



REGULAR MEETING OF THE
PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Wednesday, May 25, 2012
7:00p.m.

El Cerrito City Hall
Council Chambers
10890 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the Management Assistant at 510-559-7000. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the city to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting. (28 CFT 35.102-35.104 ADA Title II).

1. Roll Call
 - a. Chair - Manish Doshi, Leslie Goldstein, Seth Kaplan, Steve Lipson, Robin Mitchell, Margo Takemiya.
 - b. Commissioners Goldstein and Takemiya were absent.
2. Commission / Staff Communications / Announcements: None
3. Oral Communications From The Public: None
4. Council Liaison Report: Councilmember Rebecca Benassini

Councilmember Benassini reported that at the May 1, 2012 Council meeting, the Strategic Plan contract has been awarded. The contract will be done during this year and will outline the City's major goals.

In a discussion of the Tradeway site, she explained negotiations with the developer have been extended. Because of the loss of Redevelopment Funds, the State may have objections in extending the time for negotiations.

5. Approval of Minutes: (Action: Approve) Exhibit 1
Meeting Minutes from March 28, 2012

Commissioner Lipson noted that Chair Doshi was not present. Commissioner Mitchell moved that the minutes be approved as amended. Commissioner Kaplan seconded the motion, which was approved.

6. Discussion of Fence at Lower Canyon Trail field:

Jones gave an overview of the situation. He explained that fencing is typically a routine staff matter. With good intentions and concern for potential safety issues, Public Works staff installed fencing to prevent balls from rolling downhill into blackberries and the creek. Members of the public were called on to speak:

Maggie Resnick, 2036 Carquinez, expressed her opinion that the fence was a defacement of a beautiful park. She felt like that neighborhood had been very tolerant of the soccer community.

Charles Barnes, 6123 Jordan Avenue, objected to the lack of neighborhood notice and suggested temporary fencing.

Liz Townes, 2400 Tulare Avenue, enjoys the park, but feels the lower field is a lawn that has been adapted as a soccer field. She feels that the fence is a scar.

Victoria Hughes, 1513 Elm Street, thinks that the fence is ugly.

Jean Tan, 6814 Hagen, suggested leaving holes for temporary barricade.

Donna Hiramoto, 1166 Richmond St., did not like the chainlink fence and suggested temporary fencing.

Harold Jamison, 6934 Fairview, did not think there was a safety justification for the fence.

Natalie DeJarlais, 2010 Carquinez, advocated reasonable compromises, but expressed concern that soccer's needs were being given priority.

Ken Longo, 426 Clayton, advocated temporary fencing.

John Wallace, 6436 Hagen, did not like the fence.

Braden Reddell, 1905 Tapscott Avenue, commented that there should have been public input on the fence installation.

Rick Stellina, 2019 Mira Vista, recalled when the hillside was planted in ice plant. He fully supports soccer, but finds fence intrusive, and supports use of temporary fencing.

Jessica Camery, Soccer Board member, reported that the soccer club rents the field at lower Canyon Trail one and uses volunteers. The Club never asked for a fence.

Charles Barnes, 6123 Jordan Avenue, is not against soccer, but would like transparency and would like responsible use of the park.

Erin Gillett, 824 Contra Costa Drive, advocated temporary fencing, and hoped the park would remain available to all kids.

Maggie Resnick, 2036 Carquinez, stated she enjoys the park in evening, and has some concern about sharing it with soccer players.

Victoria Hughes, 6502 Morris Avenue, was concerned that soccer dominated the park. She felt that the field was dominated by soccer and that the safety of children should be paramount. She felt that the Prospect Sierra field is under utilized.

Richard Stellina, 2019 Mira Vista, commented that the discussion was becoming one of soccer and not the fence.

Becky Barnes, 6123 Jordan Avenue, stated her biggest issue is the beauty of the park.

Rosemary Loubal, 6502 Morris Avenue, advocated the management of resources, and thought that the fence was not a good use.

Chair Doshi noted that this project did not come before this Commission for approval. Discussion followed about field usage by the leagues and the public. Commissioner Lipson stated that field usage and space is at a premium. El Cerrito Youth Baseball holds permits for the upper field and added that the leagues subsidize the City.

A suggestion was made to post a bulletin board with a schedule, so that the public would be aware of when practices and games are going on.

Commissioner Mitchell commented that the City needs to be more sensitive to infrastructure issues. Chair Doshi added that the soccer league has monthly meetings to talk about issues.

7. Discussion and Presentation of a Demonstration Garden of native Plants along trail between Shevlin and King Drives: Commissioner Mitchell

Judith Frank, 6762 Glen Mawr Avenue, has lived in the City since 1993, and has been inspired to replace lawn with natural plants. She is working with David Weinstein to locate a native plant demonstration garden. They are considering the cul-de-sac at the top of Shevlin Drive. Chair Doshi suggested doing a smaller version in the street median.

8. Public Works Update: Bill Driscoll reported that the Public Works Department is working on irrigation repairs
9. Staff Update:
 - a. The City Council passed the Master Fee Schedule.
 - b. Some of the Swim Center fees were changed and have been in effect since the beginning of summer. Camps are going well.
 - c. The Guitar Center moved to Emeryville. It donated a guitar for on-line auction with the proceeds to be donated to our scholarship fund.

Chair Doshi suggested that staff talk to Jerry Bradshaw about the public response to the chainlink fencing. We may need to develop policy to review projects. He also reported that the Soccer Leagues' permit for El Cerrito high School's field has not been approved.

10. Items For Next Agenda
Update on the Canyon Trail chainlink fence.

11. Meeting Adjournment

COMMUNICATION ACCESS INFORMATION *To request a meeting agenda in large print, Braille, or on cassette, or to request a sign language interpreter for the meeting, call Lori Teachout, Management Assistant, at 559-7001 (voice) at least FIVE (5) WORKING DAYS NOTICE PRIOR TO THE MEETING*

Chris Jones

From: roberth [roberth@lanset.com]
Sent: Wednesday, May 23, 2012 12:46 PM
To: Jerry Bradshaw; Chris Jones; Bill Jones; Council members
Cc: janet carter
Subject: Fence in Canyon Trail Park

Dear El Cerrito Leaders,

First of all, we would like to thank you for Canyon Trail Park. It is a beautiful place, from the upper meadow, through the woods, to the frog pond below. We live right up the street from it on Jordan Avenue and use the park almost every day – for walking, playing frisbee, birding, and lying in the grass looking up at the sky and trees.

The redwoods are one of the jewels of El Cerrito. To build a fence in front of them – and such an ugly fence – is really intrusive, visually and in other ways. The fence completely breaks up the spaciousness and destroys the sense that we are in nature, a little wild and open space. Many people, ourselves included, lean against the redwoods and meditate. Others lean against them while picnicking. It is a joy to just walk over and be under the trees. Now they feel inaccessible.

Canyon Trail Park is a wonderful shared community space for dog walking, baseball, tennis, kite flying, picnicking – and soccer. That this decision to put in a fence was made without consulting the park's users is troublesome. In the last year, the people playing organized soccer have begun acting as if they own the park. They also litter and deface the grass with toxic paint.

It should be possible to have a multi-use park. That will take everybody working together. As a first step, we are asking that the fence be removed as soon as possible, so we can begin the discussion from open space.

Thank you for considering this request.

Robert Horton
Janet Carter
6128 Jordan Avenue

Chris Jones

From: Lynn Murdock [lynnmudrock@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, May 23, 2012 1:31 PM
To: Chris Jones
Subject: Chain link fence at Canyon Trail

Chris Jones,

I cannot make it to the Dept of Recreation meeting tonight, but would like to give input about the chain link fence recently installed at Canyon Trail Park. It really detracts from the natural beauty of the park. If soccer balls are an issue, perhaps poles with netting could be put up during games--as are the goals--and taken down when finished. I use Canyon Trail for my daily walk and consider it a gem of a park. Hope some solution other than the fence can be agreed upon.

Thank you,

Lynn Murdock

Ludwig Avenue, El Cerrito

Chris Jones

From: Caren Ohlson [caren77@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, May 23, 2012 1:41 PM
To: Jerry Bradshaw; Chris Jones; Bill Jones; Council members
Subject: Canyon Trail Park Fence

Dear El Cerrito Leaders,

Thank you for Canyon Trail Park! I live nearby on Knott Avenue and play frisbee there about once a week. The redwoods are amazing and I am grateful for the effort you've put in to keeping the park beautiful and natural-looking.

I am writing to ask you to please tear the fence down that was recently put up near the redwood trees. To build a fence in front of them – and such an ugly fence – is really intrusive, visually and in other ways.

Canyon Trail Park is a wonderful shared community space and I'd like it to remain that way. That this decision to put in a fence was made without consulting the park's users is troublesome. I think it's possible to have a multi-use park, and it will take everybody working together.

As a first step, I am asking that you rewind your decision to build a fence, tear it down, and start the discussion over again to include the voices of more park users.

Thank you for your consideration,
Caren Ohlson
1435 Knott Ave.

Chris Jones

From: Joy, Dan [DJoy@pacunion.com]
Sent: Monday, May 21, 2012 4:27 PM
To: Chris Jones
Cc: Georgina Edwards; Maggie Resnick; Jean Tan; Kenneth Alborn; Harold Harold; Natalie; Victoria; Alberto Zurita; Noom B; Julia White; Steve Lipson; Liz Townes
Subject: RE: Canyon Trail Park Fence

Hi Chris,

I know that the meeting is on Wednesday night but unfortunately I have a Twilight Tour scheduled for a property that I'm selling on the Arlington. So I will not be available that night for the meeting. I wanted to make sure that my comments were heard and that is why I'm sending them to you via e-mail. As I said, most of the parents you are referring to with children that may play soccer there are not from our neighborhood at all. The parents from the area that I know come there with their kids are always supervising them and would not want the fence to have been installed there. I think there are really 2 issues here.

1. The fence needs to be removed period.
2. The use of the park for soccer needs to be re-evaluated as currently most of the year it's unavailable for residents in the area to use because it's being rented out for soccer. As I said before, this park was not designed as a soccer field. It is small for that kind of use. It would be one thing if it were 2 nights a week for small children soccer or something like that. But it is every evening after school until dark and sometimes after dark and then on the weekends as well. That is overuse by soccer and not allowing residents in the area to use it for other things is the second issue needing to be address as I see it.

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From: Chris Jones [mailto:CJones@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us]
Sent: Monday, May 21, 2012 10:58 AM
To: Joy, Dan
Subject: RE: Canyon Trail Park Fence

Good Morning Mr. Joy,

Thank you for forwarding your comments to me. In hindsight, staff regrets not vetting this project more thoroughly. Installation of fences are pretty common and generally only generates positive feedback, typically from parents who appreciate a barrier to help in supervising their children.

If you are available, the Parks and Recreation Commission will be discussing this item on Wednesday, May 23rd at 7pm. We want to make sure that everyone who has thoughts on this issue has a chance to be heard in a public forum. The meeting takes place at City Hall, 10890 San Pablo Ave. If you are unable to attend, I can forward your comments below to the commissioners or you can send me something else.

Sincerely,

Chris Jones
Acting Recreation Director
City of El Cerrito
(510) 559-7005
www.el-cerrito.org

The City of El Cerrito serves, leads and supports our diverse community by providing exemplary and innovative services, public places and infrastructure, ensuring public safety and creating an economically and environmentally sustainable future.

From: Joy, Dan [mailto:DJoy@pacunion.com]
Sent: Monday, May 21, 2012 10:02 AM
To: Chris Jones
Subject: Canyon Trail Park Fence

Dear Mr. Jones,

I am very disturbed by the erection of the chain-link fence along the west side of Canyon Trail Park. The park is in my neighborhood and I walk my dog through there almost daily. The fence is an eye sore and is totally disrespectful of the beautiful grove of redwood trees behind it. I want to know who authorized the construction of this fence? It seems that the purpose is for children's soccer and to keep soccer balls from going down into the canyon. This park was not built as a soccer field. Those of us who use it all the time have tolerated the soccer the past couple of years but in reality it is now being used for that all the time prohibiting those of us who live in the neighborhood from using our own park. This is wrong and totally not acceptable. This is a natural park designed to enjoy nature, not for playing soccer. The area there should be for everyone to use, not just soccer kids that are coming from other areas to use our park. The fence is a disgrace to what the Parks and Recreation Department are supposed to be doing. A natural setting park such as this should be preserved for its wooded setting, not disgraced by an ugly fence for the purpose of some sports event. I ask that the Parks and Recreation Department stop renting out our field to soccer kids and return it for our neighborhood to use and that the fence be removed immediately.

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Chris Jones

From: Dan Plonsey [dplonsey@yahoo.com]
ent: Monday, May 21, 2012 9:43 PM
ro: Jerry Bradshaw; Chris Jones; Bill Jones; Council members
Subject: ugly fence in Canyon Trail Park

Dear El Cerrito Leaders,

I am a homeowner on Ludwig Avenue, in El Cerrito. My family and I are frequent users of Canyon Trail Park: I take walks through it every morning, play frisbee with friends and family, and recently my boys and I have begun playing tennis there.

First, I do owe you many thanks for maintaining the park and the canyon trail. It's a beautiful park at all times of year. I appreciate that it is made available to children, players of various sports, picnickers and dog-walkers. (I have a soft spot for the dog-walkers, and am glad that the city has been lenient in not cracking down on off-leash dogs!) The park has been a great place for meeting other El Cerritans, in particular the dog-walkers, who are happy to have conversations about pretty much anything.

However... I have to say that the new fence is really, really ugly. Typically as I talk in the park, I like to look out in the direction of the fence (that is, I did before the fence), because it is a beautiful view. I can imagine an El Cerrito that is without people: just trees, birds and frogs.

I am assuming that the fence was installed at the request of the soccer players. While I can appreciate the annoyance of having to run down the hill after a mis-kicked ball, I think that the city -- meaning: the rest of us -- are already being generous in allowing them to use the park. We are already generous in not complaining about them painting white lines on the grass, leaving their goals lying around, leaving plastic wrappers from the little juicebox straws littering the field. We are already generous in allowing their regular weekend use of a public park, so that I can't go there to play frisbee with my friends and my kids.

The fence needs to go, and perhaps the soccer players too. Let them pay for some other more appropriate field.

Or maybe a compromise could be reached, such as the planting of bushes as a natural barrier, just over the crest of the hill.

Sincerely,
Dan Plonsey
5670 Ludwig Avenue