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**MINUTES
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
February 24, 2009
City Hall
250 Hamilton Ave**

Commissioners Present: Deirdre Crommie, Joel Davidson, Sunny Dykwel, Carl King, Paul Losch, Pat Markevitch, Daria Walsh,

Commissioners Absent:

Others Present: Council Liaison Espinosa

Staff Present: Greg Betts, Catherine Bourquin, Lester Hodgins, Rob de Geus, Donald Piana

I. ROLL CALL CONDUCTED BY: Catherine Bourquin

II. AGENDA CHANGES, REQUESTS, and DELETIONS: Item 3, Presentation by PABAC will not be presented tonight. Staff de Geus and Commissioner Crommie will provide a short update on this topic. Item 5 will not be an Action item but the Commissioners comments will be taken and submitted with the staff report that will go to Council from Kenneth Dueker, City Managers office.

II. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS: Kevin Coleman, spoke on the lack of gym space in Palo Alto. He would like to see attention put on the short and long term impacts of this problem.

IV. BUSINESS:

- 1. Approval of Draft Minutes of January 26, 2008 regular meeting** – The Draft Minutes of the January 26, 2009 regular meeting were unanimously approved as written. **Approved 7:0**
- 2. Welcome new City Council Liaison Sid Espinosa** - Council Member Espinosa was welcomed as our new City Council Liaison for the Parks and Recreation Commission.
- 3. Informational presentation from Palo Alto Bicycle Advisory Committee (PABAC)** – Staff de Geus informed the commission that Richard Swent who was to speak tonight had back surgery and was unable to make it to tonight's meeting. Staff de Geus spoke



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with Mr. Swent and shared with the Commission some of the points of interest that PABAC is involved with. Among other interests PABAC has been involved in improving bicycle access to the Baylands. They have been working with VTA on the concept of a Highway 101 underpass/overpass to the Baylands in South Palo Alto. Commissioner Crommie also advised the Commission that PABAC is also interested in the existing Adobe Creek underpass and expanding the open hours of the underpass for pedestrians and bicyclists. PABAC will be invited to the March 24th regular meeting.

4. **Discussion with Anne Cribbs on the Senior Games** – Anne Cribbs came to the Commission to provide an update on the 2009 National Summer Senior Games. The count down has started and there is only approximately 150 days left until the games commence. The official dates for the senior games are August 1 – 15, 2009. The expectation is 12,500 athletes will participate in the games. There are 4000 volunteers needed to put this event on. Anne Cribbs provided a demonstration on using the Senior Games website to register volunteer Commissioner Chair Markevitch as the first to sign up. The website to register for these volunteer opportunities is www.2009seniorgames.org. The Commissioners were given time to ask questions following the presentation. Commissioner Davidson challenged the Commission to come up with a total of 250 volunteers. A motion was made by Commissioner Davidson and seconded by Commissioner Crommie.

*Motion: To have the Parks and Recreation Commission cooperate together to achieve a 250 volunteer quota for the 2009 National Summer Senior Games.
Approved 7:0*

5. **Approval of a Recommendation to City Council for the Adoption of a “Foothills Fire Management Plan”** – Staff de Geus reminded the commission of the item change at the beginning of the meeting referring to the staff memo he provided correcting the title of the item. The Commission was asked for a recommendation to City Council but instead they are only being asked tonight to provide comments, and notations of errors or omissions on the draft plan. Staff will capture all the Commissioners comments in the minutes and the minutes will be attached to the Staff report that goes to Council in April.

Kelly Morariu, Interim Deputy City Manager, provided the Commission with a brief update on the purpose of the Foothills Fire Management Plan. She stated that the plan came about from a discussion with the City Council during the 2008 city budget process. The fire safety in the foothills and the staffing of fire station 8 were discussed and a request from City Council was made to the City Manager’s Office to have a fire management plan created for the foothills area in Palo Alto. The key players for this plan were introduced, Carol Rice and Cheryl Miller consultants of Wildland Resource Management, Ken Drueker, Police Department on special assignment for the City Managers Office, Lester Hodgins, Supervisor Open Space and Greg Betts, Interim



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Director of Community Services. A PowerPoint presentation was provided by the Wildland Resource Management consultants focusing on the information in the Wildland Fire Risk Assessment and mitigation draft that was provided to the Commission and Public.

The Fire Management Plan Update addresses the following key items:

- Fire hazard assessment
- Regional evacuation routes
- Review of municipal ordinances
- Staffing of Station 8
- Wildland Fire Management Recommendations and Mitigations
- Updates to Pearson-Arastradero Trails Master Plan and Foothills Trail Maintenance Plan
- CEQA documentation
- Implementation plan and potential funding

Oral communications followed the presentation:

Jean Olmsted, 240 West Charleston, Palo Alto – Mrs. Olmstead who is a volunteer at Foothills Park removing invasive plants spoke on how she feels that the plan is designed to prevent fires but will destroy the nature preserve. The plan calls to treat 330 acres “but we will be lucky if we are left with a garden” she said. The prevention treatments need to be reconsidered so the natural areas are not destroyed.

Franklin Olmsted, 240 West Charleston, Palo Alto – Mr. Olmsted provided the Commission and Public with some handouts of a map and a list of plants that are in an area that is on the treatment plan for the Fire Management Plan. His concern of the area is that the area is very steep and in the area of the chaparral are very rare species. The treatment suggested in the plan would wipe out these rare species and change the unique ecology that only occurs in this particular area of the park. He would like to see something else be done in that area of the park.

Interim Deputy City Manager Morariu reported that the staff report that will be going to Council will have the Foothills Park and Arastradero Preserve specifically mentioned in the report and the comments and concerns from the Parks and Recreation Commission will be included.

Commissioners Questions and Comments:

Commissioner Davidson – Commissioner Davidson was concerned with the draft mitigated negative declaration.

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1. Under BIO-1, what is meant by “the legal consequences of take of protected species or habitat”?

Answer by Consultant Rice: She said that it was a Fish and Game technical jargon that they use.

2. Why do chemical herbicide treatments and not biological treatments get more attention in the report?

Answer by Consultant Rice: The concern is on the eucalyptus stumps and the sprouting, they felt that herbicides would be a more affective treatment. Commissioner Davidson would like to see an emphasis put on biological treatments in the report.

3. The words “Not anticipated” come up a lot in the report. Would like to see more of a reason why it is not anticipated.

4. The area around Los Trancos has a lot of eucalyptus trees, neighbors in that area would like to know how to have them removed. Is this part of our jurisdiction and how does the City intend to assist with eucalyptus removal? Is the report going to address this problem?

Answer by Consultant Rice: The treatments prescribed are within the Palo Alto property lines. There will be collaboration with other jurisdictions that are impacted by potential fire hazard areas.

5. Why does noise in that area not reflect a problem in the mitigation report?

Answer by Consultant Rice: There is a threshold requirement, and the anticipated level of noise from machinery was not determined to reach that threshold.

Commissioner Dykwel –

1. Make sure the report addresses the ingress and egress routes for the neighbors that would be impacted if there was a fire. She wanted to ensure that communication was implemented with all concerned residents.

2. That an emphasis is placed on the community for regional cooperation for evacuations.

3. Ensure that the plan does not have any adverse impacts on the natural environment of the nature preserves.

Answer: Consultant Rice referenced the Draft Mitigation Declaration and noted the BIO’s section references any concerns with plant species, wildlife, etc.

Commissioner Walsh – Commissioner Walsh thanked everyone involved in the report and to the residents that came forward today with their comments.

1. How will the Public’s and the Commission’s comments be incorporated into the plan? And what is the date to have them in by?

Answer by Consultant Rice: It is her understanding that the comments, suggestions will be sent in a list form asking the consultants to modify the plan



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and include them before the final adoption by Council in April. All comments should be received by March 11, 2009.

2. The question relates to the mowing of the sides of the small trails. If you have to mow every year, wouldn't it make sense to just make the mowed fire breaks accessible to the public as trails?

Answer: Staff Betts replied by given a little history on how trails were developed. In Pearson Arastradero Preserve, the trail system is 10 miles that can be safely patrolled by staffed rangers, and in Foothills Park there are 15 miles of trails that can be safely patrolled by staffed rangers.

Commissioner Losch –

1. If we did nothing on a scale of 1 – 10, 10 being the highest risk, where do these two parks fall, if we maintain the status quo?

Answer by Consultant Rice: The State looks at the building codes and the park preserves are in the 75% of that code. The containment area is the most concern. By accepting this plan the approximate percentile that you will be improving would be about 50% in relation to the original 75%.

2. If there is an incident, are we reducing the degree of havoc?

Answer by Consultant Rice: We would be reducing it dramatically. Commissioner Losch wanted to emphasize that if we show that there will be a dramatic decrease by using the treatments in the plan, there will be those who will argue the necessity of keeping Fire Station 8 open.

3. This is a \$700,000 project, how much does it cost to raise \$700,000?

Answer by Deputy City Manager Morariu: She said it will depend on the structure; it will be a multi-pronged plan and we will be partnering with regional stakeholders. The regional areas will have their own fire plans in place in order to make the process easier to apply for grants.

Commissioner Crommie –

1. Where would the fire most likely start from?

Answer by Consultant Rice: We targeted the ignition source in our report, BBQ's were focused on, road side fires were main concern. She added most fires are human caused.

2. Commissioner Crommie would like to see the BBQ's removed from residents homes that impact the areas closes to the fence line then to have the wildlife habitat be impacted by mowing or grazing.

Answer by Consultant Rice: Residents are supposed to be doing there own fire management program. The fire department regulates this and does home site inspections.

3. Commissioner Crommie questioned the error in prioritization.

Answer by Consultant Rice: She replied that life, property and resources are used universally to prioritize a fire plan.

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4. Commissioner Crommie expressed her concern over *sudden oak death*; she wanted to double check that the processes for the treatments would not increase the chance of contamination.

Answer: Consultant Rice suggested a vehicle and equipment washing machine be included in the grant proposal to prevent seed spreading and any contamination of diseases.

Commissioner King -

1. How does it get implemented by the actual fire department?

Answer by Officer Ken Dueker: It doesn't involve just the Fire Department; it involves the Police, Fire and Open Space and Parks departments. This is a multi-faceted problem. The plan is technical and isn't a reference document for the fire department to rely on. We're hoping to spawn interagency cooperation, so we can solve the gaps that have been identified in this Fire Management Plan.

2. Commissioner King shared his concern that he did not see the metrics for how the City will determine how best to use limited resources to implement the plan. For example the plan provided an example of grazing vs. mowing but it was not clear what numerical analysis will be used to determine which of the recommendations will be implemented. Commissioner King also asked about how the environmental costs get factored into the decision making process?

Answer by Consultant Rice and Miller: During the implementation process there will be an implementation team who will investigate the options that have been highlighted in the Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration. Once there has been a determination, the recommendations and actions have to be followed. There are some dollars associated with this because of the monitoring costs that are involved.

Interim Deputy City Manager Morariu informed the commission that following the close of comments to the Foothill Fire Management Plan staff in planning will walk through with the concerned parties who submitted comments. Often times the plan will change slightly. Any changes and recommendations will be incorporated. We will probably sit down with the Olmsteds and look into their concerns.

Commissioner Markevitch - Commissioner Chair Markevitch had suggested at a previous meeting that the BBQ's at Foothill Park be changed to propane. She did not see it in the report.

1. Commissioner Markevitch would like to see converting the BBQ's to propane be considered as an option for Foothill Park. This would eliminate the potential fire hazard from hot coals and the chance of them blowing out.

Council Liaison Espinosa -



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1. Council Liaison Espinosa inquired if the report would be coming back to the Commission to flush out items such as the cost benefits vs. environmental impacts. Answer by Interim Deputy City Manager Morariu: She responded that it would not, unless directed by Council to. Once the implementation of the plan was underway, there will be a lot of dialogue occurring and she could see engaging the Commission in this process. We are still working on how that strategy is going to work.
2. He added that he was impressed on how much outreach has been done. He also wanted to recommend that when it comes before the Council it is presented with how we've been doing outreach, what will be different and what we will be doing. The process in which the plan was developed doesn't need to be the main focus. Station 8 – the “big elephant in the room”, will probably be a big part of the discussion, so being prepared for that discussion will be helpful.

Interim Deputy City Manager Morariu responded by agreeing and her feeling was that the plan was the starting point and the focus on the implementation will require a lot of discussion.

6. **Agenda setting – Review suggested topics for consideration at future meetings** – The Commission engaged in a discussion on topics for future meetings. Staff de Geus suggested that the Commission first reaffirm the existing priorities. Then, once the priorities are reaffirmed, concentrate on the additional items that were suggested and see where they fit in with the priorities. The Commission can then have two or more Commissioners choose topics of interest that they will work on and bring to the Commission when the item is ready for a meaningful and productive discussion.

After some discussion on the existing priorities a motion was made by Commissioner King and seconded by Commissioner Losch:

- a. Playing Areas –
 - A. Develop a field allocation policy necessary to meet the recreation and non-recreation demands of our residents at a fair and reason cost.
 - B. Engage in a CSD Strategic Planning process
 1. Analysis of existing conditions and capacity of CSD programs, services and facilities.
 2. Analysis of community perspective on CSD programs, services and facility needs for the future, and
 3. Development of specific strategies and actions to best meet these needs within realistic budget constraints.
- b. Open Space
 1. Provide citizens and staff clear statements and guidelines on balancing recreational uses with habitat preservation in Open Space.



- c. Culture of Fitness
 1. Encourage the citizens and employees of Palo Alto to embrace a healthier lifestyle through increased physical activity.
- d. Partnership
 1. Identify and compile a comprehensive list of all partnerships pertaining to the Parks & Recreation Department with an eye towards forging new ones.
- e. Palo Alto as a Magnet
 1. Understand Palo Alto's role and cost structure with regards to providing Parks and Recreation services to residents and non-residents.

Motion: To have the following changes reflected in the Commissioners 2009 Priorities.

- 1. Remove from Playing Areas "B." Engage in a CSD Strategic Planning process***
- 2. Change the title "a. Playing Areas" to "a. Reserved recreational facilities".***
- 3. Move "e. Palo Alto as a Magnet" under "a. Playing Areas" as "B"***
- 4. Make "Engage CSD strategic planning process as priority "e".***

Approved 7:0

Items to be included as potential agenda items on the work plan were identified as follows:

- Overview of Open Space and Parks Division operations – Opportunity to introduce Rangers and CIP project coordinator.
- Access to Baylands – move to March meeting
- Informational presentation on update of CIP funding/projects
- Greer Park renovation – CIP project
- The policy on the terms of office for the Commission – Commissioners King and Davidson.
- Creek/Urban trails – Commissioners Dykwel and Crommie
- Public Art in Parks – Chair Markevitch will be meeting with the Chair of the Art Commission to discuss how art is placed in parks.
- Parks and Recreation Commission and PAUSD liaison – Commissioner Losch and Walsh will work on formalizing a plan and then meet with Chair Markevitch.
- Revisiting recreational opportunities for dog owners – Commissioners Walsh and Losch
- Middle School Athletic program and policy – Commissioners Walsh and Markevitch
- Community Garden opportunities – Commissioners Davidson and Crommie
- Open Space Vision statement – Commissioners Walsh and Crommie
- JCC/Cubberley Gym transition – Informational

V. COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Adopt-A-Park list – Traditionally whoever got the information to Catherine first had their pick of parks. Return your forms to Catherine.
2. CPRS conference is next week March 3rd – 8th.

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3. Staff de Geus informed the Commission that he received a letter from a concerned user of the impact that will take place during the Greer Park renovation. Staff is working on responding.
4. Commissioner Davidson remarked on the documentation that the Commission receives is sometimes unreadable.
5. Commissioner Davidson announced that staff Minka Van der Zwaag is working on Earth Day. He would like to have a heads up when programs are coming up. Staff de Geus said he would send out the work schedule for Earth Day.
6. Commissioner Davidson formally apologized to the Commission for his remarks on the Commission's work load at last months meeting.
7. Commissioner Crommie would like to have a laser light pointer available for presentations.

VI. TENTATIVE AGENDA FOR MARCH 24, 2009 REGULAR MEETING:

1. A public meeting for Seale and Greer Park will be on Wednesday, March 11th. Commissioners will receive notification to follow the Brown Act laws.
March 24, 2009 Tentative Agenda
 - PABAC presentation
 - Lytton Plaza Project review and recommendation to Council to adopt a Park Improvement Ordinance for the Project Plan.
 - Presentation on Recreational Aquatic Program with staff Annie Bunten

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Adjourned at 11:02pm