

CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH
MINUTES OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

October 26, 2009
6:30 P.M.

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ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Cajka, Fitzpatrick, Gill, Harris, Murray, Nicholson and Rosenthal

Absent: None

Others Present: Director of Parks and Recreation Director Richard Gill, Recreation Services Manager Idris Al-Oboudi, Recreation Services Manager Mark Leyman, Recording Secretary Jane Grace and others (see list)

AGENDA CHANGES

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the September 29, 2009 Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting were approved as written.

CEREMONIAL

None

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Linda Smalley suggested that the existing dog run at Live Oak Park is fabulous but was hoping that the unsanitary wood chips that were removed for the Hometown Fair would be replaced with clean wood chips; however, she reported that the same unsanitary chips were returned, along

with trash from the fair, leaving health issues for dogs as well as people. Ms. Smalley indicated that she would be willing to financially help to see clean wood chips in the dog park. She appreciates the dog runs available to them and reported that Nick [Meick, Senior Recreation Leader] is wonderful.

GENERAL BUSINESS

09/1026-1 – Consideration of an Off-Leash Dog Area at Polliwog Park

Recreation Services Manager Idris Al-Oboudi reported that staff is recommending that the Parks and Recreation Commission recommend to City Council the installation of an off-leash dog run area at Polliwog Park for general use by the public and dog obedience classes. The total cost for the dog run is estimated at \$18,200 and staff is recommending that the installation be completed over two years in two phases.

Mr. Al-Oboudi reported that the proposal is to establish an off-leash dog run in Polliwog Park, between western pathway of the park and Begg Pool/Field. The new dog run in Polliwog Park would be to improve the quality of life for dog owners by providing residents on the east side of Sepulveda a dog run like the one at Live Oak Park.

Mr. Al-Oboudi reported that the Dorsey Field dog run opened in 2005, the Marine Sports Complex dog run opened in 2006 and an on-leash park pathway access was initiated in 2004. Despite initial neighborhood concerns in the past, no incidents or problems have resulted from dog runs and paths.

The criteria for the selection of the new dog run includes the following:

- City property (owned/leased)
- Manhattan Beach Middle School support for project
- Pathway adjacent to area currently used for dog walking
- Flat (minimal excavation)
- Maximize distance from residential dwellings.

Mr. Al-Oboudi reported that staff reviewed the area in Polliwog Park with the Dog Advisory Committee, who agreed to its suitability for an off-leash dog area. A notice was sent to the neighborhoods surrounding Polliwog Park notifying citizens of the Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting; Mr. Al-Oboudi indicated that he has received several calls and e-mails in support of the proposed dog run; a few e-mails voiced concern regarding the ramifications of a dog run in an area where concerts and special events are held. Mr. Al-Oboudi indicated that staff's approach during a special event would be to sign the dog run closed.

Mr. Al-Oboudi reported that if the Polliwog Park site is approved as an off-leash area for dogs, staff will monitor the area and document any concerns. At the end of six months, staff would provide the Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council with a status report.

Audience Participation

Kate Budlong reported that she lives on Marine Avenue and owns a dog. She expressed an enormous thank you for the dog walkthrough path in Polliwog Park and was delighted to hear about this new idea for an off-leash dog run. Regarding the idea of conducting dog obedience classes in the dog run, Ms. Budlong suggested that this type of use should be minimized and posted when closed, allowing the public to use the area as an off-leash dog run a majority of the time. She suggested there would be an issue between large and small dogs, with some monitoring required. Ms. Budlong suggested that replacing the wood chips once a year is not adequate as they would get pretty saturated in that length of time. She suggested that the dog run be opened earlier in the morning since many people walk their dogs before going to work and staff would be available since Begg Pool has an early opening time.

Mr. Al-Oboudi reported that hours of operation for the proposed dog run are linked to staff availability; there is only one staff person on duty in the morning that monitors Marine Avenue Park and Village Field as well as Polliwog Park, therefore, requiring an 8:15 a.m. opening. The Live Oak Dog Run opens at 7:30 a.m. (earlier than the proposed Polliwog Park run) because of staff availability from Live Oak Tennis. Annual costs for maintaining the dog run would be in the area of \$5,000 which includes wood chip replacements and mutt-mitts. Mr. Al-Oboudi indicated that if additional dog obedience classes were required and scheduled at the proposed dog run in Polliwog Park, the area would be signed and limited to a minimum schedule.

A motion was made to recommend to City Council the installation of an off-leash dog run area at Polliwog Park for dog obedience classes and general use by the public.

(MSC: Rosenthal/Gill; Unanimous)

09/1026-2 – Consideration of a Request from Manhattan Beach Little League to Rename Marine Park and Install a Commemorative Wall Within Marine Park that Recognizes Our Youth and Adults Who Have Contributed to Youth Sports in Manhattan Beach

Recreation Services Manager Mark Leyman reported that staff is recommending that the Parks and Recreation Commission consider a request from Manhattan Beach Little League to rename Marine Park and install a commemorative wall within Marine Park that recognizes our youth and adults who have contributed to youth sports in Manhattan Beach.

Mr. Leyman reported that there is no fiscal impact at this time related to the renaming of the park and commemorative wall. However, if a new name and commemorative wall for the park is approved, then the park will need a new monument sign; and depending on what kind of wall is decided, there will be a need for funds for the construction of the wall.

Mr. Leyman reported that last spring two former Manhattan Beach Little Leaguers and Mira Costa High School baseball stars (Henry Pearson and Jon Wilhite) were involved in a terrible accident that took the life of Henry Pearson and critically injured Jon Wilhite. Two other young passengers in the car were killed. It was determined that the person who caused the accident was drunk and ran a red light. This tragic accident sent shock waves through the community as three young lives were lost and one left with years of recovery.

Mr. Leyman reported that Little League representatives and the Pearson and Wilhite families met and felt that this tragic accident caused by a drunk driver should be remembered for the horrible effects alcohol and driving have on all of our lives. They are requesting that the City change the name of Marine Avenue Park, not after a person or individuals but something more inspirational such as “Celebration Field, Inspiration Park, Honor Field, Remembrance Park, Tribute Park, Spirit Park or Perseverance Field.” In addition, Little League is requesting that “the City build a memorial wall that is less a testament to any individual than one that commemorates the power to influence that person or his or her experience stands to bear.”

Mr. Leyman reported that the City currently has no policy for naming fields and parks. Regarding the request for a commemorative wall, staff believes that there are many details that must be worked out; who is recognized on the wall, how are they recognized, for what experiences are they recognized, who makes the recommendations, what does the wall look like and can we use the site of the Marine Park building instead of a wall?

Mr. Leyman reported that Manhattan Little League is also requesting that all approved recommendations be implemented for Little League Opening Day in March. Mr. Leyman suggested that staff will strive to meet this schedule; however it may be difficult because of the need to develop policies and procedures for a fairly sensitive and complex subject, building or buying a wall and new monument sign, the upcoming holidays and the demands the holidays have on volunteer committees and commissions as well as finding a funding source.

Mr. Leyman suggested that due to the complexity, sensitivity and precedent of developing a policy, staff recommends establishing a subcommittee composed of members from the Commission and key youth agencies to develop policies, procedures and recommendations for establishing the naming of the park and construction of the commemorative wall. Staff recommends that the subcommittee be comprised of two Parks and Recreation Commissioners and community based youth group representatives including Manhattan Beach Little League, AYSO, Mira Costa Pony Baseball and Manhattan Beach Youth Basketball.

Audience Participation

Tom Tyrer, Past President of Manhattan Little League, reported that the Pearsons and Wilhites have a long history with Manhattan Little League and what impressed and inspired Mr. Tyrer and the League was the fact that instead of grieving alone, the Pearsons and Wilhites used this event as a platform to promote to young people that this is what happens when people drink and drive. The Pearsons and Wilhites don’t want to commemorate just one individual but they want this tragedy to have a positive influence with kids and teens that are impacted by it. Mr. Tyrer suggested that the commemorative wall is less about commemorating a specific individual but more like a parable wall, placed in a high traffic area (children ages 13-17); each person selected for the wall has an opportunity to have a positive influence on the people who pass by.

Nigel Pearson, Henry Pearson’s father, indicated that he and his family are behind this proposal and they hope that something positive will come out of this situation.

Commissioner Nicholson moved that the Commission form a sub committee made up of two Parks and Recreation Commissioners and four members of the youth sports community to consider renaming Marine Avenue Park and developing a memorial wall. (MSC: Nicholson/Cajka; Unanimous)

Mr. Gill suggested that the sub committee discuss process, procedure, policy and criteria for placement on the wall. Commissioner Gill and Commissioner Harris volunteered to serve on the sub committee. Mr. Leyman reported that Lisa Popovich-AYSO, Alby Silvera-Pony League, Kelton Durham-Manhattan Beach Youth Basketball and Tom Tyrer-Manhattan Little League have volunteered to serve on the sub committee.

091026-3 – Direction from City Council for The Parks and Parks and Recreation Commission to Discuss and Develop the Pros and Cons of Possible Operational Changes for The Dune at Sand Dune Park

Mr. Gill reported that staff is recommending that the Parks and Recreation Commission discuss and develop the pros and cons of possible operational changes for the dune at Sand Dune Park

Mr. Gill reported that during the October 20 City Council meeting, the Council directed the Parks and Recreation Commission to discuss possible operational changes for the dune at Sand Dune Park and what positive and negative impacts those operational changes would have on the community. The City Council also directed the Parks and Recreation Commission to meet with the Parking and Public Improvements Commission (P.P.I.C.) after the Parks and Recreation Commission has developed their list of possible operational changes with pros and cons. The P.P.I.C. is simultaneously conducting public meetings regarding the operations at Sand Dune but they are only looking at neighborhood traffic and parking issues. They are currently working on the details, pros and cons for a possible neighborhood permit parking program, meters for Bell Avenue and other traffic calming measures. The City Council wanted to be sure that both commissions were communicating with each other and discussing the pros and cons of all possible solutions.

Mr. Gill reported that the dune at Sand Dune Park was closed August 14th because of the negative impacts that were occurring in the park and surrounding neighborhood which were caused by the large attendances during the summer months. The increased usage of the dune created problems in the park and surrounding neighborhood related to noise, traffic, trash, speeding vehicles and increased erosion of the dune.

Mr. Gill reported that this issue is not new for the Commission. This issue was thoroughly discussed by the Commission and City Council from 2000 to 2004. This issue came to the forefront again this summer because of the larger than usual increase in attendance that occurred in late June through August 14 when the dune was closed. Mr. Gill reported that our records indicate an approximate 25% increase in usage when comparing the months of June 2009 and July 2009; during certain peak times in July, there were over 250 people on the dune. Because there are only 39 parking spaces along Bell Avenue, by far the majority of the users were seeking parking in the neighborhood.

Mr. Gill reported that City Council has stated that they are more interested in knowing what the pros and cons are for all possible solutions in addition to obvious recommendations. Council will discuss the pros and cons of the operational changes from the Parks and Recreation Commission and the traffic/parking issues from the P.P.I.C. and they will then make recommendations for the dune at Sand Dune Park.

Mr. Gill reported that tonight the Commission will listen to the public who will report on issues they encounter on a day-to-day basis regarding the dune.. The next Parks and Recreation Commission meeting, scheduled for November 23, will be a “town hall” type meeting where the Commission and the public will determine pros and cons for operational changes for the dune. The Parks and Recreation Commission and P.P.I.C. will hold a joint meeting in January and both commissions will then report to City Council in early February.

Commissioner Harris inquired about the scheduled November 23 commission meeting, suggesting that because the Manhattan Beach schools are closed that entire week, it might eliminate a lot of people attending. The Commissioners agreed to schedule November 16 and December 14 for the next two Parks and Recreation Commission meetings.

Commissioner Harris asked whether any money from the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District Grant was ever used to maintain the dune and, if so, will we have to pay it back to the County? Mr. Gill reported that money from the grant has been used for cleaning the dune; the City Attorney states that a closure of the dune portion of the park to all, would not violate the City’s obligations under the grant program.

Audience Participation

Kathleen Spilten suggested that the problems at Sand Dune Park have been slowly escalating over the past 15 years. She can’t park in front of her house, she finds it difficult to walk across Bell Avenue, and the small town quality is slipping away; it’s like putting a county park in the middle of a neighborhood. Ms. Spilten would like to see the park returned to its original purpose, a playground for kids. She suggested that there is no way to address the density issue; parking meters and permits are ideas that are trying to go around the major issue which is the park is not set up to be a county park.

David Wachtfogel reported that when the County originally gave the City money for Sand Dune Park, they wanted to list Sand Dune Park in their brochure of County parks. The City said no and left some money on the table. Mr. Wachtfogel suggested that anything that causes as much trouble as Sand Dune Park ought to be abated; the problems have gone on too long. He suggested that the dune has destroyed the park; the people who don’t live near the park only care about their need to use the dune and don’t care about people who live near the park.

June Moberg reported that her children and grandchildren have played on the dune. She originally recommended to City Council that they limit the use of the dune with a Disneyland type sign, only children at a certain height being allowed. Ms. Moberg indicated that she worries about the stability of the hill and if the dune continues to be used as an exercise facility, the City should hire a geologist to investigate Ms. Moberg asked the City to plant and/or eliminate the

exercise facility and please give them back their neighborhood. She reported that while walking in and around the park, she sees parking spots filled and people running their engines while waiting for a spot to park; she suggested this would add to our pollution.

Debbie Phillips indicated that in the past five to ten years, Sand Dune Park neighbors have been prisoners in their homes due to the traffic and crowded parking. She suggested that those who have read the County Grant have concerns that we have the ability to do anything that looks like we are treating people differentially; the only options is to close the dune to everybody. Ms. Phillips suggested that no one's right to exercise on the dune will supersede her right to enjoy a peaceful and safe usage of her home.

Jacob Rome understands how bad the impacts have been on the neighbors at the top and bottom of the dune and that City Council will not open the dune until there is a solution. Mr. Rome reported there are times when it is really bad and the focus should be on reducing those peak usage times. Mr. Rome's ideas for keeping the park open include:

- Minimize disruptive times
- Reduce usage during peak times
- Maintain easy availability for residents who want to use the dune
- Preserve ability for hyper-locals to spontaneously use the dune
- Make the area safe for children

Mr. Rome disagrees with a reservation system since it might destroy spontaneity and would make it easier for non-residents than for residents. He suggested that the permit system could work really well; a one year pass could be purchased at City Hall once a month at a determined time; kids under 12 wouldn't need a pass; a pass wouldn't be required for all times during the day; a one-day-use pass could also be sold.

Mark Kemple suggested that if the dune were not open and never had been opened, no city planner in their right mind would place the dune in that location knowing how it would be used. The dune as a workout facility is not natural and we choose to remake it every three weeks when we replenish the sand. Mr. Kemple suggested that we should only have the dune if it compliments the neighborhood. He reported that in a 2002 L.A. Times article, the City determined that the maximum usage on the dune should be 30 people. He asked the Commission to seriously consider asking City Council not to reopen the dune.

Brent Enright suggested that most people in the neighborhood would not like to see the dune closed but would like to see fewer people on the dune, whether they be residents or non-residents. He suggested that the number of people on the dune has created the majority of the problems.

Louis LeRoy suggested that if you were to lay out a community as it currently exists, looking at the size of the streets, size of the home, number of cars per resident, etc. you would draw a different conclusion with what you would do with Sand Dune Park. He suggested that the traffic engineer should look at the basic assumptions when the neighborhood was first built. He questioned whether anyone has looked at the safety of children based on the volume of traffic, at the effect of emissions of idling cars. Mr. LeRoy indicated that he has concerns for the safety of

children, effect of emissions on the elderly and the negative impacts on the quality of life for neighborhood residents.

Victoria Peters doesn't feel that any parking restrictions will do any good. She reported that she used to use the dune but it became too busy; no one should be restricted from coming to Sand Dune Park but it shouldn't be used as an exercise facility. Ms. Peters questions why we should spend money on replacing the sand due to erosion, when we have had to cut City programs. Ms. Peters suggested that the dune could be used for educational projects or a nature preserve. When she reported a problem with the top of the dune, Public Works (Juan Price) was very helpful by replacing the curbing. However, she reported that duners won't get out of the way when asked, and brag about their bad behavior. Ms. Peters suggested that the dune as an exercise facility needs to be closed.

Alita Rothmeyer reported that she no longer runs the dune because she was pushed out of the way by others; she no longer walks the stairs because the runners moved off the dune are now running the stairs. She suggested that parking permits will only push the parking further into the neighborhood.

Dennis White suggested that the issue is we have a sleepy little neighborhood with a park originally built as a pocket park; this park now has 9,000 visitors a month. There are now 2000 "Friends of Sand Dune" members on Facebook; it appears in nature magazines and newspapers advertising a regional exercise facility; car alarms and loud talking begin at 6:00 a.m. Mr. White suggested that a reservation system would require additional staff, more enforcement and maintenance problems, all which would cost money. He suggested there are other places to get a good workout, i.e. three miles of beach; people don't need the dune to exercise. Mr. White suggested that the City cannot afford this costs and the dune should be closed.

Don Trucker is one of the "evil dune users" since 1978. He agrees that the usage should be lowered to mitigate impact on the neighborhood. He is not in favor of a reservation system. He suggested that a usage card or self-pay kiosk would be preferable so that use could be spontaneous. Mr. Trucker reported that even with the dune closed, the parking on Bell is still congested. He doesn't feel the master plan issue is legitimate, with a toxic-spewing refinery just three blocks from schools.

Moorea Henn lives at the end of 35th Street and reported that she agrees with the majority of speakers. She reported that when her dad comes home from a long day at work, he can't even park in front of their house. Ms. Henn wants the dune shut down.

John Rendler suggested that the sustainability of the dune is excellent at this time because the dune is closed. He suggested that because the dune is closed:

- Parking is a non-issue
- Sand replenishment is not necessary
- Security is not needed to get 200 people off the dune at 9:00 p.m.

Mr. Rendler suggested that the dune should not be open at night because there are no lights. He reported that because there are no sidewalks and curbs in the area, there are many times when

police and fire vehicles are not able to drive on the streets because cars are parking too far out into the street.

Ana Hory reported that she and her family are dune and park users. She suggested that a reservation system would be a problem because of their spontaneous use of the dune; they use the dune not because it is free but because they like to work out outdoors. She is in favor of some limitations in order to preserve the small community but feels that closing the dune is not an option. She would like to see enforcement and traffic control increased. She has created a web site www.sanddune.com in order for Manhattan Beach residents an opportunity to express their feelings.

Gary Osterhout, a Manhattan Resident since 1992, indicated that the beauty of Sand Dune Park is important to him. He suggested that impacts of the dune on the park have existed for a long time:

- When the park was last renovated, the community stopped a plan for a proposed nature study building
- There is no enclosed building for the playground program because of community concerns of attracting too many people
- No additional play equipment for older children was added because of concerns of attracting too many people

Mr. Osterhout suggested that for the Commission to jump to solutions without knowing their objective is a flawed process.

Richard Lopez lives at the top of the dune, is a dune user and has had mixed feelings about the closure of the dune. He reported that since the closure of the dune, the neighborhood has been peaceful and quiet with no parking issues and would now vote to keep the dune closed. Mr. Lopez indicated that if he needs to exercise in the sand for his bad back, he will exercise at the beach.

Gerry O'Connor indicated that he is happy that the dune issue is with the Parks and Recreation Commission and feels that parking is the wrong issue to discuss. Mr. O'Connor suggested that the City's only options regarding the dune are a permit or reservation system or closure. He suggested that if you choose to leave the dune open, you need to define what you want the dune to be; you need to define measurable goals; you need to define operating parameters; and you need to follow up and measure against those goals.

Nancy Dirado suggested that the problems have gotten worse at the dune but have always been bad. She suggested that the park rangers are lame ducks since there are too many people for them to control. Ms. Dirado suggested that the problems at the dune have been solved with the dune closure. She would like to see nobody using the dune and return it to an environmental, natural dune. She encouraged the Commission to look at what has happened in the last nine years.

Jane Tournat reported that the goal of most Sand Dune neighborhood residents is to return Sand Dune Park to a small neighborhood park. She suggested that with the closure of the dune

as a workout facility, this goal would be achieved and children's safety would no longer be at risk. She suggested another option to closing the dune completely would be to close the dune to exercise only, requiring enforcement to be high for a month or two.

Kim Riley suggested that the park ranger has been the only saving grace for the neighborhood but the park leaders are not able to control the high numbers in the park.

Cheryl Vargo reminded the Commission what Sand Dune Park used to be:

- Grass
- Volleyball Court
- Multiple picnic tables
- Neighbors using the park for birthday and block parties

Ms. Vargo suggested that when the City received money from the County, the neighbors suggested that "if we build, they will come." She suggested that the improvements made to the park included railings for the stairs, lighting and play equipment. She challenged the Commission to determine where the County money was spent. Ms. Vargo suggested that the park has to be closed.

Wil Arvizo originally indicated to City Council that he would like the dune left open but is now suggesting that the usage of the dune has gotten way out of hand. Mr. Arvizo made several counts of people on the dune (136 people at 9:00 a.m.; 148 people at 8:00 p.m.) He now feels that the dune should be closed. He doesn't want to see people parking further and further into the outer neighborhood because of a parking permit program. Mr. Arvizo suggested that the City is cancelling programs because of budget restraints, but increasing costs at the dune. He suggested the only alternative is to close the dune.

Mark Kemple suggested that with the closing of the dune, the Commission has the opportunity to give back to the community. With the temporary closing of the dune, the neighborhood has had a rebirth; children are playing and families are picnicking.

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

- \$25,000 spent a year for sand replenishment
- Commissioner Harris would like to see the breakdown of hourly use which includes variables (weather, closure, park ranger hired) and specific peak usage time
- The task of the Commission will be to look at all options for the dune, listing pros and cons
- Commissioner Gill would like to see a sample of citations that have been given at the dune
- This year's Sand Dune budget was not cut and includes cost to replace sand and staffing

COMMISSION ITEMS

Commissioner Harris reported that the Pumpkin Races were fabulous and everyone, including Recreation Services Manager Idris Al-Oboudi, seemed to have a terrific time. She reported that

the Climate Action 350 event, hosted by the City of Manhattan Beach, was very well attended and she was very proud to be a member of the community involved with the event.

Commissioner Murray attended the Senior Advisory Committee and reported that they are forming a committee to provide discounts for older adults; the Hawthorn Suites and Roadrunner as well as others are involved in the discount program.

Mr. Gill reported that when the City Council formally adopts their Work Plan, they will be looking into the appointment of an older adult as a member of the Parks and Recreation Commission.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m. to Monday, November 16, 2009.

PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

OCTOBER 26, 2009

Tom Tyrer, Manhattan Little League
Linda Smalley
Kate Budlong
Kathleen Spilten
David Wachtfogel
Nigel Pearson
June Moberg
Debbie Phillips
Jacob Rome
Mark Kemple
Brent Enright
Nancy Dirado
Kim Riley
Wil Arvizo

Louis LeRoy
Victoria Peters
Alita Rothmeyer
Dennis White
Don Trucker
Moorea Henn
John Rendler
Ana Hory
Gary Osterhout
Richard Lopez
Gerry O'Connor
Jane Tournat
Cheryl Vargo