

DRAFT

CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH MINUTES OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

November 16, 2009
6:30 P.M.

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ROLL CALL

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

Absent: Commissioner Fitzpatrick

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

AGENDA CHANGES

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the October 26, 2009 Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting were approved as written.

CEREMONIAL

None

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Gerry O'Connor spoke about the process and ability of the Commission to collect public input. He reported that the Commissioner's e-mail addresses are not posted on the City website; he indicated that historically the three minute limit for speaking at the Commission level has never been implemented, unless necessary and proposed that the three minute limit is inappropriate at the Commission level.

GENERAL BUSINESS

09/1026-3 – Direction from City Council for the Parks and Recreation Commission to Discuss and Develop the Pros and Cons of Possible Operational Changes for the Dune at Sand Dune Park

Director Richard Gill reported that tonight we will be looking at all possible operational changes that would mitigate the problems occurring in Sand Dune Park and neighborhood and asking for pros and cons for each. He reported that the Parking and Public Improvements Commission (P.P.I.C) was also directed to look at operational changes in the neighborhood, specifically a neighborhood permit parking program

Mr. Gill reported that the Commission and the public will address the three areas of possible operational changes for the dune:

- Close the Dune
- Changes to the hours of operation
- Reservation System, limiting the number of people allowed on the dune

Mr. Gill asked that everyone be respectful of everyone's suggestions, even if they don't agree. He suggested that they shouldn't get caught up in the minutia, i.e. the fine details of a reservation system. After everyone has had a chance to discuss the pros and cons for each suggested operational change, the Commission will reconvene and make any final remarks. If the discussion of all the operational changes is completed, the discussion will continue at a joint commission meeting with the P.P.I.C. on Thursday, January 7. At that time, both commissions will discuss each of their operational issues and then forward this information to the City Council at either their last meeting in January or their first meeting in February.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Nancy Dirado, and others in the audience, requested that the City do an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on the dune. Ms. Dirado suggested that she is frustrated that the City hasn't provided them with an EIR, including how many cars the neighborhood can accommodate, suggesting that it would be difficult to give pros and cons without this information.

Gerry O'Connor suggested that the reservation system being discussed tonight is more a permit system with its end goal being to limit the number on the dune.

REPURPOSE THE DUNE

The majority of the audience didn't want the option titled "Close the Dune." They requested that staff change the title to "repurpose the dune."

Patricia Ware Pros:

- Preserve the natural historical landmark
- Protect its form and beauty
- Won't be reconstructed monthly
- Stop erosion

- Environmentally ethical
- Provide potential habitat for El Segundo blue butterfly and endangered species
- Birding once again viable

(Summarized comments delivered in writing for archival packet)

Cindy Berkhalter - Ordering an EIR is the only responsible thing to do

Pros:

- No plastic bottles littering the top of the dune

Rita Cheever – EIR needed

Victoria Peters – EIR needed

Pros:

- No strangers wandering our streets
- No longer exploited as a world class workout facility
- Alleviate traffic

Kathleen Spilten

Pros:

- Better use of our money to address other issues rather than maintenance of the dune
- Positive environment for children
- Safer
- Alleviate traffic issues
- Protect peace and quiet
- Preserve the quality of Manhattan Beach

Markus Mack

Pros:

- No traffic
- No overuse problems
- No recycling of sand
- No parking problems
- No trash issues

Robert Hess

Pros:

- Eliminate maintenance costs
- Ability to sleep in mornings
- Safer for kids
- Less traffic
- Less dust
- No loud music
- Stair use is quiet, self regulating

Mark Kemple**Pros:**

- Avoid cons of other options
- Dune maintenance costs eliminated
- Avoid cost of peace in the community
- Non-discriminatory way of closing the dune
- Safer for children
- Blossoming of the park – picnics, use of greenbelt returning
- Eliminate unsafe conditions during sand replenishment

Name Unknown**Cons:**

- Public Park
- Used by Manhattan Beach residents – convenience for residents eliminated
- Kids won't be able to play on dune
- No exercising allowed on dune – unique training and aerobic experience
- Community melting pot eliminated

Bob Vargo**Pros:**

- Would get neighborhood park back

Bill Hory**Cons:**

- Costs involved to change, to make it an environmental habitat
- Liability to change
- Might set a precedent to close of recreational area due to increased usage
- Penalize Manhattan Beach families who use the dune
- Closing a unique, one-of-a-kind workout facility
- Decrease real estate value
- Loss of possible revenue

David Wachtfogel suggested that the real estate values in the area have depreciated. He feels the dune and the park cannot co-exist and if the dune continues to operate as an exercise facility, Sand Dune Park will be destroyed.

Faith Lyons**Pros:**

- No need for big city infrastructure to manage park
- Reduce need for staff for monitoring

Dexter Taylor indicated that having no dump trucks in the neighborhood for sand replenishment has been cause to celebrate.

Pros:

- Dust reduction
- Parking available

Sandy Francini

Pros:

- Quality of life returned to residents
- No worry about traffic

Dennis White suggested that the workout on the dune is not unique and no different from running on the beach.

Pros:

- No need for additional on-site staff
- No need for increased enforcement
- No sand replenishment needed
- Maintain property values
- Won't have to pay for parking meters
- Additional revenue for other recreation facilities and programs

Nancy Dirado

Pros:

- Eliminate the attractive nuisance of the sand dune
- Money allocated for the maintenance of the dune could be given to the Chamber of Commerce or held in reserve
- Recreation facilities, i.e. volleyball court, could be returned to the base of the dune
- Eliminate confrontational issues

Jane Tournat thanked Mr. Richard Gill and Mr. Idris Al-Oboudi for all their work over the years to come up with a solution for the sand dune situation.

Pros:

- Restore neighborhood park and natural resources
- No erosion
- Restore birds/bird watchers
- No reason for parking meters
- No emissions or water waste by replenishment
- More neighborhood/family gatherings – current level of usage is acceptable
- Liability to city disappears

Maryann Fragner reported that she used to run the dune and supported a reservation system; however she now believes that the park is too small to support a reservation system.

Debbie Phillips

Pros:

- Only enforceable option
- Simple
- Costs nothing
- Saves the sanity of the neighbors

Jeff Vignette

Pros:

- Bring sense of peace and harmony back to the neighborhood
- No need to dodge cars and trucks on the way to the park

Denise M.

Pros:

- No more strangers around neighborhood
- No more replacement of sand

Brent Denrie would not like the dune used as an athletic facility, but left as it is.

Jerry Hankins

Pros:

- Save cost of water used during sand replenishment
- Consistent with city's green initiatives

(Summarized comments delivered in writing for archival packet)

Richard Lopez

Pros:

- Shows City Council's responsiveness to residents

Steve Snivley

Pros:

- No more trash, i.e. socks, water bottles
- No reason we can't repurpose the dune and make it available to children

Cons:

- Children no longer able to play on dune

Rosemary Gray suggested that her children and grandchildren are unable to use the park because of the overuse of the dune.

Don Trucker

Cons:

- L. A. County Grant precludes closing the dune because of potential litigation
- It doesn't appear that closing the dune has returned the park to a family destination

Gary Osterhout

Pros:

- Most fair/equitable solution

Gerry O'Connor

Pros:

- Increased use of park by neighbors
- Neighborhood stability – decreased turnover of housing

Patricia Ware

Pros:

- Realizing mission statements of Parks and Recreation – Protect Environmental Resources; Strengthen Safety and Security; Enhance Community Image and Sense of Place

David Wachtfogel suggested that there are other parks where use has been abated because of overuse and this would not be that unusual.

Mark Kemple

Pros:

- Promote beauty
- Avoid litigation if dune left open
- Return to original mission of the park
- Avoid cost of operating a 9,000 use exercise facility
- Not as much vomit on the streets
- Promote city's reputation
- Brings cohesiveness to the neighborhood

Cons:

- Children won't be able to interact with all races with the dune closed

Jacob Rome

Cons:

- Won't be able to take action photos of the dune

Don Trucker

Cons:

- Sets a precedent – if neighbors don't like other facilities. they might take action

Nancy Dirado

Pros:

- Sanitation of sink near bottom of dune
- One stall bathroom will not take such a beating

Dennis White

Pros:

- Less neighborhood crime

Victoria Peters

Pros:

- Less neighborhood crime
- Sets positive precedent

Lynn Harris suggested opening up the dune occasionally for a “kids’ day” type event’

RESERVATION PERMIT SYSTEM – limit the number on the dune at any one time

Bill Francini

Cons:

- Additional staff and enforcement needed

Debbie Phillips

Cons:

- Can’t control traffic in neighborhood

Kim Riley

Cons:

- How do we know that enforcement will take place?

Faith Lyons

Cons:

- Unenforceable
- Too expensive to properly enforce

Jacob Rome

Pros:

- Generates revenue
- Maintains access for exercise and children
- Will reduce usage

Robert Hess

Pros:

- Will bring after-hour activities back into the park

Cons:

- Unenforceable

Jerry Hankins

Cons:

- Sand replenishment will still be necessary.
- Still have erosion, loss of dune surface, dust

Cindy Berkholder thanks the staff for their patience during this frustrating situation.

Cons:

- Double the cost for enforcement and sand replenishment
- Too early to make a decision until we know costs and impact (need EIR)
- Unenforceable!

Steve Snively

Pros:

- Potentially balances exercise and park usage

Cons:

- Cannot implement reservation system without institutionalizing overuse of the facility and neighborhood over use

Bill Hory

Pros:

- Reduce usage
- Increase revenue
- Decreased expenses – reservation should be non-refundable

Maryann Fragner

Cons:

- Trash, noise
- Even if you control the numbers you can't control the quality of people who use the dune

Jane Tournat

Cons:

- New cost of educating public about reservation program
- Increase cost for starting up new system
- Ongoing costs for maintaining system
- Children can't make reservations

Dennis White

Cons:

- Continued trash, noise, speeding cars, medical emergencies
- Cost of web page, software
- Staff and enforcement costs
- Unenforceable

Mark Kemple

Cons:

- Liability
- Residents don't want it
- People waiting to use it
- Tension if unable to make reservation
- Non-legitimate process of picking number of users
- Enforcement loaded with problems

Gary Osterhout

Cons:

- Unfairness due to hours of access
- Workout facility incompatible with concept of casual neighborhood park
- Fence is unaesthetic and unfavorable image
- Reservation system not comparable to tennis court reservations
- Doesn't make sense to keep open for just a few; no cost benefit

Don Trucker

Pros:

- Many Manhattan Beach residents would like to use the dune – “ We do want it”
- Historically (40 years) has been used as an exercise facility

Dexter Taylor

Cons:

- Use of dune for exercise is an unintended consequence of its location

David Wachtfogel reported that going down the dune on cardboard, etc. has been outlawed which is an abatement of the use of the dune.

Bill Francini suggested that a reservation system legitimizes the use of the dune as an exercise facility.

Denise Mazzota (not in favor of a reservation system)

Pros:

- **No need for parking meters and signage**

Gerry O'Connor (operational guidelines if Council chooses to implement permit system, even though it doesn't appear to be the popular path)

Pros:

- Permit would provide flexibility for target usage
- Provides user identification and accountability
- Ability to rescind access with grounds

Cons:

- User costs and inconveniences as well as City costs
- Complexity could be beyond staff ability to effectively implement

HOURS OF OPERATION

Kim Riley - If dune is kept open, Ms. Riley would prefer 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., closed May through September.

Nancy Dirado

Cons:

- Complicated to define times
- Will create confusion
- Exclusionary
- Doesn't address parking, trash, bathroom, sand replenishment

Dexter Taylor would like to dune closed seasonably – January through December

David Wachtfogel suggested that the dune remain closed and the park revived.

Jacob Rome

Pros:

- Able to target the hours that suffer from greatest impact.; target hours that Manhattan Beach residents use it most.

Mark Kemple

Cons:

- Limiting the hours would exclude non-residents, producing a possible legal problem
- Safety issues not addressed – sand still has to be replenished
- Traffic issues still in play

John Rendler

Cons:

- City would open themselves to serious liability issues if the dune is open after dark. Due to safety issues, the dune hours should be changed to closed at dusk.

Bill Francini

Cons:

- Changing the hours does not address the number of people and overuse of the dune

Gerry O'Connor

Cons:

- Dune overuse will shift to remaining open hours and possibly worsen

Gary Osterhout

Cons:

- Workout facility still incompatible with concept of neighborhood park
- Ratifies the use of the park as a workout facility
- Friction between those that want to use it as a park and those that want to use it as a workout facility
- If the dune is closed seasonally, it will be difficult to adjust to a neighborhood park again
- To be workable, it will have to be open year round, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., which will be intolerable to the neighborhood

Faith Lyons

Cons:

- Still have all the environmental impact on neighborhood

Jane Tournat

Cons:

- Change of hours is not a solution

Mr. Gill reported that the Parks and Recreation Commission will be meeting jointly with the P.P.I.C. on Thursday, January 7, 6:30 p.m. At that time, both commissions will discuss each of their operational issues and then forward this information to the City Council at either their last meeting in January or their first meeting in February.

Dennis White suggested that the City Council will need cost estimates of all the dune options discussed in order to weigh the pros and cons.

COMMISSION ITEMS

Commissioner Harris reported that the subcommittee to discuss the 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 has met twice and will report to the Commission at the December 14, 2009 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting. Commissioner Gill reported that A.Y.S.O. has donated \$3,000 for preliminary designs.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m. to Monday, December 14, 2009.

PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

NOVEMBER 16, 2009

Gerry O'Connor
Nancy Dirado
Kathleen Spilten
Victoria Peters
Mark Kemple
Bill Hory
Dexter Taylor
Dennis White
Maryann Fragner
Jeff Vignette
Denise M.
Richard Lopez
Rosemary Gray
Gary Osterhout
Bill Francini
Cindy Berkhalter
Denise Mazzota

David Wachtfogel
Patricia Ware
Markus Mack
Robert Hess
Bob Vargo
Faith Lyons
Sandy Francini
Jane Tournat
Debbie Phillips
Brent Denrie
Jerry Hankins
Steve Snivley
Don Trucker
Jacob Rome
Kim Riley
Steve Snively
John Rendler