



APPROVED

**MINUTES
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
April 28, 2009
City Hall
250 Hamilton Ave**

Commissioners Present: Deirdre Crommie, Joel Davidson, Sunny Dykwel, Carl King, Paul Losch, Pat Markevitch, Daria Walsh,

Commissioners Absent:

Others Present: Council Liaison Espinosa

Staff Present: Greg Betts, Catherine Bourquin, Rob de Geus, Donald Piana, Lester Hodgins

I. ROLL CALL CONDUCTED BY: Catherine Bourquin

II. AGENDA CHANGES, REQUESTS, and DELETIONS: None

II. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS: Joe Hirsch, 4149 Georgia Lane PA – Mr. Hirsch spoke on the concern over gym space for their Cardiac Therapy Program. Mr. Hirsch handed out some information on the program and requested some time on the next agenda to share more about the Cardiac Therapy Program and their future space needs at Cubberley.

IV. BUSINESS:

1. **Approval of Draft Minutes of March 31, 2009 regular meeting** – The Draft Minutes of the March 31, 2009 regular meeting were approved as amended with two corrections.
Approved 7:0
2. **Friends of the Palo Alto Parks – Update on Universal Playground proposal for Mitchell Park** – Staff Piana went over the staff report he provided to the Commission on the proposal from the Friends of the Palo Alto Parks. He introduced Olenka Villarreal who presented the proposal to the Commission. The Commission was given time for questions after the presentation. Commissioner questions included parking adequacy and the consideration of alternate locations. Commissioners were generally supportive of the concept and were excited about the possibility of a new Universal Playground at Mitchell Park fully funded by the Friends of Palo Alto Parks. The



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Commission will look forward to reviewing a staff recommendation in the coming months for possible recommendation to Council.

Oral Communications

Penny Ellson, 513 El Capitan Place PA – Ms. Ellson supports the proposed universal Playground and would like to see an area designated for the senior community to have a place to go and converse and connect with the children at the playground.

3. **Policy discussion of the current restriction of dogs in Foothills Park on holidays or weekends, as stated in Municipal Code 22.04.150** – Commissioner Walsh started the discussion with how Commissioner Losch and she had expressed an interest in finding more recreational opportunities for dogs and their owners. Foothill Park is the only park that has a restriction of no dogs on weekends. The history of this ordinance stems back to the 1970's where issues of dog bites, dogs off leash and dogs disturbing the resident animals resulted in the prohibition of dogs on weekends. Staff Hodgins provided some background on enforcement issues that the Rangers face, which is exacerbated by different rules for weekdays and weekends.

Oral Communications

Rosemary Stevens, 366 Iris Way PA – She would like to keep the policy as it stands now, however she would also like see dogs prohibited all week. She believes dogs at Foothill Park disturb the natural wildlife habitat and the rules when dogs are there are not obeyed by the owners.

Jean Olmsted, 240 W Charleston PA - Ms. Olmsted remarked that Foothill Park is a dedicated nature preserve, not a traditional “Park”. It needs to be left for the wild animals to have a place to go and not be affected by dogs running off leash. There isn't enough staffing as it is now, and with the budget proposals there still won't be enough staff to enforce the dogs off leash laws.

Herb Borock, PO Box 632 PA – Mr. Borock would not like to see the policy changed to allow dogs in Foothill Park on weekends.

Linnea Widestrom, 450 Monroe Drive PA – Ms. Widestrom believes it would be a mistake to change the policy to allow dogs in Foothill Park on weekends.

The Commissioners were given an opportunity for questions and comments. The issue of dogs off leash was discussed and a suggestion of having the owners acquire a license stating that their dog has been trained in order to use the park was mentioned. Council Liaison Espinosa encouraged the Commissioners to concentrate on more than this issue, to step back and identify additional options to improve dog owner recreational opportunities perhaps as part of a Dog Master Plan.

4. **Review Commission memo to Council recommending a feasibility study for a grade separated pedestrian/bicycle crossing of Highway 101 in South Palo Alto – including**

the possible funding of such a grade separation project: exploring the possibility of lengthening access to the existing Adobe Creek US 101 Undercrossing (Lefkowitz Tunnel) beyond the current 6-months annually; and updating the Palo Alto Bicycle Master Plan - Commissioner Crommie provided a brief overview on how this item came before the Commission tonight.

Oral Communications

Penny Ellson, 513 El Capitan Place PA – Ms. Ellson represented Green Meadow Association in support of a need for a pedestrian/bicycle crossing of highway 101 from South Palo Alto to the Baylands. With the growing population on this side of Palo Alto the need is great and is supported by the residents.

Linnea Widestrom, 450 Monroe Drive PA – Chair for the Monroe Park Association, this topic was discussed at a recent meeting and everyone in their community is in whole support of a pedestrian/bicycle path from South Palo Alto to the Baylands. The closest crossing is at Embarcadero which is too far for smaller or special needs children.

Jean Olmsted, 240 W Charleston PA – Ms. Olmsted is in support of this feasibility study, their neighborhood has been struggling to get bike paths for years.

The Commission had an open discussion on the topic. Council Liaison Espinosa informed the Commission that this is a subject matter that is supported by the City Council. Staff de Geus told the Commission that he learned this week the City has applied for federal stimulus money for this project. The Commissioners went through the draft memo to Council and made the following changes:

- SUBJECT: That it be a priority for the City of Palo Alto for there to be year-round bicycle and pedestrian access across Highway 101 in Southern Palo Alto.
- Recommendation #4: Direct City Staff to meet with the Santa Clara Water District to determine what it would take for the existing Adobe Creek US 101 Undercrossing (Lefkowitz Tunnel) to be opened year- round (currently it is opened only 6 months/year).
- Add Recommendation #6: Request that City Staff encourage active civic engagement, including a Liaison from the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Motion made by Commissioner Dykwel and seconded by Commissioner Losch

Motion: To approve the Memo to Council on Bicycle and Pedestrian Access Across Highway 101 in Southern Palo Alto as amended. Approved 7:0

5. **Discussion and possible selection of a Commissioner Liaison to the Palo Alto Unified School District** – Commissioner Losch briefly went over the idea of assigning a Parks and Recreation Commission Liaison to interact with Palo Alto Unified School District at a policy level.

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Motion made by Commissioner Walsh and seconded by Commissioner Losch

Motion: Move to appoint a PARC Commissioner to be the Liaison to the Palo Alto Unified School District. Approved 7:0

Commissioner Walsh volunteered to be the Liaison and it was agreed to elect a back up Commissioner in the event the Commissioner can not attend any of the PAUSD meetings. Commissioner Markevitch volunteered to be the back up Liaison.

V. COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Commissioner Losch mentioned the need to have an email address for the Public to contact the Commissioners on the website. Staff is currently working on setting this up.
2. Commissioner Crommie spoke on the difficulty on getting around on the City's website and said that the *Know Zone*, once you get used to it, is a great tool to finding what you are looking for.
3. Council Liaison Espinosa remarked on the website issue to let the Commissioners know that the City agreed to have the website re-done with a task force that was created of citizens that have experience in website design. The look that the city is heading for is more of a type of e-gov portal style.
4. Commissioner Davidson wanted to thank Staff Catherine and Don for attending with him a meeting on the Ventura Community Garden expansion. He also thanked Catherine for keeping him informed about a new community garden that is not handled by the City that Catherine found out about.
5. Commissioner Davidson also thanked Staff de Geus and his staff for putting on an Earth Day celebration and letting him set up a booth for the Emergency Preparedness Committee.
6. Commissioner Davidson remarked on the new Farm Shop that is being held every Wednesday from 4pm – 7pm. He said it was a very nice event.
7. Commissioner Dykwel inquired on the status of the art work for Greer Park. Staff Piana informed the Commission that there has been a recommendation to have the art work placed at the park on the Amarillo Street side of Greer Park.
8. Staff de Geus announced the 87th May Fete parade coming up on Saturday, May 2nd. The theme this year is "Dream Green" it starts at 10am.
9. Staff de Geus announced some upcoming meeting dates.
 - Public Budget Meeting – April 29th at Cubberley
 - Budget Finance Committee meeting for CSD – May 12th, 7pm
 - CIP Program meeting – May 13th (Commissioner Crommie attending)
 - Group 4 Community Meeting on Mitchell – May 19th at 7 pm
 - Joint Commission – Art Project update/Mitchell Master Plan – May 27th
10. There was a discussion on the decision to have an August Commission Meeting – It was voted 4:3 to **not** have the regular scheduled August 25th meeting.

VI. TENTATIVE AGENDA FOR MAY 26, 2009 REGULAR MEETING:

1. Recreation Summer Aquatics Update (20 min)
2. Open Space Ranger Overview (30 min)
3. Cardiac Therapy Space Presentation
4. CIP Update
5. Friends of the Park - Universal Playground – Action
6. Discussion on Community Meeting on Dog issues

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner King and seconded by Commissioner Davidson
Adjourned at 10:10pm