

**Parks and Recreation Commission
MINUTES**

Council Chambers, 990 Palm Street
San Luis Obispo, CA
Wednesday, June 4, 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, Commissioners: David Hensinger, Rick May, Gary Havas and Ron Regier

ABSENT: Vice Chair Craig Kincaid and Kylie Hatch

STAFF: Director Betsy Kiser, Linda Fitzgerald, James Bremer, Marti Reynolds

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES:

MOTION: (Regier/Lemieux) Approve the May 7, 2008 minutes as submitted.

Approved: 5 yes: 0 no: 2absent (Kincaid, Hatch)

1. Public Comment

None.

2. Volunteer of the Month

The June Volunteer of the Month honoree is Cindy Douglas. Cindy volunteered her time to share her expertise of organic gardening with the San Luis Obispo Community Garden Program gardeners at a seminar held at the Parks and Recreation Office on Wednesday, May 28, 2008. During the seminar she shared tips for organically ridding the garden of pests, balancing soil nutrients, and provided resources for organic producers of seed and amendments. Cindy also provided an overview of the federal regulations for organic agriculture and the USDA's National Organic Program. Cindy has lived in San Miguel for the past year with her family on her family's 20-acre blue oak ranchette. She has been employed at Cal Poly for the last year and a half as the manager of Cal Poly's Organic Farm and prior to that worked in Lompoc at an organic heirloom tomato farm. She has also worked for two organic certification agents and an organization that reviews materials for organic growers. Cindy enjoys working at the Cal Poly Organic Farm and educating both the students and the community. Cindy is married and is the new mom to a 3-month-old baby boy. She

enjoys sailing and spending time with her family. Parks and Recreation is grateful for her contributions to the community of the City of San Luis Obispo.

3. Slacklining in City Parks – Kiser

Director Kiser briefed the Commissioners on the history of slacklining in our parks. Three months ago the City Attorney contacted the Director regarding a complaint received by Slackliner Jerry Miszewski regarding the banning of slacklining in City parks due to liability and requested we respond to the request for accommodation. Staff discussed the issue with the City Arborist, Parks Maintenance Supervisor, Risk Manager, and at the advice of the California Joint Powers Insurance Authority (CALJPIA), a temporary policy banning slacklining was put in place until a more thorough investigation could be conducted. Mr. Miszewski was invited to attend a Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) meeting to express his interest in slacklining and request further consideration of the activity by the Commission. Mr. Miszewski spoke during the Public Comment period at both the March 5 and April 2, 2008 meetings, requesting the Commission agendaize the item to determine its appropriateness for inclusion in City parks. Staff continued to research slacklining, using a 12-month pilot program recently established by the City of Salinas as a foundation for study. Subsequent meetings with the City Arborist and Parks Maintenance Supervisor indicated that if concerns were met for safe designated sites, responsibility for trash, tree protection equipment and appropriate use of mature trees including a possible change in the tree ordinance, that slacklining might then be an appropriate activity for our City park(s). A more in-depth analysis of the sport by a PRC Sub-Committee is requested before a final recommendation can be made and an ordinance change taken to Council.

Chair Lemieux then opened up Public Comment:

Dan Pulsifer, San Luis Obispo, an ISA certified tree worker and arborist, primarily used Santa Rosa Park. Noted the two trees used over the year show only damage to the outer bark which consists primarily of “dead cells.” Suggested standards for determining health of tree and wrapping trees to eliminate any damage.

Jerry Miszewski, San Luis Obispo, became an avid Slackliner three months before it was banned, is unable to practice the sport in his own backyard as well due to the regulation by landlord. Hopes the Commission will come to an agreement on a minimum of one or two parks in which slacklining may be allowed. Mr. Miszewski showed the Commissioners a piece of thick vinyl canvas purchased for a few dollars at the fabric store that is used to protect the tree; carpet remnants may also be used.

Dan Pronsolino, San Luis Obispo, physical therapist, introduced to slacklining to rebuild muscle in a low key setting after broke foot. Encouraged the Commissioners to form a subcommittee as the activity is seemingly more intimidating than it really is. Feels sports such

as mountain biking, rollerblading, skateboarding in skateparks and jungle gyms are more dangerous by comparison. Feels if Yosemite can allow as a Federal conservation organization, we should be able to as a City government. Asks the Commissioners take time to hear information as the sport would be an easy fit for the City and one that he feel does not damage trees.

Carrie Sundra, San Luis Obispo, local engineer, finds slacklining relaxing as one of the rare sports in which you must focus only on “the now” in order to maintain balance, that there is no room in your mind for worry and therefore provides excellent stress relief. Understands the concerns but pointed out users have the same concerns because if trees are damaged there is no way to practice the sport. Feels we can develop a policy including such things as fabric on the bark. Feels a place as progressive as allowing mountain biking and skateboarding can allow slacklining. Is of the opinion that less chance of injury over grass. Encourages the formation of a subcommittee to research for a solution that all can agree on.

Kristen McNamara, San Luis Obispo a professor at Hancock, part of climbing club of which many members are also slackers. As a former interpretive ranger for Yosemite National Park where slacklining has been allowed, she feels the sport is usually done by a cross section of people and fosters stewardship.

Robert Lester, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, has been slacklining for four years, worked for Yosemite National Park for the past three summers. Finds that most slackliners are environmentally conscious and protective of the trees used. Supports the idea of a subcommittee and offered to contribute any information he can.

John Knight, San Luis Obispo, a past PRC Commissioner, planner, rock climber and novice slackliner. Would be interested in helping the subcommittee with drafting program. Has a slacklining set-up in backyard that is used for weeks at a time with no harm to the trees. Explained certain types of barks as susceptible, for example sycamore is better than pine. Anchors distribute more than 1,000 lbs. of force when standing on the line. Thanked the Commissioners for the opportunity to comment.

End of public comment 7:25 p.m.

Commissioner Havas stated he had done a lot of research on the topic lately and felt it was a good sign that, in searching for “damage to trees” on Google in relation to the sport, nothing came up. Feels the sport would serve a large number of people and promote use of parks.

Chair Lemieux spoke in support of forming a subcommittee and, in his absence, offered that Commissioner Kincaid was potentially interested in being involved.

Commissioners Havas and Hensinger offered to be on the subcommittee.

Director Kiser inquired if Mr. Miszewski and Mr. Lester would be interested in serving on the subcommittee as well to which they both responded positively. Director Kiser also suggested a slacklining demonstration be included in the annual Park Tour July 9 during the visit to Meadow

Park. Contact will be made with Mr. Miszewski in the near future regarding details of arrangement.

Chair Lemieux acknowledged Mr. Miszewski and thanked him for taking the time to inform the Commissioners of the sport three months ago.

MOTION: (Regier/May) Appoint a subcommittee to research the sport of Slacklining and return to the Parks and Recreation Commission in August 2008 with a report and a recommendation either to accommodate or not accommodate Slacklining in the City's parks.

Approved: 5 yes: 0 no: 2 absent (Kincaid, Hatch)

4. Staff Report – Bremer

Recreation Supervisor Bremer briefed the Commissioners on the Facilities operation of the Parks and Recreation Department particularly the Sinsheimer Stadium. Bremer explained a priority for use of the facility was first created in the 1970s and is updated each year by the Joint Use Committee. Since then the facility has been used from January through September for such events as the SLO Blues and the Triathlon, with heaviest use in June and July. The addition of the SLO Rattlers posed a new challenge for use which resulted in a new management plan which was approved by the PRC and Council and included a Request for Proposal for field preparation and parking plans, spectator management, food and beverage service, security and use permits and plans that both teams share the facility. Allows for two year extension on agreement so don't have to renew every year and affords the opportunity for teams to set up games well in advance of season.

Scheduled maintenance days are now included with regular maintenance. Although early in the season, Bremer indicated only minor issues have come up so far. The Parks Maintenance Department reports things are better than in the past and continue to improve. The goals for 2009 include identifying the nature of park uses for appropriate use for each park, a request policy, a master maintenance schedule included into facility prior to receiving request.

Commissioner May inquired as to the current status of pest control. Bremer explained the use of the Rodinator and bait traps, and the increased problem due to spring migration. Cannot use tools for abatement if the stadium is to be occupied the next day. The facility received constant use except for two days in mid-summer so the situation is expected to worsen as the season progresses.

Commissioner Havas inquired about signage for not feeding the squirrels. Bremer felt best approach is controlling population.

5. Director's Report– Kiser

Director Kiser briefed the Commission on the following projects:

- Skate Park – The Skate Park Needs Assessment was presented to Council on May 20th. Over 150 skateboarders attended. Council approved moving forward with a Skate Park Master Plan with RRM Design and funding for interim modular equipment until the park can be built. Staff is working with RRM Design to develop a Scope of Work for the Master Plan. Work should begin the first of July and conclude with presentations to PRC, ARC and Council by late fall, in time for the start of the 2009-11 Financial Plan development. In the meantime, we've set up a Skate Park fund and Christine Wallace is organizing an Ad Hoc Committee on fundraising.
- Mitchell Park Senior Center – Public Works is developing design plans and specifications for the parking lot. Construction is slated for December of this year. Plans and specs have been released for the renovations to the Senior Center, with the mandatory walk-through tomorrow and bid opening on June 12. Staff is currently preparing the RFP for the Senior Center Needs Study.
- Roller Hockey Rink Improvements – Estimated costs for the various preliminary designs for rink expansion are anticipated to be well over the funds allocated for the project. Staff is working with the stakeholders and the engineer to reduce those costs. Meetings with the stakeholders indicate that they are willing to accept a more practical approach to rink expansion. Design to be completed by August 2008, with construction slated for the off-season.
- Blues and Rattlers are in full-swing at SLO Stadium. Everything is going smoothly.
- We now have over 900 registrants for the Triathlon.
- Fourth of July in Mitchell Park, co-sponsored with the Rotary of SLO.
- 2008-09 Budget passed last night.

6. Committee Reports

Commissioners provided the following reports:

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| ■ Tree Committee – Kincaid | ■ Joint Use Committee – May |
| ■ Mayors Youth Task Force – Regier | ■ Jack House Committee – Hatch |
| ■ Open Space – Havas | ■ Golf – Hensinger |

Commissioner Kincaid was not present to report on the Tree Committee.

Commissioner Regier will attend the Mayor's Youth Task Force meeting on June 12.

Commissioner Havas met with Neil Havlik regarding the Open Space Sub-committee. Discussed extension of bike trail and three acres donated by Elks Lodge, Stenner Springs Conservation Loop with USFS and Cal Poly and buffer for Camp SLO, Johnson Ranch, mountain bike trails created with the help of CCMB, Righetti Hill and potential future open space, Tank Farm wetland area and Chevron donation, and Irish Hills and discussed reproducible maps.

Commissioner May reported on the Joint Use Committee. A subcommittee was formed to review and update the criteria for Facility Use and Athletic Field Renovation Grant programs. A distribution of funds was made to SLO Rugby (\$2,520) and Youth Sports Association (\$31,980).

In Commissioner Hatch's absence, Chair Lemieux reported on last months meeting of the Jack House Committee. The Mother's Day Concert May 11 went well. Family Fun Day and Art in the Park are the next events coming up in the near future.

Commissioner Hensinger had no report on the Golf Course.

7. Communications

Commissioner Regier communicated that Cal Poly is doing a few artificial turf projects and moving forward which may help reduce our use load. Commissioner Regier will keep informed. Commissioner Havas also interested.

Commissioner Regier also inquired about Holt Field. Director Kiser indicated Wendy George will bring information on Holt Field to the August meeting when the results will be presented for the Athletic Field Needs study. Also discussed the Cal Ripken/Babe Ruth project at Chevron property. Director Kiser has reviewed tentative plans but they need to work with County Planner/Airport Land Use Commission re airport fly zone. Considerable funding is still needed for this long term project.

8. Adjourned

The meeting adjourned at 8:18 p.m. to the Special Meeting of the Parks & Recreation Commission/Annual Park Tour on July 9, 2008, at the Council Chambers.

Approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission on August 8, 2008.

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Martha M.S. Reynolds
Supervising Administrative Assistant