully. Park, Golf and Sportspark operations rely heavily on temporary staffing during peak operational times. Park operations were draining the assigned temp pool quickly but trimmed utilization when Auditor’s staff provided a summary of expenditures.

Golf and Sportspark operations are managing within current temp pool allocations. There was concern that the golf course would drawn down too quickly on its fund because it is short on one position. Staff has worked hard to ensure that this was not the case.

The Sportspark has experienced record numbers of teams signing up for fall and spring seasons. Despite high utilization, temp pool resources remain adequate to finish the fiscal year.

Equipment remains an issue across all program areas. The Equipment Committee honored only one of the numerous Park, Golf and Aquatics equipment requests during this year's process. There is a mower down at the golf course and staff is scrambling to identify resources for a repair.

Golf course revenues remain sluggish. Staff is working with Purchasing and the Auditors to make a business case for the lease of new golf carts. The course needs 100 carts. There are only 86 operational carts at the course and some of these carts do not hold a charge for 18 holes. This puts the course at a disadvantage.

This equipment need is overshadowing the excellent improvements to the course made over the past three years. Staff believes leasing is the best option. Staff can include an operational lease expense each year as part of its budget. This allows the Court to identify every expense associated with management of this asset over time.

Grant Status

The County provides annual reports to the Texas Parks and Wildlife on the River Park Trail. The City and the County continue to manage their respective portions of the trail within existing resources. We are required to ensure that this asset remains open to the public as part of our responsibility for the receipt of these funds.

The state budget crisis has prompted deep cuts in Texas Parks and Wildlife grant programs. The County does not anticipate any new grant opportunities for these funds in the next biennium.

The County recently received a grant from the Paso del Norte Health Foundation. One of the grant elements is the creation of a community garden at the park. Partnering with AgriLife, Border Children's Mental Health and the Juvenile Justice Center, the park staff have broken ground on our community garden.

Staff is delighted to support this activity. The site for the community garden is an underutilized park area. It is the space east of the park maintenance facility. Staff has long wanted to return this area to a park use but that use evaded staff. There were security concerns because of its proximity to our maintenance facility.

A community garden is a perfect use for this area. It is a controlled use focused on those working on the garden. There is a water source available and staff has already run a line to support the new raised beds.

Dr. Ray Bader and his staff and Master Gardner volunteers have worked with juveniles from the Juvenile Justice Center on creating raised beds. The plan is to create 16 raised beds initially.

Dr. Bader has some seedlings ready to plan once the beds are complete. The goal is to have a fall crop. We want our partners at the Juvenile Justice Center to see the success of their efforts early on. The hope is that this project is designed in a sustainable manner so that the County can sponsor this at its other parks in the coming years.

Contract Status

The active contracts managed for the department are the construction contracts for our capital improvement projects. Staff has expended all of the CPCapital 01 funds of \$1.5 million allocated for improvement.

The remaining capital funds are from the CPASCPKIM07 fund. Staff is managing the remaining contracts with Beltran, RBM, and Sites Southwest and will manage the contractors for the landscaping and Pavilion remodeling when awarded.

Road and Bridge and Park staff will jointly manage the PSC contract. This allows us tight coordination over a complex series of activities. Staff also manages ongoing contracts with its concessionaire, LUMAR Enterprises, as well as its agreement with the YMCA regarding pool management.

We have facility use agreements with the Ascarate Fishing Club and the First Tee of Greater El Paso for their use of specified park facilities. These use agreements allow these partners access to assets that enable these fine organizations to provide services in the park.

Performance Summary

Staff is hoping that the County's finances improve sufficiently enough to eliminate furlough days. Furlough days strain the department's resources because we have to staff with temps for each of those days. Staff is still taking WOP hours and that diminished our personnel even further.

We have existing vacancies in all major program areas that we are holding so that we can give up the positions if it is possible to eliminate WOP hours. The elimination of WOP and furlough days would greatly improve morale.

Our employees are at the lower end of the pay spectrum. Their work is physical and performed mostly outdoors. Our facilities are open seven days per week and we must staff for that level of operation. Many of our staff are eligible for retirement but are afraid to give up their positions in the face of such economic uncertainty.

This creates a difficult situation. Older workers are productive but hard physical labor is draining. The opening of the new softball fields will add additional work for our field staff. We are monitoring the situation to ensure that our employees take appropriate rest breaks, are hydrated and work with sufficient support to get the job done.

Staff remains focused on our operational goals for the year. They are seeing the improvements in the park and are proud of their role in making all our facilities serve the public.

Training Status

Staff continues to attend mandatory training. With no training funds, we do not anticipate any opportunities for specialized training unless it is available at no cost to participants.

Board, Advisory Board or Commission Status

Although the Department does not have an advisory board, it works closely with various advocacy groups on park issues.







