



# PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES

## Special Meeting

May 21, 2009

6:30 p.m.

Burgess Recreation Center  
700 Alma Street

The meeting was called to order at 6:37 p.m.

### ROLL CALL

**Present:** N. Naclerio, K. Blythe, K. Breisch, P. Maurano and P. Watkins

**Absent:** A. Kirkpatrick, J. Tooley

OTHER PRESENT – B. Santos George – Community Services Director, Adela Alvarado - Consultant,  
Natalya Jones - MCC Director, MCC Staff, Starla Jerome Robinson – Assistant City Manager,  
Margaret Roberts - City Clerk

### A. PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS

### B. COMMISSION VACANCIES, APPOINTMENTS AND REPORTS SUB COMMITTEE REPORTS

K. Breisch would love to see another commissioner at the ECR meeting. She will report back on action that takes place at tonight's meeting. This is the time to make any suggestions on what you would like to see incorporated in the project. Help to get the word out for the next community workshop. The more the commissioners can reach out and support the project the better.

Commissioners agreed that previous meeting's presentation by Matt Ocamou – Senior Civil Engineer, was very informative.

K. Breisch risti advised that with issues on the gym, the Library is making people aware that there will be 17 parking spaces lost and how it would impact the users of the library. She reminded them that the City Council had opened a comment period closing on May 26<sup>th</sup> on a draft environmental impact report on the proposed new gym and gymnastics center.

### C. PUBLIC COMMENT #1

### D. CONSENT CALENDAR

### E. PUBLIC HEARING

### F. REGULAR BUSINESS

#### 1. Presentation on the Menlo Children's Center Program

The purpose tonight to clarify the questions raised at the April 15, 2009 meeting. The questions raised were put into different categories.

#### Parent involvement:

Parent co-ops are a different model than the regular childcare and typically run 9-1. Some co-ops are licensed and some are not however the parents cannot be counted in the teacher/student ratio in licensed facilities.

The co-op in MP is not run by the city staff. The parents are not used in calculating the teacher/student ratio and it does not reduce the cost to the parents. The director gives the parents a task and that is what they carry out. There is a fee charged and there is a requirement of hours for the parents to provide. The parents are also required to attend parent teaching classes.

There parent advisory committee started in 1998 or 1999 and they used to raise a lot of the funds for equipment, teacher appreciation, and outdoor enrichment programs.

Is there a requirement or limitations on what the parent advisory can do? K. Breisch asked how Project Read can use funds to pay for city staff and recreation cannot.

The commission would like to see historical data on the program.

### **Eliminating the toddler program:**

It is difficult to have 6 toddlers who are reaching age limit and how the program holds preschool spots and so there is a vacancy period.

At the Council meeting last week, the City Council determined not to make any decision regarding the toddler program until they hear a recommendation on the issue. For now they thought that the toddler program should remain in place until the recommendation arrives and there is further discussion.

### **Wait list:**

The toddler program is the most demanding program.

There are only 2 toddler programs in Menlo Park, one of which is MCC.

Do the toddlers pay more? If there is a higher demand, why are there not more slots for the toddlers and less of the other age groups?

There are 52 older children and 6 toddlers. There is an 1-6 ratio for the toddlers and they have to stay in the toddler program until 24 months but must leave prior to 30 months. The two programs cannot co-mingle.

They are in the pre-school program for 2-3 years and the toddler program for 6-12 months. If the goal of the City is to accommodate the lack of toddler programs, then there should be more space allocated for the toddlers.

Could the pre-school and the toddler program be done at different locations within the city? Yes, as long as the public does not have access. The maximum capacity for one room for toddlers is 12 for state licensing. Is there a way to reconfigure the space to allow more toddlers? She has never seen programs with multiple rooms. The restrictions for toddler programs are extreme. Once they are two, they can move to the early pre-school program.

Review of the ages in the program. The full capacity for toddlers is equivalent to 6 (currently there are some part-time space), 20 for early preschool and 32 for preschool. She reviewed the current status of the slots available for the toddlers.

### **Barriers:**

Barrier – as preschool children graduate in mid-June they enroll in the summer camp programs to capture a reduced rate. Enrollment is sought in September, leaving empty space for two months

Solution – design and implement a transition summer camp program for children entering kindergarten

Barrier – children entering the toddler program need to be 18 months prior to their starting date

Solution – realign entry age and start enrollment at 2 years old

Barrier – Spaces for children moving to the early preschool room classroom from the toddler classroom need to be saved creating the appearance of openings

Solution – no spaces will be saved. Children in the early preschool classroom will transition when a space becomes available.

Barrier – part time slots have been given the same priority as full time

Solution – full time slots will be given priority

Barrier – kindergarten school age classroom is vacant during the morning hours

Solution – use classroom for kindergarten readiness program for children not ready for kindergarten

Trinity preschool is operated 9-12 and they take 3-5 year olds only.

The kindergarten readiness program is not a licensed program and therefore must be less than 12 weeks and less than 16 hours per week. This is going to be closer to a traditional “tiny tots” program. A block is 12 weeks.

**Budget:**

Attachment B shows the outflow from the General fund for both the department level and the actual full cost recovery. For Commission and Council purposes the bottom chart for full cost level.

A lot of the cost savings during the 06/07 fiscal year the major savings was the loss of one director. It was determined that one director cannot oversee 160 children.

K. Breisch – what are the operating costs each year with more data on one chart; it would be helpful to have all of the information in one chart rather than having to look through multiple charts. Why is the trend going down in terms of cost recovery instead of up?

Attachment C shows the fully-loaded costs to run the program.

There is a subsidy study underway and will be presented to the City Council by the Finance Department. She reviewed the MCC subsidy per child charts on page 2 of the Q&A.

**Waitlist:**

A review of those on the waitlist was reviewed; a total of 83 on the waitlist.

Toddler (0-24 months) – 49

Early Preschool (2.5-3.5 years old) – 24

Preschool (3.5 – 5 years old) – 10

Open slots:

Toddlers: 1 – two day slot

Early preschool: 3 – two day slots

Preschool: 6 – two day slots

**Add the ages of the waitlist**

The parents on the waitlist stated that their children are currently being cared by the parent, babysitter, friend or relative, join a play group or in a family child care home were the answers given in a random survey of 20 parents.

Out of the 83 on the waitlist, only 29 are waiting for full time spaces.

B. George discussed how the wait list is changing.

**Additional questions:**

Items 22-26 were reviewed

The cost comparison chart was reviewed including monthly fees, registration fees, waitlist fees and hot lunch programs.

Attachment G: She went over the chart and the teacher compensation rates.

100% of the programs offer medical and dental with a turn-over rate of one percent. MCC has only lost one teacher in the past year.

There are 2 program assistants and 8 permanent teachers and one vacancy with 3 part time teachers.

**Current budget and proposal for 09/10**

<b>Fiscal year</b>	<b>Revenue</b>	<b>Expenses</b>
FY 08/09 (74% capacity)	\$600,000	\$780,421
FY 09/10 (81% capacity)	\$780,080	\$807,202
FY 09/10 (Without toddler component and full time teacher at 87% capacity)	\$810,500	\$749,024

**Proposal includes:**

Kindergarten readiness – estimated revenue of \$15,000 - \$30,000 over expenses  
 Toddler Component – Revenue loss up to \$30,420  
 Preschool Summer Camp – Maintaining monthly attendance during summer  
 Teacher - \$58,178

**Questions from the commissioners:**

Cost effective and the unmet need of the community

- How is the revenue going to be collected more efficiently
  - If not paid by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month there is a note with a late notice including a late fee. They also receive an email from the director. The current registration program does not allow auto draft payment.

There are 17 licensed daycare programs in Menlo Park, 5 service low-income and 6 operate part day (9-12 or 9-1)

PACCC – Palo Alto center history was read. They accept children from 2 months of age through the fifth grade and serve over 900 families in Palo Alto. They receive grants from various sources. The City subsidizes low-income families for child care services through PACCC.

**QUESTIONS OF THE COMMISSION:**

P. Watkins: Page 3, item 13 – dollar value of the loss for the vacancies (approx \$700/month)

K. Breisch: how many will be vacant in July (It is hopeful that there will be none)

N. Naclerio: the data suggests that most are waiting for part-time slots; if the revenue would be higher with part time fees, why is the push for full time? (With 18 students graduating to kindergarten, the full time spots will be filled prior to “sharing of part time slots to equal full time”)

N. Naclerio: If the city is trying to address the unmet need, why is the program not filling up with those wanting part time slots? (Trying to meet the open slots with what the part time requests are did not always match with what the program had available)

P. Maurano: Questions for attachment B and C and how is the additional revenue being calculated for the upcoming year? (Currently due to the current 48 in the morning and 40 in the afternoon and they are going to be attempting to fill the open slots)

K. Breisch: Why in 07/08 did the expenses increase by \$60,000? (Staffing increase by a program supervisor and the move to the new facility was during that year. There were also expenses that went to other departments that are now put into the Community Services department. A big shift was putting workers compensation to each program in the department. Expenses have been coming in under budget for the past few years and so they were reduced this year in an attempt to get it to be closer to actual.)

What is the projected revenue with the 5 changes being recommended?

Osna Loewenthal: The value of the program with the fee increases, why is the revenue still flat? From the parent perspective, the fees increased and is market value but when compared with other programs it is being competitive in terms of value to the parents. How will future fee increases effect parents wanting to sign up for the program.

Currently there are not enough centers but as the fees are increased and the ratios increased, the trend is beginning that the parents don't see the value and they will find other places to take their children. The pricing and the value of the program are at market rate. When the price is raised, the value goes down. The parents want the program to stay with the city and she is worried about the program if the fees increase. The parent's business plan has part time slots to remain. Is there a way to work with the parents so that they can be a part of the solution? There needs to be a needs assessment.

P. Maurano: If the program moves away from toddlers and part-time slots is the program not going to work?

N. Naclerio: Not loose site of what the program was designed to do in the first place. The advantages of the program on longevity of the teachers, flexibility, part-time spots seem to be getting lost. A matrix needs to be done to see how the program can be more cost effective and still a benefit and meet the needs of the community. Staffing can be utilized more efficiently. There has to be a win-win solution.

K. Blythe: There has been a lot of good information. The discussion will become a philosophical question; should this program continue? That is the discussion that needs to be focused on next month. The question of the Council is should the city continue to provide this program and not so much as the details.

B. George: In the big picture, staff has tried to give the commissioners as much background information as possible. The amount that the commission has done on this topic is miraculous and a crash course in licensed childcare. Over the past two months provide the commission the information as to what the current MCC program does; what other programs are doing; what does it mean to be accredited in an effort to have the commissioners have a better understanding going forward. For June, answering a couple of other questions, hold the meeting at MCC and have a tour of the facility. So that by June it will be time to have the discussion, including the information from staff and the parents is the program worth continue or can it get closer to cost recovery in order to reach a recommendation to provide to the City Council. So by the end of July at the latest making a final recommendation to the Council in which direction the Commission feels MCC should go. Over the past two days there have been different understandings as to if this is just the toddler program or all programs at MCC. Going forward, if the Commission sees the after school and preschool are being looked at two programs or one program. Some members of staff are viewing the two programs as separate while some are looking at it as one program. There is a difference of opinion as to the direction from the City Council.

K. Blythe: nowhere in the information provided has the information shown how the two programs coordinate together. MCC appears to stand alone.

K. Breisch: if MCC preschool program under 5 years is privatized; what will happen to the building? (The privatization would utilize the facility.)

There is a maximum capacity of 102 afterschool slots and currently there are 85. The expectation is that the afterschool program is looking positive for the next school year. There are more qualified / interested parties getting on the waitlist.

K. Breisch: Did not even realize the afterschool program was being discussed; B. George wants to clarify from Council and staff on the status.

P. Maurano and N. Naclerio: Does not see how the program can be split.

P. Watkins: cannot privatize one part without the other; but she sees them as one program.

K. Blythe: He would like to see how the Council sees it. A different recommendation could be made depending on how the Council members see the programs.

K. Breisch: She believes that the parents made their points last night and then there were further discussions. She is unsure if the parents should be given an opportunity to make another presentation. She does not believe that they need thirty minutes.

P. Maurano: During public comments should be sufficient.

P. Watkins: What have the parents found out in the last two months? She would like to hear a formal presentation from the parents.

K. Blythe: The public comment period would be sufficient.

N. Naclerio: He has heard the parents and their story. He would like to hear more options on how it can be handled.

#### **G. WRITTEN COMMUNICATION**

#### **H. PUBLIC COMMENT #2**

Osnat Loewenthal – the chair determined last night that the parents were not in a position to implement any of the ideas the parents have. There is not any reason for them to make the presentation as they are not driving the bus. The work the parents have done will not have any influence in the process.

The next meeting is June 17<sup>th</sup> at MCC. Discussion is taking place if the issue should be done as a study session so there can be more dialogue.

**J. ADJOURNMENT** at 9:32 pm until the next meeting scheduled for June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

#### **ATTACHMENT**

**Attachment A – [Copy of Presentation “Menlo Children’s Center”](#)**