



## **Staff Report**

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### DISCUSSION AND DIRECTION REGARDING DONATION OF AN ELECTRONIC READER BOARD FROM THE BELMONT ROTARY CLUB

Honorable Mayor and Council Members:

#### **Summary**

The Belmont Rotary Club is proposing the donation of an electronic reader board to the City for installation in Twin Pines Park. The donated reader board would replace the existing board in the park at the intersection of Ralston Avenue and South Road. Staff is seeking direction from Council regarding: 1) the acceptance of the reader board for this location and 2) if Planning fees will be paid for by the City or Rotary Club for processing of the design review and variance applications.

#### **Background**

In September of last year the Belmont Rotary Club requested the Council express its interest in accepting the donation of an electronic reader board for community use prior to the Rotary Club pursuing the purchase and installation of the reader board.

The consensus of the Council was to have the proposal reviewed by the Parks & Recreation and Planning Commissions prior to City acceptance.

At their meeting on December 1, 2004 the Parks & Recreation Commission discussed the proposal and reviewed options for the placement of the reader board at six locations along Ralston Avenue. After consideration the Commission voted to recommend a location at the southeast corner of Ralston Avenue and Hiller Street (Location "F" on Exhibit "C"). The Commission recommended location "A" on Exhibit "C" as a backup location if the site at Ralston and Hiller presented a problem.

Subsequent to the December meeting the Rotary Club requested the Commission consider an alternate location for the reader board at Twin Pines Park. The Rotary Club was concerned that the recommended location at the corner of Ralston Avenue and Hiller Street was not a favorable location for three reasons:

- 1) Vehicles passing the sign at that location are traveling at a high rate of speed, thereby making reading the messages difficult,

- 2) The location is at the entry of the Homeview Neighborhood, and
- 3) The cost to install the sign at the location would require the additional expense of providing electrical power.

At their meeting on March 2, 2005 the Parks & Recreation Commission reviewed the Rotary Club's request to replace the existing reader board at Twin Pines Park with the new electronic reader board. The request involves replacing only the existing four foot by eight foot message board. The existing support structure and City of Belmont sign would remain.

The Commission voted to recommend that the proposed reader board be placed on the existing sign structure in Twin Pines Park with the conditions that the new board be lowered slightly, replacing a "Rotary Club of Belmont" sign with two small Rotary logos and removing the "City Council meets 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays" sign.

The attached exhibits demonstrate the appearance of the existing board (Exhibit "A") and the proposed electronic board (Exhibit "B"). The lettering on the proposed board appears darker due to the fact that the sample was created with red letters. If the new reader board is approved the letters will be white. Also, the existing board is externally illuminated while the proposed board is internally illuminated.

The Planning Commission did not review the proposal since it will be acting in a regulatory capacity for the design review and variance for the project if Council approves the location and directs staff to proceed with an application to the Planning Commission.

### **Discussion**

The Parks & Recreation Commission recommended the City accept the reader board and placement of the reader board at Twin Pines Park for the following reasons:

- It allows for multiple messages to be displayed,
- It allows for rapid updating or changing of messages,
- The reader board will be controlled by a wireless system from the Parks & Recreation office. This eliminates the cost of having Parks & Recreation staff manually change the messages,
- The location at the controlled intersection allows for citizens to view the reader board messages more easily since vehicles must slow and stop, and
- The proposed reader board is the same size as the existing reader board.

Since the proposed location for the new reader board is within Twin Pines Park (and not in City right-of-way) the reader board proposal requires design review and a variance. Design review is required by the zoning code and if the reader board is placed in the proposed location it needs a variance for a freestanding sign with off-site advertising. An internally illuminated reader board is considered an 'animated sign' and the use of the Rotary logo would constitute off-site signage.

As the owner of the property, the Council is requested to provide direction to staff as to the appropriateness of the reader board design and proposed location. Staff is also requesting Council direction as to how the fees for design review and a variance will be covered. Design review fees are \$2,300 and variance application fees are \$3,100. Options for payment of the fees include having the City (through Parks & Recreation) pay the fees or having the Rotary Club include the payment as a part of the donation. The Rotary Club has indicated it will bear all costs for the purchase and labor to install the reader board.

**Fiscal Impact**

There is no fiscal impact related to this item unless the Council directs the City to pay the planning fees.

**Public Contact**

Standard posting and notification of the agenda. The Rotary Club was also notified of the meeting.

**Recommendation**

It is recommended that Council discuss the item and provide direction regarding the proposed location of the reader board and how the planning fees will be covered.

**Alternatives**

1. Refer back to staff and/or the Park & Recreation Commission for additional study.
2. Select a different location for the reader board.
3. Decline the donation.

**Attachments**

1. Exhibit A – Existing Reader Board
2. Exhibit B – Proposed Reader Board
3. Exhibit C – Locations Considered by Park & Recreation Commission in December

Respectfully submitted,

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Director of Parks & Recreation

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Interim City Manager