

CITY OF PETALUMA
RECREATION, MUSIC AND PARKS COMMISSION
MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

Wednesday, January 16, 2002

*Petaluma Community Center
320 North McDowell Blvd.*

7:00 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Hagen, Mobley, McCoy, Ramirez, Tarr

Commissioners Absent: Kates*, Ramirez

Staff Present: Jim Carr, Director of Parks and Recreation
Ed Anchordoguy, Parks and Landscape Manager
Don Phoenix, Recreation Supervisor
Sara Stewart, Admin. Secty. Parks and Recreation

****Chair***

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Vice-Chair Ken McCoy welcomed Vice-Mayor Michael Healy as new City Council's representative to the Recreation, Music and Parks Commission.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – *November 28, 2001*

James Mobley moved that the minutes be accepted as submitted, seconded by Marja Tarr, unanimously approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

1) **A.J. Levis** – Commented on ways he believes one could build community.

PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – NONE

OLD BUSINESS -

1) **6-Month review of program to allow dogs off leash at Oak Hill Park.**

Carr – Following a number of public hearings and a lengthy review process, the Commission made a recommendation to the City Council to allow the lower Oak Hill Park area to continue to be used as an off-leash dog-exercise area and to adjust the weekend hours to allow use of the lower area for small parties or picnics. The City Council approved the Commission's recommendation and asked that the item be reviewed in six months to determine if any changes to the use policy are required.

Nancy Taveras from Animal Control has reported that there have been no problems regarding dogs. The only concern raised is that some local neighbors have been verbally abusing users of the lower section of the park. The Police Chief is not aware of any problems involving dogs but he will relay any concerns that his staff may have. From the Recreation staff's perspective, the program is working well.

1 Carr read a letter from Commissioner Elaine Ramirez who was absent from the meeting. In the letter, she
2 reports that she has been observing very carefully the weekend usage of the lower section of the park and
3 noticed very few picnickers or walkers. During the past three months, she has not seen anyone using the
4 lower section during the on-leash hours. She is aware of increasing vandalism in the lower meadow since
5 the restriction of the off-leash hours and incidents of verbal abuse towards users from a certain family
6 who lives adjacent to the park.

7
8 She supports reinstating the off-leash weekend hours at Oak Hill Park to the present weekday off-leash
9 hours. The dog-owner community of Oak Hill Park has demonstrated that they not only deserve to have
10 these hours, but their presence at the lower section is a positive influence on the park and the entire
11 neighborhood. She is also very strongly not in favor of any fencing or confinement area for off-leash
12 canine use.

13
14 The Commission has also received in their packets three additional letters of support for using the park for
15 off-leash use. Two of the letters are indicated incidences of verbal abuse from a local neighbor. There
16 were also three letters from people who are not in favor of continuing the program of allowing the dogs
17 off-leash in the lower section of the park.

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19 Carr reported that new signs approved by the City Council with rules and hours for dogs on and off-leash
20 have been placed in the upper and lower sections of the park in addition to a new marquee that has been
21 installed in the lower area. Along the west entry (upper area) to the park, bollards have been installed,
22 and the old barbecue has been filled in with concrete so that it can be used as a table.

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24 Staff recommends continuing the use of lower Oak Hill Park as a dog exercise area as the program
25 currently exists.

26
27 **Public Comment:** Nine neighbors of Oak Hill Park spoke on the issue. Six of them were in favor of
28 removing the restrictions for off-leash dogs on weekends and allowing no-leash restrictions from 6 a.m. to
29 10 p.m. seven days a week. In order to improve the situation, some of them suggested that staff do the
30 following:

- 31 • Empty trash cans more often than once a week.
- 32 • Move existing tables in the lower area to the upper area of the park.

33 People that were in favor of the issue talked about the social benefits of having a dog area and listed
34 improvements that have occurred in the park.

35
36 Three people spoke against the issue. Two of them presented concerns about dogs in the upper area and
37 feeling unsafe walking children through the park due to the presence of dogs.

38
39 A.J. Levis – 12 Parkside Terrace - Spoke against the issue and presented a number of concerns regarding
40 the adverse effects on the environment caused by the dog run area on the lower section of Oak Hill Park.
41 He suggested a 40' buffer zone around the perimeter of the park area designated for dogs off-leash.

42
43 Sheri Cardo from the Petaluma Animal Services Committee recommended that the Commission restore
44 the weekend hours at Oak Hill Park due to a shortage of parks in which to exercise dogs on the West side
45 of town.

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47 Ken McCoy opened the floor for Commissioner's Reports.

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49 There was a lengthy discussion about the issue and Commissioners requested the following:

- 50 • Reinforcing the fence between Parkside Street and the park to eliminate some conflicts.

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Ken McCoy – Encouraged the Commission to attend the meetings.

3) McNear Park Playground Status Report – Anchordoguy

Ed Anchordoguy – The project is almost completed except for the finishing touches. Next week, staff is planning to open the playground, even though the Rotary arch will not be constructed.

McCoy – Asked if a dedication ceremony is being planned.

Carr – The Rotary Club members are considering a dedication ceremony in the Spring, when the arch is finished. This is a great project.

4) Prioritization of Goals – Carr

This item was deferred until the February 20th meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

1) Proposal to Expand Dog Off-Leash Hours in Parks – Carr

Sheri Cardo from Petaluma Animal Services Committee (ASAC) reported that committee members have visited different parks in Petaluma, spoken with park users, neighbors, Animal Control staff, and consulted with Jim Carr, in order to develop recommendations for off-leash hours for the park systems. They observed that only people with dogs use the park in the winter time. She referred to the proposal included in the Commission’s packet and presented the following recommendations:

- Expanding park hours to allow increased off-leash dog use in the winter.
- Better signage about off-leash use at each location so ordinances can be enforced.
- A public relations campaign to educate residents about appropriate dog training and being under voice control.

Carr –Seven years ago, The Commission and staff worked with Sheri Cardo developing a schedule for an off leash program for the park system. From their observations, the presence of park users minimizes vandalism and illegal activities and so far has been a good program.

The proposed changes include the expansion of hours at sites where day use is minimal. For example, Animal Control officers recommended starting at 5 a.m. In any location where there are sports fields, times were only authorized for early morning hours to prevent any conflict with sporting activities.

Ken McCoy – Requested that staff take the proposal and develop a map showing existing and potential park locations, including some of the existing parks that do not have dog-leash hours. He suggested that the Commission deal with this issue in a workshop before scheduling a public hearing. In addition, he asked staff to place a field trip to Oak Hill Park on a future agenda.

Carr – Suggested that the Commission visit Oak Hill Park on a Saturday during the spring.

Michael Healy – Asked that staff indicate on a memo how close the near residences are to the proposed dog run areas and what the proximity is to playgrounds or playing fields.

1 Following discussion, it was the Commission’s consensus to schedule a workshop on February 20, 2002
2 from 6 to 8 p.m. and then continue with the regular meeting. Refreshments will be provided.

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4 **A.J. Levis** – Complained that by establishing an area and time for off-leash dog activity at Oak Hill Park,
5 the Commission was preventing joint use of the space. He questioned who or what the park is actually
6 serving?

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8 **Ken McCoy** – Suggested making a long-term decision so that the Commission does not have to revisit
9 this item every year.

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11 **Carr** – Announced that James Mobley has submitted his resignation and this would be his last meeting.
12 He suggested taking a 10-minute break for some cake and coffee.

13 14 **2) Rockridge Pointe Subdivision – Hagen**

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16 **Carr** – Referred to his memo and staff report included in the Commission’s packet and gave a
17 background of the project. Twice prior commissions discussed the Rockridge Point Subdivision under the
18 name of Varnhagen. The Planning Commission has recently rejected the project and it will go to the City
19 Council under appeal.

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21 Following discussion, Carr suggested that the Commission send a letter to the Planning Commission in
22 order to retain ownership of the open space or have easements to guarantee public access to this area.
23 He also recommended that all dedicated open space (parcels A,B, and D), common landscaping, and the
24 detention basin be maintained by the landscape assessment district.

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26 **Bruce Hagen** – Would like to have the opportunity to review this project again.

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28 **Carr** – Since the Planning Commission has rejected this project as proposed, there is no project to review.
29 The developer does have the option to appeal to the City Council.

30 31 **3) East Washington Creek - Hagen**

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33 **Carr** – The East Washington Creek Subdivision project was approved by the Planning Commission. The
34 Commission’s original recommendation of a bike path on both sides of East Washington Creek was
35 overruled by concerns raised by the Police Department as well as other departments.

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37 **Bruce Hagen** – Commented that he does not agree with Police Department recommendation.
38 He requested that in the future, new subdivisions be presented to this Commission for review so they can
39 consider the possibilities of park development.

40 41 **COMMISSIONERS REPORTS**

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43 **1) Michael Healy** – No report

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45 **2) Bruce Hagen** -

46 **a) Lafferty Park** – A large number of people from Petaluma and other cities walked to Lafferty Park
47 from downtown Petaluma - It was a great experience. He made a presentation to the Windsor Town
48 Council tonight, not as a Commissioner but as a citizen asking for their support on what the City of
49 Petaluma is trying to do on behalf of the County.

50 **b) Westridge Open Space** – The tree planting that was done along the creek looks good.

1 c) **Parking Garage** – A rollup door was installed in the proximity of the parking garage. He asked staff
2 to find out the reason for the door.

3
4 **3) Marja Tarr –**

5 a) **Lucchesi Park** – No report.

- 6 • Asked about the date when the irrigation project around the field will be completed.

7
8 **Ed Anchordoguy** – Outlined the plans for the project and said that due to weather conditions staff was
9 unable to work on it.

- 10
11 • Asked if there are any plans for reseeding soccer fields at Prince and Wiseman Parks.

12
13 **Ed Anchordoguy** – The contractor who maintains Wiseman will do some over-seeding and aeration of
14 the lawn. He is researching a slit seeder machine that has proven very successful in other cities.

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16 b) **Aquatic Board Meetings** – Attended two meetings.

17
18 **4) James Mobley –**

19 a) **Penry Park** – Looks attractive.

20 b) **Oak Hill Park** – Was pleased to see new signs being installed – Did not see any problems as far as
21 children or dogs. Noticed a small amount of litter in the picnic area on the upper area of the park.

22
23 **5) Ken McCoy –**

24 a) **Lucchesi Athletic Field** – Thanked staff for installing signs displaying the rules.

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26 **DIRECTOR'S REPORTS - *Jim Carr, Director of Parks and Recreation***

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28 **1) Polly Hannah Klaas Performing Arts Center** – Leadership Petaluma has raised about \$92,000 to-
29 date and is currently working with staff to raise additional funds to match the 265,000 the City has
30 budgeted for the project. Plans and specifications for the center renovation are almost finished. Former
31 Commissioner Steve Arago's employer, CSW Stuber/Straub, has donated \$55,500 worth of structural-
32 engineering work for the facility. The structural report will be submitted at the end of January.

33
34 **2) McNear Peninsula** – This morning, he toured McNear Peninsula with Jeff Peters from Questa
35 Engineering and a member of the Questa staff. City staff is trying to obtain matching funds for the \$2-
36 million dollar Open Space District Grant, as well as for other grants in order to develop the property. The
37 Commission will be involved in the masterplanning of that area. Questa Engineering is assisting with
38 submitting a Proposition 13 grant, to do some masterplanning and development of the 10 acres owned by
39 the City at the north end of the Peninsula.

40
41 **3) Budget** – As he mentioned before, there is a budget shortfall and tomorrow, all department heads will
42 be gathering off site to present the most critical role that the various departments have to offer. The
43 question to be answered is "What is it that is needed for the City to function and meet the needs of the
44 community?"

45
46 **4) Graffiti Removal Program** – Ed Cerar and seventy volunteers have been removing graffiti for two
47 and a half years throughout the community and are doing a great job. Staff nominated them to receive an
48 award at the annual banquet of the California Parks and Recreation Society on February 2, 2002. Carr
49 encouraged the Commission to attend.

1 **5) Gatti and Willow Glen Projects** – In the next two to three months, staff is going to proceed with the
2 masterplanning process of the Gatti and Willow Glen projects.

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4 **Ken McCoy** – Suggested that staff review the Commission park assignments at the next meeting.

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6 **ADJOURNMENT**

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8 Bruce Hagen moved that the meeting be adjourned at 11 p.m., seconded by Marsha Tarr, and
9 unanimously approved. He thanked James Mobley for his service to this Commission and the
10 community.

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