



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: February 22, 2017

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Administration Division, Parks and Recreation Department

SUBJECT: Parks and Recreation Facility Public Use and Misuse Update

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission receive an update on public use and misuse issues at City parks and recreation facilities.

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this report is to provide the Commission with a progress update on public use and misuse of parks and recreation facilities following the December 21, 2016, Parks and Recreation Commission meeting.

At the December meeting, staff communicated current concerns, management challenges and site impacts related to misuse issues at City parks and recreation facilities. The presentation outlined various Parks and Recreation Department (Department) management strategies to increase safety and usability, and to reduce negative misuse impacts. Since December, 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

On January 20, 2017, the Department coordinated a stakeholder meeting 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. The purpose of the meeting was to improve communication and better understand the free meals and services programs provided at Alameda Park and Plaza del Mar. The Department shared the need to establish a more formal framework, while SBCPHD provided information on the importance of food safety, preparation, transportation and service in public spaces. The meeting was productive and stakeholders expressed a willingness to collaborate with the Department and SBCPHD. A smaller group met February 2, 2017, to receive more information regarding the processes for securing Temporary Health Permits and an On-Going Facility Use

Application. At the conclusion of the meeting, the group agreed to present the information to the broader stakeholder group on March 2, 2017, and assist with paperwork to begin formalizing the existing use of parks for free meals and services. It is anticipated that Alameda Park stakeholders will begin to implement these processes over the next 90 days, which will be followed by stakeholders providing similar services at Plaza del Mar.

Increasing Activity in Parks

The Department recently met with Santa Barbara PONY Baseball to discuss their needs to continue using Ortega Park for youth baseball practices. During February, the baseball infield will be renovated to improve the playing surface and weekly maintenance will occur throughout the spring season. To address coach and parent concerns regarding safe restrooms, PONY baseball was provided permitted access to the pool restrooms for players and parents during all practice times. The Sports Section is working with Santa Barbara Special Olympics to return to Ortega Park for fall soccer and softball activities, and the Aquatic Section has initiated conversations with Franklin Elementary School to provide swimming lessons for all third grade students at Ortega Park swimming pool.

Modifying the Park Ranger Schedule

During the FY 2015 budget process, the Department received funding for a third Park Ranger to increase patrols in the waterfront area. With the program fully staffed, opportunities to increase days of service, expand daily service hours, and assign resources to geographical areas where misuse occurs more frequently, such as parks and facilities in the waterfront, are being evaluated for implementation.

SBPD

Key Department staff will 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 will continue providing the SBPD and Park Rangers with quarterly calendars coinciding with peak camp and program activity scheduled in parks or recreation facilities where misuse often occurs.

Next Steps

The Department plans to continue existing efforts, implement Park Ranger schedule changes and meet with the SBPD on a quarterly basis to strategically target misuse in parks and recreation facilities. Staff will return to the Commission on a quarterly basis to provide updates.

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