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# SALT LAKE CITY COUNCIL MEMO

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**DATE:** April 5, 2005  
**SUBJECT:** Parks Division Briefing  
**STAFF REPORT BY:** Gary Mumford

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The Parks Division is responsible for maintaining 135 individual parks and open space areas including mowing, irrigation, planting, fertilization, pest control, garbage removal, and snow removal. The Parks Division is also responsible for the cemetery and graffiti removal. The Division has 123.56 authorized full-time equivalent positions.

The transmittal from the Division provides an organizational chart and discusses accomplishments, challenges and service levels. The accomplishments include implementing radio-controlled computerized irrigation systems at 20 parks. Water use was reduced by 24% over the last two years. Challenges include: (1) the increase in the acres and number of park sites to maintain, and (2) the increase in the number of special events requiring Parks Division support. Recent additions to the park system include the Library Square, Jordan River Trail from North Temple to 1800 North, two skateparks, and three off-leash sites. The Parks Department mows each park once a week.

The following chart shows the adopted budget for each of the last four years.

<b>Parks Division Budget Comparison</b>		
<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Percent Change</b>
2001-02	\$5,979,755	
2002-03	\$6,313,465	5.6%
2003-04	\$6,702,021	6.2%
2004-05	\$7,138,766	6.5%

Following the Division's presentation, Council Members may wish to ask questions including some of the following:

1. What are the plans and timing for continuing the implementation of computerized irrigation systems?

2. What type of assistance is required of Parks Division staff for special events held in City parks? Are these costs charged to event organizers?
3. Does the Division have maintenance or vandalism concerns with the skateparks? Would the Division like to see additional skateparks? Have any locations been identified?
4. Approximately how many more years will cemetery plots be available for sale to the general public at the City Cemetery? Has the Division explored any alternatives such as acquiring other property for cemetery use?
5. Is the amount of graffiti increasing or decreasing? Has the Division been able to continue to achieve its goal of removing graffiti within two days?

The Council asked that responses to the following questions be included in the Division's handout. The Division responded to these questions in the attached transmittal.

1. What successes has your Division achieved in the recent past, and what successes do you see in the near future?
2. What are the most significant challenges the Division will face in the near future?
3. Have the services provided by the Division increased / decreased or remained the same over the past two or three years, and do you anticipate that service levels will increase, decrease, or remain the same in the near future?
4. Are there service level improvements that could be made in your Division with a minimal investment of funding, or are there functions where additional resources may be needed in order to maintain current service levels?

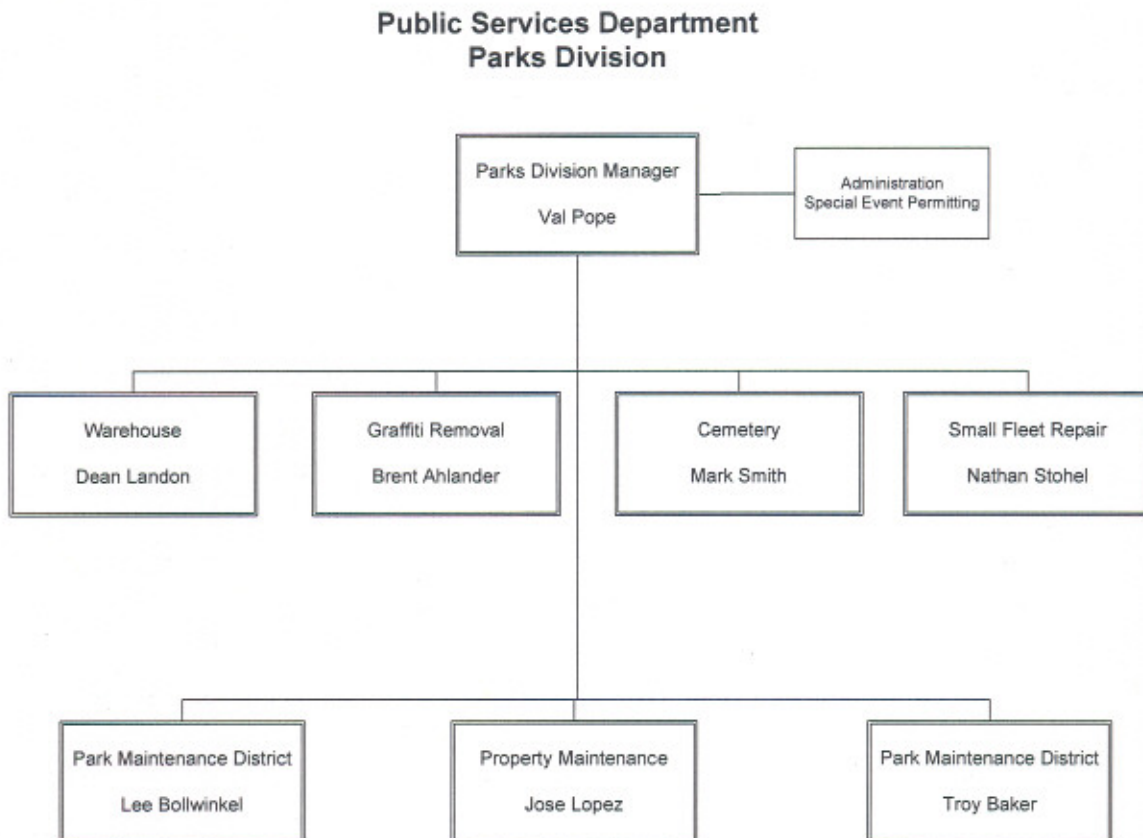
**PARKS DIVISION  
BRIEFING TO THE COUNCIL  
APRIL 7, 2005**

*List the functions / services performed by the Division and an organizational chart, including the number of FTE's. Provide information on any service level measurements available.*

The Parks Division of the Department of Public Services is made up of four programs:

- parks maintenance,
- cemetery
- special events
- graffiti removal

The division has a total of 123.56 FTEs. The organizational chart for the Parks Division is as follows:



These divisions provide the following services:

### **Park Maintenance Program**

The Parks Maintenance Programs ensures the preservation, development and maintenance of parks and open space in neighborhoods throughout the City. This program also ensures that existing park facilities meet current recreational needs and standards.

- Maintains 135 individual parks and open space areas, including weekly mowing, irrigation, planting, fertilization, pest control, pruning, garbage removal, and snow removal
- Maintains 59 playgrounds
- Maintains 236 athletic fields and courts
- Maintains over 12 miles of trails
- Maintains four off-leash areas
- Reserves park facilities for group picnics, weddings and other special events
- Supports athletic events and large scale special events and festivals in City parks
- Operates two greenhouses for the propagation and planting of City landscaping

### **Cemetery Program**

The Cemetery Program provides a respectable, safe and attractive burial place while preserving the historical significance of the Salt Lake City Cemetery, which was founded in 1847.

- There are over 118,800 people in the city cemetery whose graves are maintained through a perpetual contract, which represents a 2 ½ % increase over 2004.
- There are approximately 4,500 graves yet to sell at the Cemetery, which represents approximately 25% less plots than were available in recent years. This reduction in plots available is due to increased efforts to sell the remaining plots
- The Cemetery sells 180 to 220 plots per year and there are approximately 36,500 plots that have been sold that will be used in the future by the owners. Fewer plots are being sold each year due to the decreasing number of available plots and location of these remaining plots.
- There are between 550 and 600 burials each year. This represents a 9% increase over recent years.

### **Graffiti Removal Program, "Off the Wall"**

The Graffiti Removal Program provides removal of observed or reported graffiti within two days from private properties, as well as City facilities and infrastructure.

- Graffiti teams respond to an average of 5,020 sites annually. The number of graffiti responses has stayed relatively level over the past few years.
- Graffiti is removed on public and private property (with a waiver.)
- There is an Adopt-A-Spot Program where others can cover graffiti with material supplied by the City.

### **Special Events**

The Special Events Program permits, coordinates, and supports over 400 special events, free-expression activities, and filmmaking activities in the city. Because it serves as the social and political center of the valley, Salt Lake City permits more special events and free-expression activities than other cities in the County.

*What successes has your Division achieved in the recent past, and what successes do you see in the near future?*

The Parks Division made the following accomplishments in Fiscal Year 2004-05, including:

- Implementing radio-controlled computerized irrigation systems at 20 parks. These systems are controlled by a weather station that turns off irrigation in the event of natural precipitation. This continued automation of the irrigation system in City parks will reduce the city's use of unnecessary water, and increase the time available for parks maintenance staff to proactively maintain and repair the parks system as necessitated by the increase in usage. The Division was able to stretch its funding and convert more of the system than planned by utilizing rebates from the supplier, and efficiencies within its maintenance program.
- Reducing water use by 24% over the last two years.
- Receiving the Recycling Aluminum Can Award from the National Conference of Mayors for its efforts in educating the public about aluminum can recycling. The Parks Division created the can structure that won the \$5,000 prize, which will be used to further recycling efforts within the city.
- Acquiring the Jordan River Trail from North Temple to 1800 north, and improving lighting on the Jordan River Trail from 21<sup>st</sup> so. To I-80.
- Acquiring the operational responsibilities for the Library Block, including support for all special events on the Plaza and Commons.
- Installing Olympic Legacy Projects in the Peace Gardens, Jordan River Trail and Memory Grove "A" street trail.
- Renovating the North Shelter in Liberty Park for Youth City Programs.
- Renovating the Glendale Tennis Courts, Liberty Tennis Courts, and Dee Glenn Tennis Courts; as well as constructing a new tennis building in Liberty Park.
- Making improvements to Liberty Park (culinary water system improvements, addition of concrete tables, signage improvements, replacement of the concession stand).
- Updating park reservation system, in order to better account for the collection of fees; this system will enable the division to bring reservations online in the future.
- Working with UDOT to enhance the aesthetic quality of the improvements to the 700 east medium strip between 1300 South and 900 South.
- Opening two new skateparks (Jordan and Fairmont Parks).
- Replacing over seven playgrounds.

In the near future, the Parks Division will accomplish the following:

- Assisting in the development and operation of the publicly-approved sports complex. This complex will address the increasing demand for athletic fields within the city, leaving neighborhood parks for neighborhood use, and reducing traffic and congestion in these neighborhoods
- Continuing the implementation of computerized irrigation systems in city parks and the cemetery.
- Participating in the renovation of Ottinger Hall for YouthCity programming in Memory Grove Park.
- Potentially extending the Jordan River Trail from 1800 North to 2400 North.
- Adding three off-leash sites to the park system.
- Adding one to two new skateparks to address existing demand.
- Expanding the Peace Gardens in Jordan Park.

***What are the most significant challenges the Division will face in the near future?***

The most significant challenges the Division will face in the future include:

- Increased costs for staffing, materials and utilities
- Increase in the number of special events requiring Parks Division support.
- Increase in the acres and number of park sites to maintain.
- Ability to address the capital repair and replacement needs within the City parks system.
- Lack of open green space to accommodate athletic activities – the publicly-approved sports complex is anticipated to alleviate this need for athletic field space.
- Over use of athletic fields - the publicly-approved sports complex is anticipated to alleviate the overuse by providing alternative athletic field space. The division will need to develop a proactive program for taking parks out of service for reseeding and repair in order to protect the asset for future use.
- Continued efforts to reduce the use of water in public parks while maintaining the turf.

***Have the services provided by the Division increased / decreased or remained the same over the past 2 or 3 years and do you anticipate that service levels will increase, decrease or remain the same in the near future?***

Service levels within the Division have increased over the past few years with the increased demand for special event support, increased demand for the use of athletic fields, and addition to the parks system of amenities such as skate parks and dog off-leash parks. Service levels are anticipated to continue to increase with the addition of new open green space acquired with bond funds, and the required administrative coordination for the Open Space Advisory Board; and with the opening of the new sports complex.

***Are there service level improvements that could be made in your Division with a minimal investment of funding or are there functions where additional resources may be needed in order to maintain current service levels?***

The Parks Division has installed a computerized irrigation system in a number of the City's Parks and open green space with the commitment of saving water. We would like to see the commitment to the computerized irrigation system continued allowing the efficient use of water and reducing the consumption water.

Other items that the Parks Division would prioritize for additional funding include:

- More proactive fertilization and spraying of weeds to protect the integrity of the turf over the long run.
- Baseball and soccer athletic field improvements
- The additional of amenities in increased demand including a rock climbing wall, more skateparks, and a BMX park.