



**CITY OF SANTA BARBARA**  
**PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT**

**AGENDA DATE:** July 22, 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 various Parks and Recreation Department (Department) initiatives and activities.

**DISCUSSION:**

Fourth of July

Each year the Department plays a critical role for the Fourth of July holiday by coordinating the special event planning, overseeing event day logistics, providing beach and aquatic safety, and performing the post event clean-up. Historically, July 4th brings thousands of people to the beachfront to celebrate; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 was starkly different than past years. Following the closure announcement for Los Angeles County beaches, and subsequently Ventura County beaches, on Thursday July 2nd, Santa Barbara County issued a Health Officer Order to close beaches in Santa Barbara County for Fourth of July weekend from 12:01 a.m. on Friday, July 3rd, and continued through 11:59 p.m. on July 5th. For the City of Santa Barbara, this included the closure of East, West, and Leadbetter beaches along with parks adjacent to those beaches, and the beach and park areas from Shoreline to Arroyo Burro County Park. Although public beaches and adjacent parks were closed to passive recreation, including sitting, lying, standing, sunbathing, sightseeing, picnicking, and all other non-exercise, passive, or sedentary activities, they remained open for water sports, running, walking, cycling, or other forms of active physical activity.

Planning for a traditional Fourth of July holiday includes working with other City Departments to produce and post tailored signage to remind the public of prohibited activities, scheduling double the number of beach lifeguards assigned to work on the holiday and extending a typical workday through the conclusion of the fireworks to ensure beach patrons leave the waterfront safely, and scheduling all Park Rangers and parks operations staff to assist with managing large crowds and the increased volume of trash that is generated. Even with the closure of City beaches and adjacent parks and the cancellation of the annual fireworks

show, the Department maintained high staffing levels in anticipation of large crowds, a high heat weekend, and the need to provide outreach regarding required compliance with the beach closure and social distancing mandates. Under the Department's July 4th Staffing and Operating Plan, all four Park Rangers were assigned to provide support in the waterfront, 12 beach lifeguards staffed the towers, 2 emergency vehicles staffed with lifeguard emergency medical technicians patrolled all beach areas, and 14 parks operations staff assisted with restroom and trash services. Additionally, staffing levels were increased to provide further support in the waterfront, including assigning 19 staff on July 3rd and 32 staff on July 5th. Over the course of the Fourth of July weekend, the Department expended approximately 812 work hours in the waterfront, reported over 3,000 individual public contacts to remind residents and visitors of the beach closure and prohibited activities, and worked to keep the beaches and parks clean and safe. Almost all interaction with the public was positive, and many complied with staff direction to leave an area when asked.

#### Facility Improvement and Capital Projects

Although Department programs and services have been largely focused on responding to the coronavirus pandemic since March, work to design, permit, and construct a number of facility improvement and capital projects proceeded.

- Bohnett Park Restroom Renovation: With Community Development Block Grant Funds, the restroom at Bohnett Park received a complete interior renovation similar in style to the renovation efforts at City park restrooms in other locations.
- Chase Palm Park Center Renovation: With Fiscal Year 2020 General Fund facility renewal funds, the Department worked with the Facilities Division to complete interior renovations and upgrades that include new ceiling tiles, paint, carpet, and lighting. The project also included an overhaul of the kitchen area to better support catering and the opening of the building interior to create an improved connection between the entry way, large room, and sun room. Additional improvements include air conditioning and revitalized landscaping. A formal fence to better delineate the outdoor space that is open by reservation only will be completed this summer.
- Plaza Vera Cruz Renovation: Discussed in greater detail in the Parks Division report for this month, the Department is undertaking a turf, tree, and landscape renewal project and plans to create a designated recreational field space.
- Bohnett Park Access and Picnic Area Improvements and Storm Water Treatment: Due to reduced capital funds, the Department will be implementing a scaled back park renovation project in conjunction with a Creeks storm water treatment project this fall. Park related improvements are largely funded through a CDBG grant.
- Louise Lowry Davis Center Exterior Renovation: With CDBG funds and a Measure C allocation, the Department will undertake the exterior improvements in Fiscal Year

2021. These include creating the outdoor patio space, improved entry way, lighting, and access. Since interior programs are not likely to be permitted for some time, construction will not impact services. Any outdoor services, such as the senior lunch and food distribution programs, will be located at the Westside Neighborhood Center.

- Eastside Neighborhood Park: The Department hopes to embark on a mini renewal of Eastside Neighborhood Park that will include renovation of the restroom and replacement of the playground. Although full funding has yet to be secured, the Department received partial funding from the CDBG program for the renovation of the restroom at Eastside Neighborhood Park, and may be able to match this funding with General Fund Capital and Measure C funds to complete both the restroom renovation and playground replacement. Additional improvements include upgrading the lighting, relocating the picnic area, and removing some of the oak trees to open up sight lines into and through the park.

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