



**PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Minutes of Regular Meeting of May 6, 2020
City Council Chambers, One Twin Pines Lane, Belmont, CA**

CALL TO ORDER: 7:08 PM.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Cotten, Foehr, Fox, Kapur, Lee, Lyford, Michaels, Mittelstadt, Sanders
(Note: Per Governor's Executive Order N-25-20 issued March 12, 2020, all Commissioners participated remotely.)

Staff Present: Parks and Recreation Director Shearer, Administrative Assistant Clark, Recreation Supervisor Michael Moran (Note: Clark and Moran participated remotely.)

INTRODUCTION

Director Shearer reviewed changes to meeting procedures in the virtual format and welcomed new Commissioners Lee and Kapur.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Led by Chair Michaels

COMMUNITY FORUM (Public Comments)

Resident Deniz Bolbol asked the Commission to address the issue of bicyclists using Water Dog Lake trails at night.

Resident Pat Cuvillo stated he was part of a new community group, the Friends of Water Dog Preserve, that would like to meet to discuss helping with open space/trail maintenance.

Resident Jennifer Lien's email was read into record. Lien discussed the history of the open space and the importance of protecting it for future generations.

Resident Peggy Christgau's email was read into record. Christgau stated she had observed an increase in bikers in the open space, making conditions unsafe for hikers.

Resident Mimi Iversen's email was read into record. Iversen reminded the commission of their duty to protect the open space and asked that bicyclists be banned from all trails except fire roads and that illegally created trails be removed.

COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCEMENTS / AGENDA AMENDMENTS

Commissioner Michaels welcomed new commissioners Lee and Kapur.

Commissioner Lyford appreciated seeing so many people enjoy the open space with masks on.

Commissioner Sanders said the Youth Advisory Committee was working on a community cookbook and “5 minutes of clapping” for essential workers.

Commissioner Fox thanked staff for helping residents feel safe walking in the parks.

Commissioner Michaels thanked the community for respecting shelter in place orders and proposed that the Firehouse Square presentation be moved ahead of committee assignments.

CONSENT CALENDAR

March 4, 2020 Draft Minutes

ACTION: On a motion by Commissioner Foehr, seconded by Commissioner Lyford, the minutes were unanimously approved.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

Selection of Commission Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson

ACTION: On a motion by Commissioner Foehr, seconded by Commissioner Lyford, Commissioner Fox was unanimously appointed as the new Commission Chair.

ACTION: On a motion by Commissioner Foehr, seconded by Commissioner Lyford, Commissioner Cotten was unanimously appointed as the new Commission Vice-Chair.

Firehouse Square Project, 1300 El Camino Real and 875 O'Neill Avenue: Review of Landscape/Site Amenity Plans for the Mid-Peninsula Housing Component

Due to residing near the project, Commissioners Fox and Michaels recused themselves from the discussion.

Community Development Director Carlos de Melo gave an overview of the project scope and shared landscaping plans for the Mid-Peninsula Housing component. The project was approved by City Council in October 2019 with a condition that the Parks & Recreation Commission review/approve the landscape and site amenity plans for the Mid-Peninsula Housing component.

In response to Commissioner inquiries, de Melo stated the street trees/landscaping would be maintained by the property owners, public space would consist of special paving and benches accessible from 5th Avenue, public art could be considered, and historical site elements would be preserved and integrated into the project, as required by the Belmont Village Specific Plan.

ACTION: On a motion by Commissioner Lyford, seconded by Commissioner Mittelstadt, the Commission unanimously approved the landscaping plans for the Mid-Peninsula Housing component as presented (5-0, with Commissioners Fox and Michaels abstaining).

Commissioners Fox and Michaels rejoined the meeting.

Liaison/Committee Assignments

Assignments were updated based on the interests of new Commissioners and current vacancies.

Open Space Trail Signage Committee Update

Due to residing near the project, Commissioner Mittelstadt recused himself from the discussion.

Director Shearer presented the project goals, scope, design iterations, and implementation phases. She showed maps of trails with proposed signage changes. Shearer stated that next, the committee would revise sign designs and Phase 1 and 2 recommendations and bring them back to the Commission. She stated that Phase 1 would be economical to complete since signs could be fabricated in-house and installed by staff or volunteers. In addition, an Eagle Scout was helping to gather online content for the signs' QR codes.

Commissioners shared questions.

- In response to Commissioner Cotten, Shearer shared sign dimensions and said they hoped to deter the use of some trails using natural barriers such as boulders, logs, or vegetation.
- In response to Commissioner Lee, Shearer said adding a few more signs was not cost-prohibitive and that the plexiglass in bulletin boards may be replaced, but the structures would remain the same. In response to Lee, Sullivan said he did not think the proposed trail closures would significantly impact the use of other trails.
- In response to Commissioner Lyford, Shearer said sign colors could be customized.
- In response to Commissioner Michaels, Shearer said the committee would try to incorporate some design elements from other City signs; Michaels also suggested creating a style guide. Shearer clarified the “share the trail” sign graphic was created in-house, but would repeat on print/online materials. She confirmed signs would have unique ID numbers and QR codes.
- In response to Commissioner Sanders, Shearer said trail difficulty would be shown by text label as well as icon.

Belmont resident Deniz Bolbol approved of replacing trail markers, but said public participation was needed to consider new trails. She added that the Friends of Water Dog Preserve would love to help gather information for QR codes and that a sign was needed at the Hallmark and Lake Road entrance.

Belmont resident Kristin Mercer supported replacing trail markers and closing the proposed trails, but expressed concerns about the environmental impact of sanctioning illegally created trails and said public input was needed.

Resident Bill Kurtz's email was read into record. Kurtz asked to be on the Trail Signage Committee and expressed concerns regarding sanctioning new trails without a transparent community process.

Resident Jonathan Carter's email was read into record, clarifying the Towhee, the possible namesake of a newer trail, was a bird residing in Bay Area chaparral.

Commissioners shared comments.

- Commissioner Sanders said she loved the use of QR codes on the signs.
- Commissioner Michaels mentioned phase 2 and 3 recommendations were helpful but beyond the committee's scope. He suggested education around the “share the trail” graphic and adding a link to submit issues or feedback to web pages linked to QR codes.
- Commissioner Lyford wanted to install replacement signs as soon as possible.
- Commissioner Lee suggested posting a replica trail marker as a key at trail entrances.
- Commissioner Foehr asked if phases 1 and 2 could move forward because neither involved sanctioning additional trails. Commissioner Lee asked if all trails suggested for closure were problematic. Shearer said the committee should refine phase 2 and return to the Commission.
- Commissioner Cotten liked the idea of adding flora, fauna, and history to the QR code pages.

- Commissioner Fox thanked committee members for their work and expressed a need for more design iterations.

Commissioner Mittelstadt rejoined the meeting.

Belmont Sports Complex Synthetic Turf Project Update

Director Shearer said the project experienced a delay due to the field not draining correctly, but a solution had been identified/implemented. She reviewed project progress and next steps with an anticipated completion date of October 2020.

Commissioners shared questions and comments.

- In response to Commissioner Michaels, Shearer said staff were meeting with youth sports representatives the following day to discuss the impacts of the delay.
- Commissioner Lyford said the delay would increase demand on surrounding fields.
- In response to Commissioner Fox, Shearer said only several inches of topsoil were removed.
- In response to Commissioner Foehr, Shearer said the drainage issue would have been discovered regardless, but rain fortuitously highlighted it early on.

COVID-19 Update

Director Shearer reviewed cancelled programs, the “Virtual Rec” web page, and outreach to seniors. She gave a status update on the Community Learning Center, the Senior and Community Center, summer camps, parks, athletic fields, and the open space and said summer aquatics were cancelled.

Commissioners shared questions and comments.

- In response to Commissioner Cotten, Shearer confirmed customers were refunded for cancelled programs and facility rentals through May were refunded or rescheduled.
- Commissioner Foehr thanked staff for adapting to the circumstances. In response to Foehr, Shearer confirmed summer camp was currently for children of essential workers and minimum operations workers, as defined by the County.
- Commissioner Kapur recommended a social media campaign for inspirational sidewalk art.
- Commissioner Lyford was happy to hear the Youth Advisory Committee was assisting with senior outreach and that seniors were receiving resources for receiving meals.
- In response to Commissioner Michaels, Shearer said contract instructors were sent new requirements and were submitting summer program offerings and Commissioners could help by calling seniors, reminding the public to wear masks in the open space, or pulling weeds.
- Commissioner Mittelstadt commended Shearer for continuing to advance scheduled projects.
- Commissioner Fox loved the activities being shared on social media and wanted Commissioners to facilitate weeding. In response to Fox, Shearer said summer staff had been hired, but the counselor in training program was cancelled.

Director Shearer thanked all the Parks & Recreation staff for their work during COVID-19.

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan Update

Director Shearer said an RFP had been drafted, but due to the fiscal impacts of COVID-19, advertisement of the project was subject to approval of the FY21 budget.

Summer Commission Meeting Schedule

The Commission decided to keep both July and August meetings on the regularly scheduled dates.

Commission Calendar

Director Shearer presented the draft calendar and said she would separate July and August topics.

OTHER BUSINESS / UPDATES

Commissioner Questions and Comments

In response to Commissioner Michaels, Director Shearer said the Government 101 presentation (date TBD) would provide a good review of Commissioners' limitations including online communications.

ADJOURNMENT: 10:27 PM.

Brigitte Shearer
Parks and Recreation Director