



**CITY OF SANTA BARBARA**  
**NEIGHBORHOOD ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**AGENDA DATE:** July 11, 2018  
**TO:** Neighborhood Advisory Council  
**FROM:** Administration Division, Parks and Recreation Department  
**SUBJECT:** Parks and Recreation Facility Public Use And Misuse Update

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Neighborhood Advisory Council (NAC) receive an update and discuss public use and misuse issues at City parks and recreation facilities.

**DISCUSSION:**

The purpose of this report is to provide the NAC with an update on public use and misuse of parks and recreation facilities.

At the February 2017 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting, staff communicated current concerns, management challenges, and site impacts related to misuse issues at City parks and recreation facilities. Since then, staff has focused on collaborating with representatives from the homeless services coalition to address the use of parks to provide free meals, working with local service providers to increase the amount of activity at several parks, modifying the Park Ranger schedule to provide more comprehensive and geographical coverage, and improving communication with the Santa Barbara Police Department (SBPD) to share observations and request an increased presence and enforcement during peak programming times.

Use of Parks to Provide Free Meals

Since March 2017, the Parks and Recreation Department (Department), in collaboration with representatives from the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department (SBCPHD), Central Coast Collaboration to End Homelessness (C3H), Doctors Without Walls, and various faith-based organizations, implemented an annual permitting process for the existing use of parks for free meals and services. Stakeholders using Alameda Park quickly embraced the change and completed the necessary permitting and insurance requirements. These annual permits are reviewed annually by the SBCPHD and the Department. A similar process is being developed for use of Plaza del Mar, which will be followed by stakeholder meetings and implementation.

### Increasing Activity in Parks

The Department continues to meet with Santa Barbara PONY Baseball, Special Olympics, and other youth serving agencies to maximize use of Ortega Park to dissuade misuse activities while balancing the need to manage the turf impact. The Department approved the temporary installation of a home run fence for baseball activities and permitted access to the pool restrooms to address coach and parent concerns regarding safe public restroom access. Recently, Revolution Youth Soccer secured permits for using the park, which brings 600 youth and their families to the park on weekends throughout the year. This type of positive activity further discourages misuse behavior.

### Modifying the Park Ranger Schedule

The Department receives funding for three Park Ranger positions to patrol 60 park and recreation facilities. When the program is fully staffed, the current schedule will be modified to increase days of service, expand daily service hours, and assign resources to geographical areas where misuse occurs more frequently.

### SBPD

Staff representing the Parks and Recreation Divisions meet quarterly with SBPD Beat Coordinators and Restorative Policing Officers to share observations, communicate challenges, and strategize on how to maximize resources to reduce misuse in parks and recreation facilities. The Recreation Division provides the SBPD and Park Rangers with quarterly calendars showing peak camp and program activity scheduled in parks or recreation facilities where misuse often occurs.

### Next Steps

The Department recently initiated a master plan process for Dwight Murphy Field and Ortega Park. During the first round of community meetings, many of the participants, including residents, businesses and park users, expressed the importance for incorporating methods to improve safety and circulation, expanding positive activity and hours of use, and improving sightlines to eliminate areas where misuse occurs. While the Park Master Plan process moves forward, the Department will continue to manage existing efforts, while developing strategies to target misuse in parks and recreation facilities.

**SUBMITTED BY:** Rich Hanna, Assistant Parks and Recreation Director