

**Parks and Recreation Commission
MINUTES**

Council Chambers, 990 Palm Street
San Luis Obispo, CA
Wednesday, April 2, 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 Craig Kincaid, Commissioners: David Hensinger, Rick May, Kylie Hatch, Gary Havas and Ron Regier

ABSENT:

STAFF: Director Betsy Kiser, Marti Reynolds

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES:

MOTION: (May/Hatch) Approve the March 5, 2008 minutes as submitted

Approved: 7 yes: 0 no: 0 absent

1. Public Comment

Jerry Miszewski of San Luis Obispo, a Cal Poly student, spoke on slacklining explaining the history and methods to Commissioners and how the sport encourages health without harm to the trees used. Gave background on the sport's beginnings in Yosemite in the 1960s. Emphasized that more dangerous sports exist in parks that include skateboarding and playground equipment.

2. Oaths of Office for new members – Hooper

City Clerk Audrey Hooper administered the Oaths of Office for new Commissioners Gary Havas and Ron Regier. Commissioners Havas and Regier then introduced themselves to the public and committee members.

3. Volunteer of the Month – March

There was no volunteer of the month for March.

4. Election of Chair and Vice Chair – Lemieux

Nominations were taken for the positions of Chair and Vice Chair of the Parks and Recreation Commission for 2008.

Motion (May/Regier): To re-elect Jill Lemieux as Chair of the Parks and Recreation Commission

(7 yes: 0 no: 0 absent)

Motion (Lemieux): To elect Rick May as Vice Chair of the Parks and Recreation Commission

Motion Failed by request of Commissioner May.

Motion (Lemieux/Hensinger): To elect Craig Kincaid as Vice Chair of the Parks and Recreation Commission

(7 yes: 0 no: 0 absent)

5. Appointment to PRC Subcommittee assignments – Kiser

Note: This agenda item was considered out of order listed. It was covered after the Mitchell Park Master Plan item was completed.

Chair Lemieux emphasized change is always welcome if Commissioners are interested in different subcommittees than currently serving. The subcommittees and appointed meeting times were then reviewed.

Appointments were made to the various committees of the Parks and Recreation Commission, as follows:

Tree Committee – Craig Kincaid

Open Space – Gary Havas

Joint Use Committee – Rick May

Jack House Committee – Kylie Hatch

Golf - David Hensinger

Mayors Youth Task Force – Ron Regier

Chair Lemieux will set up a meeting with Agatha Reardon and keep in contact as an unofficial

liaison to the Senior Center.

6. Amendment to Mitchell Park Master Plan – Kiser

Action: Review the proposed amendment to the Mitchell Park Master Plan removing the area behind the Senior Center designated for a specialty garden and replacing it with a parking lot, and forward a recommendation to City Council to approve the amendment.

Chair Lemieux read a statement providing background on the amendment and reviewing rules of conduct for the meeting. Because of the number of speakers, Chair Lemieux asked as an alternative to applause that the audience raise their hands in support of a comment. Stated goal of everyone present is to make the best decision for the community.

Director Kiser gave the staff report and a PowerPoint presentation on the Mitchell Park Master Plan background and history. Initial PRC approval of amendment on November 7, 2007 was with caveat that replacement land be purchased downtown equal in size to that lost to parking lot and that if there was a change in use of the center that parking lot area would return to parkland. CHC denied the proposed amendment January 28, 2008. A multitude of public comment was received February and March. The ARC will hear on April 7 and Council on May 6. The Director explained the role of the Commission was to evaluate the amendment in terms of conformance to the Parks and Recreation Element of the General Plan. Alternatives are to a) determine that amendment is not compatible with the Element and deny; and b) identify alternatives to parking lot for presentation to Council. Alternatives have come in the form of letters from the community to the PRC, Council, staff, media, Robert Horsch, Parking Manager, and suggestions from Council.

Chair Lemieux opened the subject for Public Comment but reminded the Commissioners they will be asked to review.

Richard Rall of San Luis Obispo, Vice President of the Senior Board, reminded the demands of the few shall not outweigh the needs of the many. Reminded that those opposed to parking lot are able to rally large groups of people through computer technology that unfortunately most seniors do not use. Asked Commissioners to address the parking problem at the Senior Center. Use by the seniors Monday – Friday leaves time for use by others. Need to address loading and unloading on the street, security of off street parking, mobility problems, parking for caterers, unloading of supplies, delivery of food.

Dick Flanders of San Luis Obispo, devotes five days a week to senior activities. Thinking as an eventual parking lot, already half pavement even though “specialty garden” of 6,000 square feet listed, small portion. Does not understand why so much opposition. Rented facility that Parks and Recreation utilizes to raise funds.

Charles Oldham of San Luis Obispo commended the board for parking proposal. Supported gazebo, vitality of youth using it. Feels opposition acts as though it would be a Wal-Mart parking lot. Believes coating proposed would have aesthetic value. Asked to consider danger of service road existing now; card have to back on to Santa Rosa, one-way traffic proposed, which is better.

Marie Wilson of San Luis Obispo passed out pamphlets to the Commissioners. USDA and weekend programs needing parking. Noted considerable cement already in place. Used Emerson Park as an example of a downtown park with business parking and reminded any future change in building use will still have parking need. Sees amendment as a simple solution.

Carol Nelson Selby of San Luis Obispo hopes that Council listens closely to community. Suggested to the PRC they are not politicians and can take the long view. Depend on their view for the future as keepers of renewable resource. Asked this “jewel” be protected for future. Many uses, speaking as a senior but urban pocket park does not require parking. Suggested senior facility could be run from other area.

Paul Wilson of San Luis Obispo informed that Paso Robles used senior center for meetings, the parking issue will go on forever. Passed photograph of park to commissioners to view of four cars bumper to bumper where designed for three. Keep proposed plan. Gave example of Persian Square in Los Angeles with parking underground and park above. Stated City has done a lot for parking downtown.

David Kuykendall of San Luis Obispo thanked the Commission and asked they consider three things 1) map of SLO showing location of households throughout the City that opposed the parking lot; 2) petition to not put in parking lot; 3) survey with 172 signatures. Strong agreement park is valuable and senior center available. 98% of those surveyed agreed the parking lot is not the best use of park. Disagrees as long term solution and that public transportation should be first priority to consider.

Meg Kuykendall of San Luis Obispo believes specialty gardens are of value to community and feels seniors deserve better space. Issue not parking spaces but access to the center. Funds should be used to pay for public transportation to address mobility problems.

Bill Casella of San Luis Obispo is concerned for safety and traffic flow, exhaust, public transportation and the cost of fuel.

Jim Kelliher of San Luis Obispo feels should adhere to Master Plan. Specialty garden should be pushed forward.

Carmie Casella of San Luis Obispo referred to the Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights which lists #3 as being able to play in a safe place which is what we have now. Feels driveway with bolder perimeter would be tempting children to be in area where seniors with slower reflexes would

reduce safety. Feels with so few parking spots available, user can't see if there is space available until already in the lot.

Gini Griffin of San Luis Obispo, representing Obispo Beautiful Association, read statement. Referenced awards in Mitchell Park. Concerns over intrusion of parking lot; keep character of Mitchell Park.

Eric Meyer of San Luis Obispo stated the Master Plan was achieved after years of work. All realized except for community garden. Usurping this part of Master Plan is not in best interest. Asked why keep fighting the same fight. Asked Commissioners 1) Motion to withdraw prior approval and 2) request City Council fund community garden in Master Plan.

Mary Andrews of San Luis Obispo spoke as a mother of a 4 and 6 year old and a neighbor. Echoes 100% what last speaker said. Wants park garden but knows seniors need parking. Feels losing sight of gaining minimal parking spaces. Seniors need adequate place and current senior center will never be it. Transfer to the Ludwick with adequate facilities. Pocket park not appropriate place to be talking about parking. Not losing but gaining a community garden. Would be losing an asset.

Bruce Collier of San Luis Obispo referred to donation history and identified the Ludwick Community Center as an existing facility with parking that could be used. Consider the area behind the Senior Center designated as a specialty garden should be used as such.

(Chair Lemieux noted specifics on history available, contact Parks and Recreation staff.)

Jenn Yost of San Luis Obispo stated unfortunate that the view seems to be neighbors versus seniors. Wants to invest more in seniors. 19 residents from her building use the park daily. Space in question is surrounded by fence, did not know it was to be a garden space. Feels the tenants in her building would use the space. Views as an asset to community center. Suggested that when events take place the seniors are given right to block off the street on both sides of Buchon and Santa Rosa. Feels more adequate facility at the Ludwick Community Center.

Matt Ritter of San Luis Obispo and a botany professor stated driveway goes under canopy of heritage tree in plan which feels would kill the tree.

J. Trees Ritter of San Luis Obispo, a physician with three daughters, feels the exit onto Santa Rosa and entry into an area children are playing would be unsafe when combined with potentially slower reaction time of older drivers.

Wendy Knight of San Luis Obispo opposed the parking plan, feels the large park would be reduced and safety compromised. Feels it's a mistake to pave green space.

Agatha Reardon of San Luis Obispo stated senior population underrepresented. Fence removed

after many years and its being open has not been a safety issue mentioned before but feels it would go back up. Believes tree committee found heritage tree to not be endangered by plan. As someone who is at the senior center every day, does not believe small parking area would impact the park. Master Plan changed several times; concern lies with community garden not greater traffic.

Sean Ryan of San Luis Obispo hopes to keep area as is intended for community garden and not a parking lot.

Samantha Smith of San Luis Obispo also opposed, better used as garden space.

Craig Jacobson of San Luis Obispo reiterated opposition to parking lot and also unaware because of fence that could use horseshoe pit. Excited about community garden possibility and use as green space.

Sue Power of San Luis Obispo supports safety issue comments and resolving in other ways. Concentrate on individual parking and transportation alternatives so center can be utilized. Center not adequate as a senior facility; need something larger to accommodate growing population, parking spaces won't resolve problems. Asked to stay with existing Master Plan and focus on future.

Ursula Bishop of San Luis Obispo feels over last 19-20 years improved park. Didn't know about November meeting. Asked Commissioners to consider as a new vote. Feels the seniors deserve better. Asked to consider angled parking. Requests staying with existing Master Plan.

Peter Schwartz of San Luis Obispo feels parking lot would be subsidizing the motor industry and that real estate is too valuable to use as parking. Conveyed formula using real estate values to describe how much it would cost to park per hour to equal out. Reconsider vote to maintain existing Master Plan.

Lou Carpine of San Luis Obispo thanked the Commissioners. Feels the parking lot will not correct the problem. Asked about exit road and how close to children's area. Gain of only seven spots. Reconsider vote to maintain Master Plan.

Stephen Lamb of San Luis Obispo reiterated the sentiments of other speakers. Referenced photo of four cars parked too closely together and said found empty spots this morning. Senior Center an improper location for functions and activities held there and that are already held at the LCC. Recommends to deny amendment to Master Plan and fund community gardens.

John Altman of San Luis Obispo feels gas prices raising issue of alternative transportation need and changes in senior driving habits. Preserve green space, opposed to developing parking lot.

Stew Jenkins of San Luis Obispo speaking on behalf of his wife and himself opposes amending

Master Plan. Likes ability to walk to the center and potentially garden in area. Better access to seniors, with vehicles not a long term answer. Consider transportation alternatives such as add more loading zones or drive-through completely fenced with no damage potential to the heritage tree. Recommend Council use money for parking lot on public transportation instead.

Valerie Endres of San Luis Obispo asks consideration for change with regard to preservation of character of park and needs and consensus of neighborhood residents. Consider alternate transportation solutions not parking.

Larissa Heeren of San Luis Obispo loves park for the trees and grass her home does not provide. Supports creative solution and exhausting every possible alternative. Consider reversible solution first. Concerned for trees and the wildlife living there.

Mary Ellen Gibson of San Luis Obispo states there has been a response to this matter from around the world. Opposed to paving public gardens.

(End of Public Comment).

Commissioner May clarified with Director Kiser that the rules of use for parking lot were to be determined at a later time, the availability of parking to the public at night, that the parks close at 10 p.m., and the location of pavement near the heritage tree.

MOTION: (May) Stay with Parks and Recreation Commission Vote of November and recommend to City Council a parking lot be put in behind the Senior Center.

The Motion failed due to a lack of second.

MOTION: (Kincaid/Hensinger) Move to deny the amendment to Master Plan and open for discussion.

Commissioners discussed the motion.

Commissioner Hatch understands need to provide for senior citizens but difficult decision on which way to take direction. Studying where trees are, the flow of traffic, and looking at spaces currently available, would probably be better to keep with Master Plan, looking for a better solution for the senior center. Would rather see monetary upgrades go to a new center.

Commissioner Hensinger appreciated public turnout as previously there was not as much input or exposure to all age group's viewpoints.

Commissioner May gave background as a long term resident of SLO since the 1960's. Would personally like to see the garden developed. Concerns for the heritage tree – interviewed park attendees. Feels real solution is a senior center that provides for all needs. Feels need for proposal to take to Council that takes care of both sides wishes; however there is no solution at this point. Hopes to find solution to area, but rather than a hard yes or no, propose yes to temporary parking and then deal with senior center at a later date. Fix current senior center first – feels it works because seniors can come and go freely and get answers to their challenges, prepare taxes, socialize, etc.; we need to be able to give that type of freedom and personal comfort somewhere else (in a new facility).

Commissioner Regier stated he has tried to keep an open mind as a new commissioner. Has familiarized himself with the topic and is at a crossroads as he can respect both sides of the issue. Shared biases and philosophies pertinent to this decision making process. That 1) half measures show progress but stop tactic may make reaching long-term solution more difficult, 2) As a Commission they are custodians of park land and stewards of active programming and defenders of green space and as such that under any circumstance the taking away of parkland should take a very compelling argument, and 3) seniors unique special needs are deserving of support. Sympathetic to both sides yet certain arguments has no sympathy for. Will vote not to amend the master plan feeling that the seniors deserve better and approaching a new center is past due. Congratulated audience for committing the time to attend.

Commissioner Kincaid thanked both sides illuminating all issues. Feels need for public transportation, ease of movement, and removal of cars from the streets. Was not aware of community garden area. Sensitive to seniors' needs and the inability for some to not use the center due to parking. Although unsure that it is the job of the PRC to solve problems, at least can help by denying the amendment.

Commissioner Havas relayed a personal experience of hearing musicians in the gazebo after dark and feeling the magic of the park. Does not see an easy solution, particularly Commissioner May's approach. Feels the least expensive option should be tried first and agrees with comment to try something not irreversible. Feels compromise is needed and there will be unhappiness from one side or another with the decision either way. Favors changing parking in the street, repainting options. Urges compassion, that ten years is a long wait to get a new senior center. Sees underutilization and can see both parking lot and community garden.

Chair Lemieux thanked the public and staff and community correspondence received. Feels need to ensure representing community appropriately, takes responsibility seriously knowing that people will be impacted. Thanked Agatha Reardon who was first to relay to her that seniors don't refer to the center as a ten year plan, but rather that the City needs a new community center of which a part will be a senior center. That the LCC was seriously considered but it doesn't meet 100% of their needs either. Feels responsibility to not make decision on loudest voice but to take into consideration all viewpoints. Past notes show loudest voice supported the parking lot; feels new information should be given equal weight. Clarified the term "band aid" which was used in the past really means "unmet need" i.e., transportation. Transportation alternatives

not being an easy fix, feels subject needs to be brought before Council. Appreciated Commissioner Regier's information and has always approached decision making with question of if whether it will still be good 20 years from now. If a good decision had been made 10-20 years ago, for example, would not be dealing with this situation now. Is respectful of the effort that went into the master plan and feels all the thought that went into it should not be undermined by a body of people that disagree with it. Putting in a parking lot is not doing the community the best service, but questions how the needs of seniors be met immediately. Although it can't be done tonight, can be part of solutions and that process. Wants everyone to feel there is a solution for them. Voted against parking lot last time.

The motion was reread.

MOTION: (Kincaid/Hensinger) That construction of a parking lot behind the Senior Center is not compatible with the Parks and Recreation Element of the General Plan and thereby *deny* the amendment to the Mitchell Park Master Plan removing the area behind the Senior Center designated for a specialty garden and replacing it with a parking lot.

Approved: 6 yes: 1 no: 0 absent

7. Annual Park Tour – date, time, areas of interest

Director Kiser explained the premise of the annual Park Tour for the three advisory bodies within the Parks and Recreation Department. The tour generally includes a mix of open space, trails and park sites that are new, renovated or have proposed projects. Commissioners discussed possible preferences and reviewed with the Director sites selected on the last tour. Commissioners preferred an afternoon tour with a BBQ dinner at the Laguna Lake Golf Course. Potential date of July 9 will be confirmed next month. Commissioners made suggestions for areas to be included on the tour, as follows:

- Bridge and Hole No. 3 at Laguna Lake Golf Course
- Damon Garcia Sports Field
- Bob Jones Bikepath and Ranger Facility
- Johnson Ranch
- Therapy Pool Public Art
- “Drive-by” Public Art
- Jack House Tour
- French Park
- Eto Park
- Slacklining

- Disc Golf at Laguna Lake

Director Kiser also advised to look through the General Plan for additional options. Once finalized, the tour program will be developed and information distributed to members of the PRC, the JUC and the Jack House Committee.

8. Director's Report

Director Kiser briefed the Commission on the following projects:

- The consultant for the Athletic Field Needs Assessment is currently interviewing the Youth and Adult sports groups to determine their needs. She has also met with the School District, Cal Poly and is scheduled to meet with Cuesta College and Mission Prep regarding the use on their fields. Concurrently, the consultant is developing a list of communities with similar field needs to determine level of play, maintenance schedules, use policies and priorities, etc.
- Hole #3 at the Golf Course has been finalized; play to begin in June.
- Applied for and received a \$20,000 grant from the Janssen Foundation to supplement the funds available to expand the roller hockey rink.
- Held dedications for the bocce ball courts, Community's Bridge and Bee Bee Works his Magic. Well attended events.
- Staff, Jill and Mr. and Mrs. Loh attended the CPRS District VIII Awards Banquet to receive the Park Planning award for Cheng Park.
- The Activity Guide for summer is at the printer and will be released next week.
- The Santa Rosa Skate Park Needs Study will come before the PRC on May 7.

9. 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 |

Tree Committee Commissioner Kincaid explained there was no quorum for the last meeting.

The last meeting of the Mayor's Youth Task Force was March 13th.

Commissioner Havas will meet with Neil Havlik in the future regarding the Open Space Committee.

Commissioner May reported on the Joint Use Committee. Relayed information that although the final agreement is not yet signed, the two semi-professional baseball teams have come to an understanding regarding use of Sinsheimer Stadium which will soon go before Council. Two grant requests were approved: Central Coast Baseball and SLO Soccer.

Commissioner Hatch reported that at last month's meeting of Jack House Committee they set up an expense account for person operating the Wash House and fund replacement through committee approval. Determination of relevant historical items being conducted by Laurie Siles prior to inventory and closing in October. Tours resume on April 6 and upcoming events are Mother's Day concert May 11, Family Fun Day June 22, Art in the Garden August 17.

Commissioner Lemieux had nothing new to report on the Golf Course.

10. Communications

Committee members more thoroughly introduced themselves to new members.

Chair Lemieux clarified public speakers earlier references to a "community garden" at Mitchell Park. Plan actually calls for a "specialty garden" which can be a garden of any type and which has not been proposed or decided upon as of yet.

11. Adjourned

The meeting adjourned at 10:31 p.m. to the Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting on May 7, 2008, at the Council Chambers.

Approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission on May 7, 2008.

_____/S/_____

Martha M.S. Reynolds
Supervising Administrative Assistant