

From: [Martin Whitfield](#)
To: [Ed Zuercher](#); [David Mathews](#)
Subject: RE: Request for explanation: Echo Canyon trailhead hours changed without public notice
Date: Friday, August 21, 2026 4:10:00 PM

Hi Ed,

The hours of operation of sunrise to sunset were approved by the Parks Board and have been in place since before the HOA development agreement which was executed in 2013. Posted signage at Echo Canyon has said sunrise to sunset since before the development agreement was executed. The custodial contractor responsible for cleaning the restrooms have been leaving the manual gate open regularly allowing hikers to access the parking lot and trail before sunrise. In early June 2026 contracted security guards noticed the custodial contractor was leaving the gates open and notified Parks staff. Parks staff notified the custodial contractor to not leave the gate open. Parks staff has been opening the gate at 5am before sunrise on a daily basis. An electronic gate will be installed by the end of September which will allow Parks staff to open and close the gate remotely. The software will also allow the gate to be closed during extreme heat warnings. MW

Marty Whitfield

Director

City of Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department

(602) 262-4986 office



Email: martin.whitfield@phoenix.gov

From: Ed Zuercher <Ed.Zuercher@phoenix.gov>
Sent: Friday, August 21, 2026 2:47 PM
To: David Mathews <david.mathews@phoenix.gov>; Martin Whitfield <martin.whitfield@phoenix.gov>
Subject: Fw: Request for explanation: Echo Canyon trailhead hours changed without public notice

Please see attached sent to all council.

Ed Zuercher
City Manager
Phoenix, Arizona



From: Board of Directors <board@goodgoat.net>
Sent: Friday, 21 August 2026 13:30:15
To: Council District 8 PCC <council.district.8@phoenix.gov>; Council District 3 PCC

<council.district.3@phoenix.gov>; Council District 6 PCC <District6@phoenix.gov>; Council District 7 PCC <council.district.7@phoenix.gov>; Council District 5 PCC <council.district.5@phoenix.gov>; Council District 2 PCC <council.district.2@phoenix.gov>; Mayor Gallego <mayor.gallego@phoenix.gov>; Council District 1 PCC <council.district.1@phoenix.gov>; Council District 4 <council.district.4@phoenix.gov>

Cc: Ed Zuercher <Ed.Zuercher@phoenix.gov>

Subject: Request for explanation: Echo Canyon trailhead hours changed without public notice

CAUTION: This email originated outside of the City of Phoenix.

Do not click links or open attachments unless you know the sender and were expecting this email.

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Dear Members of the Phoenix City Council,

We write on behalf of the Board of GOOD|GOAT regarding a recent change at the Echo Canyon trailhead on Camelback Mountain that we believe warrants the Council's attention.

Earlier this month, the opening time at Echo Canyon was moved back from its long-standing 4:30 AM start to 5:00 AM. As far as we can determine, this change was made without any public notice, explanation, or adoption at a public meeting.

The change is already causing real problems for the public:

- Hikers who arrive at 4:30 AM — as they have for years, to beat the desert heat — now wait outside locked gates for another thirty minutes. Because the Town of Paradise Valley prohibits vehicles from waiting outside the gates, these residents are placed in the position of violating that rule simply by arriving at the time they always have.
- Combined with the summer restriction closing the trail from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, the lost half hour meaningfully shrinks the safe window to complete the hike. A 2.5-mile round trip can take 1.5 to 3 hours depending on fitness and experience, and the change falls hardest on older and less experienced hikers who most need the early-morning hours to finish safely before the closure.

We respectfully ask the Council to:

1. Explain the basis for the schedule change.
2. Restore public input and notice for decisions of this kind.
3. Address the conflict this creates with Paradise Valley's no-waiting rule.

We've attached a flyer summarizing the issue. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss it and are happy to provide firsthand accounts from affected hikers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

The GOOD|GOAT Board

Board of Directors

GOOD|GOAT

Protecting the interests of the herd!



board@goodgoat.net



goodgoat.net [goodgoat.net]



Phoenix, AZ



A Phoenix-based 501(c)(3) civic organization

From: [Martin Whitfield](#)
To: board@goodgoat.net
Cc: [Ed Zuercher](#); [David Mathews](#)
Subject: FW: Request for explanation: Echo Canyon trailhead hours changed without public notice
Date: Monday, August 24, 2026 1:41:00 PM
Attachments: [flyer_echo-canyon-hours.pdf](#)

Good Afternoon,

The hours of operation of sunrise to sunset were approved by the Parks Board and have been in place since before the HOA development agreement which was executed in 2013. Posted signage at Echo Canyon has said sunrise to sunset since before the development agreement was executed. The custodial contractor responsible for cleaning the restrooms have been leaving the manual gate open regularly allowing hikers to access the parking lot and trail before sunrise. In early June 2026 contracted security guards noticed the custodial contractor was leaving the gates open and notified Parks staff. Parks staff notified the custodial contractor to not leave the gate open. Parks staff has been opening the gate at 5am before sunrise on a daily basis. An electronic gate will be installed by the end of September which will allow Parks staff to open and close the gate remotely. The software will also allow the gate to be closed during extreme heat warnings.

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[REDACTED]

Email: martin.whitfield@phoenix.gov

From: Ed Zuercher <Ed.Zuercher@phoenix.gov>
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To: David Mathews <david.mathews@phoenix.gov>; Martin Whitfield <martin.whitfield@phoenix.gov>
Subject: Fw: Request for explanation: Echo Canyon trailhead hours changed without public notice

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 Phoenix, AZ



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From: [Board of Directors](#)
To: [Martin Whitfield](#)
Cc: [Ed Zuercher](#); [David Mathews](#)
Subject: Re: FW: Request for explanation: Echo Canyon trailhead hours changed without public notice
Date: Monday, August 24, 2026 3:17:30 PM

CAUTION: This email originated outside of the City of Phoenix.

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Dear Director Whitfield,

Thank you again for your response. We want to add firsthand knowledge that bears directly on it, and to ask the Department to reconcile its account with the record.

Our board president, Jerry Van Gasse, has been at the Echo Canyon trailhead nearly every morning for years — handing out bananas to hikers so reliably that regulars and staff know him as "Banana Man." He knows the custodial worker and the park rangers personally. In all that time, what he observed is the opposite of what your email describes: the custodian locked the gate every night, and City park rangers opened it at 4:30 AM each morning, as daily routine.

Coming from someone who has watched that gate open nearly every day for years, that account means the 4:30 opening was not a contractor's oversight later corrected. It was a deliberate practice carried out by the City's own staff. There would be nothing to "correct" — what happened this summer was the quiet end of a long-standing practice the public relied on, without notice or public input.

It also fits the schedule itself. By the Department's own account, Parks staff now open the gate at 5:00 AM, before sunrise — so sunrise-to-sunset is not the rule that governs the opening. If it were, the gate would not open until nearly 6:00 AM at this time of year, and on excessive-heat days, when the trail closes at 8:00 AM, that would leave too little time to safely finish a hike that can take up to three hours. The opening time has always been a discretionary call, and for years the City made it at 4:30 AM.

We ask the Department to:

1. Reconcile its account with its records. We are requesting, under the Arizona Public Records Law, the Echo Canyon gate-opening logs and ranger assignments, the June 2026 security notifications referenced in your email, and any written directive changing the opening time.
2. Restore the 4:30 AM opening — at minimum during the summer heat restriction and on any day the trail closes at 8:00 AM.
3. Publish, as the electronic gate comes online, the opening schedule and the criteria and advance-notice process for extreme-heat closures.
4. Address the conflict with Paradise Valley's no-waiting rule through signage or the new gate.

We appreciate your engagement and remain glad to discuss this directly.

Board of Directors

GOOD|GOAT

Protecting the interests of the herd!

board@goodgoat.net

goodgoat.net [goodgoat.net]

Phoenix, AZ



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On Mon, Aug 24, 2026 at 1:41 PM 'Martin Whitfield' via Board <board@goodgoat.net> wrote:

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