



# Staff Report

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DATE: August 20, 2008

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Shia Geminder, Recreation Supervisor  
Rob de Geus, Division Manager, Recreation & Golf Services

SUBJECT: Field Use Allocation Policy (draft) Review

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The purpose of this report is to get feedback from the Parks and Recreation Commission on the draft "Field Use Policy". It is also an opportunity to review the public comment and suggestions received from various stakeholders regarding the draft, and a timeline for the adoption of this policy. This policy is the first step towards a longer term solution of a Parks & Recreation master plan that would identify and address the City's current and future field use needs. This is an informational report and no action is requested at this time.

## **BACKGROUND**

As you are aware, the Community Services Department has been working closely with Commissioners Panelli and King over the last six months to create a formal "Field Use Policy" to ensure that park and field facilities are utilized for recreational, athletic, cultural, educational, social and community service functions that meet the needs and interests of the community. The City of Palo Alto Recreation Division brokers all City and Palo Alto Unified School District fields. These include 16 parks, 5 sports complexes, 15 elementary schools, 3 middle schools and 2 high schools. The City works regularly with 34 local sports clubs and non-profit organizations that represent approximately 25,000 participants. Two things are clear: athletic field space in Palo Alto is in high demand for limited space, and the demand continues to increase each year.

Our field reservation guidelines are no longer adequate to address the demand for fields or for the competing interests of how often and to whom fields are brokered. There has never been a **formal policy** that establishes procedures and sets clear policies governing the use of City of Palo Alto and Palo Alto Unified School District playing fields managed by the City of Palo Alto. As we continue to experience ever growing demand with limited supply of playing fields, the necessity to have a clear, concise and objective field use policy becomes more imperative than ever.

## **POLICY DRAFT PROCESS**

The interests of many stakeholders were considered in the formulation of this policy draft including: various neighborhood residents, park maintenance staff, Field User Committee members, Parks & Recreation Commissioners, PAUSD and regular field users. A Parks and Recreation Commission special study session was held on November 8, 2007, at Jordan Middle School to hear neighborhood and field user concerns about the use of the playing fields at Jordan Middle School. Public comment and feedback regarding the policy draft (see Attachment B) was solicited via email and the City website. Various cities were benchmarked from South San Francisco to Campbell to San Jose to see what, if any, field use policy was currently in place. We have adopted various segments of the field use policies from the City of Campbell and the City of Cupertino, as they have the most comprehensive and effective policies we have seen.

## **RECURRING ISSUES VIA PUBLIC FEEDBACK**

There are a few recurring themes amongst the feedback we have received and require more direction from the Commission.

- **Section V. Eligibility:** *Residency requirement of 51% for priority brokering eligibility.*  
There have been some suggestions to increase the residency requirement for youth non-profit organizations to 75% or even higher or perhaps incorporate a sliding residency scale. San Carlos currently requires 90% or greater overall residency. Moreover, given that none of the regular adult soccer organizations meet our 51% requirement, should this percentage requirement remain the same or again incorporate a sliding scale?
- **Section V. Eligibility:** *Recreational versus competitive league priority or “volunteer non-profit” versus “commercial non-profit” priority status.*  
Volunteer non-profit is defined as purely volunteer in nature with no paid coaching or training and a non-restrictive membership. An example would be AYSO. Commercial non-profit is defined as organizations can hire paid coaching or training staff. An example would be any CYSA soccer club. Some competitive youth and adult leagues contend they should have equal or greater priority over recreational leagues due to the nature of the leagues that allow young players to advance to higher levels of play. Competitive leagues are far more regional in nature than recreational leagues due to the lack of abundance of competitive players in any given city.

## **TIMELINE**

At this August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2008, meeting we hope to hear additional public and Commission feedback and then refine the draft, bringing back a final to the September 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting for consideration to move to council for review and approval. It is our hope to have the Field Use Allocation Policy in place by October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2008 in advance of spring brokering which occurs in November.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: Field Use Allocation Policy draft

Attachment B: Stakeholder & Public comments regarding the draft policy