

San Rafael Park and Recreation Commission

Meeting Minutes: September 19, 2013

Vice Chair Eric Holm called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. at the San Rafael Community Center.

Roll Call: Commissioners: Mark Bustillos, John Gamblin, Eric Holm, Jeff Jones, Mark Machado, Ralph Mihan, Chair, Tom Obletz, Commissioners, Patricia Bassett, Alternate

Commissioners Present: Bustillos, Gamblin, Jones, Holm, Machado, Obletz, Basset

Commissioners Absent: Mihan

Staff Present: Director Carlene McCart, Dave Davenport, Parks Superintendent, Kelly Albrecht, Senior Recreation Supervisor, Child Care

The Commission extended condolences to Ms McCart on the recent passing of her husband, Thomas S. McCart, Jr.

1. Action Items

A. Report on Child Care Division

Director McCart introduced Kelly Albrecht, Senior Recreation Supervisor and long time employee of the City of San Rafael, Child Care Division under the Community Services Department. Ms. Albrecht described the scope of service of the 30-year-old Child Care Program that offers both California State Licensed pre-school and school-age programs at eight sites throughout San Rafael, staffed by 42 full time and 12 part time employees. The program serves 1400 students and 1250 families annually.

Current issues impacting Child Care are the:

- projected 5 year increase in the kindergarten enrollment in both San Rafael City and Dixie School Districts. All but one Center is currently full with waiting lists. One Center was expanded to accommodate an additional 20 students for a total enrollment of 115.
- loss of Latch Key funding from the State of California that subsidized school age program fees for low income families
- reduction in State Pre School and Federal Community Block Grant funding to subsidize pre school fees for low income families

At the conclusion of her remarks the Commission asked the following questions:

Are there plans to expand additional Centers to meet the need? Expansion requires an amended License and additional square footage of interior space to accommodate more students. Hiring qualified employees is also a challenge. The Department will expand where it is feasible to do so.

The Department is also considering a new model for summer programming that will expand capacity to serve families.

Is the program profitable? The program was designed to be self sufficient through user fees. With the increase in staff costs, medical and pension costs, primarily, the economic recession, and the loss of subsidy from the State, Federal governments, the program has been short of this goal four of the last five years, funding itself by approximately 95%. By expanding Centers, the gap will narrow. The City Council will study the issues to determine the most prudent fiscal course of action in the future.

Fees are typically increased each school year. Full day fees are set currently at \$22 per day. Novato charges 19 and Corte Madera, \$23. School year fees are set for half day. In addition to user fees, the City receives approximately \$147,000 from outside sources to subsidize low income families enrolled in the pre school programs.

What is the scope of the Pre School Program? Parkside Children's Center is licensed for 50 pre school students, attending full day ages 3-5 years and is currently full. Pickleweed Children's Center has four half day preschool classes serving 68 students.

What are the Licensing parameters? The State of California requires that licensed child care programs have prescribed, appropriate and safe facilities, ratios of no more than 1:14 staff/student (San Rafael maintains a 1:12 ratio), minimum requirements for employees, program standards, hours of operation, etc. Inspections are conducted at least annually, as are audits.

How is billing and fee collection accomplished? One bookkeeper manages all fee collection amounting to \$3.5 mil. annually. Families are billed monthly in advance, and not allowed to continue to attend programs if in arrears of payment. Payments are accepted in bank automatic transfers or by credit card or check. No cash is accepted.

After discussion, the Commission commended Albrecht on the continued success of the Child Care Program.

B. Report on KOSS Committee (Keep Our Open Space Safe)

McCart reported that as a part of the City strategy to address the safety of its Open Space Lands this cross department committee was recently formulated to coordinate efforts to alleviate fire potential and other safety concerns. Representatives of Fire, Police, Public Works, Management Services, Community Services, and Economic Development meet monthly to review incidents, responses, pro active approaches and to discuss strategies. One key issue is the illegal camping that occurs in the open spaces primarily above Gerstle Park and on Dollar Hill adjacent to the Downtown corridor. Increased Ranger services, contractual removal of brush and debris in and around suspected camps, vegetation management, renewed urban/wild land interface fire prevention, increased signage activities are some of the methods employed to reduce the risks. Both McCart and Superintendent Davenport serve on the KOSS Committee.

Commissioner Bustillos inquired about the impact of these efforts on the Downtown Corridor. Staff responded affirmatively to an increase in homeless presence in the Downtown.

Commissioner Basset concurred that she observes more individuals at night in the Downtown.

Bustillos noted he feels an aggressive pressure from homeless individuals and does not go Downtown in the evening hours.

McCart explained the contract with Barbier Security to patrol Falkirk Cultural Center grounds both day and evening hours to prevent camping or loitering on the premises, in addition to presence during private rental events. The security patrols will continue through the Fall and resume in the Spring.

Commissioner Holm concurred that the presence of young people with aggressive dogs intimidates the public in the Downtown parks and other public places. He was bitten by one such dog at 4th and A Streets recently.

He went on to describe the existing seasonal shelter program, REST and the most recent homeless census that concluded 1200 individuals are un-housed in Marin County.

C. Report on Downtown Landscape Improvements

Davenport reported that in response to the Downtown Improvement Committee appointed by the City Council, the Parks Division has experimented with new and upgraded landscape treatments at the Fourth Street intersections. Upon inspection only three had viable irrigation, at A, C and Lootens Avenue. Tree roots have damaged the other locations to the point there is no water source to support new landscape. Davenport designed installation of carpet roses and other species and will evaluate the success of the treatments in late Spring. Meanwhile other issues with interloping on City electrical outlets, seat wall integrity and safety in and around the intersections are under review.

2. Commission Business

A. Director's Report

McCart reported the Department welcomed Nick Stone, Youth Services Coordinator. Stone comes from a professional background at the Marin YMCA and is a resident of San Anselmo. His is a new position created to increase youth serving programs as the result of the Department reorganization. Lidia Que has also joined the Department as Administrative Assistant II replacing the departed Andrea Gilles. The Terra Linda Community Pool season has been extended by three weeks to meet demand for service. Staff will meet with San Rafael Pacifics management to review the second season. A letter was received by the Los Ranchitos HOA complaining about landscape maintenance in the neighborhood park. Davenport will respond. An email request for a Pickleball court installation at Boyd Park was received. McCart will respond that the existing tennis court is closed for safety reasons, and cannot be used for another sport at this time.

B. Falkirk Report

McCart reported on the Annual Art Auction, and a new renter of the second floor office space.

C. Parks Report

Davenport reported the annual cycle of landscape pruning has concluded. The Terra Linda Community Pool will be refilled the first week of October, Storm related preparations are underway by the Parks Division. 30 trees will be planted to replace those removed this year. Crews are preparing Downtown landscape for the Mill Valley Film Festival. The Downtown Streets Team is contributing to the improvements in the area. On suggestion, he will request they address stickers on street poles as feasible.

Bustillos inquired about volunteer efforts to remove Scotch Broom. Davenport relayed several volunteer groups coordinate with the City to remove the non native invasive plant. Seasonal removal is most effective.

Commissioner Oblatz inquired about City response to graffiti removal. Davenport replied that since the elimination of the position assigned to this function, removal is slow to occur, and not the highest priority for Public Works crews.

D. Report from Committees

There were no reports.

E. Approval of Meeting Minutes, June 20, 2013 and July 18, 2013

M/s Bustillos/Obletz to approve

AYES:	Bustillos, Gamblin, Jones, Holm, Machado, Obletz, Basset
NOES:	None
ABSENT:	Mihan

3. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.