



## PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Mel Pincus, 1<sup>st</sup> District  
Marico C. Enriquez, 2<sup>nd</sup> District  
Neil Merrilees, 3<sup>rd</sup> District  
Marian Vanden Bosch, 4<sup>th</sup> District  
Michael J. Cooney, 5<sup>th</sup> District  
Ruben Luva, Youth Commissioner

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**Parks and Recreation Commission Special Meeting  
Thursday, March 17, 2011  
5:30 p.m.  
San Mateo County Board of Supervisors' Chambers  
400 County Center  
Redwood City, CA 94063**

### Minutes

Chair Enriquez called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

**1. Pledge of Allegiance**

**2. Roll Call**

Commission: Cooney (Absent), Enriquez (Chair), Luva (Youth Commissioner),  
Pincus, Vanden Bosch (Vice chair) (Absent)

Staff: Bennett, Emil, Harris, Herzberg, Lockman, Lombardi, Moore,  
Medina, Noyer, Porter

**3. Oral Communications**

There were none.

**4. Action Item**

A. Review and Approve Parks Budget Reduction Proposal

Director Porter said that County Parks as part of the overall County structural deficit reduction plan needed to reduce its general fund allocation by \$655,453, or 10.6%. He said the first third of that reduction was achieved through the merger of the Parks Department with the Public Works Department and the elimination of the Parks Director position. He said the second third of that reduction would be achieved by realignments including un-funding a gardener position, funding one staff position through a Park enterprise fund, and reducing a retirement annuity overfunding. He said there were basically two options to accomplish the final third \$205,000 mandated reduction and those were to reduce a park or parks in the system or to reduce hours at one or more parks in the system. He said staff had prepared and distributed a survey to every

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reservation maker over the past year, about 6,200 individuals and groups, to get feedback on what budget reduction actions were preferred. He said an estimated 1,600 responses had been received.

Superintendent Lockman provided an overview of the process by which staff identified the proposed budget reduction strategy. He said due to previous budget reductions that reduced service levels significantly, staff did not think those could be further reduced and still meet health, safety and natural resource protection. He said staff reviewed all of the parks in the systems and compared general constraints for the full or partial closures of each park.

Superintendent Lockman said 60 percent of the survey respondents did not want service levels reduced. He said reduction in hours or days of operation was received as a good option at 25% and a fair option at 41%. He said the third option to close a park or parks was received as a good option by 14% but as a bad option by 55%. He said the last part of the survey asked respondents to rank their four favorite parks. He reviewed the results of that question from most preferred parks to keep open to least preferred parks to keep open. He said they received 700 written responses and there were two main comments: one, that fees should be raised or sponsorship or donations sought, and two, to develop more volunteer and docent support.

Superintendent Lockman reviewed the parks closure feasibility comparison that looked at closing three to four parks several days a week. He said San Bruno Mountain, San Pedro Valley, Edgewood and Junipero Serra Parks were identified as those parks which if closed partially three days, mid-week, would reach the cost savings needed and still preserve the resources needed to effectively manage those lands. He said they also looked at park closure and identified Flood Park as a park that could be closed with minimal impact to special interest groups and most easily secured. He said closing Flood Park would impact fewer visitors annually than partially closing the four parks three days mid-week.

Director Porter said \$450,000 in budget reductions could be made without impacting the park system. He said if it made sense to close a park rather than partially close parks, Flood Park was for several reasons the best candidate to close as there were 17 city parks in the vicinity of it, it was already closed through September for SFPUC water transmission line upgrades, and it could be most easily secured with fencing to prevent vandalism. He said staff were surprised that numerous survey respondents would prefer fee increases as the solution. He said staff would review fees, noting that fee increases did not always result in greater revenue immediately as often there was a decrease in use for at least the first year.

Commissioner Merrilees said he was a strong supporter of community parks, and it was painful that at his first Commission meeting he had to consider the potential closure of one. He asked what it would look like to close a park. Director Porter said it would vary dependent upon the park. He said large open space parks such as San Pedro Valley Park could not effectively be physically closed whereas Flood Park could be fenced and

locked. He said closure entailed locking restrooms and gates. He said there would be maintenance responsibilities that would need to be taken care of even if the park were closed but at a lower level of staffing. He said one concern with closing parks was public safety. He said it was very important in the larger parks to have ranger staff available for public health and safety, and protection of the natural resources.

Commissioner Pincus asked if closing Flood Park would achieve the last \$205,000 needed to meet the mandatory budget reduction. Director Porter said that was correct.

Chair Enriquez said the proposed option to close Flood Park and the other reductions proposed would meet the necessary budget reduction. He reviewed the high priority comparison table of the parks and said it seemed to align with the exhibit related to constraints of parks closures. Superintendent Lockman said those aligned closely.

Commissioner Pincus asked if Bicycle Sunday generated revenue. Superintendent Lockman said it did not. Commissioner Pincus asked how the final third of the budget reduction would be made if the Flood Park closure option was not done.

Superintendent Lockman said the other option would be to close four parks for three mid-week days to get the resource savings and to cut two ranger positions rather than the three positions at Flood Park, noting because of the open space nature of those parks that staffing resources would have to be allocated even if the parks were closed. Commissioner Pincus asked if there could be a seasonal shutdown. Superintendent Lockman said closing the parks seasonally would impact full time, permanent staff. Director Porter clarified that the staff positions being considered for elimination were vacant and would not affect staffing.

Commissioner Pincus said he was concerned that the closure of Flood Park would mean the Foundation would have to relocate. Director Porter said Foundation staff would be given access to the Park or another space would be found with the same minimal expense. Commissioner Pincus asked if the Devil's Slide trail would have an effect on this year's budget. Director Porter said it would not but it would begin to have some costs in calendar year 2012 for planning efforts. He said it was expected that there would be operational impacts in 2013. He said it appeared that the County would take over the trail development and operation, which would require substantial capital of over \$1 million and for operating the park annually the estimated cost was \$200,000 to \$250,000.

Commissioner Merrilees suggested since Flood Park was already closed until September for the SFPUC work that staff could take that time to review other alternatives to meet the budget reduction so Flood Park could be reopened in the near future. Director Porter said staff would certainly vet the public's suggestion to raise fees. He said that Parks staffing and service levels had been impacted by a series of significant budget cuts over the years. He said staff had considered what the minimal staffing was needed to maintain public health and safety. He said they found that there could be no further reduction in staffing and still keep parks open and meet public health and safety needs. He said survey comments also suggested using interns, docents and

volunteers. He said such people resources were positive and could support staff and in the future serve to provide desired educational opportunities.

Public Comment: Mr. James Cebrian, Menlo Park, said he was member of the Peninsula Disk Golf Association and an attorney. He said Parks could easily generate new revenue of up to \$85,000 by moving forward on the proposal for a disk golf course at Junipero Serra Park. He requested that the group be given time on the April Parks Commission agenda to make a presentation on a more detailed construction plan.

Ms. Lyndall Erb, Montara, said she was a member of ETRAC and was opposed to closure of parks, noting the danger of unsupervised remote areas. She said she would support increased fees and reducing hours of operations.

Ms. Mary DeLong, Friends of Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, was opposed to park closures, and supported ranger staffing at the Reserve, noting that volunteers could only do so much, and knowledgeable staff were needed to protect these federally protected resources.

Mr. Bern Smith, El Granada, said he had talked to State Parks staff about their process when they reviewed closing parks because of budget limitations, and found that County staff had looked at most of the same elements. He said the County would have liability considerations whether or not a park was closed. He said he would like an analysis of how many rangers were needed for what number of park visitors. He said closing the Reserve might be better for its natural resources. He said that the parks system would never break even fiscally but it was created to conserve and protect lands important to the people in the County. He said he had concerns related to grants opportunities that the County had availed itself of that had legal mandates about the disposition of the lands for which the funds were used. He asked also if there were other mandates that needed to be considered in this discussion. He said because Flood Park was in a dense neighborhood it would be imperative to do public outreach and resolve issues and concerns should be Park be closed.

Ms. Faye Brophy, Emerald Hills, asked why Wunderlich Park in Exhibit E was shown as a Net County Cost of -\$51,000 and Edgewood Park was shown as a Net County Cost of \$283,000. She said she rides horses in both parks and could not understand the disparity of those numbers, unless contributions to weatherize trails by equestrians made up the difference. She thought the cost of Bicycle Sunday should be considered as a potential cost savings.

Mr. Jay Anderson asked when the SFPUC construction would be done at Flood Park. Director Porter said that work was scheduled to be completed by September 2011. Mr. Anderson said since Flood Park was already closed well into the fiscal year that it meant sense to keep it closed the entire year.

Mr. Ken McIntire, San Bruno Mountain Watch, said that the County as the guardians of open space should make sure that all citizens have equal access to those spaces.

Mr. Don Pugh, Chair of the Woodside Trails Committee, said parks were a priority for people and should not be touched or lessened. He said people needed parks for their good health and well being.

Mr. Walter Gloskowski, Belmont, said private industry had to do substantially reduce work force, salaries and benefits because of the economic crisis. He said the solution for the County was to reduce staff salaries and benefits and cancel and renegotiate existing employee contracts.

Ms. Mary Guedon, Redwood City, suggested revenue generating idea development such as subscriptions to parks similar to a program offered by the State Parks Foundation.

Chair Enriquez closed the public hearing.

Commission Comment: Commissioner Merrilees said it was shocking to him that there was an existing park with a baseball diamond, tennis courts, shelter facility and picnic sites, but not enough money to maintain it. He said he agreed with the one speaker that private industry had faced substantial budget reductions and might face more. He said in times of economic stress that parks were needed even more. He said he was appreciative of the reasoned report and the public's response to the survey, which he would read in detail.

Chair Enriquez asked if Parks would meet its mission statement with the proposed budget reduction strategy.

Director Porter thanked the public for their comments. He said that staff had reviewed memorandums of understanding and agreements with other agencies related to park operations as part of the budget reduction review process. Responding to Chair Enriquez, Director Porter said Parks was following its mission with the proposed closure of Flood Park in that it would continue to maintain and operate 15 parks and two historical sites. He said closing Flood Park was a recommendation by staff because of the park opportunities available to the public in that area. He said even with Flood Park's closure, County Parks would still offer a great variety of open space experience for park visitors.

Commissioner Pincus asked about senior parking discounts, and if those discounts were mandated or whether they should be examined. He said the survey had indicated the public would support an increase in camping fees, and asked whether there would be a reduction in use if fees were raised. He said since Flood Park was already closed that it was possible to see if there were impacts and foretell what would happen if the Park was to be closed a longer time. He said it would be important to do public outreach in the surrounding area.

Superintendent Lockman said that seniors have free park entry and pay just 50% for picnic and shelter reservations, Monday through Friday, and pay full fees on the weekend. He said camping fees had been raised from \$21 to \$30 the previous year and there had been no noticeable decrease in use.

Director Porter said related to Commissioner Pincus' question about the neighborhood and the impact of the closure of Flood Park that the County had begun preliminary discussions with the City of Menlo Park and how residents might be affected, and whether either short or long term the City might want to assist in keeping the Park open. He said staff would reevaluate fees, noting that they had been raised two years prior.

Superintendent Lockman said that Flood Park would not be closed and demolished but rather it would be mothballed. He noted that the park would be fenced and secured, would have resident ranger presence, and there were neighbors on two sides. He said if Parks took the action of closing Flood Park that staff would meet with neighbors, the City, and police

Director Porter said the purpose of this meeting was to present the budget reduction proposal, receive comments from the public and the Commission, and relay the Commission's recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.

Chair Enriquez said he thought the budget reduction proposal made by staff would effectively meet the mandated budget reduction, and the remaining open question was whether to close a park fully or parks partially.

Commissioner Pincus said he thought the public would find it difficult if some parks were closed partially during the week. He said parks for the public's reference should either be open or closed. He said he would never consider the Reserve closing as it provided an important educational function beyond recreation and that the access to it which could not be secured would have great liability issues if closed.

Commissioner Merrilees complimented staff on the report and indicated that it was a good analysis to prioritize parks based on use, educational features, and the amount of money each resource uses. He said reducing the budget 10% did not reduce the resources by 10%, which was to be appreciated.

In response to a question from Chair Enriquez, Director Porter said the Commission was being asked to recommend to the Board of Supervisors approval of the proposed budget reduction strategy as outlined including either closing Flood Park or closing San Bruno Mountain, San Pedro Valley, Edgewood and Junipero Serra Parks three midweek days.

Commission Action: M/S Pincus/Merrilees to recommend to the Board of Supervisors (with regret) acceptance of staff's proposed budget reduction strategy including the closure of Flood Park and direct staff to review additional revenue enhancements.

Motion carried 3-0 with Youth Commissioner Luva supporting the motion and Commissioners Cooney and Vanden Bosch not in attendance.

Director Porter said the staff would go before the Board of Supervisors on March 30, 2011 for a preliminary budget hearing, again in June for the final budget hearing pending state budget realignments, and final adoption in September. He thanked the Commission and public for their comments and support.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 6:23 p.m.