

CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH
MINUTES OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

March 26, 2007
6:30 P.M.

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ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Gill, Harris, Lear, Murray, Nicholson and Rachmiel

Absent: Commissioner Lamb

Others Present: Recreation Services Manager Idris J. Al-Oboudi, Recording Secretary Jane Grace and others (see attached list)

AGENDA CHANGES

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the February 26, 2007 Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting were approved as written.

CEREMONIAL

None

GENERAL BUSINESS

07/0326.1 – Presentation by Dog Committee Regarding Approach for Establishing Future Dog Run Sites

Recreation Services Manager Idris J. Al-Oboudi reported that the city and resident committee on dog ownership has been meeting off and on for the past few years discussing issues of dog and pet owners. Past projects included park walk-throughs and two off-leash play areas. Mr. Al-Oboudi reported that the Dog Committee's presentation is to seek guidance from the Parks and Recreation Commission as to the approach they might use on park access and recreation opportunities for pet owners in Manhattan Beach.

Mr. Jon Vogl, a member of the Dog Owners for Quality of Life Committee, thanked the Commission for hearing their report tonight and also thanked city staff, including the Parks and Recreation and Police Departments, for their efforts and allowing the committee to pursue all of the enhancements for dogs in the city.

Mr. Vogl asked for guidance on the following considerations:

- Expansion of park walk-throughs
- Creation of an on-leash grass access
- Additional off-leash play areas

Mr. Vogl recommended the following steps to take in a community outreach effort:

- Post proposed locations in newspapers prior to notices for meetings
- Invite public to attend dog committee meetings in order to boost membership
- Provide staff reports and statistics on past experiences on city website
- Encourage “location tours” of proposed sites with city staff

Mr. Vogl reported that the basis for expanded on-leash park walk-throughs are to enable people to walk their dogs through specific areas and certain parks. He reported that prior on-leash areas were initially met with concern from residents but after a trial period with proper signage and mutt mitt dispensers being placed, three locations have become extremely successful (Live Oak, Bruce’s Beach and Sand Dune parks).

Mr. Vogl suggested that it would be a natural progression to expand some of the access areas and it would be beneficial for dog owners to have more consistency among all the parks in Manhattan Beach regarding dog walking. The new areas recommended for expanded access by the dog committee are the upper pathway, ramp and stairs at Sand Dune Park and the west corridor in Polliwog Park. The dog committee is also recommending on-leash park access at Bruce’s Beach park; i.e. passive grass areas of open space, suggesting there will be no interference to organized sports. Dogs are currently limited to the concrete path. Mr. Vogl suggested that the walk-throughs and park access should be reviewed separately from the off-leash play areas.

Mr. Vogl reported that the existing play areas were initially met with resistance from neighbors with concerns for noise and excessive barking, smell, overcrowding and safety. After a trial period, it was discovered that these issues and concerns did not occur. Mr. Vogl suggested that the off-leash play areas have become a positive influence on the neighborhood and community.

Mr. Vogl suggested that there is a need for more locations in order to incorporate geographical balance and provide localized use for area residents. He reported that the play area selection criteria includes placement on city property, areas currently used for dog walking, emphasis on existing sight and sound buffers and neighborhood considerations.

Mr. Vogl suggested that three additional off-leash play areas under consideration are:

1. Veterans Parkway South (4th Place & 5th Street, west side)
2. Veterans Parkway North (Poinsettia & 27th Street)
3. East Manhattan Beach (Water Tower – new mixed-use concept)

Mr. Vogl reported that the dog committee is asking the Parks and Recreation Commission for guidance on the following:

- General approach – additional methods to inform residents
- On-leash park walk-throughs
- Bruce’s Beach access (on-leash) – pursue now or later?
- Off-leash play area: multiple locations – Pursue one at a time or simultaneously?
Approve all, install one at a time?

During a discussion among the Commissioners, the following points were made:

1. Commissioner Lear suggested:

- a parking study be done at the water tower to determine how many people are already using the area as a park location, therefore, suggesting there might be only a small increase due to a dog run.
 - parking on Veterans Parkway not an issue
 - barking dogs have been proven to be a non-issue
 - both locations on Veterans Parkway should be considered simultaneously; the water tower location should be considered after the Veterans Parkway locations are successful
2. Commissioner Nicholson suggested that a small notice be placed in the recreation brochure advertising the two existing dog runs.
 3. Commissioner Harris suggested that if we pursue the water tower as a location, we should keep track of the number of car trips to the water tower and inform users that the area will be shut down if parking becomes excessive.

Mr. Al-Oboudi reported that the proposed dog runs will not be in parks that are lit or manned by staff and the community and F.I.D.O. will need to be involved in making sure that the runs are a success during their trial period and after.

4. Commissioner Nicholson suggested that following order for consideration of off-leash play areas:
 - 4th Place & 5th Street, west side of Veterans Parkway
 - Poinsettia & 27th Street, Veterans Parkway
 - Water Tower – not at this time. We should wait until we have a success with Veterans Parkway locations
5. Commissioner Murray indicated that she would love to see a dog run at the water tower but feels it would be beneficial, at this time, to place two trial runs on the Veterans Parkway. She suggested that statistics and testimonials regarding the trial areas should be gathered, addressing the positive impact, social interaction, safety and a sense of well being enhanced.
6. Commissioner Rachmiel suggested that two successes with the Veterans Parkway would be beneficial before going for the water tower location.
7. Commissioner Gill indicated that the water tower should be tabled at this time, suggesting it might harm the success of the Veterans Parkway locations. He suggested that the sheathing on the Live Oak run is an eyesore and a more esthetic covering should be used. Mr. Al-Oboudi indicated that sheathing would not be recommended for use at the Veterans Parkway locations.
8. Commissioner Harris suggested that we need to educate the community on the need for dogs to exercise and that “Tired dogs are happy dogs”. She suggested that one site should be done at a time and after a six month period, and the first site is permanent, a second site should be introduced. Ms. Harris is concerned that people on the east side of Sepulveda are in need of a dog run, suggesting that is why people might drive to sites on the west side.

Mr. Vogl indicated that the committee will formulate all of the Commission's information and other public input and come back to the Commission with a formal request.

Commissioner Nicholson inquired when we have to worry about economics. Mr. Al-Oboudi reported that depending on what is proposed, a supplemental to the budget might be submitted or it might be absorbed within our operational budget.

Commissioner Murray suggested that we work with Hermosa Beach to see how they are dealing with the topic of dogs in parks.

REPORTS

Mr. Al-Oboudi presented the Calendar of Events to the Commission, reminding them that the re-naming dedication of Bruce's Beach will take place on Saturday, March 31, at 10:30 a.m. at Bruce's Beach.

OTHER COMMISSION BUSINESS

Commissioner Gill reported that he has been attending several Facility Strategic Plan meetings and surprised to learn how unhappy the seniors are with the programs in Manhattan Beach. He inquired whether there was anything the Commission could do to help.

Mr. Al-Oboudi reported that in the past there had been only five hours for a senior recreation leader dedicated to the senior program where we were able to provide trips, luncheon and senior events. However, the seniors have indicated that they desire other kinds of activities. After City Council approved additional hours (30 hours per week) for the program, the new position was advertised and no interest was shown for this part time position. We have since been approved for a full time position and are in the process of recruiting for the position and placing supplementals in the budget for programming.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

John Sloway, representing the Manhattan Village Synthetic Turf Committee, thanked the Commission for putting their "seal of approval" on the synthetic surface at the Manhattan Village Field in December 2006. He reported that the City Council approved the appropriation of \$900,000 from available CIP funds for the synthetic surface at the Manhattan Village in January 2007. Mr. Sloway reported that the timeline was to break ground in early June 2007 in order to be completed by September 1, 2007. Mr. Sloway indicated that it is unknown to the committee members if we are on track to make this timeframe, but they are nervous, as there is always a lag time from contractor selection to groundbreaking. He suggested that even if contractor selection occurs within four weeks, that only leaves five additional weeks to groundbreaking.

Mr. Sloway asked the Parks and Recreation Commission to assist the Manhattan Village Synthetic Turf Committee with oversight of this project. He suggested that the Parks and Recreation Department have been excellent but he feels they may be overworked trying to put this all together and he is concerned there might be a bottleneck. He indicated this project is very time sensitive and the field has to be open and ready by September 6 or a lot of people and clubs will be misplaced.

Mr. Al-Oboudi reported that he will share this information with the Parks and Recreation Director, Sports Manager and Public Works who may be able to better respond to Mr. Sloway's concerns.

Commissioner Lear indicated that the Commission is authorized to make recommendations to City Council, not make policy. He suggested that this is strictly operational and he would need to go directly through Parks and Recreation staff.

Mr. Sloway reminded the Commission that Manhattan Village Field wasn't really the field the committee wanted to install synthetic turf, but suggested Marine Avenue Soccer Field because of its pathetic condition. Mr. Sloway reported that he would probably be returning to the Commission to request to get your recommendation for Marine Field and possibly Begg Field.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m. to the next regular meeting scheduled for April 23, 2007.

Jane Grace
Recording Secretary

Ted Lamb
Commission Chair

Parks and Recreation Commission
March 26, 2007

- Jon Vogl – City and Resident Committee on Dog Ownership
- Mary Friedman – City and Resident Committee on Dog Ownership
- John Sloway