



PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES

Regular Meeting

May 20, 2009 at 6:30 p.m.
Burgess Recreation Center
700 Alma Street

The meeting was called to order by Chair Kirkpatrick at 6:48 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: K. Blythe (arrived at 6:54), A. Kirkpatrick, K. Breisch, P. Maurano, P. Watkins

Absent: J. Tooley, N. Naclerio

A. PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS

B. COMMISSION VACANCIES, APPOINTMENTS AND REPORTS SUB COMMITTEE REPORTS – Defer to May 21, 2009

C. PUBLIC COMMENT #1

- All public comments will be done during public comments #2.

D. CONSENT CALENDAR

1. Approval of the minutes dated April 15, 2009.

P. Watkins would like more detailed minutes of the April meeting. Chair A. Kirkpatrick noted that the notes taken and submitted in the packet are an attachment to the minutes.

Moved and seconded (P. Watkins/ P. Maurano) approval of the April 15, 2009 minutes with the addition of the notes added to the list of attachments to the minutes.

E. PUBLIC HEARING

F. REGULAR BUSINESS

1. **Introduction of the new Senior Engineer Matt Ocamou; project updates on Kelly Park, Flood Park, Burgess Gymnasium and the Gymnastics Center**
 - Matt discussed his background in terms of the park and recreation field. His goal with the new projects is to make sure all the latest and greatest tech is incorporated and the facilities are long-term. The current projects:
 - Burgess Gym: Draft EIR in public review with public comment period ending on May 26, 2009. Following that period, the PW department will be addressing the comments in a response to comments which will accompany the final EIR. It will be reviewed and recommended by the Planning Commission on June 29, then to the Council for approval. After that the kick-off for construction, timeline is early fall.
 - Kelly Park: outline of the plans for the park are with a consultant. Maintenance and parks staff are reviewing the documents and making sure the program elements are included within budget and time frame. Project for 65% drawings in mid-June. Construction anticipated in December.
 - Flood Park: There have been discussions with San Mateo County regarding the County taking the park out of their list of inventory. Possibly transferring the park to the City of Menlo Park amongst other things. The County parks department is more in terms of open space.

A. Kirkpatrick asked how long for Kelly Park construction. M. Ocamou responded approximately 4 months construction and there will be an impacted schedule. There may be a time period where there may be

better pricing. There are many options for synthetic turf. The City is proposing a modi-filament similar to the Hoover sport field in Redwood City. Other manufacturing is being looked at to get a good park.

P. Maurano asked about the possibility of artificial turf being torn out due to environmental impacts. M. Oscamou advised that it is a concern; to safeguard this is to use toxins with the least amount of hazardous materials. The lead contaminant is a product associated with brightly colored dyes. Specifications are being required that certifies that there are not contaminate materials in their products. There are virgin rubbers that are more expensive and have a degree of odor, but have not been proven to be toxic. There are alternatives such as geofill, which is an all natural coconut nut, but it has the difficulty of maintenance. Recently a study was done on synthetic turf and contaminants. There is more staff present in grass than artificial turf. Heat and synthetic turf does exist but there is a cooling effect with watering the turf. The flip side is that there is a tight water supply and it may not be feasible to put ½ inch water every time it gets warm. It is planned to have an irrigation system on the field. Historically things have yet to be proven that synthetic turf is detrimental.

K. Breisch asked what was the main topic discussed at Panning Commission on the Burgess Gym. M. Oscamou advised that the biggest topic was parking. There is adequate parking but convenience was an issue. Staff is looking at how to address the needs of the community in terms of the parking convenience. They are looking at alternatives for parking. There are adjustments being made to the configuration and distribution of parking. Additional signage on the campus is also being looked at and there is a verbal arrangement to use the SRI parking lot across the street for after work hour usage. This will assist in relieving some of the pressure on the parking lots. There are increases identified in the report for traffic impacts. With additional signage people can be encouraged to take alternative routes.

2. Menlo Children's Center Program; introduction of public input process, Cherise Brandell, Community Engagement Manager and Margaret Roberts, City Clerk

Public comments on the item:

- Osnat Loewenthal – Read multiple sections from a handout that she had prepared for the Commission. A copy is attached and considered a part of these minutes. ([Handout](#))
- Jennifer Martinez – Provided a snapshot of San Mateo County and pointed out that there is a shortage of quality daycare within the county. There are only two facilities in Menlo Park outside of the state setting. Consistency among programs is important and if the City continues to operate, it will be maintained and in the best interest of the children. There is great teacher retention in the current program which is known to benefit children. (Childcare for San Mateo County – non-profit)
- Yael Caspi – Agrees with O. Loewenthal. She addressed a point made during City Council meetings; regarding this program being a city run program deterring others from coming to Menlo Park. She met with Helen Stinebum, executive director of the Wonder Years Preschool, regarding MCC being a competitive program and is that keeping them from coming to Menlo Park. Difficulty in finding space, coming in and owning the land – UTL; fees too high and that there are not efficient incentives to come into the city to provide the center. She advised that the city run program is not a deterrent. They looked at the Flood park area and determined that it was not cost effective.
- Dusan Pejakovic – His personal experience with MCC compared to private daycare has determined that MCC has a better child to teacher ratio and a more stable environment. The teachers at MCC are there to stay and want to do a good job. The teachers are only at other places until they find a better place to go. There seems to be a push to privatize MCC and he strongly believes that it is a benefit, not a hindrance.
- Diana Foreman – One of the best things about MCC is the flexibility and tolerance for the needs of families. In the past she had a child in a different facility; however one of her children became chronically ill and without MCC there would have been no way for her to take care of her toddler and her sick child without the program. They are extremely flexible and this is an extraordinary situation. When they moved from Italy they could not find a facility with flexible hours and there was nothing in Menlo Park and a reasonable price that operated from 9-12 that were equivalent for this facility. It is tough to live in an apartment with babies while being a talented engineer.
- Clyde Jones – Has 2 children in MCC. They moved from the East Coast two years ago. The teachers at MCC are high quality and the children trust them. The teachers are typically at other programs for a

couple of years and then move on and this is not happening at MCC. His daughter is shy and took to the teachers at MCC quickly and is learning. It is high quality and it helps him and he lives close to the facility.

Chair A. Kirkpatrick read a letter that he received via email. ([letter](#))

K. Breisch:

- This is an opportunity for others to get involved and become more aware of operations of government.
- Is it possible to have the parents do a presentation at the next meeting?
- If another city was going through the same challenge what did the city do when they had to privatize?
- Is there a day care center that would want to come in and do privatization in MP with the challenges taking place? Is there anybody interested in anybody coming in and taking over MCC?
- She has no childcare expertise. With the new President and the stimulus package; he wants to increase more opportunity to strengthen the middle class. Will there be any possibilities in the stimulus package for this area?
- MCC has a 501C3 number – is there a way that they can do any other fundraising?
- It is great that the parents have had meetings with staff. Can it be done on a more regular basis? How can the parents be more involved in the program? What is the overlap when the current parent's children move on? How would it be in 2-3 years?
- How much day care is available in MP for this age group?

K. Blythe:

- He did not hear in the options of finding more funding was grants or federal funding.
 - Osnat: Most of the grants are for low income families and she does not know of any for middle class. It is the middle class that is suffering. They were thinking more towards educational funding. They will look for as parents and maybe the director should also look into.
- He encouraged the parents to look more into grant and external funding.
- They have asked for more time and wanted to be able to submit a more thorough business plan.
 - Osnat: One challenge is that the implementation needs to be looked at. It can be successful if implemented properly. If implemented poorly it will fail; so implementation is an important issue.
- Is there time in the timeline to have a more thorough presentation of a business plan?
 - Osnat: They would like until March 2010 to see if the business plan will work. If it does not work she does not see another plan.

Osnat: meeting of the parents Monday with staff and they discussed most of what was submitted in the document to the Commission tonight.

A. Kirkpatrick:

- Unless staff can present a plan that they feel they can implement it cannot work.

P. Maurano:

- Should not wait for additional input from the parents. She listened two weeks ago to the Council meeting. The financial picture has gotten worse since 2004. Raising fees was not going to help the situation. Looking back when it was discussed for outsourcing; there were some ideas that were feasible. From the parent's point of view, they have not looked at other options. She would like to see the approach of having the parents look at other options and possibly work with a couple of commissioners on this.

A. Kirkpatrick

- Impressed with the family's work
- There is reputable daycare centers
- MCC runs a great program; the solution is to find a way to make it run more sufficiently
- The program should not be subsidize
- The government is not good at running daycare
- At June it should be worked very quickly to find a solution to recommend to the Council

B. George:

Tomorrow will be the staff presentation on how to move forward. There will be a chart with options on how to proceed to get to cost recovery. Steps that have been made will be outlined as well as impacts.

K. Breisch:

- Will staff be meeting with the parents prior to June?

A. Kirkpatrick:

Palo Alto has a co-op where the parents are required to put in certain hours. He would like more information on the Palo Alto programs.

P. Maurano asked about the turnover in directors and the running of the program.

B. George: There has been difficulty with turnover and it has not been over keeping a person in the role, it was more changes (circumstances).

Osnat: it is not an accusation, but it needs some explanation. Somewhere there is a problem as to why those things happened. There were many changes in the management of the city and department.

K. Breisch: Will there be a presentation on the numbers in the report including before the renovation?

K. Blythe: Why in 2007 was the cost half of what is projected in 2009?

Osnat: The fees were increased without any changes to the program structure. It is frustrating that the tax dollars went to the vacancies. The policy was to take whoever was first on the waiting list. There was no policy to make sure there were no vacancies. Other daycare centers part-time parents have to be paired with other part-time parents to make a full time spot.

A. Kirkpatrick: Turnover rates

B. George: The County of SM has an average of 25% turnover per year.

K. Blythe: His expectation for number 1 is to get a comparison of the parents program and the city's proposed program.

B. George: The work being done on researching the possibility to outsource the center. Unless there is a formal request for information then why would the City be doing initial asks. Working with the City Manager's office it was decided it was premature at this point. There has to be recommendations made to the City Council and have the Council look at it prior to searching out the information. She has received emails from two businesses that could be viable for privatizing.

P. Maurano: would like to see what is out there.

B. George: It was determined that is too premature since the decision has not been made to privatize.

B. George: Q&A will be provided for items not resolved tomorrow will be done in June; then with all of the information the discussion could begin. Because some of the information the Commission has received has rolled out faster, the suggestion was to have the discussion in June and come up with a recommendation. If a recommendation cannot be reached then go into July.

K. Breisch: Tomorrow can the staff provide the direction that was given to the commission on the task? She would like to be clear on what the commission is being asked to do.

B. George: There was a chart provided earlier it will be expanded to include programs to include. There will be percentages and what it would take to get to full cost recovery. Hopefully it will provide a better roadmap in the decision process.

K. Blythe: In the end, isn't the philosophical decision is to privatize this.

A. Kirkpatrick: He sees it differently. Changes will take 6-12 months to determine if changes are making a difference. Another way is to see if it can be better if privatized.

K. Blythe: the commission needs to make the decision to recommend privatization or not.

P. Maurano stated that there is confusion as to the scope of the charge to the commission.

A. Kirkpatrick: Should it be cost controlled? If yes, send it to one path or not. Is there is a specific reason why the City should subsidize MCC.

G. WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

H. PUBLIC COMMENT #2 - None

J. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8.26 p.m.