



PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES

**October 17, 2007
Burgess Recreation Center
700 Alma Street**

Chair Maurano called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Paula Maurano, Jim Tooley, Patricia M. Watkins, Andy Kirkpatrick, Nick Naclerio, and Kelly Blythe

OTHERS PRESENT: Barbara Santos George, Community Services Director, Jessica Lewis, Kristi Breisch, and 18 Attendees in audience

A. PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS:

Commissioner Maurano presented a proclamation given to the City of Menlo Park in recognition of their wonderful parks and community services.

B. COMMISSION VACANCIES, APPOINTMENTS AND REPORTS:

Barbara Santos George introduced Kristi Breisch a new commission member. She has a background in professional sports including work with WMBA and numerous Tennis organizations. Kristi has volunteered at the city clerk's office, project read, and Menlo Park Presbyterian Church. She has also completed leadership training through San Mateo County. She is excited to be elected as a Parks and Recreation commissioner and looks forward to making a substantial contribution to the Board.

C. PUBLIC COMMENT #1:

Kathryn Henkens of Menlo Park

Speaking on the usage of Nealon Dog Park, Kathryn expressed the importance of Nealon to the Menlo Park community. She was motivated to speak to the Board after hearing that this asset to the community might be moved or closed. She petitioned her neighborhood and out of 36 neighbors 26 were in favor of keeping the Dog Park at Nealon Park. She urged the Board to preserve the dog park.

John Duggins of Menlo Park

John is a 30-year resident of Menlo Park, a corporate sponsor of a softball team, as well as a dog owner. Nealon Dog Park has allowed him and his family to take part in an activity together. He has not heard any complaints about smells or excrement at Nealon Park from his teammates or his family. He said that the dog owners that frequent Nealon Park are diligent about cleaning up after their dogs. Further he has seen no messes in the softball dug outs. He ends by saying that softball and the dog park are both important for the City of Menlo Park.

David Fichtner of Podera

David has concern that Nealon park staff does not treat dog owners with respect and often say that they should not be there. He has received negative response from staff when inquiring about repairs that need to be addressed in the park such as puddles and deep grooves from tractors. He suggests listing the issues from all constituencies and have staff mitigate thus allowing different groups to work together and compromise.

Rich Rollins of Menlo Park

A resident of Menlo Park for 25 years Rich spoke to the issue of Oak Knoll School and the destruction of valuable Open Space. Mr. Rollins hand out pictures and architect designs to commissioners and audience that represented the Oak Knoll site. He stated that there has been a lack of communication between the city and school board as well as less than full disclosure by the school board. Mr. Rollins added that this decision will eliminate Open space for parking lots and buildings and further thinks the school board should be mandated to abide by the original plans. Commission Maurano asked questions about what the pictures represent and expressed that the commission has no jurisdiction and no impact upon this decision. Mr. Rollins felt that although the commission may not have jurisdiction they do have the ability to influence the process. Commissioner Kirkpatrick asked Mr. Rollins if the field space was the primary concern he had at the Oak Knoll site. Mr. Rollins said yes to commissioner Kirkpatrick's question. Barbara Santos George said that the City of Menlo Park also does not have the authority and it is not the role of the commission or the city to weigh in on the changes to the Oak Knoll campus.

Mayra Cramer of Menlo Park

Ms. Crammer would like the dog park to extend its hours because it is difficult for working people to enjoy and use the facility. She also wanted the commission to know that Nealon Dog Park has had a positive impact for her family. The power of animals for kids and others is invaluable. She also has great admiration for the groups that watch out for Nealon Dog Park and feel that they are extremely contentious in every area. She appealed to the commission to keep this valuable space and let it be a permanent part of the community.

Dick Blah of Menlo Park

A resident of Menlo Park for over forty years, the Nealon dog park has been a wonderful asset to him and his family. He would like the commission to continue its existence. Mr. Blah would like to increase the house from 7:30pm-10: 30pm so people do not have to rush to the park after work. He would like to see the park expanded.

Milt Borg of Menlo Park

Speaking to the issue of the Oak Knoll school site, Mr. Borg is concerned about the proposed changes. He stated that the area they wish to change is really the only area kids have. Neighbors and others are against the plan and the loose of green area. He would like for the commission to advocate and try to influence this decision. His children and grandchildren both used this area and it is still utilized.

Jennifer Bestor of Menlo Park

A Menlo Park resident for seventeen years she is passionate about the preservation of Nealon Park Dog Park. She affirmed that for many the dog park is a lifeline, a recreational activity and an asset to dogs, families and citizens in the City of Menlo Park. She feels that this conversation about the Dog Park can ultimately be a win win situation. She asked for the commission to examine four solutions and suggestions about the dog park so that the issues involved can come to a resolution.

1. Create a feedback mechanism between all parties involved. Allow for open communication and dialog.
2. Look into how much it would cost for a gate. The dog owners would be happy to pay for this addition to the dog park.
3. Suggests more signage so that it is clear when the dog park is open and when it is not a dog park.
4. Let dog owners water the park before they leave and provide more maintenance.

D. CONSENT CALENDAR:

Maurano asked for minutes to be approved. Watkins moved for them to be approved Kirkpatrick seconds. Minutes are approved.

E. PUBLIC HEARING

None

F. REGULAR BUSINESS:

1. Field allocation

Mark has a document he can implement in January. Commissioner asked about why they have not seen this document and requested for Mark to send document to commission as soon as possible.

2. Discussion on parks and standards for City of Menlo Park

Commissioner Maurano asked commission to considerer adopting an idea to have a park in walking distance available to every Menlo Park resident. She would like for City staff to identify under used land and is happy to be a part of this process. Commissioner Watkins expressed concern about where the money for this project would come from. Commissioner Kirkpatrick suggested to examine what areas are being underserved and to see if there is support for park growth within those under developed areas. There was a consensus that more thought should be given to this issue and that a plan for growing parkland should be made.

3. Update on construction of Burgess Gym

Commissioner Blythe reported to the commission that three different consultant firms were interviewed and the initial ballots to work with the firm Field/Peoli were unanimous. Field/Peoli has an understanding of the Menlo Park community and infrastructure. They also spend a lot of their time on community outreach and involvement. The conceptual design will be done by February and construction could potentially start by 2009. The firm will present three plans, one a renovation of existing gym, two a renovation and addition to existing gym and finally a complete demolition and rebuild. Barbara expressed the importance of having the gym be ADA accessibly, reaffirming a commitment to a therapeutic recreational environment.

4. Staff report on Nealon Park Ball Park

Staff report is tabled until next meeting. Commission requested to see the report in advance.

5. Tour of playing fields

The intention of a tour would be to better understand the facilities that commission serves. It was suggested to take a Saturday morning or extended lunch tour of places and possibilities for a dog park. There was an idea to narrow the tour to sites that a dog park might be suitable using the study that was done during the conception of a dog park in the City of Menlo Park.

6. Re-schedule November commission meeting to 11/14 and December meeting to 12/12

The change of dates for both meetings was approved.

G. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS:

None

H. PUBLIC COMMENT #2:

None

I. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 8:33 p.m.