



Public Facilities, Recreation & Special Events

Memorandum

DATE: July 21, 2017
TO: Stephanie Small, Community Services Director
FROM: Erik Strunk, Director, Public Facilities, Recreation and Special Events
SUBJECT: Follow Up to Request on Homeless Information

The Parks and Recreation Division is responsible for enforcing Chapter 27 of the City Code, which is entitled "Parks and Recreation". The Parks Ranger Division is responsible for enforcement of this Code. As with other City Codes, the Police Department also can cite provisions of this code, as necessary. Chapter 27 as currently written, does not address homelessness or activities that may be typically associated with the topic. Rather, its focus is on the proper use of the park for enjoyment and safety.

The Park Ranger Division consists of two full-time employees and approximately six part-time employees. They do not have the authority to arrest, detain, or issue citations for alleged trespass or urban camping violations. They do not monitor or enforce other sections of the City Code that may govern other public property such as the Civic Center, the Public Memorial Plaza, the Bead Museum, City Hall, or the Velma Teague Library. In such cases, should they have a concern or witness an alleged crime, they are trained to contact the proper authorities - the Glendale Police Department - for any necessary enforcement action.

The primary function of our Park Rangers is to provide general assistance to all park patrons and enforce parks rules and regulations for our 2,100-acre park system. Their hours of operation range from 6 a.m. – 12:00 a.m., seven days a week. Most of our busiest times are immediately after work and during the weekends and holidays – when our parks are typically used the most. For the most recent year available, the Park Ranger Division responded and documented approximately 20,567 types of incidents in our parks system. Examples would include providing general assistance to park patrons (i.e. - dead car batteries, flat tires, water distribution, etc.), verbal warnings, written warnings, parking citations, vandalism, etc.

For those cases in which they encounter a homeless person, they are trained to safely engage them in conversation to determine whether they can assist by placing them in contact with one of our non-profit homeless assistance providers. For example, over the past three months, we have convinced six homeless persons to voluntarily leave Murphy Park and seek the assistance either US Vets and/or the Phoenix Rescue Mission. We plan to continue these efforts. The Park Rangers always stress compassion and education first, then enforcement as a last resort.

As with all park patrons in Glendale, it is important to note that unless they are violating a park rule, they are welcome to use the park. The prolonged use of a park bench on which to sit is not a crime, nor is laying in the grass. However, if there are signs that a violation has occurred (Urban Camping, litter, trash, alcohol, drugs, etc.), we can and will contact the proper authorities who can then take enforcement action as appropriate. As mentioned earlier, our Park Rangers only have this authority on city-owned properties designated as part of our park system.

July 21, 2017

Memo on Department Homeless Efforts

Page – 2

If a Park Ranger staff engages individuals in the park after hours, we notify them of the park hours (which are also posted on the park sign) and they are asked to leave. If they refuse, our Park Rangers can and will contact the Glendale Police Department and a trespassing citation can be issued.

Since the presentation of the City's homeless strategy in August 2016 and its subsequent implementation last Fall, the department has been very active in contributing to the City's collective effort to address the issue. Since its implementation:

- The Glendale Parks and Recreation Division has been actively participating in the City-wide homeless task force to better coordinate and address what it can do, to address issues related to homeless not in only parks, but city-wide in general.
- In February 2016, we hired a new Parks Ranger Supervisor who is tasked with assessing and professionalizing our Park Ranger Division.
- We have hired four new part-time Park Rangers to assist with patrolling and enforcement and over the next twelve months, have plans to hire seven more on a part-time basis.
- We are in the process of equipping Park Rangers with new technology to allow for enhanced communication and reporting, which will allow more time in our parks and more contact with individuals who may be homeless or seeking assistance.
- Our Park Rangers meet monthly with the Glendale Police Department to discuss concerns and issues in our parks (including homelessness).
- We are currently reviewing our park code to ensure it is enforceable and meets the needs of our community. We want to make sure of the enforceability of Section 27 of the City Code and to ensure its legal language is reflective of community needs. The intent is to conduct this review over the coming months and bring it to the Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council, for formal consideration.

If you have any questions, or my team can be of assistance, please feel free to contact me directly at 623-930-2827.

C: Tom Duensing, Assistant City Manager
Rick St. John, Chief of Police
Tim Barnard, Assistant Director, PFRSE
Charyn Eirich-Palmisano, Community Revitalization Administrator
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