



PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES

Special Meeting (Postponed from February 15, 2006)

February 22, 2006

6:00 pm.

Burgess Recreation Center
701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park

Chair Watkins called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Chair Watkins, Vice Chair Cline, Commissioners Luder, Robinson, Whittaker, and Silano; Maurano arrived at 6:30

OTHERS PRESENT: Michael Taylor, Acting Community Services Director

ABSENT: None

A. PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS:

None

B. COMMISSION VACANCIES, APPOINTMENTS AND REPORTS:

None

C. PUBLIC COMMENT #1:

None

D. CONSENT CALENDAR:

1. **Approval of December 21, 2005 and January 18, 2006 Commission Meeting Minutes:**
Motion by Commissioner Luder to approve the revised [December 21, 2005](#) and [January 18, 2006](#) meeting minutes; seconded by Commissioner Robinson unanimously carried.

E. PUBLIC HEARING:

None

F. REGULAR BUSINESS:

1. **Approval of Annual Commission Calendar for 2006**
Motion by Commissioner Robinson to approve the 2006 Park and Recreation Commission meeting schedule ([attached](#)); seconded by Commission Luder and unanimously carried.
2. **Buy a Brick Program Update**
The Commission received an update on the Buy a Brick Program including a business/marketing plan and timeline ([attached](#)) from Commissioner Cline.
Motion by Commissioner Luder to have Commissioner Whittaker make a Commission Report and present to Council a copy of the plan and timeline; seconded by Chair Watkins and unanimously carried.
3. **Sports Field Update**
In the temporary absence of Commissioner Maurano, the Sports Field Task Force Update was delayed; the Aquatics Programs Contract Negotiations Update and Highlands Golf Proposal for Bayfront Park Update were moved ahead of this item on the agenda.
4. **Aquatics Programs Contract Negotiations Update**
Michael Taylor, Acting Community Services Director, updated the Commission on the status of the negotiations with Tim Sheepar, LLC for the lease use of Burgess Pools; following three weeks of

discussion, the negotiations continue. Issues currently being discussed include the shared space usage, schedules of community use, and fees. Acting Director Taylor informed the Commission that since the negotiations are ongoing, the City Staff Report was not yet completed. A similar situation is in effect with the negotiations with the East Palo Alto YMCA for use of the Belle Haven Pool. Issues still being discussed are liability insurance coverage and transportation for the YMCA members.

Following discussion on the timing of these negotiations (Luder), five year length of the lease rather than a shorter trial period (Robinson), inclusion of Belle Haven Pools with the Burgess agreement (Robinson), questions about City Swim Teams (Maurano) and the disappointment of building brand new facilities that the City may not have the opportunity to operate (Maurano);

Motion by Commissioner Cline that Commissioner Luder prepare a statement to the effect that “The Parks and Recreation Commission is disappointed in being overlooked and not included in the decision process regarding the Burgess Pools lease agreement and request to be involved in such future decisions and allowed to engage in its advisory capacity for this contract” and present this to Council as a Commission Report; seconded by Commissioner Luder and unanimously carried.

5. Highlands Golf Proposal for Bayfront Park Update

Michael Taylor, Acting Community Services Director, updated the Commission on the status of the negotiations with Highlands Golf at Bayfront Park by reading information provided by Kent Steffens, the Public Works Director. Since negotiations are ongoing, staff cannot get into details on the specific areas of concern in the draft agreement. In January, Highlands Golf submitted draft option and lease agreements. City staff has completed its review and identified areas of concern in the draft agreement, which have been transmitted to Highlands Golf. No specific timeline has been established to try and conclude negotiations.

Discussion ensued on having questions more appropriate for Public Works than Community Services (Robinson), conflicting statements made by Public Works Director Steffens quoted in the newspaper (Robinson), this was attributed to miss-quotes by the media (Silano and Cline) and the sensitivity of discussing ongoing private negotiations (Robinson).

Public Comments

Daina Aveazonis – Redwood City pooled time to allow conversation regarding Bayfront that Chair Watkins allowed.

Nancy Borgeson – Menlo Park pooled time to allow conversation regarding Bayfront that Chair Watkins allowed.

Lennie Roberts – San Mateo County questioned why the minutes of the November 1, 2005 City Council meeting were yet to be posted. Filling the tidal pools is a complete non-starter and asks that the City complete its homework by consulting with the experts in the field including BCDC, Army Corps of Engineers, etc.

Mark Losta – Menlo Park addressed the Commission with comments regarding the Highlands Golf negotiations and asked that alternate locations be considered in order to leave Bayfront as an open space for the future. He recognizes that there were potential issues at Bayfront for sports fields to be built but that the contractor had offered to build fields at alternate locations. He understood that the Commission has the authority to guide Council and share their experience to provide advice on whether proposals are a good idea or not.

Elizabeth Lasensky – Menlo Park stated that she thought the Highlands negotiations process was further along. Her hope is that fair attention is given to public parks and free space and not to a

soccer field allocation board. She questioned the stated value of sports fields and asked the Commission to truly examine all of the issues.

Robin Smith – Atherton represented the Sequoia Audubon Society urged the Commission to recommend leaving Bayfront as open space to preserve the natural habitat. She doubts the ability of anyone to fill the wetland area to build fees due to the regulations governing such a project. She cautioned that Menlo Park should think carefully before giving away a park for 50 years. She invited the Commissioners to a Bird Walk on March 4th at 9:00am at Bayfront.

Steve Schmidt – Menlo Park recommended the Commission not recommend a proposal being floated to the public about a vote on the development of Bayfront. The fact remains that the site is totally unsuitable and that even a popular vote would not make the decision to create golf lands appropriate. He supports tonight's motions for the Commission to fulfill its role as an advisory and recommendation board and asked that Council be allowed to make a decision and not be swayed by the seemingly democratic process of a ballot measure.

Eileen McLaughlin – unknown stated that it is a good thing that awareness is increasing and salt pond restoration is providing new opportunities for private foundation funding for shoreline improvements that the City may be able to take advantage of.

Following the Public Comment, discussion returned to the Commission

Commissioner Silano stated that City staff is to provide the expertise on projects such as this and that he is in favor of allowing the process to unfold as Highlands is committed to create the EIS and subsequent EIR to provide the information needed on the City's ability to move forward with the project or not. He considers it premature to make any decisions or recommendations at this time.

Commissioner Cline expressed concern that City staff may not have done due diligence in investigating the Bayfront proposal and that a proper public process was not followed.

Commissioner Maurano asked if we shouldn't go back to Council to clarify the Commission and Task Force role to get direction as to the exact assignment and for a clear charter. Since the November 1st Council meeting minutes aren't posted yet, there is a lot of confusion over what they are supposed to do and how to get information without necessary staff input.

Commissioner Luder thought this was a good time to re-open the Task Force to gather additional information on Bayfront Park.

Commissioner Robinson said that BCDC is the agency that regulates the area and Public Works staff needs to be at the table in order to answer a lot of these questions. He thinks it is prudent for Commissioner Cline to present the Sports Field Task Force information that he currently has on Bayfront Park to Council as a Commission Report.

Commissioner Silano expressed concern that this may compromise negotiations and muddle the situation further.

Motion by Commissioner Robinson that Commissioner Cline prepare a Commission Report to Council with his packet of information on Bayfront Park with a reiteration that the Parks and Recreation Commission expects to be involved in making a recommendation about the Bayfront Park proposal prior to Council decision; seconded by Chair Watkins and unanimously carried.

6. Sports Field Update

As a segue from the Highlands Golf Proposal for Bayfront Park Update, Commissioner Maurano presented a completed draft report of the Sports Field Task Force ([attached](#)).

Commissioner Luder profusely thanked Commissioner Maurano for all of her hard work on the Task Force and report. The Commission gave her a round of applause.

Commissioner Maurano outlined the information and methodology of the report. She expressed concern over the accuracy and interpretation of some of the data and shared with the Commission the difficulty of comparing other City's field data. Many of the numbers and information in the report require considerable explanation in order to be valuable.

Commissioner Robinson had many questions and asked for some corrections and clarifications. He stated that maintenance costs listed in the report include building landscape areas and are therefore virtually worthless. He also mentioned the need to include fee data to be included in the summary information. Many of the numbers are non-descript to be valuable and need to be broken down or better defined (e.g. parkland table on page 1 of the summary).

Commissioner Robinson also shared with the Commission information on the Menlo Park City School District Superintendent presentation on the proposed \$90M bond for school improvements that would significantly impact all sports fields in the City as construction takes place. He shared that he represented the Commission at the school district meeting in offering Commission assistance in meeting the needs of the community.

Motion by Commissioner Cline that Commissioners Maurano and Robinson revise the Sports Field Task Force Report and bring back to the Commission prior to presenting to Council; seconded by Chair Cline and unanimously carried.

G. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS:

None

H. PUBLIC COMMENT #2:

None

I. DIRECTOR'S UPDATE:

The meeting was adjourned before Michael Taylor, Acting Community Services Director, could give the Commissioners any additional updates.

j. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 8:21 p.m.