

DRAFT

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CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH
MINUTES OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

May 22, 2006
6:30 P.M.

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ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Cohen, Harris, Lamb, Lear and Paralusz

Absent: Commissioner Marrill

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 April 24, 2006 Commission Meeting were approved as written.

CEREMONIAL

None

GENERAL BUSINESS

06/0522.1 – Consideration of Renaming Parque Culiacan

Mr. Al-Oboudi reported that during the April 18, 2006 City Council meeting, the City Council directed the Parks and Recreation Commission to discuss and consider renaming Parque Culiacan, incorporating a name of some historical significance.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Bob Bohner, President of the Manhattan Beach Sister City Committee, indicated that he is still against changing the name of Parque Culiacan. He reported that Parque Culiacan was named in honor of our former sister city and even though we have changed our sister city, the Sister City

program reflects and promotes diversity. He suggested that a compromise was worked out by the City Council two years ago by not changing the name of the park but placing a plaque in the park which educates the public about the history of the park. Mr. Bohner asked that the Commission recommend against changing the name of Parque Culiacan.

Michele Murphy suggested that plaques can disappear but naming things has power. She suggested that the current name, Parque Culiacan, is a falsehood. The name Bruce's Beach would give power which the plaque does not do. The name Bruce's Beach would honor the history, suggesting that those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

Ms. Murphy understood that until the civil rights movement in the early sixties, the park was an empty lot. She suggested that the plaque is a little dishonest, describing the events that happened a long time ago but not the years the park stood as an empty lot.

Grace Walters, a Manhattan Beach resident for more than 30 years, was shocked to discover the Manhattan Beach decision to uproot black families years ago, in the name of eminent domain. She suggested that renaming the park Bruce's Beach would be a unique opportunity to acknowledge our history and set an example for future generations.

Patrick McBride is aware that City Council directed the Parks and Recreation Commission to discuss and consider renaming Parque Culiacan, incorporating a name of some historical significance. He suggested that the park's history in 1924 has a huge civil rights significance and renaming the park to Bruce's Beach would have historical relevance. Mr. McBride suggested that a lot of people think we should honor the Bruce Family and he suggested that we should honor the symbol that they stand for and the historical struggle that took place.

Marge Crutchfield suggested there are two issues to discuss: 1) Do we honor the civil rights movement? or 2) Do we honor the Sister City movement which brings people together from all over the world? She suggested that the plaque does both and she doesn't see any reason to change the name of Parque Culiacan; she sees us doing this over and over again if we don't settle on one name now. Ms. Crutchfield suggested that the words on the plaque "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" depicts what the Sister City program is all about.

Barbara Sills, a 39 year resident, taught school in Watts during the 1960s and her African American friends told her they couldn't live in Manhattan Beach. She doesn't negate the work done by our Sister City program but suggested that it would be more meaningful to change the name of the park to Bruce's Beach to honor those people kicked out or not allowed to live in Manhattan Beach. Ms. Sills suggested that it would be more valuable to name the park Bruce's Beach rather than after a sister city that is no longer our sister city. She suggested that if the City can afford to mail out an expensive Undergrounding Brochure, they can afford to replace the sign at the park.

Viet Ngo suggested that the name of the park should be changed to Forgiven Park. The park should be a place where anyone can go to meditate and ask for forgiveness; look at the ocean and be with nature. He suggested that the healing process should include helping other people. Mr. Ngo suggested that we have to accept the fact that the former African American residents were

victims of racism and we should apologize to them. His desire is equal justice for all. He suggested that Forgiven Park would be a healing name and help to remedy past wrongs.

John Bushman, a lifelong resident of Manhattan Beach and a member of the Metlox, Police and Fire Facility Issues Committee. Mr. Bushman suggested that the name should be left as it is or changed to a name that doesn't reference any bad feelings or bring up negative history, i.e. Ocean View, Surf View or Sunset View.

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

1. Commissioner Lear reviewed the following names suggested for consideration:

- Bruce's Beach
- Keep Parque Culiacan
- Forgiving Park
- Ocean View Park
- Surf View Park
- Bayview Terrace

2. Commissioner Lamb reported that an uncle of his had grown up in Manhattan Beach and whose father was the third police officer hired by the City of Manhattan Beach. His uncle (now 92) had a strong memory of walking home from a Boy Scout meeting and coming upon a burning house with robed KKK members out front. Commissioner Lamb suggested that this was an unfortunate era for our City. We should recognize what happened and do something which will remind our community how we should now act and treat other people.

3. Commissioner Lear suggested that there is a trend which includes three categories of suggestions:

- Recognizing the civil rights wrong from 1924
- Respecting the Sister City program
- Neutral category – Bayview Park, Forgiving Park, Surf View Park, Ocean View Park

Commissioner Lear suggested that the Commission should, without identifying a specific name, look at these three categories and discuss which category we are in favor of.

4. Commissioner Cohen reported that the City Council has asked us to consider renaming the park to reflect historical events.

5. Commissioner Paralusz agreed that City Council's direction was to consider renaming the park to reflect historical events. Commissioner Paralusz indicated that she is in favor of renaming the park Bruce's Beach to recognize the blemish on our City's history. She suggested that we can't go back and change what happened but certainly now address what happened.

6. Commissioner Gill indicated that his fifth grade son has never heard of the story of Bruce's Beach in his local-history classes. Mr. Gill suggested that should be changed by naming the park Bruce's Beach; we need to teach the past to learn about the future.
7. Commissioner Harris indicated that she needs more information and would like someone to read the words that are now on the Parque Culiacan park plaque.

Susan Seville-Jones, 2003 Leadership Manhattan Beach class co-project manager, read the following:

*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 Angelinos. 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 parquet 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.

Ms. Seville-Jones indicated that Leadership Manhattan Beach Class of 2003 held a contest and identified the top-ten choices and presented them to City Council. City Council decided to keep the name Parque Culiacan and asked that, in order to make the name Parque Culiacan more valuable, create a plaque with historical information.

8. Commissioner Harris indicated that she is not in favor of renaming Parque Culiacan to Bruce's Beach. She is in favor of leaving the name as it is and feels that the plaque includes the information that everyone is looking for.
9. Commissioner Cohen suggested that the current name and Bruce's Beach both meet the criteria that Council has asked us to consider so this becomes emotional and subjective. She suggested that it is significant that we have a plaque that recites, in some views, effectively and in other's views not completely the history of Bruce's Beach. Ms. Cohen indicated that she is in favor or renaming the park to Bruce's Beach and not persuaded by fears that acknowledging a bad part of history will incite new negative feelings.

Commissioner Lear suggested that the Commission, because they are an advisory committee, should report back to the City Council that 1)there was support for the Sister City Organization

and keeping the name Parque Culiacan and that 2) there was significant support for changing the name to Bruce's Beach. Commissioner Lear moved to forward a recommendation to City Council that, after taking audience participation and having dialog among the Commissioners, the Commission recommends that the park be renamed Bruce's Beach and also acknowledges the contributions of the Sister City Committee, understanding that there is a legitimate debate with respect to maintaining the name Parque Culiacan. Commissioner Lamb seconded the motion. Ayes: Lear, Lamb; Nays: Cohen, Paralusz, Gill, Harris.

Jim Wagner indicated that he didn't realize that the subject was so slanted regarding historical significance. He suggested that it sounds like we should call the park Mea Culpa Park. He doesn't understand naming a park after something that hasn't contributed to the growth of Manhattan Beach. He suggested that every city has dark secrets and he doesn't see the significance of trying to make up for an error made in the past. Commissioner Cohen suggested that the impetus for this discussion is the civil rights history in Manhattan Beach.

Gail Runk suggested that we have a history of racial discrimination and reported that in the late 1950s there were cross burnings and very few black families in Manhattan Beach; in the 1960s there was a very active fair housing group in Manhattan Beach. She suggested that the name Bruce's Beach would be a wonderful name for everyone.

Commissioner Lamb indicated that he doesn't consider the proposal to rename the park a reflection on a long history; rather it recognizes a series of incidents that happened at a particular site rather than what some might consider atonement for an entire history.

A motion was made to recommend renaming Parque Culiacan to Bruce's Beach as it reflects the historical events that took place in Manhattan Beach. (MSC: Gill/Paralusz; Ayes: Cohen, Paralusz, Gill, Lamb; Nays: Harris, Lear)

06/0522.2 – Selection of 2006 Youth Services Award Recipient

Commissioner Lear reported that staff had, as of last month's Commission Meeting, not received any nominees for the 2006 Youth Services Award. Commissioner Lear had indicated that he was in contact with Manhattan Little League and AYSO and was confident that we would receive some nominees by this meeting. No nominees have been received. He suggested that the Commission could continue soliciting for a nominee for one more month or choose not to present an award in 2006. **A motion was made to not name the 2006 Youth Services Award due to the lack of nominees. (MSC: Paralusz/Lamb – Ayes: Paralusz, Lamb, Harris, Gill, Cohen; Nay: Lear)**

REPORTS

Mr. Al-Oboudi invited all the Commissioners to the events that will be held in spring and summer, suggesting that the staff loves to have them and their families at our many events. This past weekend, a very successful Family Campout and Fishing Derby was held. He reported that we are continuing to hire new part-time staff for the busy summer; on-line registration has been very effective, with 70% registration done on-line.

OTHER COMMISSION BUSINESS

Commissioner Lear reported that Commissioner Cohen will be moving to the Planning Commission and Commissioner Paralusz to the Parking and Public Improvements Commission in June and thanked them for their service to the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Commissioner Harris inquired whether the subject of new dog run areas will be discussed with the Commission or directly with City Council. Commissioner Lear suggested that the Commission should ask for direction/permission from City Council for discussions for additional dog runs in the City of Manhattan Beach.

Commissioner Lear suggested that the Commission would also like direction/permission from City Council to discuss a proposed skate park. Mr. Al-Oboudi indicated that a skate park is on the unfunded CIP list and the Council's work plan as part of the Community Facility Strategic Plan.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m. to the next scheduled meeting on June 26, 2006.

PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
MAY 22, 2006

Bob Bohner
Michelle Murphy
Patrick McBride
Barbara Sills
Marge Crutchfield
Viet Ngo
John Bushman
Sandra Seville-Jones
Gail Runk
Jim Wagner