

CITY OF PETALUMA
RECREATION, MUSIC AND PARKS COMMISSION
MINUTES

WORKSHOP

*Petaluma Community Center
320 North McDowell Blvd.*

Wednesday, February 20, 2002

6:00 p.m.

Commissioners Present:

Hagen, Healy, Kates*, McCoy, Ramirez, Tarr

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***

1) Proposal to Expand Dog Off-Leash Hours in Park

Carr – Referred to the proposal the Commission received last month from the Animal Services Advisory Committee. The only change that Carr and Sheri Cardo recommended is not deviating from the 6 a.m. opening of the parks per City of Petaluma ordinance. Included in the Commission packet was a site plan, which reflects parks and open space within the City, which are currently used as a dog run areas, and a description of park locations, size, and home proximity.

A letter has been distributed tonight from Mrs. Theresa Mahoney, who takes her children to Oak Hill Park on weekends. She is concerned that there is an interest to take away from the children of Petaluma the time frame from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. designated for families and picnickers, to allow off-leash dogs to run in the lower section of the park.

Carr gave a background history of the dogs off-leash program and commented that the program has been successful. The proposal being presented is to expand the hours in the parks listed. The Commission has already approved the expansion of hours at Prince Park, primarily because there is no use there until about 3 p.m.

If the Commission recommends expanding the hours to exercise dogs in different parks, his suggestion is to have a public hearing. Notify the people that live in the vicinity to attend the hearing, present the proposal, and obtain some feedback, so that the Commission can make a formal recommendation to the City Council. Another option is to leave the hours as they currently exist or make changes as recommended tonight.

Carr asked for Commissioners' comments.

Ken McCoy – In addition to the hours, he would like the Commission to address possible sites that can be designated to exercise dogs.

Dwayne Meredith from Animal Control, suggested possible sites that have natural drainage, such as areas close to creeks, a place on Maria behind Mervyns, Ely Blvd. South, and Westridge areas.

Michael Healy – Presented concerns about the problem of dog waste in the parks. Staff should be encouraging better use of public parks by dog owners - There needs to be a more aggressive campaign around that. He suggested having larger garbage cans and more bag dispensers available for public use. He is not particularly interested in revisiting or extending Oak Hill Park hours.

A.J. Levis, 12 Parkside Terrace – Believes that dogs off leash impact other uses of the park. He suggested that voice control be defined, and areas in all parks be clearly marked. Presented concerns about the conditions of the drinking fountain at Oak Hill Park and the area underneath the oak trees. He asked that the hours be increased at Rocky Dog Park.

Carr – The dog program has been in effect for 8 years, and with the addition of Ed Anchordoguy and additional park maintenance staff, the condition of the turf in the City parks is the best it has ever been.

Elaine Ramirez – Suggested that the Commission consider the City Hall lawn and the Marina area for dogs off leash. She wholeheartedly supports all the hours Sheri Cardo has recommended for all the parks, including Oak Hill Park.

Marja Tarr – Would like to see more consistent hours to run off leash dogs in all parks so that they are not confusing for dog owners. She asked that the Commission consider allowing some time after school in neighborhood parks where dogs must be on leash.

Ken McCoy – Agreed with Marja about the uniformity of hours in all parks, and suggested that staff include some wording on the signs regarding courtesy rules.

Mike Healy – Asked that the Commission consider both of Marja's suggestions.

It was the general consensus of the Commission to recommend that Jim Carr and Sheri Cardo work together to refine the proposal as follows:

- ◆ Make the hours more consistent
- ◆ Add a public awareness component to the proposal and take steps to ensure that the campaign addresses the Commission's concerns.
- ◆ Present some suggestions addressing signage

Ken McCoy – Suggested that the Commission make a decision about the hours proposed for Oak Hill Park.

Following discussion it was the Commission recommendation to keep the hours that the City Council approved.

Sheri Cardo – At the last meeting, there was a long discussion about Oak Hill Park and winter hours. The Commission decided that the hours will change at the break of day light savings time. She asked when is this going to take effect.

Carr – Most likely next year, because it will have to be presented to the City Council for approval. He said that at the next meeting he will be presenting a proposal to the Commission before scheduling a public meeting and forwarding a recommendation to the City Council.

There was a 5-minute break before the regular meeting.

