



Agenda Item #: _____

Staff Report

City of Manhattan Beach

TO: Honorable Mayor Ward and Members of the City Council

THROUGH: Geoff Dolan, City Manager

FROM: Richard Gill, Director of Parks and Recreation
Idris J. Al-Oboudi, Recreation Services Manager

DATE: July 5, 2006

SUBJECT: Consideration of a Recommendation from the Parks and Recreation Commission to Rename Parque Culiacan to Bruce's Beach

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council discuss and consider the recommendation from the Parks and Recreation Commission to rename Parque Culiacan to Bruce's Beach.

FISCAL IMPLICATION:

If the request is approved, the cost to replace the park monument sign and attached plaque is approximately \$9,000-\$10,000.

BACKGROUND:

During the April 18, 2006 City Council meeting, the City Council approved the Parks and Recreation Commission's recommendation allowing them to discuss and consider renaming Parque Culiacan, incorporating a name of historical significance.

Parque Culiacan is the City's oldest park and is located between 26th and 27th Street on the west side of Highland Avenue. It is situated on a sloping grass hillside, is approximately three acres and has a beautiful view overlooking the ocean. It is a passive park with no facilities or play equipment.

The park began its life in the 1920's. The City Council initiated eminent domain proceedings to take the property located from the Strand to Highland Avenue between 26th and 27th Streets and all families were dispossessed of their property. The circumstances of the eminent domain proceedings have led some historians to conclude that the actions were racially motivated, as the proceedings did include the removal of a popular beach resort for black families (Bruce's Beach) and also dispossessed a number of black families from their homes. The exact motivations of the proponents of the eminent domain proceedings may never be truly known but the circumstances surrounding the birth of the park have raised questions.

Parque Culiacan is named after the City of Manhattan Beach's original Sister City Culiacan,

Mexico. It was originally named Bay View Terrace in 1962 and later changed to Parque Culiacan in 1974. We recently received a letter from Culiacan, Mexico, indicating an interest in reestablishing a sister city relationship. We have attached a copy for your consideration during this discussion. This letter was also provided to the Sister City Committee for their consideration.

DISCUSSION:

In 2002/2003, Leadership Manhattan undertook a class project to rename Parque Culiacan. They received permission from City Council to conduct a community-wide contest for a new name. After several months, the Leadership class returned to the City Council with several recommendations for renaming Parque Culiacan, including Friendship Park. During the meeting, the Sister City's Organization representatives protested the recommendation and stated that it was inappropriate and disrespectful to drop the original Sister City's name Culiacan from the park. The City Council denied the recommendation of Friendship Park. They did approve erecting a new monument sign, keeping the name Culiacan and allowing a plaque to be placed on the monument that recognized the origin of the park.

The Leadership Manhattan Class of 2002-2003 paid approximately \$7,500 for the new monument sign and plaque and it was rededicated July 2003 as Parque Culiacan.

During the February 27, 2006 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting, the Commission recommended to City Council (Council approved looking at the renaming of the park during their April 18 meeting) that the park be renamed after the significant historical events that took place in the 1920s. During the May 22, 2006 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting, after taking public testimony and much discussion, the Commission made a recommendation to the City Council to rename Parque Culiacan to Bruce's Beach. During the May meeting, the Commission heard testimony from representatives of Leadership Manhattan supporting the name change and representatives from the Sister City Organization recommending denial for the name change. The members of the community were split, some voicing approval and several recommending denial.

Staff's only input into the decision is that Parque Culiacan is not a beach, it is a park. Therefore, the name Bruce's Beach is not representative of the physical description of the area. Staff suggests the Council consider Bruce's Park or Bruce's Beach Park, if the Council is interested in changing the name.

Attachment A: Correspondence

Attachment B: Correspondence from Leadership Manhattan Beach

Attachment C: Correspondence from Culiacan, Mexico

MAY 20, 2006

MAYOR & CITY COUNCIL
CITY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH

A SHORT NOTE FROM ONE OF YOUR FORMER COUNCIL MEMBERS
AND MAY TO EXPRESS MY FEELINGS ON WHAT I UNDERSTAND IS A
CONTEMPLATED NAME CHANGE FOR PARQUE CULIACAN ,

I AM SURE YOU ARE ALL AWARE OF THE NOT SO PROUD HISTORY
OF THE PARK AREA IN QUESTION. BETWEEN 1972 AND 1980 THE
CITY COUNCIL HAPPENED TO BE VERY INVOLVED IN DEVELOPING A
STRONG AND MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR SISTER CITY
CULIACAN, SINALOA. THE NAMING OF THE PARK CULMINATED A
LONG PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THIS IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIP
AND STARTED A CONTINUING RELATIONSHIP AND REMINDER OF
HOW IMPORTANT THE PARK HISTORY, OUR CITY'S HERITAGE AND
OUR TIES WITH CULIACAN ARE TO THE CITIZENS OF MANHATTAN
BEACH AND MEXICO.

CITYS NAME SCHOOLS , STREETS, BUILDINGS AND PARKS ALL THE
TIME BUT RARELY DO YOU FIND THEM CHANGING NAMES WITHOUT
SUBSTANTIAL REASON. PERHAPS LOOKING FOR ANOTHER AREA
OR LANDMARK TO NAME IN HONOR OF ANOTHER IMPORTANT
PERSON OR ENTITY MIGHT BE A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE..BUT PLEASE
DON'T CHANGE THE NAME OF PARQUE CULIACAN.

SINCERELY



STEVE NORDECK
FORMER MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEMBER

CC SISTER CITY COMMITTEE
MARJORIE CRUTCHFIELD

RECEIVED
CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH
MAY 24 2006

Tuesday, June 06, 2006

Mr. Geoff Dolan
City Manager
City of Manhattan Beach

*Rich
for
Stull
report*

Hi Geoff,

Enclosed is a letter to the members of Council for the July 5th, 2006 meeting. Along with the cover letter, we have enclosed the current wording on the plaque and proposed wording should council decide to change the name of the park.

I have also sent a copy of the enclosed to Rich Gill.

Please call if you have any questions.

Thanks

Richard

RECEIVED
CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH
JUN 05 2006

Friday, June 9, 2006

Honorable Mayor Mitch Ward
Honorable Mayor Pro Tem Nick Tell
Councilmember Jim Aldinger
Councilmember Joyce Fahey
Councilmember Richard Montgomery

Dear Councilmembers:

As project leaders for the Leadership Manhattan Beach Class 2003 Parque Culiacan project, Sandra and I would like to share a few of our thoughts prior to the council meeting of July 5th, 2006.

Several of you were on Council at the time we brought the concept of a community contest to rename the park. One of the guidelines set by Council was that an individual's name could not be used for renaming the park; consequently this may explain why the Bruce family name was not submitted for consideration.

The concept of the plaque was suggested by Council, and we wholeheartedly endorsed the idea and spent a great deal of time with other community members and in front of Council trying to capture the history of the park. We felt, as did others, that it was an appropriate time and manner to bring attention to the tragic circumstances that "reflected the views of a different time."

If Council decides to change the name of the park, we believe that with only a few modifications, the text of the plaque can be preserved. We have enclosed the current wording along with our suggestions. We sincerely feel that the current wording not only brings attention to the eminent domain proceedings in 1924, but explains the entire history of the park through the modern era.

In researching the history of the park back in 2003, we went to various sources including the City, the local library and the Historical Society. Materials that have recently been shared by residents with us highlights that there is much that has been written about Bruce's Beach and its place in our history. We would hope Council would encourage residents that wish to tell the Bruce story in more detail to work with the Manhattan Beach public library to supplement the current local history section to make more information available to the community.

Both Sandra and I are available for further discussion and look forward to seeing you at the council meeting on July 5th.

Cordially,

Richard Frank
Sandra Seville-Jones

Parque Culiacan

Named in honor of Culiacan, Mexico
Our first Sister City 1974

Formerly the site of Bruce's Beach, a resort for African American Angelenos. This two-block neighborhood also housed several minority families and was condemned through eminent domain proceedings commenced in 1924. Those tragic circumstances reflected the views of a different time.

The land was referred to as City Park and Beach Front Park, and later named Bayview Terrace Park through a community contest in 1962.

Designated Parque Culiacan on March 16, 1974 at the time of a visit from representatives of our first Sister City.

Parque Culiacan commemorates our community's understanding that friendship, goodwill and respect for all begins within our own boundaries and extends to the world community.

Signed and donated by Leadership Manhattan Beach Class of 2003.

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Bruce's Park

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Dedicated by the Manhattan Beach City Council
July , 2006

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Mexico
Our first Sister City 1974

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Bob & Mary Ann Brigham
687 The Esplanade
Paso Robles, CA 93446
805-2226-2274

RECEIVED
CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH
JUN 12 2006

To the Honorable Members of
The Manhattan Beach City Council
City Hall
1400 Highland Ave.
Manhattan Beach, CA 90266

June 9, 2006

com/
Archives

I have been following with considerable interest the most recent developments in settling on an appropriate name for the park that is bordered by 26th and 27th Streets and Highland Avenue and The Strand. My interest in this particular piece of land goes back to 1939 when I was 12 years old and my family moved to Manhattan Beach. When I asked adults who knew more about my new home town than I why there were these spacious vacant lots standing idle in the midst of what was even then dense development, my questions were greeted with either ignorance - - - feigned or otherwise - - - or I was put off with suggestions that I should not concern myself with such matters. A dozen years later when I was faced with the task of writing a thesis for a masters degree in history, I saw it as an opportunity to at last satisfy my curiosity. What I ended up with in May, 1956 was a thesis entitled "Land Ownership and Occupancy by Negroes (sic) in Manhattan Beach, California" and an understanding of what had happened in my town regarding this issue from 1914-1926.

While I wanted my fellow citizens to have a knowledge of this chapter in the history of their town, and while I was gratified by the feature stories that would appear from time to time in the local print media, I never thought the naming of the park that was finally created in 1960 from the weed-filled vacant lots that had blighted the neighborhood since 1926 would become such a cause celebre.

Although my wife and I have moved to Paso Robles to be closer to our older daughter and her family, I will always consider Manhattan to be my "home town," and I will never lose interest in what happens there. For obvious reasons, I have a special concern regarding the naming of the park. Therefore, I would like to go on record as favoring the name change from Parque Culican to Bruces' Beach Park. I have strong feelings on behalf of

the sister city concept, and I am grateful to those who have worked hard and enthusiastically on the Sister City Committee to maintain a relationship with Culican or whatever city we might consider to be our sister at any particular time. But I think that now when the name Parque Culican no longer seems to be appropriate, we have an opportunity to say to the world that a mistake was made a long time ago that we want to try to rectify.

In closing, I very strongly want to state that I don't think the current residents and our city government need to apologize for something our forbearers did eight decades ago. We bear no responsibility for that. Our task is to let the world know that this wonderful town holds its arms open to whomever can afford to live here, for that is the America that we are fortunate enough to have inherited in the 21st century. Yes, there is still some unfinished business to be taken care of in our evolving culture, but we want to be leaders, not followers - - - and certainly not obstructionists.

Thank you for reading this over-long but passionately held point of view.

Sincerely,


Bob Brigham



*"2006, Año del Bicentenario del Natalicio
del Benemérito de las Américas,
Don Benito Juárez García"*

Dependencia: **Secretaría de
Desarrollo Económico**

Sección:

Oficio No. **SDEM/0101/06**

Expediente:

Culiacán, Sin., Mex., June 01, 2006.

MR. GEOFF DOLAR
City Manager
City of Manhattan Beach, California

Dear Mr. Geoff Dolar:

I am pleased of having had the opportunity to salute you and, at the same time, having gotten information about Culiacán Park which is located in that beautiful city. I appreciate your kindness and courtesies in my short visit to the already mentioned city of Manhattan Beach.

As you know, Mr. Aarón Irizar López, Municipal President of Culiacán, State of Sinaloa, México, has the firm intention of reestablishing our relationships as city sisters between Culiacán and Manhattan Beach, although you told me that you already have a brotherhood with the city of Santa Rosalía, State of Baja California, México. However, as I stated, according to that interest, I suggest that this petition should be presented to the Sister Cities Community Council with the object of promoting this relationship in a steady way. If you consider achievable our request, a visit to your place of Mr. Aarón Irizar López and some of his staff members will be made, the day you determine. If our petition is not feasible, please let me know by writing, the decision the Council takes.

As a background, I mention you that the City of Culiacán, shows a steady cultural and economic development. Everyday, we promote new projects on tourism as well as business. We want Culiacán be a notable destiny, in terms of tourism and business. At this date, Culiacán has more than 850,000 population. We understand our need of having relationships with attractive and competitive cities as Manhattan Beach.

I attached photographs taken in my recent and quick visit to your city as well as the Municipality of Culiacán's Web Site, www.culiacan.gob.mx and the city's promotion, www.culiacan.com.mx.

Waiting your kind answer to our request, I send you friendly greetings.

SINCERELY YOURS
THE SECRETARY OF THE MUNICIPAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

MR. GUSTAVO ALFARO ROJO

RECEIVED
CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH

JUN 13 2006

A copy to: Mr. Aarón Irizar López, Municipal President of Culiacán.
A copy to: Mitch Ward, Mayor of Manhattan Beach

Al referirse a este oficio citense los datos
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