

Parks and Recreation Commission
MINUTES
Council Chambers, 990 Palm Street
San Luis Obispo, CA
Wednesday, March 5, 2008, 7:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Lemieux called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Chair Jill Lemieux, Vice Chair Bob Wolf, Commissioners: David Hensinger, Don Dollar, Rick May and Kylie Hatch

ABSENT: Craig Kincaid

STAFF: Director Betsy Kiser, Marti Reynolds, Linda Fitzgerald, Michael Codron, Kim Murray, and Andrew Merriam of the Wallace Group

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES:

MOTION: (Hatch/May) Approve the February 6, 2008 minutes as submitted and approve the February 13, 2008 special minutes noting absence of Don Dollar.

Approved: 6 yes: 0 no: 1 absent (Kincaid)

1. Public Comment

Dan Pulsifer of San Luis Obispo and a member of the City of San Luis Obispo tree crew, commented on the growing sport of slacklining, which is similar to tightrope walking, in City Parks. Has seen minimal to no damage to trees so far. Slackliners set up anchors on two trees then stretch a length of webbing between. Trunks are wrapped to prevent damage prior to tying up these slack lines. Noted the City ordinance states not allowed to tie anything to a tree but that tree trimmers tie themselves to trees regularly when working on them. Showed Commissioners a friction saver used by City tree crews and its similarity to the loop of webbing used to prevent movement against bark of trees by slackliners.

Mary Ellen Gibson of San Luis Obispo thanked the Commissioners for the work they have done. Is against the parking lot at Mitchell Park. Feels if start paving will taking away green space, making a small park even smaller.

Ursula Bishop of San Luis Obispo asked Commissioners to put the Mitchell Park parking lot on the next meeting's agenda as an item to consider not paving parkland. Hadn't received postcard notification, nor saw any signs, yet feels lives inside the area of concern. Was involved in topic with the City the last time the proposal came up which was voted down by Council. Does not know why it is coming up again. Feels should build a larger more accessible Senior Center rather than this

smaller Senior Center that requires this parking lot. Asks they vote unanimously to not pave over the park.

Eric Meyer of San Luis Obispo commented that he did not see any notice or signs of prior meeting on Mitchell Park. Believes a 300 foot radius for notification is not appropriate when paving over a park. Except for a few times a month for a few hours, the balance of the time always sees parking available when he goes by.

Suzanne Heitzman of San Luis Obispo thanked the Commissioners for their hard work. Feels the process for paving the parking lot should not be rushed. Does not live in neighborhood of the park and doesn't feel those outside the immediate area know what is proposed. Requests the process be slowed down to allow for more public input and not "pave paradise."

Lou Carpine of San Luis Obispo thanked the Commissioners for their service. Asked they reconsider their vote of November 7 on the Mitchell Park parking lot as it would be a shame to cover park land. Interpreted comments read in the minutes of that meeting as indicating consensus that parts of the land are being underutilized. Showed a photo printed from Google Earth® highlighting the greenness of the park. Asks the Commission reconsider and reagendaize.

Stephen Lamb of San Luis Obispo and Chair of Human Relations Commission repeated his sentiment from the previous month. Feels seniors are an important constituency and is very much an advocate for them and is himself a member of the senior center. Against putting in the parking lot and requested the Commission to be against it too. Asked the Commissioners to advocate with them to build a new state of the art center that takes care of the existing population and the boomers. Wishes for Parks and Recreation Commissioners together with Human Relations Commission and the Arts Council to join together to make that their legacy. Stated Mitchell Park is an historic treasure once visited by Theodore Roosevelt who gave an address from the gazebo. Gave analogy of paving Mission Plaza to gain parking for the church. Asked the Commission to focus on the needs of the future, not pave green space and to please re-agendaize.

Carol Nelson-Selby of San Luis Obispo moved to the city recently and feels with small yards of town housing having park to utilize is a true gem. Uses Mitchell Park every day and always sees people in the park but thinks the senior center is underutilized – she teaches Tai Chi there. Endorses all that Stephen Lamb said. Park is asset that's irreplaceable. Have short and long term problem, the long term being the need for a new senior center and suggests Meadow Park as a quieter alternative with no parking problems. Feels people will be unsafe backing out of the existing senior center parking area into busy intersections. For the short term would like handicapped parking on one side, designated parking during certain hours, to move the program temporarily, and provide a shuttle for meetings. Asks the park be saved and seniors accommodated without losing this asset.

Jerry Miszewski of San Luis Obispo, a Cal Poly math major, spoke on slacklining. Has been slacklining for six months mostly at Santa Rosa Park and approached four months ago by maintenance personnel informing him to stop because of liability issues and the tree ordinance. Offered statistics highlighting typical park items such as a jungle gym or skatepark as dangerous than slacklining which has existed since 1975 without any fatalities. Asked the sport of slacklining

not be banned.

[Director Kiser explained the background behind the recent banning of slacklining which mainly stemmed from consultation with CALJPIA on liability and the Tree Committee and regulations against tying around a tree. Communications with JPIA did not recommend it unless designated to one place, or alternatives to tree use. Can place on agenda and look at as an activity in future.]

Mathew Ritter of San Luis Obispo stated he agreed with everything said about the Mitchell Park parking lot so far. As a Cal Poly botany professor he has worked with Ron Combs on heritage trees and believes it would be a mistake to think a parking lot at the senior center won't affect that tree as close as it is.

Sarah Ritter of San Luis Obispo said, with two small children, they use Mitchell Park often. Is against a parking lot being put in at Mitchell Park and would like to see re-visited in a future meeting.

Jen Yost of San Luis Obispo spoke representing 19 people at “the Establishment” who use the park as a back yard. Asked that members of the audience stand up that were there for the Mitchell Park issue (approximately 25). Believes can accommodate a larger span of people and asked the subject be put back on the agenda.

Sybil Hanson of San Luis Obispo in support of those who have spoken against paving Mitchell Park.

Ginny Griffin of San Luis Obispo thanked the Commissioners for their service. Did not receive initial information but found the City staff helpful. Is bothered most that have an existing plan that many spent time developing which feels has been disregarded and asked where the original impetus started. Would like to put the issue to rest. Requested issue be put back on the agenda and dealt with quickly.

Dave Rau of San Luis Obispo and the Land Conservancy stated he moved to San Luis Obispo because it was green. His first residence in the City was at Toro and Buchon. Mitchell Park gave him a place to relax and go with friends and family. Feels the City is getting away from the meaning of a “home town.” Reminded that the park was given to the City by the Monday Club and asked to visualize whether they would have approved of asphalt covering the property.

Craig Lindaman of San Luis Obispo lives across the street from Mitchell Park. Feels a parking lot there would be a safety hazard as it is an emergency vehicle pathway which he sees emergency traffic from three times a day. Is against the parking lot.

Eric Meyer of San Luis Obispo added that Frank Mitchell's house, which he restored, is across from the park. Relayed the history of Frank Mitchell, mayor of San Luis at the time, receiving the land that is now the park as collateral on a loan to Dallidet. It was his wish that the land be given to the children of San Luis Obispo. After his death his wife ended up selling the land to the school district. In 1962 the City traded 23 acres on Madonna road for these two acres in town.

Brennan Angel of San Luis Obispo, a Cal Poly student, spoke in support of slacklining and added he would like to see both slacklining and now Mitchell Park as well added to a future agenda.

Public Comment was then closed and Chair Lemieux thanked everyone for their comments.

Commissioner May added that he greatly appreciated everyone's input.

Commissioner Wolf stated he was impressed with the showing but hopes representatives of Mitchell Park bring five times the people to Council. As an advisory body could re-agendize and re-vote but may only get one more vote. Suggested their energy therefore be put into the most effective place.

Commissioner Dollar reminded of Laguna Lake dredging issue. Had received a staff request and short report. Later additional information received and subsequent re-agenda changed their original vote. Feels information on history posted on the web is different than what was first received in Commission. Suggests, in the interest of the public, the Commission re-agendize to narrow differences before going to City Council.

Chair Lemieux said she would like to see the subject put on the agenda again and asked for clarification on several issues: the process on how to amend the Master Plan, how notification will reach more people, and about having on the agenda again but not necessarily to revote.

Director Kiser stated upon checking with the City Attorney if the Commission wishes to review their earlier decision regarding the Master Plan amendment it is their prerogative to either make a motion tonight to put Mitchell Park back on the agenda, or with majority consensus, could review the matter again in April. The Community can be notified of the next PRC meeting with postcards. Also stated notifications were in fact sent for the Master Plan design meeting.

Commissioners discussed briefly and it was determined to re-agendize Mitchell Park for the April 2 Commission meeting. The Architectural Review Committee will still review on April 7 and Council on May 6. Commissioners asked that notification be well distributed and posted at Mitchell Park itself.

Chair Lemieux asked the slacklining be brought up before the Tree Committee as, per Director Kiser, it cannot be added to April's already full agenda at this point. Chair Lemieux recommended the public stay close to Parks and Recreation staff and when the agenda goes out they will notify. Encouraged letters and continued comments at the meetings.

2. Volunteer of the Month – February

There was no volunteer of the month for February.

3. Presentation of Plaque to Don Dollar

Chair Lemieux presented a plaque to Don Dollar honoring his term on the Parks and Recreation Commission from 2004-2008. Lemieux stated she appreciated his knowledge of open space and respected his viewpoint through the years, regardless of whether they agreed or disagreed, and expressed the hope that he still attend meetings as a member of the community.

4. Orcutt Area Specific Plan – Kiser/Codron

Director Kiser reminded the Commissioners that the purpose of the Parks and Recreation Commission is to advise Council and implement the Parks and Recreation Element of the General Plan. Asked the Commissioners to participate in the planning of the Orcutt Area Specific Plan tonight to determine the kind of parks for the future. Currently, the Orcutt Area is the last of the annexations to come into the City.

Commissioners received a PowerPoint presentation on Chapter 2 of the Orcutt Area Specific Plan (OASP) by Associate Planner Michael Codron and Principal Planner for the Wallace Group, Andrew Merriam. Associate Planner Codron began by reviewing the General Plan context and how it fits into surrounding neighborhoods, an overview of the specific plan, parkland requirements, an overview of recreation resources to be developed, and recommendations provided in the agenda report. Commissioners not limited to discussing only the recommendations listed. Happy to answer any questions Commissions may have and open to discussion.

Associate Planner Codron reviewed Policy 2.2.6 of the Land Use Element which states all residential development shall be integrated with existing neighborhoods and where physical features make this impossible, the new development should create new neighborhoods. Specific plan is program for how development will occur in the future and how the park will be integrated into the neighborhood. Big focus on connections. Park is essential to Orcutt area and central. Highlighted the bridge, railroad safety trail, street connections and bike paths. Explained the current OASP is working document, a public hearing draft. This will eventually lead to a new draft of OASP that Planning Commission (PC) will present to City Council. Commissioner's input will be forwarded to PC. Chapter 2 deals with Open Space and Parkland. 230 acres, 55 percent zoned for development and 45 percent parkland and open space. The plan provides for 1,000 new dwellings, 15% of which will be affordable housing, a school site shared with park, and other features, etc.

Principal Planner Merriam spoke on history of project and the 2002 agreement to meet both the City and property owner's goals. Noted the area is the highest density in the City at 24 units per acre, although some are 18 units per acre and some 12 units per acre. Have received pressure that single family lots be less than the 6000 square feet that is typical.

The Righetti Ranch is largest component and 8 streams pass through the area was discussed in that it will make a unique neighborhood. Park is central to the development became, and because of school district needs, ended up with a bifurcated park with school in between. Explained changes to the plan and additional acreage on south side of creek for a scenic park. Mr. Merriam will walk Righetti Hill with Natural Resources Manager Neil Havlik to identify future potential trail system. Pointed out the Railroad Safety trail extension and class 2 bike lanes coming in from all the streets.

Associate Planner Codron expressed interest in how the Parks and Recreation Commission feels about design and shared slides portraying the look and feel of the neighborhood. Explained the Parks and Recreation Element requires 10 acres parkland/1000 residences, five acres of which is to be developed as a neighborhood park, remaining five acres located anywhere in the City deemed appropriate. Twenty acres required of this development. Reviewed goals in OASP that show intent to meet requirements. Includes central park, linear park and bicycle paths. Eventually park will be dedicated to City.

Principal Planner Merriam explained acreage expanded to total 20 acres but clarified creeks are not counted within that 20 acres. Explained the average household size will be just under 2.2 persons per residence and that the emphasis of the plan ties in an aging community with the young by including active and passive elements (tennis and basketball courts, trail system and bike paths). Discussed pocket park system at base of Righetti Hill; the linear park, trail up Righetti Hill.

Showed cross sections of the Linear Park/drainage basin and the two areas on either end that are proposed as parkland because they would rarely be affected by storm runoff.

Recommendations were then critiqued:

- 1.a Support design and location of neighborhood park.
- 1.b Provide direction that land located within the creek not be used as developed parkland and therefore should not be included in meeting parkland requirements.
- 1.c Provide direction that for school playground to be counted as parkland City needs to develop a Joint Use Agreement with School District that will then allow policies to be included in the OASP that will set up program for area.
2. Support previous design of Linear Park and provide direction that only those areas that are provided for active recreation be counted in parkland acreage requirements
3. Provide direction to staff to include policy and programs in specific plan regarding private recreational facilities. As an alternative, Commission could recommend the inclusion of pocket parks (i.e. Anholm Park) and integrate these in the area as a way of meeting parkland requirement.

Associate Planner Codron pointed out that what is being seen is the response of property owners, that drainage basins are not necessarily effective parklands, and that when developer comes forward with plans, will review more. Merriam added felt strongly about most locations but some things can be moved. Reasonably accurate in programmatic requirement for children's areas, ball fields, soccer field, etc.

Chair Lemieux then asked Commissioners for their comments and questions as follows:

Commissioner Hensinger asked for clarification on how close the draft plan was to completion. Inquired if, in light of moving forward with skateboarding park at Santa Rosa, it would be too early to propose some of parkland in Orcutt be skatepark designated. (Merriam indicated it was still open.) Commented that can see plaza, as well as the two basketball courts and bike path, attracting skateboarders and feels should consider a designated area, but noted some places on the far side of stream may be hard to police.

Commissioner May asked presenters for comments on staff recommendations. Response on change in 2002 plan was heard regarding new junction park. Commissioner May confirmed that there would be more than one tennis courts to guarantee use, and also confirmed the name “Mine Hill” will be replaced by Righetti Hill.

Commissioner Dollar inquired on public benefit from amending the General Plan, and the 30 residential lots, school district land purchase, enrollment projections, and private playgrounds being maintained to City standards. Associate Planner Codron explained analysis is still needed on the E Street area outside urban reserve and, although not the appropriate venue to discuss land use, input is welcome. Also explained that the location of school bifurcating the park was predicated on safety needs to be farther from railroad and high pressure gas lines and that a professional study was done predicting need for school there. The issue of private playgrounds are currently undetermined and can be revised. Also discussed were visual resource issues factored into single story units, and that the 15 acres of proposed easement for Righetti Ranch will never be rezoned to residential, but will remain private, and the eventual connection of Islay Hill for pedestrians. Commissioner Dollar also stated desire for less parking area and more park land.

Commissioner Wolf discussed nearby Broad Street Corridor and the shared safety trail if it is developed.

Commissioner Lemieux clarified overlay and piece of land on Righetti property not suitable for development and percentage of school need that would be lost if 20 units changed to 18. Also discussed Linear Park reduced acreage and peripheral terraces.

Chair Lemieux then opened discussion to public comment.

Jeanne Helphenstine spoke representing 144 acres of Righetti property and reminded Commissioners that ten years of meetings with 13 property owners have gone into the formulation of this plan, to please keep in mind the history and hard work already done by the Planning Department. Helphenstine expressed being happy to be part of the approval process.

Commissioners commented in turn on each of the three recommendations.

Recommendation 1, Section a: Concurrence with report. Clarification requested as to what is not counted as parkland, referenced May 4, 2005 PRC minutes which confirmed that open space trails do not meet parkland acreage requirement. Commissioner Hatch felt public art would be better than water feature.

Recommendation 1, Section b: All concur with staff recommendations on Linear Parks.

Recommendation 1, Section c: All concur, with note from Commissioner Hatch stressing need for Joint Use Agreement with School District.

Recommendation 2: All concur with staff recommendations on Linear Parks.

Recommendation 3:

Commissioner Dollar would like there to be public access if private park and Director Kiser explained “pocket” parks in areas of higher density.

Chair Lemieux concerned with maintenance if in middle of development. Merriam posed if maintained privately but accessible relieves pressure of parks farther away. Advised it is appropriate that if counted it meets criteria.

Commissioner Hatch feels infringement on property rights and if privately funded the fairness of being open to public, often the reason for gated communities. Goal is to provide for Orcutt area and to serve that community.

Chair Lemieux clarified possible if privately maintained can change to green space if want to in future.

MOTION: (May/Hatch) Approve the Orcutt Area Specific Plan with the addition to Recommendation 3 that if it private pocket parks are counted as parkland acreage, that facilities adhere to City of San Luis Obispo standards.

Approved: 6 yes: 0 no: 1 absent (Kincaid)

Commissioner Dollar discussed other parklands and large developments of 1,000 homes or more. Would like further suggestions to make for better living. Discussed graphing breakdown of private and public owned land to help misunderstandings down road of Righetti land. In the past the Open Space Plan recommended going through the Open Space process rather than just this review. Understands a Specific Plan can bypass the process. Conservation easement is felt to be of greater benefit to public down the road, particularly important with Righetti Ranch and public understanding. Merriam explained the Open Space Easement is on Righetti Hill and will become part of the plan. Will be fee dedication and City Land; will check on Conservation Easement. Confirmed intent is to preserve in response to Dollars comment on keeping sycamores as buffer on E Street open space.

[Commissioner Wolf absent from 9:32pm until 9:59 pm]

5. Staff Report

Recreation Manager Linda Fitzgerald provided a presentation highlighting playground safety. A Certified Playground Inspector since 1998, Fitzgerald discussed benefits and statistics. The State mandates of January 2008 decree that all equipment installed between 1994 and 1999 conform to ASTM standards. If non-conforming in 15 years, then state funding will be withheld. The City has had a replacement program since the 1999-2001 Financial Plan as well as four certified inspectors. All 13 playgrounds have been audited. Fitzgerald explained that City playgrounds are given a 15 year useful life and presented the replacement schedule. Replacement funding comes from the general fund, state grants and bond act and CDBG funds. Current projects are Laguna Lake, French Park and Sinsheimer Park. There is no more use of wood structures as they are found to deteriorate in adobe soil. Fitzgerald passed out the pamphlet “Dirty Dozen” to the Commissioners.

6. Director’s Report

Director Kiser briefed the Commission on the following projects:

- Joint Use Agreement approved by Council on February 15th
- 2nd Stakeholder’s Meeting for roller hockey rink expansion held February 13th. Engineers now determining cost of recommended improvements. Can do a certain amount with our funds and more if users can raise additional funding.
- The Amgen Tour of California February 21st was successful but received complaints from citizens due to slowed times caused by the rain. Noted Commissioner Kincaid was on winner’s platform.
- Council approved \$15,000 for hiring a consultant for the Athletic Field Needs Survey. Wendy George, was selected; retired City of SLO ACAO, former school board member and liaison to YSA; good background
- The Golf Course drainage was funded and constructed. More grading needed then architect will review Monday. Hope is that it will playable by June.
- The Skate Park needs assessment meeting March 1st had more than 50 attendees. PRC will review results of study and if indicated, forward a mid-year capital improvement project request to Council for design.
- Mitchell Park master plan amendment will come before the PRC April 2 as determined tonight, the ARC April 7 and Council May 6. The CHC unanimously denied based on review of what is within their purview, i.e., historic significance, and this triggered a more in-depth environmental review.
- A reminder that the dedication for the new Bocce Ball Courts and Community’s Bridge public art benches will be this Friday March 7th.
- The Director and some staff will attend the CPRS District 8 awards March 7th during which Cheng Park will receive an award for park design.
- The public art piece “Bee Bee Works His Magic” was installed in front of the Little Theatre Thursday, February 28 and will be dedicated on Saturday March 29 at 2pm. Invitations will be sent soon.
- Commissioner Hatch attended the California SW Parks & Rec Training Conference in Long Beach along with seven Parks and Recreation staff members.
- February 23 was the Commissioner’s Training at Hearst Castle. Commissioners Lemieux and Hatch attended with the Director.
- The annual Advisory Body Recognition Dinner will be March 13th at the Ludwick Community Center from 5:30 to 8pm.

7. Committee Reports

Commissioners provided the following reports:

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| ■ Tree Committee – Kincaid | ■ Joint Use Committee – May |
| ■ Mayors Youth Task Force – Wolf | ■ Jack House Committee – Hatch |
| ■ Open Space – Dollar | ■ Golf – Lemieux |

There was no report on the Tree Committee due to Commissioner Kincaid's absence.

Commissioner Wolf had nothing to report for Mayor's Youth Task Force; the next meeting will be March 13th, however, will no longer be part of Commission. Discussed new Commissioner's possible attendance.

Commissioner Dollar reported on the Open Space Committee and commented that this being his last meeting as part of the Commission, he greatly encourages residents to fight for parks and open space.

Commissioner May reported on the Joint Use Committee. There was no meeting in February.

Commissioner Hatch reported that at last months meeting of Jack House Committee they discussed tracking sales of the book "The House That Jack Built" and the donation of azaleas from the Jack House Christmas event to Cheng Park. The fence is being painted; Saturday will be the 4th workday followed by installation.

Commissioner Lemieux reported on the Golf Course where weather continues to be an issue, if not rain then wind.

8. Communications

The Commissioners commented that they would like to learn more on slacklining, were reminded of the early days of disc golf and questioned the use of something other than trees. Director Kiser stated it would entail the municipal code being amended.

Commissioner Wolf proposed next month's volunteer of the month go to disc golf participants.

9. Adjourned

The meeting adjourned at 10:17 p.m. to the Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting on April 2, 2008, at the Council Chambers.

Approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission on April 2, 2008.

/S/

Martha M.S. Reynolds
Supervising Administrative Assistant