

not. He asked for a bid minus the installation and irrigation so they could be comparing “apples to apples”. Recreation Director Whitley stated he would obtain that information.

Commissioner Matteo stated the synthetic turf at the Hall Middle School Field would need to be replaced soon and he asked if there would be any cost savings in doing them both at the same time. Recreation Director Whitley stated it would depend on the contractor and the products they are able to provide. However, the areas are not contiguous so there would probably not be a significant cost savings.

Commissioner McNally asked if eliminating the small dog area had been decided. Recreation Director Whitley stated “no” and the Commission is here tonight to discuss options.

Chair Blauvelt opened the Public Hearing.

Ms. Marlis Riddle stated her two-year old dog recently cut one of his paw pads on a piece of glass at the dog park. Members of the community are upset with the condition of the dog park and feel that it is poorly maintained. It turns into a “dust bowl” in the summer and a “mud bowl” in the winter. She asked how often the staff looks at the park to make sure it is a safe place for dogs. She urged the Commission to find a way to make the park safer and more enjoyable.

Mr. Ron Radke stated he finds the dog park rather restrictive and not well maintained. The dog park area is too small compared to other dog parks and has no shade. The back part of Piper Park would be a nice area for dogs. He stated that the cage used by the cricket club was very unsightly and takes up a lot of space. It could be relocated to the dog park area. He stated the majority of the cricket players are not from Marin County. Commissioner McNally asked Mr. Radke how often he walks his dog. Mr. Radke stated “every day” but he does not use the dog park. He walks his dog along the path around Piper Park. He reiterated that the back part of Piper Park would make a wonderful area for dogs.

Commissioner Matteo asked if the cricket cage footprint was big enough for a dog park. Mr. Radke stated he was not sure but installing a fence across the back part of the park would make for a nice dog park. Commissioner McNally stated they could not eliminate the perimeter path. Mr. Radke stated he was not sure it was a good idea to throw more money into the current dog park.

Ms. Anna Hurst stated she uses the park every day but rarely takes her older dogs into the dog park. She stated Piper Park is very heavily used and she often has trouble finding parking. She stated there might be a better location for the dog park elsewhere.

Chair Blauvelt closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner McNally asked if the community meetings with the dog owners was well attended. Recreation Director Whitley stated the first meeting he held had about fifteen

people in attendance. The second meeting, in January, had about seven people in attendance. Commissioner McNally asked what was discussed at the meetings. Recreation Director Whitley stated they discussed the problems with the dog park and the surface. Commissioner McNally asked if the size of the park was discussed. Recreation Director Whitley stated “yes” and added that the dog owners would like a larger dog park. This is not possible in the current location due to the proximity to the creek. Commissioner McNally stated it might not be a good idea to spend more money in a dog park that is not used and perhaps it should be eliminated. He stated the park is not big enough for large dogs. He wondered if they should talk to the community more before spending any money.

Commissioner Hauser stated the installation of decomposed granite has been discussed in the past and he asked how difficult it is to maintain. Recreation Director Whitley stated there was no perfect surface and the decomposed granite would degrade over time. The dog park was not high on the Public Works Department’s priority list of maintenance items. He had hoped to get a group of dog owners to pitch in on the weekends to perform maintenance.

Commissioner Hauser asked if there was any feedback about removing the small dog area. Recreation Director Whitley stated “no”. He did look at the possibility of making the “small dog” park a bit smaller by moving the fences in.

Commissioner Hauser stated the dog park, as it currently exists, is not usable. There is not other location for a dog park. Using the back part of Piper Park is not a viable option since there is a strong consensus to keep it as open space. In addition, the cricket club has been using that area for many years. There are things that could be done to the dog park but he was not in favor of installing synthetic turf. He was concerned about the current condition of the park. He agreed with Commissioner McNally that if funds were not available to make it safe then they might need to close it. He asked if it would be worthwhile to make the dog park functional given its small size.

Chair Blauvelt asked Recreation Director Whitley if he got any feedback from people that use the dog park. Recreation Director Whitley stated he has not received anything in writing. Chair Blauvelt stated she knows people who use the dog park and she was a bit disappointed at the small turnout tonight. She asked if staff could install a “suggestion box” in the dog park. Recreation Director Whitley stated he would take care of that.

Chair Blauvelt reopened the Public Hearing.

Ms. Riddle asked if the dog park could be expanded. Commissioner Hauser stated “no”. Ms. Riddle asked if grass could be installed. Recreation Director Whitley stated the high wear areas would get worn down due to the high traffic. The City is not allowed to use any herbicides so the grass would quickly go to seed and turn into weeds. Commissioner Hauser stated mowing the lawn would be a maintenance issue for the Public Works Department.

Mr. Phil Terry, Diane Lane, distributed a list of concerns to the Commission including: 1) a separate entrance for the small dog area; 2) add a single use dog run; 3) install grass; 4) remove the weeds since they are hazardous to dogs; 4) maintain the park on a regular basis; 5) install some benches; 6) limit the number of dogs allowed by dog walkers; 7) institute a fee to use the dog park; 8) enforce the leash law in Piper Park.

Commissioner Hauser asked Mr. Terry what he thought about eliminating the small dog area. Mr. Terry stated it would not be practical.

Ms. Diane Flores stated the dog park does not get a lot of use because it is just dirt. Dog parks that get the most use have grass.

Chair Blauvelt closed the Public Hearing.

Chair Blauvelt stated shade in the dog park was an issue. Trees will not thrive in that area due to the compacted soil. Recreation Director Whitley stated they could install some patio umbrellas or shade structures. Chair Blauvelt stated a bench and umbrella would be a nice solution.

Commissioner Matteo asked about the City's relationship and commitment to the cricket club. Recreation Director Whitley stated the relationship is at least 30 years old and the club has put a lot of effort and funds into the park. They have been allowed to cut the grass a bit shorter and install a cage. Commissioner Hauser asked if they pay a yearly fee. Recreation Director Whitley stated they pay \$8,200 per year. They have recently reduced their season and have opened up several weekends this year. Commissioner Matteo asked if the cricket field was rentable by other users. Recreation Director Whitley stated "yes" and noted the Marin Catholic High School girl's field hockey team uses it for games in the fall.

Chair Blauvelt stated the dog park should be scraped and the weeds removed as soon as possible. Recreation Director Whitley stated he would speak to the Public Works Department. Mr. Terry stated there were foxtails along the path to and from the park.

Mr. Radke stated the cricket club also has a wooden structure in addition to the cage. He felt they were getting favors from the City while the taxpayers are getting nothing from that end of the park.

Ms. Riddle suggested staff install a clipboard so people could sign in when they use the dog park to get an idea about its use, peak times, number of dog walkers, etc.

Commissioner Matteo asked how the \$8,200 fee paid by the cricket club compares to the amount paid by the other on-going park users (Marin Soccer, Marin Girls Softball, etc.) Recreation Director Whitley stated it was less but they contribute to the maintenance of the field. Commissioner Matteo asked if the cricket club pays a comparable hourly rate. Recreation Director Whitley stated "no". Acting Chair Blauvelt stated the Commission could discuss this issue when they review the Fee Schedule.

Commissioner Matteo asked staff if they could install the “suggestion box” and the clipboard mentioned earlier. Recreation Director Whitley stated “yes”.

Chair Blauvelt stated they need a broader discussion about the dog park. She thanked everyone for his or her comments.

BUSINESS ITEMS

1. Study Session of potential uses/amenities for .84 acre Rose Garden parkland donation

Recreation Director Whitley presented a staff report.

Commissioner Hauser stated the decision regarding the community facility use/building has not been made so the Commission really does not know what “shape” the .84 acres would take. Recreation Director Whitley agreed.

Commissioner Matteo asked if the 2.43 acres is one parcel. Recreation Director Whitley stated “yes”. He distributed a hand-drawn map of the usable space within that parcel. Commissioner Matteo stated a structure would be built and the parkland would include the remaining land. Recreation Director Whitley stated they would be working in conjunction to make it all fit and they did not want to have a lot of small areas that add up to .84 acres. The idea is to have a nice area surrounding the new facility. Ideas that came up at last night’s Council meeting included an amphitheatre, a plaza, hardscape, basketball courts, etc. Commissioner Matteo asked if sidewalks and walking paths would be part of the .84 acres. Recreation Director Whitley stated they would be part of the 2.43 acres.

Chair Blauvelt opened the meeting to public comments.

Mr. Phil Terry stated there was also a separate parcel to the west behind Red Boy Pizza and a lot was still up in the air. He stated the Council previously voted for passive use on this site and basketball courts was not part of the plan. He stated they need to envision how to incorporate the parkland into the environment so it becomes “part and parcel”. He discussed the possibility of a grassy area where performances, tai chi, etc. could take place. This area could be rented out for weddings, etc. and generate revenue for the City. There could be some terracing and other visual aspects and walking paths from the cottages, Doherty Drive, and the Lucky shopping center. The area could be a place for students to hang out. The Parks and Recreation Department office could move to this site.

Chair Blauvelt closed the meeting to public comments.

Commissioner McNally stated he would like to see passive uses for this area and he was opposed to the idea of a basketball court.

Commissioner Hauser agreed that the area should be designed for passive uses that are somehow integrated into the community facility. He referred to the Yerba Buena Gardens in San Francisco and stated it had a stage and nice walking paths.

Chair Blauvelt stated she liked the idea of walking paths that connect to the downtown and Doherty Drive.

Commissioner Matteo asked if the Council has directed the Commission to look at passive uses. Recreation Director Whitley stated “no”, they have not given any restrictions whatsoever.

Chair Blauvelt stated they would need to work around and with the community facility. Commissioner Hauser stated that was a good point and added they should create something that would be an inviting place for people to come. Chair Blauvelt stated the parkland area should be WiFi.

Commissioner Matteo stated he liked the idea about a passive nature to the area but he could support a bocce court since it would not be too disruptive to the neighbors and would have a relatively small footprint. He thought it would be a mistake to just look at passive uses. Acting Chair Blauvelt agreed and stated they should keep an open mind.

Chair Blauvelt stated this is the first stage in the process and they would have plenty of time to discuss this issue.

2. Report on Parks Tour of May 12, 2012

Recreation Director Whitley presented a staff report.

The Commission thanked Recreation Director Whitley for a wonderful and informative tour.

Mr. Terry invited the Commission to the Friday evening potluck party at Heatherwood Park.

RECREATION DIRECTOR’S ORAL REPORT

Recreation Director Whitley distributed a copy of the Larkspur Walkers’ Calendar. Commissioner Hauser stated the photographs were wonderful. Recreation Director Whitley stated staff was working on registrations for the Super Cool Summer School (formerly Ross Valley Summer School). Many classes are already full. Supervisor Clegg has been working on new technology for the department and on-line registration is now available. She is also working on Facebook and Twitter accounts. Staff will be working with the Corte Madera Recreation Department on a joint fall brochure. The brochure will be coming out in August. Chair Blauvelt asked if this would save money. Recreation Director Whitley stated it made sense and would save time, effort, and money.

Commissioner Matteo asked if the department would have the same amount of space/pages. Recreation Director Whitley stated “yes”.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner McNally asked if heritage tree permit applications were still being reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Commission. Recreation Director Whitley stated “yes” and noted the Commission would be reviewing an application next month. He stated that Fire Chief Sinnott has taken over the administrative end of the process.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Toni DeFrancis
Recording Secretary