TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: CITY MANAGER DEPARTMENT: COMMUNITY SERVICES

DATE: JUNE 18, 2007 CMR: 217:07

SUBJECT: PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION REGARDING GOLF COURSE PRELIMINARY FEASIBILITY STUDY

RECOMMENDATION

The Parks and Recreation Commission recommends that the Council:

1) Take no further action relating to the municipal golf course and its possible re-configuration at this time;

2) Direct the Park and Recreation Commission to continue the process to better understand and quantify community needs for playing fields and recreational areas and project those needs as demographics change;

3) Direct the Park and Recreation Commission to actively participate in the San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority/Army Corps of Engineers process to identify options for combined flood control and recreational use solutions in the Baylands;

4) Direct the Parks and Recreation Commission to actively participate in the San Francisco Bay Water Trail project to identify options to develop a comprehensive water recreation program in keeping with the character of the Baylands; and

5) At an appropriate time, Council should reevaluate the Baylands Master Plan to ensure the future use of the Baylands best reflects the wishes of the community in terms of balancing conservation of environmental assets with expanding recreational opportunities.

BACKGROUND

Responding to a March 7, 2005, Colleagues Memorandum (Attachment C), the City Council directed staff to conduct a preliminary feasibility study regarding a possible re-configuration of the 18-hole Palo Alto Municipal Golf Course to incorporate sports playing fields and to consider private financing strategies for such a reconfiguration. The objectives to be achieved by such a redesign were: creation of 20 to 40 acres of new sports playing field space in order to meet community demand for playing fields; improvement of the golfing experience and provision of additional golfing amenities; expansion and enhancement of the natural habitat; and helping to address San Francisquito Creek flood control needs. The Council was also interested in determining whether these changes could facilitate redevelopment of nearby private properties consistent with upcoming changes in the Zoning Ordinance.
After conducting a thorough analysis of the golf course operation, meeting with representatives of golf course user groups and golf course design consultants, staff returned to Council on March 20, 2006 and recommended that Council take no immediate action on reconfiguring the golf course. It was further recommended that Council seek funding for design of a golf course/recreation component of the flood control project if the San Francisquito Creek Joint Power Authority/Army Corps of Engineers flood control study identifies feasible multi-use flood control/recreation options.

In the report, staff concluded there are opportunities to investigate the alternatives for modifications to the golf course layout in conjunction with the development of flood control strategies as part of the San Francisquito Creek Flood Control Study. However, considering the uncertainty as to what the Army Corps of Engineer Study may suggest in terms of modifications to the alignment of San Francisquito Creek, and the estimated cost of $18,000,000 to reconfigure the golf course to accommodate four new playing fields, staff did not recommend that Council take any action until the flood control study could identify feasible multi-use flood control/recreation options.

Council referred the staff report to the Parks and Recreation Commission for review and comment. Since then, the Commission invited public comment from recreation groups, golf clubs and park visitors. The Commission also reviewed additional data from staff on the current use of fields in Palo Alto, and how the demand for field playing space may potentially be addressed by the Stanford / Palo Alto Community Playing Fields and the renovation of Greer, El Camino and Cubberley playing fields with synthetic turf.

PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On October 24, 2006, the Park and Recreation Commission voted unanimously to accept a sub-committee report concerning the feasibility of re-configuring the municipal golf course in order to add playing fields. The sub-committee report, which included the five recommendations listed above, acknowledged that although there is a demonstrated City-wide need for additional recreational playing fields, the impacts on the golf course usage, together with the cost and labor necessary to re-configure the golf course, did not justify altering the current design of the golf course to add sports fields.

The Parks and Recreation Commission would like to further investigate recreational opportunities at the Palo Alto Baylands in conjunction with the study of the possible realignment of San Francisquito Creek for flood control and the opportunities for enhancement of low-impact recreational opportunities that might be compatible with the new San Francisco Bay Water Trail trailhead at the Baylands. The Commission would also like to further study the community-wide demand for a wide range of recreational facilities and create projections for those needs as demographics change. Finally, the Commission would like to continue to study and quantify how the renovation of playing fields (at El Camino Park, Greer Park and Cubberley Community Center) with night lighting and the installation of synthetic turf expands the number of hours of field play each year, meets the community demand for playing fields.
Previously, in its review of the draft Santa Clara County Palo Alto Airport Master Plan, the Park and Recreation Commission voted unanimously to recommend the investigation of additional playing fields on the property used by the airport if the airport lease is abandoned by the County.

**RESOURCE IMPACT**
No additional costs are associated with the recommended actions. If the City Council were to pursue other options that are discussed in the Commission’s report, some staff costs would be incurred, depending on the scope of work of the staff assignment.

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS**
The recommended actions do not represent any changes to City policy.

**ATTACHMENTS**
Attachment A: Park and Recreation Commission Recommendation, October 24, 2006
Attachment B: CMR:168:06 Golf Course Preliminary Study – Report To Council on Golf Course Redesign Options To Include Fields
Attachment C: City Council Memorandum, March 7, 2005

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