



**ALAMEDA RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSION
MINUTES FOR REGULAR MEETING**

DATE: Thursday, March 8, 2012
TIME: 7:00 p.m.
PLACE: City Hall Council Chambers

1. ROLL CALL

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

Absent: None

Staff: Patrick Russi, ARPD Recreation Supervisor

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Delaney had a question about the 02-09-2012 meeting. Commissioner Sonneman had said he would sit on the interview panel for the ARPD Director position, and Delaney asked if that had already taken place. Recreation Supervisor Russi said that the interviews were scheduled to be held later on in the month.

Approve Minutes of February 9, 2012 Recreation & Park Commission Regular Meeting

M/S/C DELANEY/BROWN (unanimously approved)

"That the minutes of the February 9, 2012 Recreation & Park Commission Regular Meeting are approved."

Approved (4): Restagno, Brown, Cooke, Delaney

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS, AGENDA

None.

4. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

None.

5. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Delaney spoke about the Council meetings that had taken place the previous evenings. There had been discussion about the Golf Course and the City's athletic fields, and Delaney was wondering why the Recreation & Park Commission had not been involved with these issues prior to those meetings. He was disturbed that there is a sub-set to the sports group that are putting out literature communicating the fact that the North Loop area has already been defined as a sporting field, and it has not. Delaney asked the Commission if the other members were concerned about these independent groups developing now and talking about maintaining some of these facilities once they get built. Delaney has met some of the people, and although they seem very nice, he wonders if they are qualified, capable and committed to such an undertaking for the long-term.

Chair Restagno said this was a good observation and he sees the situation as being very similar to what happened when the Boys and Girls Club got some of the Measure WW money without first having come to the Recreation & Park Commission. They had gone straight to the City Council, and Restagno thinks the same thing has happened here, referring to a letter regarding the new sports group that the Commission had never seen. Restagno suggested that if they all feel similarly, as a Commission they could write a letter to the Council and request to see a copy of that letter.

Vice Chair Brown said she was concerned as she had attended a Sunshine Ordinance meeting to understand the transparency in government the City is trying to achieve. An audience member at the February Commission meeting had come up and asked if there was another youth sports organization being formed. The Commission had responded to the individual that there was nothing happening that they had heard of. If the City is supposed to be a transparent organization, then they should have informed the Recreation & Park Commission about the letter so they could have knowledge of what is going on.

Commissioner Delaney said it sounds appropriate that the Commission send a letter to City Manager Russo stating their thoughts in a productive, collaborative way, ensuring that everyone understands what the role of the Commission should be. Delaney had watched the Tuesday night meeting on television, and had attended the Wednesday night meeting in person, and a lot of the things he heard concerned him in regards that the Commission had no knowledge of what is going on. Delaney suggested that either Mr. Russo could come to their meeting next month and speak with them, or maybe a couple board members might go and meet with Russo.

Chair Restagno said he would draft a letter and pass it by the Commission to see if they had any thoughts to add. He wants the City Manager and Council to know this is of concern to the Commission and he will also ask to see a copy of the originally referenced letter.

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Park Master Plan (*Discussion/Action Item*)

Recreation Supervisor Russi welcomed Gail Donaldson of Gates & Associates who gave a presentation on selected sections of the Park Master Plan. Ms. Donaldson talked about changes that had been made and also introduced the Urban Greening section of the plan. Representatives from Public Health Law and Policy were also in attendance and spoke on the Urban Farm and Garden portion.

After the presentations, Chair Restagno asked the Commission if they had any other questions, comments or recommendations. The next step would be to take the plan to City Council, and Ms. Donaldson said it should be on the agenda for their first meeting in April. Recreation Supervisor Russi stated that they are looking for the Commission's approval of both the Park Master Plan and Urban Greening portion.

Commissioner Delaney wondered if individual recommendations should be made on parts of the plan that had several options. Recreation Supervisor Russi said that Gates & Associates had done a very comprehensive job of providing many options, and he advised that when each opportunity arises, the Commission could give individual recommendations, but right now they should be approving the plan as a whole.

Citing Beltline Park as an example, Commissioner Delaney had observed in the report that there was a lot going on in a limited amount of space, and was concerned that active and passive areas of the park need to be separated as much as possible. Commissioner Sonneman said that it is indeed a challenge to meet the needs of as many people as you can. Chair Restagno talked about building a sports complex and how that would mostly eliminate the issue of passive spaces too close to active areas.

Commissioner Sonneman also wanted to mention that they are ADA compliant and want to make sure they are meeting the needs of our disabled population as well.

Ms. Donaldson explained that even though the Beltline Park area seems limited, it is in width only. There is actually quite a lot of space to be utilized, but only certain things can be put in there. As a means of clarifying the space available, Beltline Park is about 22 acres, and Krusi Park which has four ball fields is only 7 acres.

Vice Chair Brown wanted to add her thanks for a plan well done. There is a lot of detail and it was good to have all the community meetings to gain input there as well. Brown moved that they continue with the program and adopt the Park Master Plan.

M/S/C BROWN/DELANEY (unanimously approved)

"That the Park Master Plan be approved."

Approved (5): Restagno, Brown, Cooke, Delaney, Sonneman

7. REPORTS FROM RECREATION COMMISSION AND RECREATION AND PARK DIRECTOR

- A. Park Division
- B. Recreation Division
- C. Mastick Senior Center
- D. Other Reports and Announcements

Recreation Supervisor Russi spoke about various activities going on in the department. At Krusi Park, some trees were removed and other demolition done in preparation for the remodeling project. The pool heater at Emma Hood was also re-built.

In the recreation world, the big event coming up is the Splash into Spring Egg Scramble which will take place on Saturday, March 31. The event is a collaborative effort between EBRPD, the Rotary Club and ARPD, and typically draws between 1,500 and 2,000 participants. This year there will be a "green theme" with a mobile fish exhibit from EBRPD as well as some beach exploration going on. In addition to the traditional chocolate, healthier snacks such as pretzels and bag carrots will also be in the mix to provide a more well-rounded offering.

Swim lessons are coming up and adult basketball is already underway. Softball registration will begin in mid-April following Spring Break, and Little League opening day will be Saturday, March 10. It's quite a busy world for recreation right now getting ready for summer activities.

Mastick Senior Center as always has wonderful programs going on. Mayor Marie Gilmore will give a State of the City address on March 13; an art exhibit of works created by Mastick members will continue through May 1; and, there will be a presentation by Douglas Borchert on the America's Cup. Commissioner Cooke added that the Alexander Technique program run by instructor Lenka Fejt is very good, and well worth taking advantage of.

8. STATUS REPORT ON ONGOING PROJECTS

9. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS, GENERAL

Chair Restagno thanked Vice-Chair Brown for her comments on Tuesday evening, as they were well stated. Also, in keeping with the green theme, Restagno asked if future Activity Reports could be produced two-sided; Recreation Supervisor Russi will pass that along.

Chair Restagno spotted Recreation employee Sandi Bertero in the audience and asked her what camp will be like this year. Ms. Bertero gave some details, saying camp would survive another year, thanks to community support, and encouraged Commission members to come out and visit. Bertero then commented about the reorganization; she knows it will affect the department and asked the Commission to do what they can. Chair Restagno suggested the Commission do a park tour, possibly visiting the camp site sometime during the summer.

Vice-Chair Brown reiterated that in regards to the issue that Commissioner Delaney had raised, she really wants to make sure that the Commission is as accessible as possible and transparent as well. She feels that the letter previously mentioned about the new sports group in town had to have had some information in it gleaned from someplace else, so she wants to make sure the Commission is at least a party to anything going forward.

Commissioner Sonneman had arrived after the discussion about this letter, so Chair Restagno briefed him on the conversation and the result of their decision to send a communication to the City Manager, copying City Council members as well. Commissioner Cooke asked Chair Restagno why the City Council would accept this without it having first gone through the Recreation Commission. Restagno had no idea why this had happened and said this is exactly why their letter is so important, as there had been at least one major issue in the past where the Commission had been bypassed.

Jon Pecson, Field Coordinator for the Alameda Soccer Club, came forward and urged the Commission to send the afore-mentioned letter, because right now there's an effort by a group to try to manage the fields. This is related to the budget to help alleviate some of those issues. Mr. Pecson believes that ARPD does a good job of managing and maintaining the fields, and anytime you give that control up to someone else, it could be done well, or it could be done to serve one sports organization instead of the sports community as a whole.

Mr. Pecson went on to say that they had formed a group to bring four new fields to Alameda – two grass and two artificial – to help support the sports complex idea. This would enhance the whole idea of revenue generation, keeping groups and competitions here. Mr. Pecson asked to get on the agenda for next month's meeting. He and two well-respected former city officials will be in the group to help bring this idea along.

Chair Restagno said it's important if the sports complex moves forward, it should collectively benefit all the different youth sports programs that use fields. Commissioner Sonneman said that's their mission - to represent all, not just select groups.

Recreation Supervisor Russi will mention the presentation to the Director, and cautioned Mr. Pecson that due to the Sunshine Ordinance, their information must be received in a timely manner so it can be put on next month's agenda.

10. ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

11. SET NEXT MEETING DATE: Thursday, April 12, 2012

12. ADJOURNMENT