

MINUTES



**PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 24, 2006
COUNCIL CONFERENCE ROOM
250 HAMILTON AVENUE**

Commissioners Present: Anne Warner Cribbs, Ellie Gioumousis, Jennifer Hagan, Edie Keating, Jeanette Marquess, Judith Steiner

Commissioners Absent: Paul Losch

Others Present:

Staff Present: Catherine Bourquin, Greg Betts, Paul Dias, Rob de Geus,

Call to Order: Meeting called to order by Chairperson Anne Cribbs

ROLL CALL: Conducted by Catherine Bourquin

AGENDA CHANGES, REQUESTS, and DELETIONS: None

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:

BUSINESS:

1. **Approval of Draft Minutes of December 20, 2005 Meeting.** Commissioners present deferred approval of the minutes to the February meeting. Commissioners present at the December meeting were not in attendance to have a quorum for approval.
2. **Election of new Chair and Vice Chair**
Commissioner Cribbs nominated Commissioner Marquess as Chair and Commissioner Steiner as Vice Chair. Approved unanimously.
3. **2006 Priorities - Approval**
 - The priorities that were decided on at the December meeting were discussed.
 1. Future of the Baylands
 - a. Conservation and habitat preservation plan

- b. Use of Byxbee Park
- c. Use of the Golf Course
- d. Review of the Airport Master Plan

2. Playing Areas

- a. Pools, fields*, gymnasiums, gardens, BMX & Tennis Facilities
- b. Prioritize community needs
- c. Identify what's next – Big Picture areas
- d. Quantify use/needs and trends

* Update of Athletic Field Taskforce report)

3. Culture of Fitness

- a. Importance of exercise for a lifetime
- b. Enable citizens to be more fit
- c. Places and access to recreation facilities and programs
- d. Gender equity

Motion: Motion made by Commissioner Cribbs to approve 2006 priorities as written, seconded by Commissioner Hagan. Approved 6:0

4. Resolution to take action for a Healthier City of Palo Alto

Staff de Geus presented to the Commissioners the resolution that Council Member Kishimoto forwarded to staff which had been adopted by the City of San Francisco in support of the Strategic Alliance. The City's Recreation Division took the resolution and revised it to fit the City of Palo Alto and the School District. There are basically three items that we wanted to say with the resolution:

1. The City of Palo Alto and School District feel that this is an issue
2. We are committed to making a difference and taking action.
3. We support the Strategic Alliance
 - Staff de Geus said that the Strategic Alliance looks at the environment we create and how it impacts our behavior.
 - Commissioner Steiner asked "What's the Strategic Alliance? It's a pretty generic statement." Staff de Geus answered "They consist of a broad group of state professionals who consider it a state issue."
 - Commissioner Keating suggested that it read *State of California Strategic Alliance*.
 - Commissioner Cribbs added to the suggestion that it might be mentioned at the beginning and list all the agencies involved.
 - Commissioner Cribbs also added that she felt that while it is important that the schools are involved and the children too, the adult population should be considered as well.
 - Staff de Geus said they would keep this in mind too.

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- Commissioner Hagan questioned the accuracy of the statement that says exercising prevents asthma.
- Staff de Geus answered that the information was obtained from the City of San Francisco resolution and the League of Cities. He would check into the word *preventing*.
- Commissioner Marquess acknowledged that she was happy to see that this falls inline with the Commissions 2006 Priorities.

Motion: The commissioners approved the Resolution as written. Approved 6:0

5. City Auditor Report- Park Maintenance

Staff Dias introduced Auditor Sharon Erickson and Sr. Auditor Renata Falk.

- Auditor Erickson briefly explained how the audits are conducted:
 - City Council directs the Auditor’s Office to conduct an Audit. The process with the Auditors office is to work closely with the departments.
 - The facts stated in the report are agreed upon. The auditors then review the process and make their recommendations.
 - Their mission is to come up with suggestions on how to fix something not to concentrate on things that are working.
 - Follow up on recommendations once a year.
 - Council accepts the report, they do not adopt it.
 - We work with the departments on the recommendations that are suggested by the Auditors office.
 - This audit was on Contract vs Staffing in Parks.
- Auditor Falk discussed the 22 recommendations in the report.
- Two community members Peter Fox and Kurt Ohns, representing the Soccer community spoke on the condition of the athletic fields at the parks.
 - Mr. Fox recommended signage be posted for enforcing rules for “Rain Policy”. Permit holders are held to not using the fields during increment weather conditions. Other non-permit users will see no one on the field and play, and thus tearing up the fields during very wet conditions.
 - Mr. Ohns, concerned that the audits report that said 91% of the parks in good condition, but in his opinion the playing fields are being neglected. Artificial turf as a recommendation for long term cost savings. Cubberley fields, why not in the report. Another issue, 3 month closed for renovation. A lot of play on the fields.
- The commissioners were given an opportunity to discuss the report with the Auditors.
 - Commissioner Keating asked why Cubberley wasn’t included. Staff Dias answered that the Cubberley site is managed by the site manager at Cubberley and is not included in the acreage the Parks Division maintains. The Cubberley site manager uses the parks expertise in a consulting basis only. Commissioner Keating confirmed that the scope of the audit is



inclusive of 43 acres of the Athletic fields, with Cubberley not being included.

- Commissioner Cribbs, What is the standard compared to other cities? Auditor Falk responded: Service Efforts and Accomplishment (SEA) report, citizens surveyed on satisfaction with parks. Commissioner Cribbs remarked on her concern on the condition of the athletic fields. She remarked “The SEA report doesn’t include a question on this issue. Would like to see this included.”
- Commissioner Gioumousius asked if other cities using contract services were examined and compared to Palo Alto? Auditor Erickson answered that it is very difficult to do comparisons with other cities.
- Commissioner Steiner asked what new cost would be added now. The cost of supervising the parks doesn’t look as if the Baylands cost was included. Referenced page 48. Auditor Falk answered the total cost shown does represent it, it’s just built into the cost and wasn’t broken out.
- Commissioner Gioumousis questioned Page 41 – doesn’t make sense. Bids increase regarding the cost of maintenance of trees. Auditor Falk answered that when bidding for fewer trees the quantity bid would reflect a cost increase, because the bids that the Public Works Tree department bids on is for all the trees.
- Commissioner Cribbs asked Staff Dias when the trees were split out of the Parks Division. Staff Dias responded: “15 years ago the trees maintenance were split out of Parks and put into Public Works.”
- Commissioner Hagan inquired on the distinction between the words “cost”, “spend”, and “save” on page 18 and 19. What is the total cost spent: \$3.8 million or \$4.5 million? How does the allocated charges play into the cost savings to the city? Auditor Falk answered that the actual expenses of maintaining the parks is \$3.8 million with \$700,000 in overhead charges, such as HR, Auditor, Purchasing, etc. In the report they only referred to the out of pocket savings, and the overhead charges were not taken into consideration.
- Commissioner Marquess would like to see an addendum to include something referencing athletic field cost.
- Commissioner Keating doesn’t see that there is a concern for space for athletic fields. Commissioner Marquess answered by giving an example of how Cubberley’s fields are used. Three soccer fields being redrawn to accommodate 12 – 14 teams at one time.
- Commissioner Keating asked if the recommendation of contracting out the sites mentioned in the report was implemented, how many city employees would be impacted? Auditor Falk answered 10 – 11.

- Commissioner Keated asked: What would be the turnover?
Staff Dias replied “We’ve had our turn over in the last five years.” The remaining staff have 10-20 years before retirement options.
- Commissioner Gioumouis asked if they found a difference in the quality of work in contract vs. in-house Parks staff. Auditor Falk, replied that there was more of a sense of ownership with the in-house staff. End results found that the contracting parks were in good condition. The contract is maintained by in-house staff.
- Commissioner Hagan wanted to know if the estimate of parks included the fields? Auditor Falk answered “Yes, it includes the athletic fields and school fields.”
- Commissioner Hagan also found from the report that we are spending a lot of our budget on our fields and yet they are still not maintained as expected. The consensus discussed was that the fields need rest from over-use not maintenance.
- Staff agreed artificial turf is a considered alternative to the expenses to maintain.
- Commissioner Gioumouis said she was shocked to see that the water is not monitored. Staff Dias responded with a correction: “We are monitoring water usage. We have certified water management designers. The report says that the Utility department should be provided better water monitoring reports.” Staff Dias added: Closure policy not enough. If we could close the fields for longer durations, we would have better looking fields. Installing artificial turf is a better cost savings solution.

6. Baylands Conservation Plan

- Staff Betts reviewed the draft report provided to the Commissioners.
- Intent was to look at the way we are managing the natural resources of the 1600-acres of Baylands Nature Preserve.
- Staff developed a scope of services and developed an RFP to send to consultants all over Northern California.
- Received two proposals: ESA and Thomas Reed and Associates.
- A Vegetation study will be the first part of our workplan. The second section will be on wildlife since there is no policy set on wildlife protection. The third will be public access.
- The mission of the Plan is to: provide a comprehensive plan that will serve as a working guide for the City of Palo Alto staff and volunteers to protect important habitat and identify sites with high restoration potential; determine feasible methods for endangered species habitat enhancement, restoration, and control of invasive non-native species; and to identify and prioritize partnership projects and resources to make best use of the volunteer opportunities and available financial

resources of partnership organizations and create the greatest benefit for habitat conservation.

- Questions:
 - Commissioner Gioumouis – Asked if the weed Phragmites was going to be included. Staff Betts said “Yes, that was included on the list they gave the consultants.
 - Commissioner Gioumouis also inquired if the property between San Antonio and Terminal Road was part of our jurisdiction. Staff Anderson answered, “No, it belongs to Mountain View-Shoreline.” Commissioner Gioumouis then asked if we were working with them to have their area cleaned out. Staff Anderson replied, “Yes.”

7. Airport Master Plan

- Staff Betts explained to the Commissioners that this was an opportunity for the Commissioners to provide their input/feedback before the report was presented to Council. The Airport Master Plan involved the 50 year lease agreement with the City of Palo Alto and Santa Clara County that will expire in 2017.
- Comments from the Parks and Recreation Commission on the Palo Alto Airport Master Plan:
 - Consideration of the future of the Palo Alto Airport should be balanced with how Moffett Field is used for private aircraft in the future.
 - Commissioner Gioumouis: Although it is not mentioned in the Master Plan, the proposed terminal building or hangars would have to be built to new flood plain levels (eight feet above the elevation of the current terminal).
 - Commissioner Keating: She does not want to see parking in the area adjacent to the Marsh Front trail.
 - Commissioner Hagen: If the rationale of leasing the land east of Harbor Road was to provide for a buffer area for the runway, it doesn't seem logical from a safety standpoint that public parking would be planned in this space.
 - Commissioner Steiner: Protection of the viewshed is very important to the quality of the Baylands. Commissioner Keating concurred.
 - Commissioner Hagen: Can other uses besides an airport be considered for the airport site? The possibility of using some land at the airport for soccer playing fields should be explored in the same fashion that the layout of the golf course is being considered. The highest and best use of the land should be considered. Would playing fields at the airport serve more residents than the airport?
- Two motions by Commissioner Steiner:
 - Motion 1: The Parks and Recreation Commission strongly supports preserving the viewshed at the entrance to the Baylands and rejects any proposed infrastructure improvements or developments which would negatively impact the viewshed of the Baylands. (6-0, Losch absent)***

APPROVED

Motion 2: The Parks and Recreation Commission recommends that consideration be made for alternative park and recreational uses within the 103-acres of land now occupied by the airport. (6-0, Losch absent)

COMMUNICATIONS/INFORMATION ITEMS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1. Stanford/Palo Alto Fields informational handout – Opening sometime in April 06
2. CityWorks CIP program Status – Info only
3. CPRS Conference – If Commissioners are interested in attending they will be reimbursed through the City.
4. Council/Commission Agenda items –
 - 3/6 - City Council Greer Park Task Force Report and the Lighting proposal.
 - 3/7 - Need representative from commission to attend for the Greer park and the Lighting proposal. Notify Midtown.
 - 3/20 - Feasibility study of golf course
 - 3/20 - Report of installation of restroom in parks

TENTATIVE AGENDA ITEMS FOR JANUARY 24, 2006 Meeting

1. New Commissioners – Welcome team building
2. Neighborhood Adopt A Park program
3. Golf Course Playing Fields-Planning report

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

