



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: September 23, 2009

TO: Park and Recreation Commission

FROM: Recreation Division, Parks and Recreation Department

SUBJECT: Recognition of Monica Jones, Sandra O'Meara and the Friends of Los Baños del Mar Pool

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission recognize Monica Jones, Sandra O'Meara, and the Friends of Los Baños del Mar Pool for their support of aquatic programming for youth and adults at Los Baños and Ortega Park swimming pools.

DISCUSSION: Facing a \$1.5 million budget reduction for Fiscal Year 2010, the Parks and Recreation Department had to make significant but strategic cuts to programs and services to meet the budget challenge. To help meet the budget reduction, the aquatic section proposed eliminating the Sunday noon adult lap swim time at Los Baños pool and youth recreation swim at Ortega Park pool. The proposal to eliminate both of these programs proved controversial with many of the regular adult swimmers at Los Baños and many Eastside community groups and families. It was this controversy and a passion for swimming that caught the attention of Monica Jones and eventually financial support from Sandra O'Meara and the Friends of Los Baños del Mar Pool to continue these two programs.

Ms. Jones immediately enlisted the help of Sandra O'Meara, President, and the Friends of Los Baños del Mar Pool Board to begin a fundraising effort to keep these important community swimming programs operating. A meeting between Ms. O'Meara and staff resulted in the creation of a formal agreement between the City and the Friends of Los Baños del Mar Pool to pay a total of \$9,100 to keep the recreation swim program for youth at Ortega Park pool open Monday through Saturday for the summer months, beginning July 1 through August 22, 2009, and Sunday adult lap swim at Los Baños from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. from July 1, 2009, through June 30, 2010.

The fundraising effort was extensive and tireless. Ms. Jones attended every City public meeting to bring awareness to the importance of these programs and solicit funding to keep these programs open. Ms. Jones and other volunteers attended every adult lap swim time at Los Baños pool to hand out flyers to swimmers, and she spent numerous hours going into the community to meet with various leaders and youth organizations. The fundraising effort culminated with an event at Los Baños pool on August 16th, which was well-attended by adult swimmers, community leaders, Councilmembers, and City

staff. Youth groups that could not be in attendance sent thank you posters which were prominently displayed around the facility to recognize the effort Monica Jones, Sandra O'Meara, and the Friends of Los Baños del Mar Pool contributed to keeping these programs open.

This summer at Ortega Park pool a total of 2,455 youth under the age of 13 participated in recreation swim Monday through Friday. The pool capacity is limited to 40 participants; however, during, the two-hour recreation swim, lifeguard staff rotated participants in and out of the pool area every 45 minutes to accommodate the daily average attendance of 60-70 participants. Saturday participation was much lower with only a total of 218 participants for an average of 15-20 swimmers participating in the five- hour recreation swim.

Participation during Sunday adult noon swim at Los Baños pool increases during the summer due to the weather, and visitors paying to swim while visiting Santa Barbara. The average Sunday swim attendance during the summer was 59 swimmers compared to an average of 46 and 43 swimmers in spring and fall respectively.

It is with great gratitude that the Parks and Recreation Department recognizes these individuals and the Friends of Los Baños del Mar Pool for their incredible support of important youth and adult aquatic programming in the community.

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