



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: May 13, 2020

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Administration Division, Parks and Recreation Department

SUBJECT: Director's Report

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Commission receive a presentation on the status of the various Parks and Recreation Department (Department) initiatives and activities.

DISCUSSION:

COVID-19 Response

In early March, the City began various steps to respond to the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The City's response ramped up dramatically with the City Council's first Emergency Order on March 12 and Governor Newsom's Stay-at Home Executive Order on March 19. Since that time, the City organization and the Department have taken a number of steps to comply with the order yet maintain essential services. All City response efforts are undertaken in cooperation with other local agencies and nonprofit partners, and with the leadership of the County Office of Emergency Services.

Although all Parks and Recreation facilities are closed, essential services continue, to the extent feasible, with available staff including: food distribution and senior lunch programs; parks and tree maintenance services and construction of building renewal projects (Cabrillo Pavilion, Chase Palm Park Center, Bohnett Park restroom). Staff also continue to respond to email and phone contacts, respond to requests for service and program/facility reservations, conduct meetings with colleagues, contractors and consultants via teleconferencing, submit grant applications and project development applications, and make presentations to design review boards.

Since indoor and outdoor facility rental reservations and sports programs were cancelled and key outdoor recreation areas, including playgrounds, skate park, sports fields, pools, basketball courts, tennis and pickle ball courts, beach volleyball courts, and outdoor picnic areas were closed, the Department maintains its outreach efforts through site signage, press releases, and social media, encouraging compliance with physical distancing in order to keep parks and beaches open. The Department also volunteers a number of staff

to be mutual aid workers with the County. All of the Department's efforts are undertaken with limited staff resources due to the release of 252 hourly staff, and the need for many permanent staff to stay-at-home to care for family or themselves.

In the last few weeks, the Department balanced the need to continue to manage high public use of parks and beaches within the physical distancing and sanitation requirements while pursuing opportunities to reopen facilities. In response to the warm weather and increasing use of beaches, the Department increased Aquatics staff to support daily beach tower and vehicle patrol, assigned Park Rangers to work through each weekend, and opened the Municipal Tennis Center for both tennis and pickle ball. Working with the County, the Department also secured approval to open the Santa Barbara Golf Club. The Department is developing plans to reopen Los Baños and the Ortega Park Pool, and hopes to establish managed access to the skate park, consistent with County health directives. Given the potential for physical distancing and sanitation requirements to remain in effect for some time, it is anticipated that many summer programs and services will be significantly curtailed and/or cancelled. However, as the spring progresses and summer begins, the Department will continue to seek opportunities to resume programs and services wherever feasible.

Wind Event

During the evening of April 23 through the morning of April 24, 2020, the city experienced a wind event, affecting areas of the Eastside, downtown, the foothills, and the beachfront. Reported wind speeds at the peak of the incident were 78 mph. Parks and Forestry staff, along with contractual tree maintenance crews, began responding to calls for service during the early morning of April 24. Since then, Forestry staff have been working to remove all debris from streets, remove broken or hanging branches from trees, and remove trees where preservation is no longer an option.

As of May 5, 2020, Forestry staff performed 108 tasks related to the cleanup efforts for a total of 389.5 hours, and anticipate another 50-60 hours of response to complete the cleanup. Parks staff are still receiving calls related to the wind event, so estimates for completion of cleanup tasks could increase. As is unfortunately common with wind events, 18 City trees were lost. Two of the most notable trees lost were the *Eucalyptus cornuta*, commonly referred to as Yate, which failed in Chase Palm Park. These trees, estimated to be over 100 years old, have ties to longstanding Santa Barbara horticultural pioneers Dr. Franceschi and Dr. Doremus, who were involved in introducing and planting this particular species in town.

PREPARED BY: Jill E. Zachary, Parks and Recreation Director