



**DRAFT**

**MINUTES  
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION  
October 28, 2008  
City Hall  
250 Hamilton Ave**

**Commissioners Present:** Deirdre Crommie, Carl King, Paul Losch, Pat Markevitch, Alex Panelli, Daria Walsh, Joel Davidson

**Commissioners Absent:**

**Others Present:** Council Liaison Jack Morton

**Staff Present:** Catherine Bourquin, Rob de Geus, Donald Piana

**I. ROLL CALL CONDUCTED BY:** Catherine Bourquin

**II. INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION**

Presentation given by Adam Howard and Jessica Lewis on Recreation Youth and Teen programs offered at Mitchell Park Community Center. There was a question and answer session with the Commissioners following the presentation.

**III. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS** – Manu Kumar, Garland Dr PA – Spoke on the issue of policy enforcement at Jordan field. He would like to see signage posted so the police can enforce the non permitted usage. He was also concerned that the closure of 6pm was not incorporated in the Field Use Policy.

**IV. AGENDA CHANGES, REQUESTS, and DELETIONS:** Item 3 was removed as the Wildland Fire Management Plan was not ready for review.

**V. BUSINESS:**

- 1. Approval of Draft Minutes of September 23, 2008 regular meeting** – The Draft Minutes of September 23, 2008 were unanimously approved. **Approved 6:1 abstention (Commissioner Davidson)**
- 2. Community Challenge to Get Active – “Let’s Go Palo Alto** – Staff de Geus introduced Amy French who is participating in a Management Internship with the Community Services Department from the Planning and Community Environment Department. Amy



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French gave the commissioners an update presentation on the “Let’s Go Palo Alto Activity Challenge website project. The project was initiated to promote community fitness. The project is funded by the City of Palo Alto and the Palo Alto Recreation Foundation. The website URL for Lets Go Palo Alto is: [www.letsGOPaloAlto.com](http://www.letsGOPaloAlto.com) or [www.letsGOPaloAlto.org](http://www.letsGOPaloAlto.org). The commissioners are encouraged to sign up and create a team. The official challenge will start on January 1, 2009. The website will encourage donations to the Palo Alto Recreation Foundation to help fund the project.

3. **Wildland Fire Management Plan** – Deferred until the plan is complete, possibly coming back in December.
4. **Review of Banning Smoking in City Parks and Facilities** - Commissioner Walsh began the discussion with asking for direction on how to proceed with this item. Staff de Geus reminded the commissioners of their discussion from the last meeting. He said that the commissioners were generally satisfied with the local, state and regulation level ordinances. Staff Piana also provided feedback on what is enforceable at the parks. The current ordinance covers the Foothill park trails only and there is no smoking at the reserved picnic areas at parks. The ordinance allows for some flexibility during fire seasons to prohibit smoking in additional locations by posting signage in designated areas. Commissioner Losch requested from his fellow commissioners a better understanding of where they stood on this issue. Chair Markevitch requested the commissioners choose one of three alternatives A – Do nothing (satisfied with the existing ordinances) B – Add the preserves to the existing ordinance or C – Ban smoking at all parks. The commissioners voted as follows:

- a. Do nothing - 4 (Commissioners Walsh, King, Losch, and Markevitch)
- b. Add Preserves to the ordinance – 1 (Commissioner Panelli)
- c. Ban smoking at all parks– 2 (Commissioners Davidson and Crommie)

Commissioner Walsh asked if there were any oral communications on this item. There was not.

Council Liaison Morton commented on the fact that Arastradero was not included in the current smoking ordinance because the preserve was added after the policy was in place. He recommended that staff make a request to council to add the preserve to the policy.

After some further discussion on the topic a motion was made.

***Motion: To take no action on the banning of smoking in City Parks and Facilities.  
Approved 5:2 (Commissioners Crommie and Davidson)***

## **V. COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**



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1. Commissioner Markevitch acknowledged City staff on the Achievement Award that they received.
2. Staff de Geus announced that the Field Allocation Policy was approved by the City Council on October 20<sup>th</sup> with a unanimous vote of 9:0
3. Staff Piana reminded the Commissioners about the Halloween Haunt event at Foothill Park, Friday, Oct 31 and Saturday, November 16 – 8:30pm.
4. Staff de Geus announced that there will be a Study Session with City Council on the Palo Alto Golf Course consultant findings on November 17<sup>th</sup> at 6 – 7pm. Council Liaison Morton told the commissioners that it would be acceptable if they made a formal request to join in the study session.
5. Cubberley's construction document is 90% complete. There will be a meeting to get all the documents together next week.
6. There will be a community meeting on November 20<sup>th</sup> to discuss the installation of a restroom at Eleanor Pardee Park. The location and time will be announced shortly.
7. Commissioner Davidson announced that volunteer Ellen Fletcher had surgery and is reported doing well.
8. Commissioner Crommie announced that her husband qualified for the Senior Olympics. Staff de Geus asked that Commissioner Crommie send Anne Cribbs an email letting her know.

**VI. TENTATIVE AGENDA FOR NOVEMBER REGULAR MEETING: November 18, 2008**

1. Study Session – Discussion of development of a strategic plan as a companion document to the City of Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan Update to 2020, the scope of which would include Arts & Sciences, Parks, Human Services and Recreation.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15pm wishing Ellen Fletcher a quick recovery.





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**MINUTES**

**PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION  
ANNUAL RETREAT  
November 18, 2008  
Lucie Stern Community Center**

**Commissioners Present:** Deirdre Crommie, Joel Davidson, Carl King, Paul Losch, Pat Markevitch, Alex Panelli, Daria Walsh

**Commissioners Absent:**

**Others Present:** Council Liaison Jack Morton

**Staff Present:** Rob de Geus, Greg Betts, Catherine Bourquin, Don Piana, Amy French

**Roll Call Conducted by:** Catherine Bourquin

**ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:** None

**AGENDA CHANGES, REQUESTS, and DELETIONS:** Chair Markevitch added Comments and Announcements to the agenda which was erroneously left off.

**BUSINESS:**

**1. Group Dynamics Discussion**

The commissioners and staff participated in an exercise to determine what they felt went well through the year and what did not go so well.

Well	What could be handled better
Subcommittee work – especially field allocation policy and Baylands use.	Clubby vibe – fun but need to reach out to the public more and make them feel welcome. Try to before meeting starts.
Tackled heavy issues, helped PTC with Baylands.	Get more civic engagement
Chair Markevitch – Great Chair, handled the running of the meeting very proficiently.	Reach out and invite people, ie neighbors



Team work – everyone is very respectful of different view points	Work more closely with the media for coverage on important issues
Support of measure “N”, complimented Commissioner Markevitch on her time spent on it.	Agenda planning – could improve
Liaison Mortons assistance at meetings is very helpful.	Role of chair should be defined to help the next Chair
Support from parks and recreation staff	Better notification of park improvements, etc.
Commissioners presence at city events	Help with “truthiness” factoids direct
	Meeting length
	Follow through on tasks, outcome unclear (dogs in park issue) no action on some items.
	Disconnect with council as a group, guidance desirable

Commissioner King requested to try and find a method to incorporate all the packet information into one PDF file. Staff agreed to look into the software to make this happen.

## **2. Study Session**

Staff de Geus gave a brief introduction of what was expected from the commission on the development of a new strategic plan for the period 2010-2020 years. Prior to this meeting staff met with Commissioners Panelli, King and Markevitch on September 18, 2008 to get input on the concept of a new Community Services (CSD) Strategic Plan.

At this November 18<sup>th</sup> meeting, Staff Amy French assisted with the discussion starting with a power point presentation, which covered the existing CSD strategic plan that expires in 2010 and a brief overview of the City’s Comprehensive Plan update for the period 2010-2020 currently underway. The commissioners spent some time discussing the primary question before them “Should staff pursue a department-wide Strategic Plan and needs assessment?” The commissioners had numerous questions that included: How will the Strategic Plan be used? How much will it cost to develop the plan? What methodology will be used for the needs assessment?

Additionally, the commissioners emphasized that strong leadership would be needed to shepherd such a strategic planning process through to completion given the many internal and external stakeholders and partners. Commissioners and staff discussed the strategic plan concept at length, recognizing that CSD is a large and diverse department, and the prospect of embarking on the development of a 10-year Strategic Plan, for the entire Community Services Department is somewhat daunting. However, after much

discussion there was a general consensus that a CSD Strategic Plan, for the period 2010-2020, is worth pursuing, however, the framework of the plan, and particularly the methodology of the needs assessment will need to be discussed further.

Staff and the commissioners agreed to continue the item to next months meeting. It was suggested that the commissioners take some time to read the information provided in the staff report and select three out of the 14 needs assessments outcomes or come up with their own, that they feel are particularly important. The commissioners will review their choices at the December meeting.

## **V. COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

1. Thursday night, November 20<sup>th</sup> the Eleanor Park Community meeting to discuss the installation of a restroom will be discussed. The location will be the Art Center, and the time will be 6pm.
2. Tuesday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> the first public meeting for Greer Park will be held. It will be at Emerson school- daycare at 7pm. The Mid-town Neighborhood Association will be co-hosting this public meeting. David Ruben the consultant will be facilitating this meeting.
3. Commissioner Crommie announced that she would like to have a meeting with the commissioners in the sub-committee for the Baylands.
4. December 15 the composting issue will go before the Council.

## **VI. ADJOURNMENT**

Adjourned at 9:55pm



## **COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

### **MEMORANDUM**

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**TO:** Parks and Recreation Commission

**FROM:** Rob de Geus                      **DEPARTMENT:** Community Services

**AGENDA DATE:** December 16, 2008

**SUBJECT:** Continued item from November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008 retreat - Development of a Community Services Department Strategic Plan for 2010-2020

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#### **Recommendation**

Staff recommends the Parks and Recreation Commission review, revise as needed, and approve a tentative scope of services for a Community Services Needs Assessment

#### **Background**

At the November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008 Parks and Recreation Commission Retreat, staff led a discussion regarding the preparation of a Community Services Department (CSD) Strategic Plan (Plan) that would include: (1) a comprehensive review and needs assessment of arts & sciences, parks, human services, and recreation programs, services and facilities, (2) a long-term (10-year) vision for CSD facilities and community programs for the same 2010-2020 period planned for the Comprehensive Plan Update, and (3) recommendations to establish near-term strategic actions, goals, policies and programs that will best meet community needs within realistic budget constraints and a strategy to adequately fund parks and recreation facilities and services in the future

At the November 18<sup>th</sup> retreat staff focused on two topics:

- (1) **The scope and purpose of a Plan beyond a Recreation Master Plan, focusing on all CSD programs and facilities** in the ten years beyond the 2005-2010 Strategic Action Plan (SAP) Executive Summary, and
- (2) **A draft scope of services for a Needs Assessment and Plan Preparation** (Attachment A) to be included as part of a report to go to City Council regarding the project prior to

staff sending Request for Proposals (RFP) to qualified consultants.

At the retreat the majority of our time was spent discussing the question, “Should staff pursue a department-wide needs assessment and strategic plan?” Concerns about the breadth of the project, methodology, benchmarking along with the time and cost commitments required for success were discussed at length. At the conclusion of the retreat there was general consensus that developing a 10 year CSD Strategic Plan would be a worthwhile endeavor, particularly due to the expiration of the current CSD Strategic Action Plan 2005-2010 and the opportunity to inform the update to the City Comprehensive Plan 2010-2020. Staff and Commissioners agreed that a CSD Strategic Plan that functions both as a companion plan to the City Comprehensive Plan as well as a road map for the community and City staff to reach goals and objectives for Community Services would benefit the community.

Furthermore there was general support for having commissioners serve on a task force, working with staff, a consultant, and community members on developing a needs assessment and strategic plan.

### **Discussion**

At the November retreat, after gaining consensus that a CSD strategic plan as opposed to a Recreation Master Plan is preferred, we began to discuss the methodology to be used for developing a needs assessment and strategic plan. Staff has reviewed numerous Parks and Recreation strategic plans prepared by Bay Area City’s including those listed below:

- Santa Rosa
- Mountain View
- Menlo Park
- San Bruno
- Redwood City
- Union City
- Burlingame
- Sunnyvale

Staff also met with a Parks and Recreation Director and Superintendent Peer Group called “POTTERES”, made up of City representatives from San Francisco to San Jose, to solicit input on best practices for Parks and Recreation needs assessments and strategic plans. Given the benchmarking research conducted to date the following components of a strategic plan are considered to be most valuable:

1. Analysis of existing conditions and capacity of the parks and recreation system,
2. Analysis of community perspective on parks and recreation needs for the future, and

3. Development of specific strategies and actions to best meet these needs within realistic budget constraints and a strategy to adequately fund parks and recreation facilities and services in the future.

The first and next step for staff and the Parks and Recreation Commission, in the consideration of a strategic planning process, is to craft a tentative scope of services for a Community Services needs assessment. A Needs Assessment can be defined as a scientifically reliable statistical study to gain an understanding of the Community Service needs, attitudes, opinions and behaviors of the constituency served. Studies suggest that a needs assessment should be an independent study from a master plan, although the needs assessment can be used as a blueprint for developing a master plan.

The needs assessment would begin with collecting information related to: how population changes in the City will affect future needs for parks, natural areas, trails, recreation facilities and services; the current condition of the recreation and parks system; population and economic data; changes in family composition, cultural diversity and income; and implications for future recreation and parks needs. This phase will culminate with a Community Profile, summarizing the key findings.

Staff found that the following methods were most commonly used by other agencies to analyze existing conditions and capacity of the parks and recreation system:

- Focus Groups
- Interviews
- Public Forums
- Secondary Data Analysis
- Community Survey Questionnaire
- Asset Mapping

Several of the above needs assessment tools would be utilized in Needs Assessment, recognizing each method has advantages and disadvantages. The goal would be to employ a wide variety of community outreach methods to document expressed needs and desires of residents related to Community Services in Palo Alto.

Attachment A provides a draft scope of services that could be used as part of a request for proposal, to solicit consultant bids on a Needs Assessment project. The project would require the consultant to work closely with staff and the community. At the November Retreat staff asked Commissioners to review the draft scope (Attachment A), and select three out of the 14 needs assessments outcomes, or come up with their own, that they feel are particularly important.

Recognizing the current economic conditions that may limit funding options for the needs assessment and strategic plan, staff will continue to focus on budget feasibility and project alternatives. That is, if funding for a comprehensive Needs Assessment is not available, staff will determine if components of the needs assessment can be accomplished by staff, as well as adjusting the project's draft timeline (Attachment B) as needed.

**Next Steps**

Should staff and the Commission agree to a tentative scope of services for a Needs Assessment staff would return to the PRC for further discussion and recommendation at the January 27 PRC meeting. Staff would provide any supporting documents the PRC may request and the PRC could: (1) discuss potential budget issues related to the Plan scope, including staff resources and potential consultant costs, (2) review any scope of services revisions, and (3) review needs assessment outreach approaches.

**ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Draft Scope of Services – Needs Assessment
- B. Draft Timeline for Outreach, Needs Assessment and Plan Preparation

Prepared by:

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Rob De Geus,  
Recreation and Golf Division Manager

Department Head Approval:

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Greg Betts  
Interim Director of Community Services

## **ATTACHMENT A DRAFT SCOPE OF SERVICES**

The goals of a needs assessment could include the following:

1. Assess resident satisfaction levels with the quality, quantity, and management of existing parks, programs, facilities and services.
2. Determine current resident usage levels of CSD programs and facilities and appropriateness of when and where these services are offered.
3. Identify what levels of spending are acceptable via fees and charges, for CSD programs, park and facility improvements.
4. Identify the community's interest in the addition of future facilities.
5. Identify future interests regarding the implementation of new programs and services that meet the needs of the community and respond to new trends in the leisure services industry.
6. Determine how effective CSD is at communicating its "products and services" and disseminating relevant information to the residents.
7. Identify resident satisfaction levels with regards to program registration procedures, including preferences for registration practices, i.e. walk-in, mail-in, fax, e-mail, etc.
8. Obtain general demographic characteristics and identify perceptions of the various market segments of both users and non-users of the CSD programs, parks and facilities.
9. Identify what prohibits non-users from taking advantage of agency services, and do they participate in other similar non-CSD activities.
10. To gather information that CSD can utilize in order to gain a better understanding of its constituency.
11. To investigate how citizens wish to utilize their discretionary time and how CSD may coordinate efforts in these areas.
12. To explore and suggest efficient ways of providing opportunities that takes into account the economic and time constraints of the community.
13. To assess the public's awareness and perception of CSD's current programs and facilities in terms of how well the programs and facilities satisfy the needs of participants.
14. To afford residents the opportunity to offer suggestions, comments, and concerns about the opportunities provided to them by CSD.

**ATTACHMENT B**  
**DRAFT TIMELINE FOR NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND CSD STRATEGIC PLAN**

- December 16, 2008 PRC Discussion
- December-January Staff research and outreach
- January 2009 Public Art and Human Services Commissions
- January 27, 2009 PRC public hearing: budget, scope, project timeline
- March 2009 CC public hearing: budget, scope, RFP authorization
- March 2009 Send RFP's to consultants and determine focus groups
- April –May 2009 Obtain proposals and select consultant(s)
- May 2009 CC public hearing if budget amendment needed
- May - June 2009 Execute consultant contract(s)
- June 2009 Community workshop/focus groups
- July – December 2009 Conduct Needs Assessment (interviews, surveys, analysis of patterns, preferences, trends, demographic profile, inventory preparation)
  
- January – March 2010 Focus group/public meetings, assessment wrap up
- March – July 2010 Draft Plan preparation
- August –November 2010 Public meetings, hearings and Plan refinement
- December - 2010 Plan adoption

Parks Recreation Commission  
Work Plan Status  
2008/2009

Priorities:	Description	Responsible	Timeline
a. Playing Fields –		Panelli, King	Ongoing
b. Open Space –		Walsh, Davidson, Crommie	Ongoing
c. Culture of Fitness –		Crommie, Davidson, Walsh	Ongoing
d. Partnership –		Davidson	Ongoing
e. Palo Alto as Magnet -		Losch	Ongoing
<b>Agenda Planning</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Community Services Strategic Plan 2010-2020	Informational for Discussion	Betts/de Geus	November-08
Joint Commission/Council Meeting	Discuss priorities	de Geus	January 12, 2008
Wildland Fire Management Plan	Review report for errors and omissions	Lester Hodgins & Consultants	January-08
Palo Alto Golf Course Operational Study	The study provides information on the Bay Area golf market and conditions of the Palo Alto Golf Course facility; and the current and alternative operating models available for the Golf Course. This item will be placed on the Finance Committee agenda in the future for further discussion and recommendations to Council.	de Geus	TBD
Flood Control - San Francisco Creek	Find a balanced flood control and recreational use solution to the risks posed by San Francisco Creek	de Geus	TBD
Mitchell Park Library	Update	Debra Jacobs	TBD
Parks CIP Update	Update	Betts/Piana	TBD
Senior Games	Update	Anne Cribbs	TBD

Parks Recreation Commission  
 Work Plan Status  
 2008/2009

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Informational Presentations	Description	Responsible	Timeline
Palo Alto Recreation Foundation		de Geus	December-08
Palo Alto Youth Council		Howard, Adam	April-09
Friends of the Palo Alto Parks		Piana	TBD
Recreation, Parks and Open Space Programs		TBD	TBD
Completed	Description	Responsible	Timeline