



## MINUTES

### SUNNYVALE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION July 10, 2013

The Parks and Recreation Commission met in regular session in Council Chambers, 456 West Olive Avenue with Vice Chair Pochowski presiding.

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m.

#### **ROLL CALL**

##### **Commission Members Present:**

Vice Chair Robert Pochowski  
Commissioner Henry Alexander  
Commissioner Ralph Kenton  
Commissioner Craig Pasqua

##### **Commission Members Absent:**

Commissioner Robert Harms

**Council Liaison:** Councilmember Jim Griffith (Present)

##### **Staff Present:**

Anna Lewis, Administrative Aide  
Patricia Lord, Senior Management Analyst  
Jim Stark, Parks Manager  
Kent Steffens, Director of Public Works  
Daniel Wax, Superintendent of Community Services

Vice Chair Pochowski welcomed new Parks and Recreation Commissioner Ralph Kenton.

#### **PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS –**

Garth Williams announced the 19<sup>th</sup> annual Trailblazers race will be held September 29, 2013. The event will be held at the Microsoft Campus and includes various races and family activities. Details are available at [www.stevenscreektrail.org](http://www.stevenscreektrail.org)

#### **CONSENT CALENDAR**

1.A. Approval of Draft Minutes of May 8, 2013.

**Commissioner Alexander motioned and Commissioner Pasqua seconded to approve the draft minutes of May 8, 2013. Motion carries (3-0) Commissioner Kenton abstained as he was not present at the meeting.**

1.B. Approval of Draft Minutes of June 12, 2013 Special Meeting.

Vice Chair Pochowski requested the minutes be changed to reflect Ralph Kenton was “appointed” instead of “elected.”

**Commissioner Kenton motioned and Commissioner Pasqua seconded to approve the draft minutes of June 12, 2013 with changes. Motion carries (3-0) Commissioner Pochowski abstained as he was not present at the special meeting.**

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Garth Williams, a member of the Board of Directors of Friends of Stevens Creek Trail, provided their annual report to the Sunnyvale Parks and Recreation Commission. A feasibility study about connecting the Stevens Creek Trail through Sunnyvale will likely come to this Commission as a draft. The mission of the Friends of Stevens Creek Trail is to promote community pride, involvement, completion, enhancement and enjoyment of the Stevens Creek Trail. Mr. Williams provided examples of their work.

### **PUBLIC HEARINGS/GENERAL BUSINESS**

#### **2. Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Feasibility of Establishing Additional Dog Parks and Off-Leash Alternatives in Sunnyvale’s Park System (Study Issue) and Budget Modification No. 2**

Senior Management Analyst Patricia Lord presented the staff report. The study addressed four areas: 1- additional sites and locations, 2 - amenities, 3 - unfenced and off-leash options, and 4 - portable fencing options.

Parks Manager James Stark and Ms Lord addressed questions from Commissioners. The park renovation budget and maintenance of dog parks were discussed. Director of Public Works, Kent Steffens, indicated the dog park amenities could be included within the park renovation budget without impacting other park features. The community survey for the study issue and off-leash trends were discussed. Panama Park was evaluated for off-leash dogs, however staff does not recommend changing the municipal code for off-leash hours at any parks due to risk and safety concerns.

Vice Chair Pochowski opened public comment at 7:30 p.m.

Mark Pruitt represented an informal group of 130 dog owners who use Panama Park and who have met as a group to discuss off-leash options. His group supports an

experimental off-leash option at Panama Park in addition to increasing dog park locations. He referenced New York Cities' off-leash program, which is revenue positive, because it requires purchase of a dog tag. His group would support the same approach.

Dawn Peralta expressed that she is happy that Sunnysvale is considering modifying the Las Palmas dog park to include area for small dogs. She is a member of a group of approximately 35-40 small dog owners who let their dogs play off-leash within temporary fencing, provided by the group at Las Palmas Park. They would like consideration of an off-leash option within a temporary fencing area until there is a specific small dog area in the dog park. She described the fencing used as 4' tall and overlapping so dogs cannot escape. She explained that many of the people in the group no longer go to that park, because they were ticketed when letting their dog off-leash.

Soren Witzman commented on the proposed schedule for the renovation of the dog park. He expressed that one year is a long time to wait for small dogs to have an option in Las Palmas Park and felt it could be easier to review the code and allow off-leash options now. He mentioned that the report doesn't site incidences that have occurred with small dogs, and he believes homeowners have proven responsible. He supports allowing small dogs off-leash, and suggested if there is an incident the dog license, if instituted, could be revoked.

Alan Moo requested the commission recommend a dog park at Serra Park. The area along the condominiums, near the school, is largely unused and there would be minimal cost to add fencing for a dog park. He cited the report that Serra Park is not a recommended site because the renovation is not schedule until 2023/24. He is aware of many dog owners in that area and explained that two substantial upgrades were made to playgrounds recently, so he thinks a dog park could be add as easily without much delay.

David Decker lives near Panama Park and supports off-leash options. He has noticed there are many hours when no people use the park. He explained how the dog benefits by being off-leash and believes dogs get frustrated while on a leash. He provided a copy of a New York City 20 year study which experimented with off-leash policies and resulted in a dramatic reduction in dog bites. He challenges the liability issues. He supports the idea to post times that dogs would be allowed off-leash in the park. He stated that off-leash dog owners are currently ticketed at Panama Park.

Monica Schwenke expressed support of the work done on the report. She felt the Las Palmas dog park is underutilized by small dogs because they are bullied by other dogs. She had questions about the timeframe and renovation schedule. She suggested a fence be put down the middle of the dog park in the meantime. Parks Manager Stark clarified that the dog park would be closed for six months while renovated. Ms Schwenke suggested the City consider an alternate location for displaced dogs and owners during construction. She suggested that if off-leash was an option, a "good

canine citizen” test could be implemented to obtain a dog license. It also creates dog training opportunities. She was happy about the progress and the potential for three dog parks in the future.

Susan Smith supports an interim solution for small dogs. She is a member of the group of small dog owners at Las Palmas Park. She is open to the idea of community liaisons to help monitor off-leash options. She feels the group has demonstrated they could self-supervise and would be willing to meet city requirements. The group has a facebook page and members are connected via email. They would be open to having a representative leading the group and would like their temporary fencing to be sanctioned.

Jim Tang had questions about the turf, and stated that the grass at Las Palmas has not grown well. Parks Manager Stark stated the artificial turf is significantly more expensive, and there are new varieties of turf grass that will hold up better than the current version. The City may recommend that the dog park is closed once a week to let the grass grow. Mr. Stark also stated the public showed greater interest in natural grass over artificial turf. Mr. Tang requested consideration regarding the size of the small dog area, stating the space should be proportional to the dog’s size. He made several suggestions to raise money if the budget was an issue.

Ray Gehring is a member of the group supporting off-leash options at Panama Park. He mentioned there are a variety of dogs, and dog sizes at the park and the dogs all get along. He explained that when large dogs have space, and are not confined, they get along better with other dogs. Panama Park provides enough space for large dogs to get their exercise. He explained how large dogs can make a neighborhood safer.

Vice Chair Pochowski closed the public hearing at 8:02 p.m.

The commissioners considered the report. Commissioner Pasqua noted there is a significant movement for off-leash options and it is a potential revenue source. He noted there was no opposition to off-leash alternatives. Commissioners agreed enforcing off-leash regulations and licensing would present a challenge, and discussed the hygiene of the parks. Ms Lord explained the design of a traditional dog park with a double gated entry, to mitigate issues as a dog enters. Mr. Stark described Panama Park which is fenced on three sides.

**Commissioner Pasqua motioned to approve Alternative 1 - Approve Budget Modification No. 2 to appropriate \$100,000 from the Park Dedication Fund in FY 2013/14 for the purpose of making improvements to Las Palmas Dog Park, including the addition of natural grass and a separate area for small dogs; Alternative 2 – Approve inclusion of new dog parks at Lakewood and Fair Oaks Parks as part of the scopes of work for the approved major renovation capital projects at each site in the Park Dedication Fund 20 year plan; and Alternative 3 – Direct staff to prepare an amendment to the Municipal Code to allow dogs off-**

**leash at designated locations and times in Sunnyvale's Park System and establish rules for such under the authority of the Director of Public Works.**

**The motion died for a lack of a second.**

**Vice Chair Pochowski motioned and Commissioner Kenton seconded to approve Alternative 1 - Approve Budget Modification No. 2 to appropriate \$100,000 from the Park Dedication Fund in FY 2013/14 for the purpose of making improvements to Las Palmas Dog Park, including the addition of natural grass and a separate area for small dogs; and Alternative 2 – Approve inclusion of new dog parks at Lakewood and Fair Oaks Parks as part of the scopes of work for the approved major renovation capital projects at each site in the Park Dedication Fund 20 year plan; with the addition to expedite renovation of Las Palmas to create an area for small dogs.**

**Motion failed (2-2) Commissioner Alexander and Pasqua dissented.**

Commissioner Alexander had concerns that expediting the work would cause a hardship on dog owners. The dog park would be closed in the interim with no alternative for up to 6 months.

**Commissioner Alexander motioned, and Vice Chair Pochowski seconded to approve Alternative 1 – Approve Budget Modification No. 2 to appropriate \$100,000 from the Park Dedication Fund in FY 2013/14 for the purpose of making improvements to Las Palmas Dog Park, including the addition of natural grass and a separate area for small dogs; and Alternative 2 – Approve inclusion of new dog parks at Lakewood and Fair Oaks Parks as part of the scopes of work for the approved major renovation capital projects at each site in the Park Dedication Fund 20 year plan.**

**Motioned carried (3-1) Commissioner Pasqua dissented.**

Commissioner Pasqua was interested in the off-leash alternative and felt there was a large section of the community requesting off-leash options.

**Commissioner Pasqua motioned to approve Alternative 3 – Direct staff to prepare an amendment to the Municipal Code to allow dogs off-leash at designated locations and times in Sunnyvale's Park System and establish rules for such under the authority of the Director of Public Works.**

**The motion died for a lack of a second.**

### **3. Report out on June 12, 2013 Parks and Recreation Facilities Tour**

Superintendent Wax provided an overview of the two hour park tour, which consisted of a tour of 10 parks and recreation facilities in Sunnyvale.

#### **4. Election of Officers for FY 13/14**

Nominations for Chair were opened.

Commissioner Alexander nominated Commissioner Pasqua, who declined indicating he would consider a vice chair nomination.

Commissioner Pasqua nominated Vice Chair Pochowski, who declined as he has served in the capacity for a number of years already.

Vice Chair Pochowski nominated Commissioner Alexander, who accepted the nomination.

There were no other nominations for Chair, nominations were closed and the vote was taken.

**VOTE for Commissioner Alexander for Chair: 4-0 passed. Commissioner Alexander was declared Chair for FY 13/14.**

Nominations for Vice Chair were opened.

Commissioner Kenton nominated Commissioner Pasqua for Vice Chair, who accepted the nomination.

There were no other nominations for Vice Chair, nominations were closed and the vote was taken.

**VOTE for Commissioner Pasqua for Vice Chair: 4-0 passed. Commissioner Pasqua was declared Vice Chair for FY 13/14.**

#### **NON-AGENDA ITEMS AND COMMENTS**

##### Commissioners Oral Comments

Commissioner Pasqua thanked staff for the parks and recreation facilities tour; it was very informative and provided a sense of purpose.

Commissioner Kenton complimented the city on the training he received to orient him as a new commissioner.

##### Staff Oral Comments

Superintendent Wax provided comments as follows:

- The mandatory training for Chair and Vice Chair is on August 8, 2013 at 6:00 p.m. More details will be provided to Commissioners Alexander and Pasqua.
- The proclamation for July as Parks and Recreation Month, from the June 25, 2013 City Council meeting was presented.
- The Senior Center 10 year anniversary gala event is on July 19, 2013. Invitations to the Black and White Ball were provided to Commissioners.

Council Member Griffith reminded Vice Chair Pochowski or his designee, since the new chair will not yet be trained, to attend the July 23, 2012 Council meeting regarding the Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Feasibility of Establishing Additional Dog Parks and Off-Leash Alternatives in Sunnyvale's Park System (Study Issue) and Budget Modification No. 2.

**INFORMATION ONLY ITEMS**

None

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Wax  
Superintendent of Community Services