

MINUTES



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 20, 2005
COUNCIL CONFERENCE ROOM
250 HAMILTON AVENUE

Commissioners Present: Anne Warner Cribbs, Ellie Gioumousis, Jennifer Hagan, Edie Keating, Paul Losch

Commissioners Absent: Judith Steiner, Jeanette Marquess

Others Present: Jack Morton, Council Liaison

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

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: David Rice, 2757 Gaspar Ct. spoke on park renovations

BUSINESS:

1. Approval of Draft Minutes of November 29, 2005 Meeting. Commissioners approved the minutes subject to three changes. *5: approved*

2. Community Gardens – Policy decision on cost recovery

- Greg Betts provided the commissioners with a brief synopsis of the action that needs to be taken that evening concerning the fee increase for the Community Garden plots.
- Communications were given by owners of the community garden plots:
 1. Anne Ercolem, 360 Iris gardener at the Main Garden since 1999: Feels that the fees as originally proposed are excessive. The fees were reduced significantly after one meeting with garden representatives and wonders if additional meetings may result in further fee reductions. Volunteers do maintenance of the garden fences. She noted that staff (staff secretary) spends 50% of her time



Approved

- on the program. If volunteers didn't do so much work for the garden program, staff would have to spend even more time on the program. She is concerned that if the higher garden fees result in fewer gardeners at the Main Garden, the Art Center may take over the vacant garden land. The Commission should assure that the garden expenses are accurate.
2. Bob Stienstra Sr., 385 Curtner Avenue gardener at Eleanor Pardee Garden who lives in an apartment: He said he would have a plot regardless of the garden fees. He is concerned about the non-gardeners taking advantage of dumping waste into the compost drop boxes (and thus increasing expenses for the garden program).
 3. John McFarlin, 448 Addison Avenue, one of the original gardeners at Eleanor Pardee Garden and is still very active: The Master Gardeners do not pay rent for their garden space and are thus subsidized by the other gardeners. He believes the Master Gardeners should pay the "full going rate" for their plot to offset the garden expenses.
 4. Enid Pearsen, gardener at Eleanor Pardee for ten years (and on a waiting list for the Pardee Garden for ten years before then): Gardens should be considered park space. Please refer to the reference materials on other Community Garden programs she provided to the Commission. Some plots are too large – 1,100 and 1,200 square feet. Other cities provide plots that are ten feet by ten feet (100 square feet). Her plot is 20-feet by 20-feet. She feels that the maximum size of a garden plot should be 400 square feet in order to accommodate more gardeners and thereby reduce the waiting list. The City of Berkeley hauls in compost for the benefit of their gardeners. She feels that the City should subsidize the community garden program. She agrees that the Master Gardeners should pay their fair share of expenses.
 5. Mary Palmer, 350 Grant Avenue gardener at the Main garden for 10 years: Opposes the garden fee increase. The program is a low cost, low maintenance program. The program required no parking, no electricity or other big expenses. The garden volunteers provide labor for fencing projects. The City has not made infrastructure improvements to the garden. It does not seem to her that the City is spending much money on the program. She feels the garden is the lowest cost facility of any park facility. The increased fees may cause her to consider leaving the program.
 6. Penny Proctor, 788 Greer Road, gardener at Eleanor Pardee garden since 1982: Visitors enjoy the paths, but gardeners enjoy the gardens the most. She has done a lot of work improving and amending the soil of her plot. The benefit

Approved

- has been healthy organic vegetables. People love their plots. She hopes that the fee reduction program will prevent low-income gardeners from leaving the program. She believes that elimination of the year-round compost drop boxes will reduce improper dumping (by non-gardeners).
7. Ed Hale, 365 Kingsley, gardener for three years: Feels it is a public garden. He objects to the statement in the staff report that gardens are fenced and gated. He said that people can enter the gardens at any time. He feels the gardens should be subsidized by the City and enjoyed by all residents.
 8. Maria Loblin, 951 Channing Avenue, gardener for one year: She feels that fees should be based on actual expenses, not on staff expenses (indirect costs).
 9. Tina Cass, 1730 Cowper Street, gardener at Main Garden for twenty years: She helps to manage a donation fund that helps to pay for fences and other garden costs. She wonders if setting the rent fees at the full cost of direct expenses is consistent with other recreational programs such as the Lawn Bowling Green, Baylands athletic fields and tennis courts. She asked if sports leagues are paying for the full costs of using fields. She feels that the cost figures in the staff report should be double-checked for accuracy. She said that even City staff (parks staff) has used the compost dumpsters to dispose of wastes. Indirect costs seem way out of control, especially the costs for the annual billing. The City of Mountain View has one staff person working five hours per week for their program. She said she hasn't seen a park ranger at the Main Garden.
 10. Rita Morgin, 600 Channing Avenue, gardener at main garden for ten years: She said that twelve years ago the garden program was free. She feels that the gardens are parks and as such the program should not have to provide 100% of direct costs. She said that staff costs and numbers have changed since the October accounting report. The Main Garden fences are not locked. The Main Garden has a waiting list for six months to one year. She believes that if garden fees are increased the gardeners will not try to conserve water or reduce compost. She thinks the program should be free for demonstrating organic gardening.
 11. Christina Smith, 1144 Cedar Street, gardener at the Eleanor Pardee garden: Agrees that the Master Garden program should pay for its use of garden space. The fact that senior gardeners get a 25% discount at age 62 should be clarified on the billing statement. Cleaning deposit fees should also be clarified. She feels that the fee schedule as proposed seems reasonable. Concerns have now

been addressed by a fee reduction program that is based on a sliding income

12. Diana Bebbington, 1360 College Avenue #5, Gardener for two years: She has spent \$1,000 on a drip watering system with an automatic timer for the benefit of her garden plot. She is disappointed with the dissemination of information on the fee increase process. She said the Master Gardeners (at Eleanor Pardee Garden) are only from Santa Clara County (and not from other counties, as was inferred by another speaker). The Master Garden program serves as a demonstration garden that is beautiful and food-providing. She says that it is a shame that there is not better information about the Master Garden program. If there was better information, there might be more composting and therefore less expense on hauling away compost. She is happy that the City helps with providing rooms for gardening classes and programs.

- Questions addressed to Greg Betts from the commissioners:
 - Commissioner Keating: What portion of the garden is locked? Answer: Johnson, Eleanor Pardee and the Main Gardens are completely fenced around the perimeter. The Pardee Garden gates are kept locked.
 - Commissioner Hagan: Why is this defined as a program? Answer: Like the use of camp ground space, group picnic areas and rooms used for private use, the use of garden plots for personal use is considered a “personal benefit program.”
- Comments from the Commissioners:
 - Commissioner Gioumouis: feels that all gardens should compost their own waste so that compost drop boxes are not necessary.
 - Commissioner Losch: \$45 for a garden plot is a real bargain and a tremendous value. In hard financial times he feels that users should pay their fair cost of the program. He feels there needs to be a mechanism to assist financially challenged individuals. The fee reduction program meets that need.
 - Commissioner Keating: Is pleased to see levels for the fee reduction program set at the level they are. She believes that the fee reduction program would help those gardeners who need assistance, and those who can not afford the garden fees, even with the fee reduction program, could always get a smaller sized plot. She feels that the formula proposed by staff for setting fees is fair. She feels that in lean financial times the gardeners should pay 100% of direct costs.
 - Commissioner Cribbs: There should be good dialogue on the setting of program fees. The speakers presented many good ideas. Gardeners should be encouraged to communicate with one another. Staff should help to facilitate communication between gardeners. She agreed that in hard financial times the gardeners should contribute 100% of direct costs.

Motion by Commissioner Keating, seconded by Commissioner Cribbs: 1)The Commission recommends the fee increased as proposed, with the fee reduction program to assist low-income individuals; 2) and that by policy the user fees should recover between 50% and 100% of direct costs depending on the economic climate and as determined by the Finance Committee.

*Substitute motion by Commissioner Gioumousis: Fees should always be set to recover 50% of direct costs. (Failed for lack of second) **Motion approved 5-0***

3. PA Tennis Club Cubberley Lighting Proposal

- This is a carry over from the commissioners prior year work planning and a request from October 2005 meeting to place on a future agenda. There were speakers from the public in attendance to give oral communications.
 - Jeff Travn, 1040 Ramona – Friends of the Palo Alto Parks. They were approached by the PA Tennis Club to gather information on possible fund raising ideas and the possibility of their assistance with the lighting proposal. It was the general consensus of the organization to support the proposal of lighting at the Cubberley tennis courts. They are not in a position to be responsible for fund raising, but would provide assistance if needed.
 - Kay Carey, 4160 Old Trace Road – President of the Palo Alto Tennis Club. Presented an overview of past discussions. Palo Alto has a large community of tennis players, more the 6,000 players. The PA Tennis Club has 600 members. The suggestion to put lighting at the Cubberley Tennis Courts came from a prior council suggestion. The club has put their \$1.00 a member into a Trust to reserve this money for this proposal. They have in reserve \$20,000 and Northern California Tennis Association(NTSA) has informally said they could give \$2,500 as can United States Tennis Association(USTA). She introduced a representative from USTA to speak more on this topic.
 - Hilary Somers, USTA 633 Elm Ste #302, San Carlos. Came to speak on behalf of the PA Tennis Club. She is the USTA community coordinator. Presented the commissioners with a few facts on tennis. Palo Alto is one of the leaders for Tennis. In Santa Clara County there are 8,645 USTA members, the largest nation wide. There was a participation survey conducted, tennis participation is at the highest level in 13 years since 1992. “Putting lighting at the Cubberley tennis courts couldn’t come at a better time.”
 - Chuck Bradley, 2957 Waverley Palo Alto – Long time resident and a member of the PA Tennis Club. Wanted to remind the commissioners that a meeting notice was sent to surrounding residents, and at the October PARC meeting no one came to object to this proposal. The Palo Alto Tennis Club is not coming

Approved

- to the city for a handout, but looking to have the city acknowledge their (PATC) efforts and help fund this proposal. At this time the cost would be \$110,000 - \$130,000.
- Chair Commissioner Cribbs requested discussion from the commissioners or a motion.
 - Commissioner Losch acknowledged the Palo Tennis Club for their previous presentations. He feels the challenges facing him and possibly the commissioners are “How are we going to fund this?” It’s a great idea, and we should collectively agree to move the proposal forward to Council.
 - Commissioner Keating agrees that the lighting proposal is a good idea. It’s evident every time she passes by Mitchell and sees the night time use. She addressed the question to Staff Dias, “What is the possibility of using impact fees to fund this proposal?”
 - Staff Dias gives the commissioners a brief overview of what we have so far.
 - Funding available from three sources, PA Tennis Club, \$20,000, North cal \$2,500, USTA \$2,500 for a total of \$25,000. That’s only 20% of the cost of \$110,000 - \$130,000 to install lights.
 - Impact fees use is contingent on community use. The results of the study conducted showed 26% increase in tennis use.
 - The Commissioners and/or city would have to prioritize other projects that would also be available for using impact fees, such as artificial turf, Greer Park, etc.
 - Recommends looking at other sources of funding.
 - Commissioner Hagan acknowledged that the 26% of use was an honest number. Leaving a gap of 54%. That’s why it’s important at this time to insure that the proposal gets into the pipeline for consideration.
 - Commissioner Gioumouis agreed it was a good proposal and she supports the idea.
 - Commissioner Keating moved for a motion to approve the proposal.
 - Commissioner Chair Cribbs acknowledged how frustrating determining what the use of impact fees are. She would like to see more effort made towards finding other funding possibilities. She used the University club as an example and how they generated funds from their members to fund projects. Kay Carey spoke up from the public and needs to know how much the city would be willing to fund, in order to move forward with other funding opportunities.
 - Liaison Morton advised the commission that they should focus on making the council aware of the proposal and let council worry about how to fund it.
 - Commissioner Keating made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Gioumouis.

Motion: The Parks and Recreation Commission recommends that Council support the Palo Alto Tennis Club’s proposal for lighting at the Cubberley Tennis Courts. We recommend that council seeks a combination of public and private funding.

Approved 5:0

4. **Greer Park Sub-Committee report**

A motion to approve report and forward to council requested by Commissioners. Communications from the public was heard:

- Annette Glanckopf Ashton, 2747 Bryan Street representative of the Midtown Residents Association. Annette spoke on behalf of the midtown association and that they would like the city to seriously consider the recommendation of tennis courts for the vacant area at Greer Park and use the funding from the impact fees as a funding source. She also acknowledged all the hard work of the Greer sub-committee, particularly Jeanette Marquess, Jennifer Hagan, and Paul Dias.
- Jean Scott, 3136 Genevieve Court P.A., She has been connected to this project since it began back in 1972. She is thrilled to see that there will finally be a conclusion to what will be of the “little corner” at Greer Park. Over the years they have had funding taking away three times and spent elsewhere. She would like to see at least a backboard for tennis, group picnic tables (two or three tables placed together for parties) and restroom facilities.
- Charles Scott, 3136 Genevieve Court P.A., After 35 years of promises, he would like to see what was promised by previous council members, city managers, and past Community Services Department head Paul Thiltgen. The very minimum as he sees it would be a back board, two tennis courts, 3 or 4 setting of grouped picnic tables to accommodate family outings, and restrooms. He mentions a similar area at Foothill Park, a 6 foot concrete slab with stainless steel stools and walls almost to the floor to permit only hose washing to clean.
- Kay Carey, 4160 Old Trace Road P.A., member of the Greer sub-committee. Reminded the commissioners on the cost to put in a passive park, ¼ million. From her experience with working with tennis contractors, it cost about \$40,000 to \$50,000 per court with these numbers it would cost about the same to put in 4-5 tennis courts. Palo Alto is still below the USTA’s court availability requirements, which is 58 courts. Palo Alto has 28 full time courts and 16 half time courts available for use.
- Betsy Allen, Mid town resident – She is very concerned on the extent the report covers the installation of Gymnasium for the use of Greer park. If we have the gyms and they were a private/pubic investment we would from her experience surely loose control of them. In the report it mentions that Palo Alto doesn’t have enough Gymnasiums available. She reminds everyone that we have two, one used by Foothill College and one used by JCC which we could take back and use for all of Palo Alto. This would be a better solution then to build a new one.
- Sheri Furman, 3094 Greer – Acknowledged Annette Ashton for bringing this forward. We have been waiting 25 years and feel that this project should take

Approved

- precedence over lighting at Cubberley. She would like to see the parcel of land be used in a capacity that everyone could enjoy.
- Hilary Somers, representing USTA – Would like to add that another possibility for tennis court funding could be obtained through a new partnership created in 2005 called “Tennis in the Parks”. The requirement for funding for the creation of 4 or more tennis courts could fund up to 20% or \$20,000.
 - Commissioner Cribbs acknowledged this information from Ms. Somers and said they were looking into this type of funding possibilities for renovating existing Palo Alto tennis courts.

The Commissioners were asked for comments and a motion to move the report forward.

- Commissioner Losch would like to see Greer Park completed and accepts the recommendation of a passive park.
- Commissioner Gioumousis feels that if we just accept the passive park and not consider tennis courts she feels that’s all the area will ever be. She would like to pursue the recommendation of tennis courts.
- Commissioner Keating agreed with a passive park. She believes that putting in lights at Cubberley is an efficient use of funds. Rehabilitating JLS is also a good idea. There are Terman courts already available too. Agrees with a passive park.
- Commissioner Hagan mentions that the sub-committee was created to find out what the community wanted. They researched possibilities over the last six months. We need to move forward and present this report Council. As a commission we recommend that Greer Park be completed.
- Commissioner Cribbs agrees, at this point we want the Council to know that we support the information in the Greer report and would like to see a resolution to the vacant land at Greer.
- Liaison Morton gave the commissioners ideas on how to present to council their recommendation.
- Commissioner Losch adds that what we might say to council is “out of the options explored, what seems to be more feasible is using the land as a passive park or installing tennis courts.”
- Motion by Hagan and seconded by Keating.

Motion: We recognize the groundswell of community support for the completion of Greer Park. The commission believes that the completion of Greer Park should be the cities next most important recreation priority. We recommend the council accept this report, and we recommend two options for consideration by the council, one a passive park and two tennis courts. Approved 5:0

5. Recognition of outgoing Commissioners



Approved

Commissioner Cribbs announced that three commissioners have ended their terms. They have agreed to stay on until next month when Council has selected their replacements. Words of appreciation were said to commissioners Gioumousis, Hagan, and Keating.

COMMUNICATIONS/INFORMATION ITEMS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1. Staff Rob de Geus provided a handout on a resolution of the Strategic Alliance promoting healthy food and activity environments from San Francisco. It was agreed as a city we would do the same. We will write our own resolution and will come back next month to have the commission endorse.

TENTATIVE AGENDA ITEMS FOR JANUARY 24, 2006 Meeting

1. Election of Chair and Co-Chair
2. Baylands Conservation Plan
3. Airport Master Plan
4. City Auditor Report – Parks Maintenance
5. Strategic Alliance resolution promoting healthy food and activity environments
6. Stanford/Palo Alto Fields
7. CityWorks CIP program status

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

