



PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

Regular Meeting

June 17, 2009

6:30 p.m.

Burgess Recreation Center
700 Alma Street

6:00 p.m. Tour of Menlo Children's Center

The meeting was called to order at 6:38 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: J. Tooley, K. Blythe, K. Breisch, P. Maurano, P. Watkins, and N. Naclerio (calling in from One Kendall Square, Building 1400W, 2nd Floor, Cambridge, MA 02139)

Absent: A. Kirkpatrick

Other Present: B. Santos George – Community Services Director, Adela Alvarado – Consultant, Natalya Jones – MCC Director, MCC Staff, Nancy Nuckolls – Community Services Business Manager, Starla Jerome-Robinson – Assistant City Manager

A. PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS

B. COMMISSION VACANCIES, APPOINTMENTS AND REPORTS

1. **June 24 – August 12: Summer Concert Series in Fremont Park**
Summer Concert Series kick off with a Block Party on June 24. Donations from private donors and entities made this possible.
2. **June 24 and August 12: Block Parties**
There will be 2 parties on Santa Cruz Avenue in collaboration with the Chambers of Commerce. The idea was to have people get more involved in the downtown area and to stimulate local shopping and business.
3. **June 29: Planning Commission will again hear on EIR for the new gymnasium**
The Planning Commission will address concerns on the lack of parking issue raised at the Library Commission meeting.
4. **July 4: City Wide 4th of July Celebration**
The City's annual parade starts at 11:45 at the parking lot on Santa Cruz and Chestnut. The celebration starts at Noon at Burgess Park.
5. **July 14: Park and Recreation Month, Proclamation presented at the City Council Meeting**
Proclamation will be presented at the Council meeting on July 14. At least one commission member should be present to receive the proclamation.

C. PUBLIC COMMENT #1 (*Limited to 30 minutes*)

D. CONSENT CALENDAR

Approval of the minutes dated May 20, 2009 and May 21, 2009.

Motion (J. Tooley/P. Maurano) to postpone the approval until July meeting.

E. PUBLIC HEARING

F. REGULAR BUSINESS

1. Menlo Children's Center – Presentation and discussion of questions raised during the May 21, 2009 Park and Recreation Commission meeting ([Attachment A](#))

Adela Alvarado presented the answers to the questions raised on the previous meetings:

1. If another city was going through the same challenge what did the city do when they had to privatize?

Mountain View is the only one that went through the privatization. In July 2007 the City of Mountain View approved plans and specifications for the Child-Care Center and bids were awarded for construction in September 2007. They have funding from the City, Hewlett Packard and First Five. They serve 104 children from infants to 5 years of age, providing services to low income families and Mountain View residents primarily.

2. 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?

We don't have an offer yet.

3. 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?

No funding for the middle class in this area.

4. MCC has a 501(C)(3) number – is there a way that they can do any other fundraising?

Yes, the parents will do a Dine-Out fundraiser at the Chili's restaurant on June 23rd.

5. It is great that the parents have had meetings with staff. Can it be done on a more regular basis?

Yes, they will be more involved through fundraising events, volunteering and marketing. Most of them will stay involved 2-4 years since they have children that attend the school age program.

6. How much day care is available in MP for this age group?

Menlo Park has 17 licensed child care programs. Six of them are half-day programs and two full-time toddler centers.

- Are there discussions on how to include the parents in the program?
 - Program Director is meeting with parents once a quarter about the policies of the school to discuss specific questions, for example: safety and kindergarten preparations. The number of parents attending the meetings usually varies and depends on the topic.

7. Will there be a presentation on the numbers in the report including before the renovation?
No.

8. Why was the cost in 2007 half of what is projected in 2009?

There were several staff vacancies and structural changes in 2007 that temporarily reduced expenses. The City also started shifting city-wide costs (i.e. workers comp) to departments.

9. Why is the trend going down in terms of cost recovery instead of up?

Changes that are currently being implemented will make up for this. There has not been direction to make this cost recovery, in the past, even though the Staff asked for different fees. In contrary, the City Council would reduce them to satisfy the parents. And that was why the Councils in the past weren't looking at the 100% recovery. They didn't understand the full impact of what they were doing when they made those decisions since it then took the fees further from cost recovery.

- How likely is it that the program reaches the 100% recovery?
 - The proposed revenues are based on 97% cost recovery, now we are at 76%.

The City is making some changes in running the program. The toddler component was controversial. Subsidizing policy has not been decided by the City Council.

We were hearing about the long waiting list and that there were no other places available in town. The waiting list is the indicator that the toddler program is scarce. The space could probably be remodeled or changed to expand the program, or the afterschool could be moved to the Recreation Center. Obviously, the programs are not bringing in the revenue; it's not about covering the costs but bringing in the revenue.

- Redesigning would have to be planned as a capital improvement. Also, the afterschool program used to be at the Recreation Center, and there were a number of waivers required from licensing. A big issue concerning the program was safety since the Recreation Center is open to the public.

Comments from the public:

1. Osnat Loewenthal of Menlo Park - Handed out the presentation of data to support the goals and need of the community and population. Need for the childcare increased in the past years, only this year of 5%. Important issue is the public accountability. The most needed services are the most expensive to operate. Most operators are only interested in financial returns and will not want to maintain the expensive services since they are the least cost effective. That is why there are not enough child-care services in Menlo Park. Childcare is the biggest problem in the community. No one is overseeing the problem of building more homes and not expanding the child care facilities accordingly. Having other programs along with the childcare, which is not profitable, could cover the loss.

- If the city is considering building or remodeling 5 schools in next 2 years, how come we can't have funding for the child care? Reconfiguration of the space could accommodate more toddlers?
- Yes, but as we heard, that is the question of capital improvement.

2. Diana Pohlman of Menlo Park – Pointed out that there is no care for our children in the City, and spoke in support of keeping the program with the City. Suggests cutting off the afterschool to make more space for the preschool.

- Barbara George - The biggest baby boom since 1957 was in 2007. The number of children needing the programs is just going to rise. The school district does not want the afterschool on its property. There were discussions before with the Menlo Park City School District board and parents, on the issue, to understand that there is a huge need for the afterschool program. There is a diverse opinion on where should and who should hold the afterschool program. With all the new developments lately, it should be the City's responsibility to have an adequate child care facilities. This issue was never discussed with the planning commission.

2. Menlo Children's Center Program – Adopt a Recommendation to City Council on Whether or Not to Privatize the Menlo Children's Center Program ([Staff Report 06.17.09](#))

- Correction: The first page of the Staff Report should state February 24th 2009 instead of March.
- Tonight the Commission will make a recommendation to bring to the City Council. The Menlo Children's Center Program is considered one program composed of two elements – preschool and afterschool. The entire revenue should be looked as one unit but the current focus is only on preschool age care.
- There is no final decision on what level of subsidizing the City Council is interested in. The Commissioners agreed that it is their responsibility to listen to the community and that the City needs a strategy to have childcare.
- If we were to recommend privatization, it would be for the school year 2010/11. That should give time to show if the new staff recommendations will get the Program closer to cost recovery.
- In 2006 there was a Childcare Review Committee and developed the RFP. If the RFP is issued now, the next school year would be under the new operator.
 - The staff suggested that the Commission requests the info, qualifications, and proposals, but not to start the bid process yet.

- The commission can start to develop the RFP now and at the end of the 6 months, by the mid year review, a decision will be made. The parents should be surveyed and then we will determine whether the program is meeting its budget goal.
- Moved and seconded (J. Tooley/P. Maurano) and passed unanimously to recommend that the City will continue to operate the program while simultaneously developing an RFP process, and at midyear 2009/10 Budget Review, based on the parents' satisfaction survey and whether the program is meeting its budget goal, would be the decision point for issuing the RFP. What ever the decision made in February would be in affect in the fall 2010.
- A subcommittee should be formed to follow and track the process.

G. WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

H. PUBLIC COMMENT #2

J. ADJOURNMENT at 9:30 p.m.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – [MCC Presentation Q & A 5.21.09 and Budget](#)

Attachment B – [Handout from Osnat Loewenthal](#)