



## ALAMEDA RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSION MINUTES FOR REGULAR MEETING

**DATE:** Thursday, March 13, 2014  
**TIME:** 7:00 p.m. Called to Order  
**PLACE:** City Hall Council Chambers

**1. ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Chair Bill Delaney, Vice Chair Lola Brown, Commissioners Ann Cooke, Joe Restagno and Bill Sonneman

**Staff:** Amy Wooldridge, Recreation & Parks Director

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Approved edited minutes of January 9, 2014 regular Recreation & Park Commission meeting M/S/C Commissioner Brown/Commissioner Cooke and unanimous.

**3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS, AGENDA**

No Public Comment. Chair Delaney mentioned the passing of Golf Commissioner, Mr. Ray Gahl. He was a great asset to the City.

**4. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS**

Director Amy Wooldridge, reported there were many comments received for the Jackson Park bench, that were presented to the Commissioners.

**5. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Review and Recommendation on the Clark Memorial Bench in Jackson Park**

Director Amy Wooldridge made a change to the recommendation and requested that the Commission delay the recommendation until further research be completed. The bench is significantly damaged. This is not on the historical monument list, but this is first hardscape in the city's oldest park.

Chair Delaney asked if we are addressing a bench or are we addressing crime; if there was no crime would we be discussing this. Director Wooldridge stated we would be talking about this because of the recent damage to the bench.

**Public Comment:**

Josh Miller, lives across the street. He said the majority of people who frequent the bench are unruly teens causing trouble, and sometimes dangerously spilling out onto the street. The bench is situated so it allows the illegal behavior. The park is in a constant state of evolution, and this should include the bench.

Betsy Mathison, lives near the park. Jackson is the most urban park and being passive it deserves more attention. She reported doing research on "dumb friends league" and gave historical perspective. She asked if the bench could be saved as there seems to be a much broader meaning in the inscription.

Chair Delaney asked if the activities impact her at home. Ms. Mathison stated her household and home have not been impacted.

James Manning, lives directly across the street from the bench. He is in favor of keeping the bench and encourages a place for youth to gather. He has observed illegal activity, but those things happen at the picnic tables also. He doesn't mind the noise. He asked for the consideration for more than one bench. Chair Delaney asked what the lighting is like after 10:00 p.m. Mr. Manning said it is not completely dark, but there is no light directly on the bench.

Karen Larson, lives on Park Avenue. She stated the attractive nuisance part of the park is on the opposite side of the park. She wanted to know if there is significant damage or minimal damage. She stated being at a lunch where the City Manager reported the financial state of the city is good. If there is a reason to spend general fund money, this seems to be the project.

Mary Manning, thank you for hearing comments. She has developed a fondness for the youth who are there, and they tend to be of an age where older kids are. They are creative with skateboards, unicycles, they juggle, things like this. The bench has a clubhouse feel to it, and for the most part they are well behaved kids. She encourages the bench being maintained and to preserve the space for youth. Chair Delaney asked if there are specific times for the group of youths. Ms. Manning said it is weather dependent.

Christopher Buckley, Alameda Architectural Preservation Society, provided a picture of the bench before the storm damage. He spoke on the historical element of the bench. He asked for the \$12,000 itemized detail for the rehabilitation project. He spoke on the illegal activity and an idea to create a dog park there, and he asked for an evaluation on lightening. Believes CEQA would be part of the removal of the bench.

Dorothy Freeman, stated living near Park Avenue in the 70's, and would like the bench to be renovated and preserved.

Frank Martin, lives across from the bench. He likes the bench and there hasn't been upkeep to the bench, no maintenance has been done to the bench. The police have better things to do. He has mixed emotions because of the skateboards could be hurt by drivers. He stated the lighting isn't good at that part of the park. Commissioner Cooke asked if lighting was better would it help. Mr. Martin stated no. The negative element in the park is a deterrent to neighbors or people who want to walk through the park.

Chair Delaney thanked the public for being here, and letters sent.

Commissioner Cooke stated it sounds as though the majority of the speakers would like the bench renovated. She commented that as ARPD has funding issues, perhaps the public can find ways to contribute to the renovation of the bench if that is the decision.

Commissioner Sonneman thanked all the speakers. He stated while working as a member of the faculty of Alameda High School he would be called on occasion to go to Jackson Park because there was about to be a fight. The location of the park is unique. He commented on driving around during the week and there were people doing park stuff, walking, and playing catch with kids, but no one was at the bench. He stated the bench is an eye-sore. He asked the public is this about the spirit of the bench, or the bench itself. He is looking forward to hearing what comes back.

Vice Chair Brown drove by on the way to the meeting and reported there were about seven people on the bench. She is looking forward to hearing more, but there are costs involved and the ARPD budget doesn't have the funding.

Commissioner Restagno commented there are several concerns like is it historic or not; is Jackson Park a natural area for youth to do something illegal; and the look of the bench itself. What is the true cost of the bench being renovated, and the preservation of something historic. He is leaning toward preserving the bench, but would like to see the information that comes back to the Commission.

Motion to continue this agenda item until further information is provided by staff including crime statistics over the last two years and options for renovations, including detailed cost estimates. M/S/C Commissioner Cooke/Vice Chair Brown and unanimous.

Director Wooldridge stated all neighbors will be notified when this comes back to the Commission.

## **6. OLD BUSINESS**

### **A. Jean Sweeney Open Space Park Update**

Director Wooldridge reported working with Mr. Kristopher Koster, Architect, for the second draft. Mr. Koster provided a master plan sketch that went before the Jean Sweeney Committee. She expects this to come to this Commission in April.

Ms. Janice Edwards, Alameda Backyard Growers submitted a request to a Mills College class to develop an organizational plan for the operations of the community garden.

There is a consolidated grant program (Active Transportation) for transit, and we are working to submit an application for the Cross Alameda Trail at Jean Sweeney Open Space Park.

## **7. REPORTS FROM RECREATION COMMISSION AND RECREATION & PARK DIRECTOR**

**A. Recreation Commission Reports:** Commissioner Sonneman stated he is involved in the T-Shirt softball league. There is a fundraiser at the Alameda Theater, March 20<sup>th</sup>. There is a commitment from both the Theater and the Elks. There is a call for volunteers.

Director Wooldridge stated this is a recreational sport for K-5<sup>th</sup> grades and co-ed, and starting with our Parks & Playgrounds program at five parks. This will be Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Vice Chair Brown reported on improvements in the Paratransit program with the hospital and

they are stopping and waiting for people in the lobby.

**B. Friends of the Park Report (FOTP):** Commissioner Restagno commented the Annual Golf Tournament is scheduled for a Monday instead of Wednesday. He is asking for donations for the silent action. They are looking at upgrading and revamping the website. They are helping out and fully support the T-Shirt League.

**C. Mastick Senior Center Report:** Vice Chair Brown reported on a program for Teens to lead sessions at Mastick Senior Center (MSC) to help seniors with technology, iPads, smart phones, tablets, etc. Director Wooldridge commented that this was inspired and requested by the teens.

Vice Chair Brown further mentioned the free tax preparing help is well underway. There will be an upcoming disaster preparedness workshop. She stated Director Wooldridge attends every Board meeting which is very helpful. Their membership continues to grow, and is currently approximately 2,700 members.

**C. Recreation and Parks Director Report:** Director Wooldridge commented the MSC will soon have free Wi-Fi. They are reducing the fence height at MSC, and looking at the landscape. There is a long-term planning committee for addressing further needs for seniors.

She reported on the water reductions in the parks, and this will impact as lawns will get brown. She wanted to remind folks that a brown lawn just means dormant, not dead. There are long-term goals for Bay Friendly planting in our passive parks.

Upcoming Council items: the three way agreement with AUSD/HA/City will be heard and will provide funding for renovation of Encinal Swim Center. Also the proposal for Babe Ruth to manage the College of Alameda Hardball Field.

The MIF three-hole course will open in May. The CEQA process for the South course will begin soon. She brought conceptual ideas to the Golf Commission for Jim's on the Course to add a banquet facility. She reported all 45-holes at the golf course are being watered by reclaimed water.

She reported upcoming ARPD events, Egg Scramble, and Earth Day.

Parks: Marina Cove Park is in an assessment district and the funds will replace the lighting bollards that have been broken. Tree in Leydecker fell on the playground and the swings will be repaired soon.

Our Junior Warriors program went really well, and adult softball is about to start. We are starting to get more corporate teams. We have a big push right now for high caliber hires for our summer programs. Summer registration starts soon, and there are several new camps coming including circus camp, science, leadership, and skateboarding. Now offering online classes.

We are working on expanding services and activities for special needs youth.

Chair Delaney asked about the impact on staff for adding more programming. Director Wooldridge reported that we are very busy, and we could do with more staff. There is a good energy with working together, but staff feels stretched thin.

The Board applauded Amy for her great work with changing ARPD.

Commissioner Restagno asked for a Krusi Park update. Director Wooldridge commented that the lack a Project Manager in the department has impact her workload for getting projects moving. She is working on getting a RFP will be out to the public in the spring.

8. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS, GENERAL:** None
9. **ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA:** None
10. **SET NEXT MEETING DATE:** Thursday, April 10, 2014
11. **ADJOURNMENT:** Chair Delaney adjourned the meeting at 8:37 p.m.