

Dear Commissioners,

The Washoe County Regional Parks and Open Space Commission, in its advisory capacity to the Washoe County Commission, have voted (unanimously) to recommend that you increase the budget allocation to the County Regional Parks and Open Spaces in the upcoming budget.

In the budget cuts starting in 2008, the Parks budget was cut by two thirds, from 9 million dollars to 3 million dollars and has remained at that level. No other county department took as great a hit. We know money is still short, but many departments have had their budgets restored and we feel that it is time that the Parks Department had its funding reinstated.

If you gave Parks one million dollars more each year for the next 6 years, it would only get it back to its 2008 level of funding by 2021.

In the seven years since 2008, visitation at Regional Parks has gone from 3.6 million visits to 5 million and the number of acres in the system has increased. Washoe County Parks and Open spaces supervise 13,000 acres stretching from parks in Washoe Valley to the Sheldon Antelope Refuge at the Oregon border. Parks has more buildings than the Library system, which has more than twice the staff and three times the funding, but even the library is not fully funded.

With less than half the employees it had in 2008, the Park staff has managed to keep the system functioning, but the lack of funds and manpower is obvious in many areas. For example:

1. Their mowers and other equipment are worn out and need replacement. Their vehicles are also in the same condition and they do not have enough, which sometimes means seasonal employees cannot get themselves and their equipment to a work site.
2. Playing fields have not been fertilized regularly for five years. If these fields do not get the needed maintenance soon, they will fail and have to be re-turfed, which would be a large capital outlay.
3. During these lean years there has been no weed abatement. This is a fire hazard, is unsightly, and leads to a weed explosion.
4. There are no portable rest rooms, no gates opened or closed, and minimal trash collection.

The county puts culture and recreation low on the priority list, but this does not reflect public sentiment. When the County attempted to close Sun Valley Swimming Pool that community took over the pool and is running it and four parks, with a monthly assessment from each home. Recently the city of Reno tried to close Traner Pool, but had to reverse itself because of public outcry.

Your mission statement says you are “working together to provide and sustain a *safe, secure, and healthy* community.”

The crime rate continues to go down, so the County Commission is doing an excellent job of making the community safe and secure. Parks and Open Spaces, by their very nature, are very much part of community health.

So please begin to fully fund these wonderful public resources.

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