

**MINUTES OF THE
REDONDO BEACH RECREATION AND PARKS COMMISSION MEETING
OCTOBER 14, 2020**

A. CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Recreation and Parks Commission, conducted as a Zoom meeting, was called to order by Vice-chair Varvarigos at 7:00 p.m. City Clerk Eleanor Manzano administered the Oath of Office to all new and re-appointed Commissioners.

B. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Berling, Korman-Soooper, Varvarigos, Escontrias,
Almeida, McCauley
Commissioners Absent: Arrata
Officials Present: John LaRock, Community Services Director
Eleanor Manzano, City Clerk
Teresa Hartman, Recording Secretary

C. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

At the request of Vice-chair Varvarigos, Commissioner Korman-Soooper led the Salute to the Flag.

D. APPROVAL OF ORDER OF AGENDA

Motion by Commissioner Korman-Soooper, seconded by Commissioner Berling, to approve the Order of Agenda. Motion carried unanimously, with Commissioner Arrata absent.

E. BLUE FOLDER ITEMS

None.

F. CONSENT CALENDAR ITEMS

1. Approval of Affidavit of Posting for the Recreation and Parks Commission Regular Meeting of October 14, 2020.
2. Approval of the minutes of the Recreation and Parks Commission Regular Meeting of March 11, 2020.

Motion by Commissioner Berling, seconded by Commissioner Korman-Soooper, to approve the Consent Calendar. Motion carried unanimously, with the exception of Commissioner McCauley, who abstained, having not seen the agenda items, and Commissioner Arrata, who was absent.

G. EXCLUDED CONSENT CALENDAR

None.

H. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None.

I. ITEMS CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS AGENDAS

None.

J. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION PRIOR TO ACTION

J.1. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Community Services Director John LaRock introduced this item, saying that every year in October, according to the City Charter, each commission holds elections for the positions of Chair and Vice-chair. The Chair runs the meetings, and the Vice-chair serves in this capacity when the Chair is absent. Members of the Commission can nominate themselves or another member of the Commission for these positions.

Vice-chair Varvarigos opened the discussion and asked the Commissioners for nominations. Commissioner Berling nominated Commissioner Korman-Soooper for Chair. Commissioner McCauley seconded the motion. Commissioner Korman-Soooper nominated Commissioner Berling for Vice-chair. Commissioner Almeida seconded the motion. Both motions were unanimously approved, with Commissioner Arrata absent.

Commissioner Korman-Soooper assumed the role of conducting the meeting, and Community Services Director LaRock thanked Commissioner Varvarigos for serving as Vice-chair during the previous term and conducting several meetings in the absence of a Chair.

J.2. COMMUNITY GARDENS PRESENTATION

Community Services Director John LaRock said that a community garden has been a topic of interest and a number of individuals have approached the City to express their interest in installing a community garden in various public spaces throughout the City. There is a new effort, a partnership between the South Bay Parkland Conservancy and a representative from the Garden of Guadalupe, Brianna Egan, who will have a presentation for the Commission at tonight's meeting. They have solicited the City Council for consideration of their plan for beginning a community garden in a specific location. It would be the City Council's decision whether or not the City can advance this kind of a project. The presentation tonight is to provide information to the Commission about what may be proposed to the City Council at their upcoming Strategic Planning Session. Director LaRock introduced Brianna Egan, who joined the meeting remotely.

Brianna Egan shared her screen with the Commissioners and began her presentation. She said that the South Bay Parkland Conservancy is very interested in providing green space for all the residents of the South Bay cities. She became involved in this effort through a neighborhood garden project that sprung up over the summer, which they called the Garden of Guadalupe. Other members of the committee are Barbara Epstein, Mara Kapano, Bill Petitt, and Caroline Vu. Other community members voiced support for their project, when a survey of 60 residents was taken. They have not yet heard from the City about a site that they could use, but Councilman Nils Nehrenheim suggested that they consider Alta Vista park. There is a section at the corner of Julia and Serpentine that has a triangle space with good sunlight, parking nearby, and access to irrigation. They would like to build a fenced garden with plots available for annual rental. They would model it after the Hermosa Beach Community Garden. There could be a workshop space with seating, and community compost bins. A community orchard could border the space. They would also like to have a native habitat restoration project along the Alta Vista hillside. Ms. Egan listed the benefits this garden could provide for the community, including knowledge sharing, community building, and partnering with schools for teaching ecology, nutrition and environmental issues. She then invited Mara Kapano, from the South Bay Parkland Conservancy, to speak to the Commission.

Mara Kapano spoke about the plan for how they would pay for the development of the garden without having to request funds from the City. They came up with an estimated budget, which

she displayed on the screen. They hope to be able to fund the initial project through donations. She asked for questions from the Commissioners. Commissioner Berling asked whether they had planned to present a pro-forma budget to City Council including the rental fees they plan to charge for plots. She replied that they do plan to provide more details including that information.

Barbara Epstein, who is on the Board of the South Bay Parkland Conservancy, spoke next in support of the project. She thanked Brianna Egan for her excellent presentation and greeted the Commission, then turned it over to Brianna again, who said the community garden would be managed by South Bay Parkland Conservancy. They plan to raise funds for the garden through grants, donations, and annual fees for the plots. They hope the Alta Vista proposed location can be a proof of concept, and that they can eventually establish other sites in North Redondo and other parts of the City. She showed a design draft for the Alta Vista Park location and said it has space for 26 raised boxes, a shade structure and storage shed. She concluded by stating their requests to the City for the use of the land, for inclusion in the City Council's Strategic Planning Session on October 29th, and an exploratory process communicating with City staff. She asked if the Commissioners had any questions related to their proposal.

Chair Korman-Soper thanked Ms. Egan and complimented her on her presentation. She asked about how community gardens work. Ms. Egan replied that members pay an annual fee and agree to certain rules about maintaining their garden and the types of plants they can grow. Chair Korman-Soper asked about securing the location to prevent trespassing. Ms. Egan said that some of the neighboring cities have their gardens secured with padlocks that members only can open. Chair Korman-Soper remarked that the adjacent parking lot is usually not crowded, but sometimes it can be busy with sports leagues.

Commissioner McCauley commented that Alta Vista is a heavily used park and expressed concern about the traffic on the weekends. He likes the idea of school participation in the garden. Ms. Egan said they are not necessarily married to that location. They are waiting for the City to identify possible locations. There may be an area in Dominguez Park; they are open to suggestions from the City and will adapt their plans. She asked what he would recommend. Commissioner McCauley recommended that they communicate with the sports leagues.

Commissioner Escontrias asked about how much of a cost this would be to the City. Would the irrigation and water be donated by the City? Ms. Egan said there is a difference between the start-up costs and the ongoing costs. She said they haven't yet projected the ongoing costs for the water. They are not asking for the City to financially sustain the project. The site is currently covered by grass and the hillside is covered by ivy, so there are costs of maintaining it now. They will make it a priority to project the future costs and discuss the budget with the City.

Commissioner Varvarigos expressed support for having the City partner with the South Bay Parkland Conservancy on this project and said it is definitely something that the community needs and doesn't have now. He likes the idea of using a space in a park that currently is not being used. He would like to see many community gardens in Redondo Beach. He asked if there is a log of community comments that can be accessed. Ms. Egan said the comments of support from the community were submitted as attachments to the agenda item. People can also sign up for the South Bay Parkland Conservancy's newsletter for current information. Commissioner Varvarigos commented that he really likes the idea of the workshop area as a space for the community to have shared learning and outdoor discussions, and he proposed a motion in support of this initiative for a community garden in Alta Vista Park.

Chair Korman-Soooper made a motion to move the idea for a community garden forward to City Council with the approval of the Recreation and Parks Commission, and to add, if the proposed location is to be Alta Vista Park, that Alta Vista School, Redondo Sunset and AYSO leagues are to be included in the discussion of the proposed location, and to receive and file the report on the community garden proposal. Commissioner Varvarigos seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously, with Commissioner Arrata absent.

Community Services Director LaRock read an online comment from Sheila Lamb. She said she believes that a community garden will increase the quality of life of residents and she is in favor of the proposal.

J.3. DOMINGUEZ PARK PLAYGROUND REPLACEMENT PROJECT

Community Services Director LaRock gave a presentation about the Capital Improvement Project to replace the derelict playground equipment in Dominguez Park. On the screen, he showed a map of the layout of Dominguez Park and described its features. Southern California Gas currently has a construction project in the Northeast corner of the park. Currently the two playground areas are not connected. The playground surfaces are now either sand or a rubberized surface that has hardened over time to a concrete consistency. The pathways are also sand. There is also a roadway that City Public Works vehicles use, near the upper playground area. The proximity of the roadway to the playground space is a safety hazard, and the entire area, with the exception of the restroom area, is currently not ADA compliant. The City employed a landscape architect company called Architerra to come up with a family friendly and ADA compliant design for the playground area, which he showed on the screen. Before the shutdown, the City and Architerra held a community meeting in which members of the public provided input on how they would like to see the park enhanced. The fundamental design of the playground area is what we are dealing with now. Later we will consider the actual playground equipment. The design envisions a long slide connecting the upper and lower playground areas. There are fences to separate the play area from the roadway. There are some new trees in the design, along with existing trees. The available budget for the park is just over \$1,200,000. Later in the process, the Commission will hear from possible vendors for the project. Director LaRock invited the Commission's input on the conceptual rendering of the playground replacement project he had described and displayed on the screen.

Commissioner Berling asked whether there would be a way to have the perimeter road go straight to connect with Flagler Lane instead of winding around through the park. Director LaRock thanked him for the suggestion and said that all the Commission's input would be considered.

Commissioner McCauley agreed with Commissioner Berling, and suggested connecting the road at the top from the number 19 to the number 12 on the rendering.

Commissioner Varvarigos said he had received a community comment about the design firm, but he realizes now that the project is not really at the stage of actual playground design. Director LaRock said he had read the same comment, but he replied that Architerra had done many designs of playgrounds in several states. Commissioner Varvarigos commented that Beach Cities Health District, in their plans for their new campus, is planning walking trails, and we may be able to connect the plan for Dominguez Park trails to their plan. Director LaRock said that they also have a bike path planned for their property, as well as walking paths, and agreed that it would be good to consider the continuity of trails. Commissioner Varvarigos suggested a walking path along Flagler Lane, and along the opposite side of the park, as well.

He suggested using the existing rocks and boulders in the park to create flow between the upper and lower areas of the park and to plant a native plant garden surrounding them. He expressed a desire to incorporate native plant gardens in the planned design.

Chair Korman-Soper asked about shade structures and Director LaRock replied that we are not at that stage of the project now, but those specific elements will be chosen later in the process. Chair Korman-Soper commented that she likes the nature elements in South Park in Hermosa Beach and would like to see those types of things in the design.

Community Services Director LaRock read a public comment from Sheila Lamb who expressed the view that the consultant we used did not have enough experience in playground design and construction. Director LaRock had responded to this comment earlier in the meeting.

Motion by commissioner Berling, seconded by Commissioner McCauley, to receive and file the report on the Dominguez Park Playground Replacement Project, along with all the input from the Commission. Motion unanimously approved, with Commissioner Arrata absent.

J.4. CITY EMERGENCY ORDERS IN RESPONSE TO THE NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID19) AND IMPACT ON RECREATION FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

Community Services Director LaRock noted that until now, the Commission has not met since the pandemic and the shutdown of parks and park amenities began. There have now been incremental openings, as directed by the State of California and LA County. The City Manager is also the Emergency Manager, and it is through his orders that we initiate any openings or closings. The Emergency Manager and City Council aligned our policies for parks with those of LA County Parks and Recreation. Since August, we have reactivated tennis at Anderson and Alta Vista Parks. The playgrounds opened just last Friday, and the State provided all counties with signage in English and Spanish to remind people of the rules. This Friday, the 16th, we will be opening the Aviation track for public use with appropriate signage. All three of our senior centers--Veterans, Perry, and Anderson--are still closed. The teen center remains closed, as well as the historic library in Veterans Park. The Aviation gymnasium and the Performing Arts Center remain closed. The community center at Alta Vista Park and the two museums in Dominguez Park are closed. The Seaside Lagoon is closed, and special events are not permitted. The next thing we're waiting for is the allowance for basketball and volleyball. There are cases of people not following the rules in parks, and Beach Cities Health District has held meetings about how best to reinforce following the rules, suggesting having "ambassadors" to remind people.

Chair Korman-Soper said she had twelve emails related to this topic and asked if she should read them aloud. Director LaRock said she could read them tonight or email them to him and he would add them to the agenda for the next meeting. Chair Korman-Soper read all of the emails, which were complaints about grown-ups and/or children seen not wearing masks near the playground areas in City parks. She said her husband is on the Public Safety Commission and she hopes that between the several Commissions that are involved, there can be a broader discussion about this, because it is somewhat of an urgent matter. Director LaRock commented that last night the City Council did discuss the issue, and the letter she and her husband wrote as public comment was read into the record at the City Council meeting. The broader issue of compliance was discussed. The City Council decided last night not to have a mask ordinance for the City. Chair Korman-Soper commented that Hermosa Beach has signs that say masks *must* be worn, whereas Redondo Beach's signs say masks *should* be worn. She feels that when neighboring communities differ on this, it makes it especially confusing for people.

Commissioner McCauley thanked Chair Korman-Soooper for reading the citizens' comments. He asked Director LaRock whether sports leagues are now allowed to use the City fields. Director LaRock replied that under the approved County guidelines for youth sports, yes, they can use the fields.

Commissioner Almeida inquired about the stairs at Avenue C and whether they will be opened up. Director LaRock replied that those stairs are County property. He will check on that and follow up with an answer for Commissioner Almeida.

Commissioner Varvarigos commented that he is grateful the parks are reopening and he agrees with the wearing of masks. He understands that there are a lot of things like bike helmets, walking dogs in parks, or not wearing masks that the Police Dept. simply does not have the resources to enforce. While he and his boys always wear masks when they are out, he would not want to live in a community where residents are reporting people to the Police Dept for things like that.

Motion by Commissioner Berling, seconded by Commissioner McCauley, to receive and file the report. Motion carried unanimously, with Commissioner Arrata absent.

K. COMMISSIONER REFERRALS TO STAFF

Chair Korman-Soooper said she had received a complaint about a dirty bathroom in Perry Park. Director LaRock said he had seen that email already. Chair Korman-Soooper mentioned another complaint about an ambulance parked near Anderson Park and someone who is loud disturbing the area with noise. Director LaRock said that this has been brought to the attention of those who are responsible for dealing with the homeless issue, and they have a strategy to address the issue. Chair Korman-Soooper also said she has received requests from residents to have hand sanitizing or hand washing stations installed in all the parks. Director LaRock replied that Public Works does not have the staff to provide the service and maintenance that would require. They have to adjust to maintaining the new dog waste bag dispensers and additional work related to dog waste. They cannot manage other new additions to their rotations among the twenty-one parks they are responsible for maintaining.

L. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Almeida, seconded by Commissioner Berling, to adjourn the meeting. Motion approved unanimously with Commissioner Arrata absent.

Chair Korman-Soooper adjourned the meeting at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John LaRock
Community Services Director