

**CITY OF PETALUMA**  
**RECREATION, MUSIC, AND PARKS COMMISSION**  
**MINUTES**

*Wednesday, February 16, 2005*  
*7:05 p.m.*

**REGULAR MEETING**

*Petaluma Community Center*  
*320 North McDowell Blvd.*  
*Meeting Rooms A-D*

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**ROLL CALL**

***Commissioners Present:*** Hagen, Kinsella\* Noriel, Ramirez, Tarr

***Commissioners Absent:*** Harris

***Staff Present:*** Carr, Anchordoguy, Phoenix, Stewart

**Chair\***

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** *January 19, 2005*

Page 2, Line 1 - Marja Tarr asked staff to change: As a *former* tennis player to: As a *former team* tennis player.

Bruce Hagen moved that the minutes be approved as amended, seconded by Elaine Ramirez, unanimously approved.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

1) Dave Libchitz, a member of Friends of Lafferty Park, showed a Channel 7 news video regarding Lafferty Park.

2) **Loretta Conway** - Development Director of the USTA (Northern Ca area) – Was invited by the Petaluma Tennis Association and a group that plays at Petaluma High School. USTA provides grants to help facilities build tennis courts. Most of their funding is obtained from the US Open. She has brochures available explaining what they do and why they get funding. She volunteered to help and provide the City with some resources.

**PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS - NONE**

**OLD BUSINESS**

**1. Commission Comment and Discussion about the February 8<sup>th</sup> Public Meeting regarding the proposed use of McNear Park by National Little League and proposed next step - Carr**

**Carr** – On February 8<sup>th</sup>, neighbors of McNear Park and City staff had a meeting at Cavanagh Recreation Center. Carr explained to the public present that the reason for the meeting was that the Kenilworth school site had been sold and the athletic fields used by National Little League, Pop Warner Football, and the Hispanic soccer groups will be lost. Staff is trying to find a home for

1 National Little League and the two possible options are: Petaluma Junior High School and McNear  
2 Park.

3  
4 Neighbors provided their input for 2-1/2 hours and about ninety five percent of the comments  
5 presented were concerns about the proposal. Carr indicated that according to the notes that staff took  
6 and the e-mails he received since the meeting, there are nine reoccurring key points:

- 7
- 8 1) Maintain the multi-use character of the park
- 9 2) Objections to fenced areas for the fields, especially the year-round fence for the major league field.
- 10 3) The proposed change of use of McNear Park would impact other current uses of the park (i.e.  
11 movies in the park, dog exercise, general play, Boys and Girls Club, soccer, community garden,  
12 high school baseball, etc.)
- 13 4) There will be an increase of cars coming into the neighborhood.
- 14 5) Parking spaces are limited now without the increased impacts.
- 15 6) The Petaluma School District should be involved in the discussions regarding a replacement field  
16 for Little League since they sold the Kenilworth property.
- 17 7) People objected to paving over any portion of the park to create parking.
- 18 8) The proposed change of use will adversely impact the quality of life of the McNear neighborhood.
- 19 9) Enthusiastic ball players, parents, etc. will lead to noise pollution within the neighborhood.
- 20

21 **John Kinsella** – Invited the neighbors to provide additional comments not mentioned at last meeting  
22 or to reinforce the current ones. He opened the floor for public comment:

23  
24 **1. Janice Cader-Thompson** - Does not feel that there is a lot of leadership in this community for  
25 sports activities for the youth and adults. She gave a background history of the events that happened at  
26 McNear park when she was a City Council member, and talked about the RESA project. She believes  
27 that staff can come up with a real solution - there is plenty of property in the flood plain. There are  
28 other communities that build community parks in the flood plain to meet the needs of the community.  
29 She opposes having little league at McNear Park because it is a neighborhood park.

30  
31 **2. Chris Irvin** – 857 G St. – Thinks that the City keeps on losing parks. He does not understand why  
32 the public did not hear about the proposal before. He wonders how the community is supposed to  
33 comment if they don't have details about the proposal. It is also a big question to have a private group  
34 on public land - It sets a bad precedent. He encouraged the neighborhood to keep fighting.

35  
36 **3. Jane Allard Allen** - 819 G St. –The Friends of McNear are going to fight to keep McNear Park as  
37 McNear Park. At present the park is a very active community park and she is afraid that if little league  
38 were to move to the park, it will really change the nature of the park. She opposes fences,  
39 advertisements, several games going on at one time from Thursday through Saturday, loud speakers  
40 announcing games, etc. Her concern is that Petaluma does not have enough parks. There is a need for  
41 McNear Park as well as for a little league park. It is not right for the City of Petaluma to play one  
42 community against the other. It is important for Petaluma to create new parks in non-residential areas.

43  
44 **4. Linda Kade** – 902 F Street – Feels that the nine points mentioned by Jim Carr are very inclusive,  
45 and does not believe that the number of people who will be displaced versus new people who will be  
46 served has yet been discussed. She volunteered her services to help the commission perform a study to  
47 put numbers together. What it comes down to is public versus private use. She thinks the multi-use  
48 nature of the park has to be respected.

49

1 **5. Marge Tuonette** – At the last meeting, she was not able to obtain the information about how much  
2 it would cost to reconfigure the McNear field, and who will be paying for that - She wonders if it  
3 would be the City tax payers. She asked if staff had explored the possibility of building athletic fields  
4 at the fairgrounds even as a temporary solution, and if the McNear Park proposal would be temporary  
5 or permanent.

6  
7 **Carr** – The fairgrounds site is owned by the City, although there is a long-term lease with the  
8 fairgrounds which expires in 2023. There has been discussions about relocating the fairgrounds so that  
9 the entire corridor can be renovated. To-date nothing has occurred among the entities.

10  
11 If little league were to relocate at McNear Park, staff estimates that it will cost about 1 million dollars  
12 to renovate the fields. Staff applied for three grants, and depending on the adopted field option, one  
13 would be to renovate McNear Park, and two to renovate Petaluma Junior High. Carr explained what  
14 would be involved to renovate both sites.

15  
16 If grants are not obtained, the fall back position would be to use park development fees generated from  
17 the Kenilworth project.

18  
19 **6. Sally Denman** – 404 6<sup>th</sup> St. – Opposes the plan. It bothers her that little league would not be  
20 sharing the park with the neighbors on temporary basis, but the neighbors would have to give up part  
21 of the park permanently. Regarding the grants mentioned by Jim Carr, she does not think that most of  
22 the grants are given out to ruin a park. They are given out to enhance and beautify parks.

23  
24 **7. Sharon Cepa** – 447 Pipestone Circle –She objects to the plan. McNear is a beloved park where she  
25 brought her children when they were small and has a lot of memories. If little league were to take over  
26 the park, she thinks it would be a huge loss. She thinks that the park is a jewel and also the  
27 neighborhood.

28  
29 **8. Brett Newell** – 637 E St. – Thanked Chair John Kinsella for his leadership and for helping out with  
30 the community garden. He is an environmental attorney and has a unique perspective - He noticed that  
31 the decision making process has been done without any assistance of an environmental review. He is  
32 concerned about traffic and intensification of use at the park. The City needs to provide the public and  
33 decision makers with that important information. He hopes that whatever recommendations the City  
34 makes, includes a full and appropriate environmental impact analysis.

35  
36 **9. Lynn King** – 835 6<sup>th</sup> Street – Her biggest problem with this idea is that she has daughters and little  
37 league does not allow girls to play in the teams. She feels it is discriminatory – She asked if the City is  
38 planning to spend the same amount of money for girls sports as they do for boys sports.

39  
40 **10. Kevin McDonnell** – 311 Howard St. – PYSL President – All of the athletic organizations are in  
41 need for more field space in town. PYSL has 3,000 players in their program. Five hundred of those  
42 players play during December and January. One hundred kids play at Lucchesi in January. He thanked  
43 staff for the synthetic turf at Lucchesi Park. He understands that little league needs a solution right  
44 now, but soccer needs McNear and other spaces as well. His main point is that decisions are very  
45 difficult under such pressure and constraints. There needs to be a plan and opportunity to do the right  
46 things like staff did at Lucchesi. The City needs to create more spaces like that for the critical field  
47 needs.

48

- 1 **11. Julie Morgan** – 10<sup>th</sup> St. – Enjoys walking around the park and the watching the activities that take  
2 place. The park is a gem and the City of Petaluma has to preserve it. She opposes the plans to divide  
3 the park and presented concerns about traffic, visibility, and the parking lot. She believes that there are  
4 so many other ways of getting the needs met.  
5
- 6 **12. Geri Olson** – 1011 G St – Nobody has ever asked the neighbors to raise money, to be part of the  
7 solution, or to be visionaries. She does not think that the neighbors can raise a million dollars, but  
8 people can raise at least \$200,000. She will be willing to donate things to help the neighborhood. She  
9 has concerns about discrimination. McNear will become a boys park and many girls would be  
10 displaced - this is a legal concern. She wants somebody to inform the neighbors what was the original  
11 idea for the park. Since she loves sports, she wants to support sports in this town. Although, she  
12 would like to preserve McNear as a historic piece of Petaluma.  
13
- 14 **13. Theresa Behr** – She is a member of the Planning Commission and a liaison of the Architectural  
15 Review Committee which has seen a preliminary review of the proposed Kenilworth site project.  
16 When the project was being reviewed, they thought that it was the developer’s responsibility to  
17 relocate the fields, since they are the ones that would be taking the land from the Petaluma community.  
18 She is sympathetic to the little league and neighbors needs. She thinks that the developer needs to step  
19 up to the plate and provide something for the community. She likes Mr. Hagen’s suggestion regarding  
20 building playing fields on the outlet mall location, and thinks that the developers need to pay for that.  
21
- 22 **14. Tim Connor** – 302 9<sup>th</sup> St. – It seems to him that this whole push is about convenience. Little  
23 league has always been on the east side. He does not understand the reason for the big push for the  
24 west side when everybody knows how difficult it is. His suggestion is to follow the old junior high  
25 school to the new site. Giving complete control of a public facility to private people, seems criminal to  
26 him. He likes little league, he played it himself. When his American Little League site was sold, it  
27 was relocated to a dairy and the City had nothing to do with it.  
28
- 29 **15. Connie Falck** – 131 Magnolia Ave. – She is with the community garden and works for the Boys  
30 and Girls Club at the Cavanagh Center - It makes her feel good that the kids are connected to the  
31 garden. She presented concerns about the proposed parking lot and the possibility of creating extra  
32 work for the police due to young people drinking and vandalism. She thinks that kids should be  
33 playing baseball in a field somewhere. She enjoys seeing dogs out in the field and does not want all of  
34 these activities taken away.  
35
- 36 **16. Jeff Weitzenberg** – 912 F St. – Presented concerns about having many more people at the park  
37 coming to watch the games and the increased amount of traffic. He has two young boys and a dog and  
38 he is concerned about the amount of cars on the road and the potential of his boys walking out there.  
39 After hearing about the proposal, he and his wife are considering moving. He bought the house  
40 because his family loves the park, and not because he wants to be across the street from a little league  
41 park. He likes little league, but McNear is not the place for it.  
42
- 43 **17. Kristen Greer** – 518 8<sup>th</sup> St. – She does not support little league being at McNear Park and  
44 believes that this is a park that the City should be emulating and not destroying. She presented  
45 concerns about traffic and displacement of park users, and asked to help little league find another  
46 adequate place. She is in full support of another solution and would like to be part of the solution.  
47
- 48 **18. Sue Jusaitis** – 315 7<sup>th</sup> St. – She picked her house in this particular neighborhood because she  
49 enjoys living there and is able to walk downtown. She worked for a City in another County, so she

1 knows a little bit about the planning process. The neighborhood is completely built up and there is no  
2 room for growth. She presented concerns about parking, increased amount of traffic and people and  
3 indicated that the streets need repaving. McNear is a beautiful little park, but she does not think that it  
4 can handle any more than it already has.  
5

6 **19. George Rousseau** – 310 12<sup>th</sup> St. – He sees the McNear Park proposal as a temporary solution. He  
7 suggested that staff also consider as a temporary solution using three elementary schools with ball  
8 fields such as McNear, Grant, and Valley Vista plus other schools - That would eliminate the traffic  
9 jam.  
10

11 **20. Dan McBeen** – 849 G St. – Has a legitimate addition to the list; his concern is noise pollution -  
12 When you have little league, what you get is enthusiasm from parents, kids, and relatives. The positive  
13 energy is great and appropriate to little league parents. Everybody gets excited, yells and then goes  
14 home. But the people that live there will hear that noise hour after hour for days and weekends. Noise  
15 pollution is going to be a constant issue for this kind of activity in the park.  
16

17 **21. Mildred King** – 929 G St. – She was born before the park was born, grew up with the park, and  
18 absolutely loves it. She gave a background history of McNear Park.  
19

20 **22. Voorhees Mount** – 900 F St. – He was a Parks and Recreation Commissioner for 8 years, during  
21 which time he worked with other Commissioners on the Kenilworth Master Plan trying to develop a  
22 plan which would include all user groups and make it so attractive to the community that no one would  
23 consider getting rid of it – but, it did not work. At the last minute, staff is trying to find a place for one  
24 of the user groups, and he tried to prevent this from happening. He shares the concerns of his fellow  
25 neighbors and thinks that the proposal is inappropriate. He does not like the impact on the  
26 neighborhood. He urged the neighbors to deny the proposal and not to consider a temporary fix.  
27

28 **23. Mary Ann Hanson** – F St. – She is appalled about the development that is going on in the City,  
29 especially the one taking over the ball parks. She supports little league but also shares the belief that it  
30 will be illegal for little league to take over the community park.  
31

32 **24. Stefan Gutermuth** – 120 8<sup>th</sup> St. – He and his family would not be affected because they don't live  
33 immediately in front of the park. With all the development going on in Petaluma, the neighbors are  
34 losing irreplaceable resources such as McNear Park. The park is an exceptional space which people  
35 need to use to release the increasing pressure of urbanization in Petaluma.  
36

37 **25. Susan Ross** – 311 6<sup>th</sup> St. - Little league will be displacing kids that probably do not have any  
38 money. There are fees charged to participate in little league, so this is an exclusionary activity. She  
39 worries about what is going to happen to those kids who cannot afford to be part of a privatized  
40 organization.  
41

42 **26. David Rabitt** – 428 8<sup>th</sup> St. – Executive Vice-President of the Petaluma National Little League -  
43 Stated that little league is a non-profit organization and is not exclusionary No one is rejected on the  
44 basis of not being able to pay. All they require is \$100 per child.  
45 There are three little leagues in Petaluma. American is by far the largest group with 220 players this  
46 year. He thought that his neighbors would be opened to the idea of little league relocating to the park  
47 but he is disheartened about neighbors comments. The organization is asking the neighbors to consider  
48 the facts. He believes that the little league would not be conflicting with the activities that exist in the  
49 park. Why does it have to be a roadblock? Why can't this be an opportunity?

1 **27. Kurt Giestro** – He is the head coach for the softball team at Petaluma High School. One of the  
2 PJHS’s teams plays at McNear and also, the JV, soccer, and Saint Vincent’s boys teams and they never  
3 had a problem before. His biggest concern is if they take away McNear from the schools, where are  
4 they going to play? He is also concerned about where the little league kids are going to play when they  
5 are in high school, since there are no fields.

6 This town has grown six-fold since he moved to Petaluma in 1960. The only fields that have been built  
7 are the little league fields and Prince Park. This town needs athletics, kids need to be kept off the  
8 streets - Everybody needs to cooperate.  
9

10 **28. Chantal Rogers** - 823 G St. – Commented that the Carter baseball fields are very attractive - It is  
11 a real pristine area where to play baseball. If that is superimposed at McNear park, there would be an  
12 entirely different scenario. She presented concerns about noise and amount of people if little league  
13 were to establish their home at McNear Park. She also presented concerns about the possibility of  
14 needing lights if the practices take place in the evenings. She is fearful that in the future all she is  
15 going to see when she looks out her window is going to be baseball.  
16

17 John Kinsella opened the floor for Commissioners comments:  
18

19 **1. Joe Noriel** – Thanked the neighbors for attending the meeting and Jim Carr for being an  
20 exceptional resource for the community. He believes that it is very important to respect the issues with  
21 the neighbors and that staff considers Petaluma Junior High School and the Chelsea property as  
22 potential locations for the fields.  
23

24 **2. Bruce Hagen** – Was a Recreation Commissioner when the plan for Kenilworth was developed. He  
25 expressed appreciation for the community efforts to try to make the City a better place. The public has  
26 heard discussions on the use of Chelsea property (Parcels B and C) adjacent to the factory outlet. He  
27 does not support moving little league to McNear Park; although, he will not let little league go high  
28 and dry for a couple of years without having a season. He thinks that there is a better alternative - Staff  
29 will find a place.  
30

31 There is an opportunity in the Chelsea property to provide fields that everybody needs. The area will  
32 be served by the Petaluma river trail which is part of the river plan. Mr. Hagen expressed a desire to  
33 talk with people after the meeting to discuss the Corona Reach area. On March 18, the City Council  
34 will be having a meeting regarding the Chelsea property and will be giving direction to the City  
35 Manager, who is going to be negotiating with the Chelsea property owner.  
36

37 **3. Elaine Ramirez** – Thanked the public for participating in the process and for attending the meeting.  
38 In regards to McNear Park, she heard very valid concerns. She wants little league to go into a  
39 community that is more welcoming of their organization. Because of all of the people’s comments and  
40 issues raised, right now, she does not feel comfortable with McNear for National Little League.  
41

42 She thinks that Petaluma Junior High needs to be considered as a possible site for National Little  
43 League. She hopes that people don’t leave the room thinking that after voicing their concerns, they are  
44 done. She asked people to help staff find Little League a home.  
45

46 **4. Marja Tarr** – Thanked the public for providing their input. Staff has received numerous e-mails  
47 and phone calls; very concerned people about a very concerning problem. She indicated that she has  
48 raised her children at McNear park. She has also visited the park on a multitude of occasions. As a  
49 Commissioner, she is in charge on watching the park and reporting about issues concerning the park.

1 After consideration, she opposes moving little league to McNear Park. She would like to have a public  
2 hearing at Petaluma Junior High School. She encouraged people to put pressure on the City Council to  
3 see if we can come up with solutions regarding the Chelsea property. She does not want a temporary  
4 fix for National, she wants a permanent fix.  
5

6 **5. John Kinsella** – Appreciates and respects this process. There was an original proposal and staff  
7 wanted to solicit the community’s input and they received it. As a Parks and Recreation  
8 Commissioner he has to consider the needs of the entire community and try to figure out what is the  
9 best thing for everyone. In reflecting on the McNear Park proposal, he does not think that the proposal  
10 is the right one for the entire community.  
11

12 His proposal would be:

- 13 · To convene a public meeting with the Petaluma Junior High School  
14 neighborhood to discuss what would make the situation work.
- 15 · To attend a City Council meeting on February 28 to work with Council to  
16 consider the purchase of the Chelsea property.
- 17 · To create a sub-committee with members that represent all different sides of this  
18 issue, to come up with a long-term solution.  
19

20 Joe Noriel moved that the Commission recommends that staff not pursue the current proposal as a  
21 viable option for National Little League to use McNear Park. The motion was seconded by Bruce  
22 Hagen, unanimously approved.  
23

24 John Kinsella explained to the neighborhood that the Commission’s recommendation will be presented  
25 to the City Council and they will chose to act on it as they see fit.  
26

## 27 **2. Update regarding replacement of the Petaluma Swim Center - Carr**

28

29 **Carr** – The Petaluma swimming pool is another element of the Kenilworth site. At the meeting of  
30 January 25, NTDSTICHLER consultants were proposing recommended locations and options for the  
31 replacement of the swim center. They have identified two sites as the most viable options: Lucchesi  
32 Park and the existing pool location.  
33

34 Regarding the Lucchesi Park site, four site plan options were presented (attached), with prices ranging  
35 from \$8 million to \$16 million. Carr asked the consultants to keep the option of the existing swim  
36 center location opened, in case Regency is not willing to pay for the costs. Currently, the consultants  
37 are developing operational costs and revenue streams for a new swim center. The information will be  
38 presented to the Commission.  
39

40 To replace the existing pool at Lucchesi, it will cost \$8 million and \$10 to \$13 million to include the  
41 Boys and Girls Club. The question is where is the money going to come from. The City Council and  
42 City Manager are involved in negotiations with the Regency developers. Carr indicated that different  
43 options are being explored.  
44

## 45 **3. Set tour of McNear Peninsula regarding the proposal to create an Interpretative** 46 **Center/Museum**

47

48 It was the general consensus of the Commission to set up a tour of the McNear Peninsula on April 20<sup>th</sup>  
49 at 5:30 p.m. before the regular Commission Meeting. Cold cuts will be provided.

1 Further, it was agreed that the public hearing for Petaluma Junior High School site be tentatively  
2 scheduled on March 15 at 7 p.m. (Location to be determined).

3

4 **NEW BUSINESS**

5

6 **1. Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility/Marsh Access – Margaret Orr**

7

8 Margaret Orr of the City’s Water Resource and Conservation Department presented the Ellis Creek  
9 Water Recycling Facility proposal.

10 · The proposed project will be built on 262 acres at 4104 Lakeville Highway between Dredge Disposal  
11 site Park and the City’s oxidation ponds.

12 · Will treat two billion gallons of wastewater annually with enough capacity to serve Petaluma for 50  
13 years.

14 · Treated wastewater will be used to irrigate city parks and sports fields, saving potable water now  
15 used for that purpose.

16 · Will cost between \$118 million and \$130 million.

17 · Construction will start this summer and finish in 2008.

18 The access plan is under the design of Patricia Johanson, a renowned environmental architect involved  
19 with wetland areas.

20

21 **2. Set Public Meeting for the Mannion Knoll Park Project - Carr**

22

23 It was the general consensus of the Commission to set up the Mannion Knoll Park Public Hearing on  
24 March 30<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m. – (Location to be determined).

25

26 **3. Commission Assignments**

27 a. Park/Facilities Watch Program

28 b. Committees

29 This item was postponed until the next meeting.

30

31 **COMMISSIONERS REPORTS - NONE**

32

33 **DIRECTOR’S REPORTS – *Jim Carr, Director of Parks and Recreation***

34

35 **1. Gatti Park** – The project is proceeding.

36

37 **2. Senior Center** – A grand opening has been scheduled in April - The project is progressing and it  
38 looks very attractive. .

39

40 **ADJOURNMENT**

41

42 Marja Tarr moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:30 p.m.

43

44