



REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, September 27, 2017  
7:00 pm

**El Cerrito City Hall  
Council Chambers  
10890 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito**

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the Recreation Department at 510-559-7000. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting. (28 CFT 35.102-35.104 ADA Title II).

1. **Roll Call:** Chair – Glen Lubcke, Ben Chuaqui, Manish Doshi, Norman La Force, Tara McIntire, Robin Mitchell, David Zuckermann.
2. **Commission / Staff Communications / Announcements**

Swim Center exploratory work was done and a few leaks and areas of pipes that are not as strong as they should be were found. Recreation Department is looking at all of its options. The City is hoping to have City Council award a contract on November 21, 2017.

3. **Oral Communications From The Public**  
None

4. **Council/Staff Liaison Announcements and Reports**

Christopher Jones reported on matters of general interest to the Park and Recreation Commission, Council policies, priorities and significant actions taken by the City Council at the September 19, 2017 City Council Meeting.

A special note was that, City Council took the suggestion by the Commission of renaming Fairmont Park, Centennial Park.

5. **Approval of Minutes:** Exhibit 1: Meeting Minutes from August 23, 2017  
Approval of the August 23, 2017 Regular Meeting of the Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes.

Action: Moved, Seconded (Chuaqui / Doshi) and carried unanimously.

6. **Presentation and Discussion of Schematic Designs for Fairmont Park:** Melissa Tigbao and RDG, Design Consultants Bob Birkland and Peter Rohan

Staff presented the 65% design plans for Centennial Park (formerly Fairmont Park) based on feedback received from the public, Park and Recreation Commissioners and City staff. Audience question and answer period was followed by questions and comments from Park and Recreation Commissioners.

Staff Tigbao provided the Commission with an overview of the project budget, costs, and schedule. He reviewed the park setting and City of El Cerrito online survey. The comments from the Park and Recreation Department were taken into consideration when moving forward with the schematic plan. During the presentation, the Commission reviewed the schematic plan- entry, play, gather, open space and community garden. RDG Representative Rohan presented to the Commissioners the 65% PS+E changes to schematic plan including: demo, layout, Phase 2 construction (access corridor), grading, planting, irrigation, details, site elements, and play equipment. Birkland provided further information regarding the cost estimate.

Howdy Goudey expressed concerns specifically about grading and irrigation in the Community Garden area. Goudey also expressed a need for coordination with the WCCUSD regarding the fencing around and gate leading into Centennial Park. He suggested a pathway connecting the school and the park. Goudey also commented that the mid-park connection to the Ohlone Greenway should be a completely paved path and not segmented. Goudey feels that there might not be enough waste receptacles in the proposed plan. He also suggested a different style of trash receptacle than what is in the plan. Also, if the pine tree is removed as planned, there may be a need for grading in that area of the park. Goudey was concerned about the usage of compacted gravel.

RDA representatives responded to the public comments. RDA believes that they have properly planned the ADA accessibility of the pathway. The grades in the park's schematic were done evenly to meet requirements of Fairmont School and surrounding private property. The current budget is so tight, that the focus of the current plan is the center of the park. There is a possibility to shift funds to other areas however, RDA was strategic in what they are proposing to be completed in Phase 1 and what components (i.e. the sidewalk) would likely receive funding in Phase 2. Compacted gravel was selected because the options were to have gravel, mulch, nothing or a larger budget.

Tracy Taylor gave the following public comments: an area of particular concern is the crosswalk- that corner is incredible dangerous.

Staff responded by saying that the crosswalk is still very schematic. Exact placement has not been decided. The City is going through the process of evaluating where the sidewalk should be placed and what safety measures will be included. The crosswalk will not be completed in Phase 1. Instead, it will most likely be a part of the pavement improvement project.

Commissioner Doshi commented that some of the Phase 2 elements may be a part of the Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan. He also asked staff and RDG consultants if there could be a step graded/ terraced Community Garden in the park plans.

Commissioner Mitchell responded that if the garden was terraced, then the placement of the garden beds would not be able to change. Mitchell expressed further concerns about the Community Garden. Mitchell said that she understands that there is not more money to invest in that part of the plan, but is concerned that it may be a very long time before Phase 2 elements are completed. The cost estimate for a terraced garden would be \$5,000-\$10,000. There was further discussion about grading and path possibilities for the Community Garden and ADA access to different focal points of the park. RDG is anticipating the garden to an informal irrigation system. The water mainline is along the Ohlone Greenway and will “T” off to the garden. The City will be using BART irrigation valves.

Commissioner Zuckermann is intrigued about the public speaker’s comments about the WCCUSD plans for Fairmont School and how that relates to the City plans. RDG said that the communication with the School District has been difficult if not practically non-existent. There was discussion about possibilities depending on where the school decides to place the school fence and gate. The City does not know whether or not there will be access to the park from Fairmont School. The School District fence may be used by RDA as a construction fence.

Commissioner Chuaqui appreciates the work that has been done to incorporate the Commission’s comments. Sand is being used as a material in multiple areas of the parks. Commissioner Chuaqui has not noticed sand being used anymore at public parks. The use of sand was a point of discussion at the last internal City meeting. The Turtle feature is low enough for sand to be used in that area. The park is using a combination of sand and mulch. There is a lot of great play value in that combination. If it is not successful, the sand and mulch can be removed and the City could possibly install wood fiber instead. The City will be using a drought tolerant turf (seeded not sod), Stephen Prée, Environmental Programs Manager is ready to make that selection. The public meetings and online survey reported a high percentage of people that wanted open space; the City is trying to keep as much open space as possible.

ADA accessibility is a concern of Commissioner McIntire. Commissioner does not feel that there is equal opportunity to seating or access. She feels that the stairs by turtle seem odd and suggested for the stair to be pulled in more towards the turtle. Or, alternatively, make them a wider tread, to make it more welcoming. Commissioner McIntire made notes on the plans that she will provide consultants. RDA will work on updating the plan for the stairs and will look into seeing if concrete ramps will fit into the budget. RDA is also considering McIntire’s suggestion of using compacted gravel instead of fiber for ADA accessibility.

There was discussion amongst commissioners about fundraising to increase the park’s budget. The commission discussed which platform would be best and why.

The Park and Recreation Commission will receive a presentation at a later date on possible Phase 2 elements. Staff assured the Commission that there will be environmental testing to monitor the soils. No action was taken to recommend the design for approval by the City Council.

7. **Consideration of the Tree Committee' s Recommendation for the Location of a Centennial Tree Planting to Commemorate the City's 100th Anniversary:** Stephen Prée, Environmental Programs Manager/ City Arborist

There was discussion and action to endorse the Tree Committee's recommended site for a Centennial Tree planting and commemoration plaque site in the Ashbury Avenue median.

El Cerrito Urban Forrest Committee has decided to recommend planting a tree of significant stature, long-lived, and native to California. The tree selected by the Committee is the Valley Oak. The Valley Oak can live up to 500 years old. The location site is being recommended due to the limited open space within the City of El Cerrito. Additionally, the site location is keeping with the Urban Greening Plan. On September 20, 2017 a letter, detailing the proposed plan, was distributed to the residents on Ashbury Avenue where the tree would be planted. Before planting, a soil testing will be done. As the City Arborist, this is the tree Prée recommends. The City will modify the irrigation in the median to accommodate this low-water usage tree. This change in irrigation could offer opportunity for more native plant landscaping. The Committee would like to plant in the Centennial Year: 2017.

Chair Lubcke is in favor of this proposal and likes the placement of the commemorative tree planting. Commissioner La Force asked if other locations were considered specifically a central location. Other sites were considered including more centralized locations such as City Hall. The determination from Council Woman Ableson was to not obscure the design and flag in the front of City Hall. The stature of a Valley Oak is too large for this space. The initial recommendation was for it to be a prominent civic site but, this would take too much excavation of existing plants and design. The four sites that were considered were City Hall, Cerrito Vista Park, Ashbury Gateway South, and Baxter Gateway North. Chuaqui suggested for benches to be a part of the installation. Commissioner La Force suggested planting on a hillside. A hillside was not considered because of view obstruction issues.

Mike Shrago, former Tree Committee Chair, provided public comment that a tree at the entrance shows that the City is committed to an Urban Forest. Commissioner Doshi supports the selected planting location because it is a focal point because of the high amount of traffic flow coming into the El Cerrito on Ashbury Avenue.

Commissioner Zuckermann had the same initial concerns about the location, but after listening to the responses thinks it is a nice compliment to the El Cerrito entry way. Zuckermann does not like the selection of a Valley Oak tree. The Valley Oak is not a native El Cerrito tree. Successful planted and growing Valley Oak trees in the area can be found at the Oakland DMV, Berkeley Botanical Gardens, and Sacramento Street median. There is one Oak that is native and there was a proposal for 100 oaks on Motorcycle Hill. However, this was much too large of a project. The Committee did look at other trees. The Coastal Oak is less water tolerant. The Valley Oak had the longest longevity, most tolerant to shade, resistant to diseases.

Commissioner Mitchell supported the planting of a Valley Oak to be used as a marker for the entrance into El Cerrito- an official "Gateway." The Commission presented staff with suggestions for other tree types to be planted. Staff acknowledged the feedback from each commissioner and

while the feedback is appreciated, the action item in front of the Commission is only endorsement of the Tree Committee's recommendation to Council.

A motion was made to endorse the Tree Committee's recommended site for a Centennial Tree (the Valley Oak) planting and commemoration plaque site in the Ashbury Avenue median.

Action: Moved, Seconded (Doshi / Mitchell) and passed with an abstention from La Force.

**8. Park and Recreation Commission 2017-18 Goal Setting and Work Plan Formulation**

Agenda Item was tabled to the October, 25, 2017 Park & Recreation Commission meeting.

**9. Consideration of a Special Meeting to Replace the Regular Meetings Scheduled for November and December**

A motion was made to cancel the regular meetings in November and December 2017 due to holiday conflicts and schedule a Special Meeting on November 29, 2017.

Action: Moved, Seconded (Zuckermann / LaForce) and carried unanimously.

**10. Recreation Department Update:** Sarah DiBenedetto, Recreation Management Analyst

The Recreation Department HASEP (Harding Afterschool Enrichment Program) is offering 16 classes. There are currently 206 enrollments, and the most popular classes (based on enrollments and waitlists) are Lil' Ninja Warrior, Coding for Kids, and Cooking Round the World. MASEP (Madera Afterschool Enrichment Program), is offering 19 classes. There are currently 213 enrollments, and the most popular classes are Lil' Ninja Warrior, Drama Club, and Kiki's Craftaganza (multi-media art class).

The Senior Center is hosting a Senior resource Fair at the El Cerrito Community Center on Wednesday, October 4, 2017 9am-1pm.

The Swim Center is currently undergoing an exterior paint project.

**11. Items For Future Agendas**

- a. Goal Setting (October)
- b. Bike Park Presentation, Gary Hill (October)
- c. Ohlone Greenway Master Plan Overview (TBD)
- d. Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan (TBD)

**12. Meeting Adjournment 9:20pm**