

**PAGE CITY COUNCIL  
WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES  
AUGUST 26, 2015**

A Work Session Meeting of the Page City Council was held at 5:30 p.m. on August 26, 2015, in the Council Chambers at City Hall in Page, Arizona. Mayor Bill Diak presided. Vice Mayor John Kocjan, Councilors Mike Bryan, Scott Sadler, Levi Tappan, David Tennis and Dennis Warner were present.

Mayor Diak called the meeting to order.

Staff members present: City Manager, Crystal Prentice; City Attorney, Joe Estes; Community Development Director, Kim Johnson; City Magistrate/Airport Director, Rick Olson, Tourism Director, Lee McMichael, and City Clerk, Kim Larson.

Mayor Diak opened the work session and welcomed Superintendent Todd Brindle.

Mayor Diak moved this agenda item to take place first.

Discussion pertaining to Horseshoe Bend with National Park Service Superintendent Todd Brindle.

Superintendent Todd Brindle introduced Chief Ranger Lindy Mihata who will be the Acting Superintendent, and Fee Program Manager Jim O'Sickey.

Mayor Diak asked Superintendent Brindle to provide an update on Horseshoe Bend and the reason fee areas are being discussed.

Superintendent Brindle stated that this is his fifth year as Superintendent of the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area (Glen Canyon). Glen Canyon was set aside by Congress in 1972, and there are 1.25 million acres and five counties within the park. In the 1990's, Congress passed a law to allow the National Park Service to collect fees. Glen Canyon is a large and dispersed park, unlike the Grand Canyon where there are entrances at distinct places you must drive through to enter. One of the dispersed areas is Horseshoe Bend, and people do not realize that it is within Glen Canyon. The Park Service at Glen Canyon noticed that Horseshoe Bend had exploded with tourist over the last 2-3 years and that it has become an iconic place for people to visit. He stated that among things the Park Service was concerned with was over-use of the area, and visitor safety. They began looking at Horseshoe Bend about three years ago, and there have been discussions on how to better manage the area.

Superintendent Brindle stated that the Park Service made a decision this year look into issues at Horseshoe Bend. They have had discussions with Mayor Diak, Coconino County, and others about infrastructure improvements that can be done for the visitors, as well as protecting the resources. He stated that the Park Service was researching the fee revenue that they had not been collecting.

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This year he asked his staff to gather information about who was visiting Horseshoe Bend, to determine if they are also entering Glen Canyon at another entrance, and/or going on to visit another National Park, as well as just the number of visitors at Horseshoe Bend. Staff has also been asking the commercial users if they were aware that they are entering Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, a National Park Service fee area. Superintendent Brindle stated that the Park Service would not collect fees at Horseshoe Bend until they had the support of the City.

Superintendent Brindle stated that the Park Service has entered into a partnership project with the City and Coconino County regarding improvements and resource protection. He said next year is the 100 Year Anniversary for the establishment of the National Park System. The National Park Service is looking nationwide for Centennial Signature Projects to showcase. There has been discussion about using Horseshoe Bend as a Centennial Project. There is a partnership project in place called the Centennial Challenge. The Horseshoe Bend project would be approximately a 1.4 million dollar project. The Centennial Challenge Grant has been applied for and the cost for the improvements will be shared between the Park Service, the City of Page, and Coconino County. The improvements may include the parking lot, solar lighting, sustainable restrooms, and improvement to the rim trail. If the grant is approved it should be funded in 2017.

Mayor Diak asked Superintendent Brindle when he would know if the grant was awarded.

Superintendent Brindle stated that they should know by the end of this calendar year.

Mayor Diak asked if a formal survey was completed to find out who the visitors were, if they were paying an entrance fee at a different area, or are they sole visitors to Horseshoe Bend and not the rest of the recreation area?

Superintendent Brindle stated that they are not doing a formal survey, they are only approaching the commercial drivers; they are trying to capture busses and commercial tours when they are parked and the tourists are out exploring Horseshoe Bend.

Mayor Diak stated that the City did receive some complaints that visitors were directed to go to Wahweap and pay a fee and then they could come back. He stated that Superintendent Brindle had addressed that issue in an e-mail. The City of Page did its own survey and people were being turned away.

Jim O'Sickey stated that the Park Service staff was directed to contact commercial busses when appropriate and ask if they paid a fee. If they said "no, where do we pay?", they were then told that they can pay at the Wahweap Fee Booths.

Councilor Bryan stated concerns that he has not been involved in any plans regarding Horseshoe Bend.

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Mayor Diak stated that an application was submitted for grant money for the Horseshoe Bend Trail project, but that there has been no planning; without the grant money the City cannot move forward with the project.

City Manager Crystal Prentice stated that Mayor Diak, Councilor Warner and herself met with National Park Service personnel and discussed the 2009 Glen Canyon Rim Trail Assessment. The Park Service personnel told them about a grant opportunity (Centennial Challenge). Ms. Prentice stated that this was referenced in the City Manager's report, and that there was no commitment when the grant was applied for. If the grant is awarded, it will be presented to City Council at that time.

There was discussion pertaining to issues at Horseshoe Bend: increased traffic, parking lot filling up, vehicles having to park on the highway, trash, and the lack of public restrooms.

Mayor Diak commented on the amount of visitors at Horseshoe Bend in March, the beginning of the tourism season. He stated that the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) was getting involved, due to the highway being inundated with parking along both sides of the highway.

Mayor Diak stated that there was a lot of concern regarding it becoming a fee area. He asked if it would be a standalone fee area.

Councilor Sadler asked if there would actually be a fee booth in the area.

Superintendent Brindle stated that there are no plans for a fee booth.

Fee Program Manager Jim O'Sickey stated that the Park Service staff at Horseshoe Bend was asked to count private and commercial vehicles. He said that he directed his staff to contact the commercial operators, when their bus or van was empty, to let them know that they were in a fee area. They estimated that most of the private vehicles have an annual pass, some people did not realize that they were in a fee area, and some of the commercial vans were only going as far as Antelope Canyon. The majority of the visitors were from Las Vegas and California. Park Service staff reported that at 6:00 a.m. there were approximately 25 vehicles and by 10:00 a.m. vehicles were parking on the highway.

There was discussing regarding the trash, and the lack of public restrooms.

Superintendent Brindle stated that they are not turning anyone away, and they do advise the visitors to take water with them.

Councilor Warner stated that a master plan needs to be done, that the City and Park Service need to work together to plan the parking lot for private vehicles and a place for busses to park. He stated that he would like to have data to determine how many people are attending, and then determine how many people to accommodate. He stated that he did not feel it was appropriate for the City or Park Service to charge a fee without any services.

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Superintendent Brindle stated that an entrance fee is not for services, it is for entering the park. The Park Service is not contemplating collecting a fee at that location.

There was discussion pertaining to different areas of Glen Canyon where fees may or may not be charged.

There was lengthy discussion.

Councilor Tennis stated concerns that the commercial drivers may bypass the City of Page and take a different route due to the solicitation for a fee. He then referenced the ramada at Horseshoe Bend that the Canyon Club installed, and all of the improvements that the City has put into Horseshoe Bend, and this was an opportunity for people to do something without an entrance fee. He asked if there would be revenue sharing, if there was a fee.

There was discussion.

Councilor Bryan stated that the City does not want this to be a fee area, and asked if there was an option to not have a fee to enter Horseshoe Bend?

Superintendent Brindle stated that anytime the Park Service considers fee collection, they look at the cost of collection verses the revenue. He gave the example of the Chains and Hanging Gardens where there is not enough visitation to legitimize doing onsite collection. The first steps they were taking this summer at Horseshoe Bend were to find out how many busses were paying and how many were not. If the results show that the majority of them have paid somewhere else, then yes.

Superintendent Brindle stated that more infrastructure to protect the area and visitors does not come for free. He is proposing that if there is revenue based on people paying to visit Horseshoe Bend, they can turn around and put some of the money into infrastructure.

There was further discussion.

It was decided at this time to remove the second agenda item until a later date.

Mayor Diak stated that Horseshoe Bend is important to the city and the community of Page and that City Council took action to protect that area. Thirty-six (36) acres was declared to be open space to prevent an intrusion of commercial entities into that area. The City wanted to keep it from becoming commercialized and a fee area. That is still a concern for the City of Page and those sitting on City Council at this time, and hopefully those in the future. He said that there are very few things that are free in the USA today, at least free from a fee.

Discussion continued.

Bryan Price, 245 Hopi Avenue, stated his concern regarding Horseshoe Bend being a fee area and the volume of visitors that have gone to the area because it was free.

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Superintendent Brindle stated that it has always been a fee area. Glen Canyon is all a fee area.

There was discussion.

Gary Ladd, 1808 Rimview Drive made a statement that Horseshoe Bend is a tremendous asset for the City of Page and to be careful with it. He stated concerns that the Park Service was out there talking to people about fees because there are no signs to indicate that they are entering Glen Canyon and that there is a fee. He stated concerns about the parking lot and people parking along the highway. He talked about improvements to the area that he felt were important.

There was discussion pertaining to involving ADOT for signage.

Councilor Warner stated that he would like to move forward with this project and he proposed that the stakeholders work together and hire a consultant to facilitate the project. He asked that this be placed on an agenda.

Superintendent Brindle stated that if the City was requesting that the Park Service no longer contact buses, they will stop.

Mayor Diak stated that the City would like that, but that there will be an active effort to work with the Park Service to notify the public through handouts, what is coming in the future, including the tour groups, if this is the direction that is decided.

Councilor Sadler commented that if the City wants to take the lead, that the City needs to do a formal count as to how many people, cars and buses, go to Horseshoe Bend.

Discussion concerning the possible amendment to the City Code Section 3-5-5 Lease of City Property relating to publication requirements and costs, and the possible exemption of airport hanger leases, and other leases of nominal value.

Agenda item was removed.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:37 p.m.

  
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Kim Larson  
City Clerk

  
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William R. Diak  
Mayor

## CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the City Council Work Session, held on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2015. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and that a quorum was present.

Dated this 9th day of September, 2015

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kim Larson".

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Kim Larson, City Clerk