

PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, November 13, 2002
Lakeside Park Garden Center, Oakland, CA

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER:

A regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission was held at the Lakeside Park Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, California. Chairperson Webb convened the meeting at 4:40 p.m. Jim Ryugo, Secretary to the Commission, conducted roll call. A quorum was present.

2. ROLL CALL: (two vacancies)

Present: Valerie Abad, Larry Magid, Theresa Nelson, William Patterson, Mary Ellen Tong, Matthew Webb, Jeffery Wong

Absent: Dinah Fischbach-Bensen, Yvonne Myers

Staff Present: Jim Ryugo, Mary Perisic, Martin Matarrese

Visitors: Hans Carlberg, Mario Juarez, Gillian Garro, Valerie Winemiller, Eric Mills, Ken Katz, Jeffrey Hughley, La Ron Alford, Richard Orlando, Peggy Stinnet

3. DISPOSITION OF MINUTES:

A. Minutes of September 11, 2002 regular meeting:

MOTION: Commissioner Nelson moved approval. Commissioner Abad seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

B. Minutes of the October 9, 2002 work session:

MOTION: Commissioner Nelson moved approval. Commissioner Abad seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

4. SPECIAL ORDERS: Chairperson Webb introduced new Commissioners, Mary Ellen Tong and Larry Magid who had been sworn in by the City Clerk prior to the meeting. Hans Carlberg and Mario Juarez, who had yet to be sworn in, were also introduced.

5. DETERMINATION OF SCHEDULE—OUTSTANDING AGENDA ITEMS:

- Add PRAC Retreat and orientation of new members.

6. MODIFICATIONS TO THE AGENDA:

Item 12A moved up.

7. COMMUNICATIONS:

A. California Association of Park and Recreation Commissioners and Board Members Award Nominations: Noted

B. Letter from Sam Cohen, Friends of Sausal Creek, re installation of a plaque in Dimond Canyon in memory of Michael Grayson: A representative of Friends of Sausal Creek will be invited to attend next meeting to discuss location of plaque. Item to be agendaized as New Business.

- C. Letter from Officer Laura Thurman, Oakland Police Mounted Unit, re installation of plaque on path around Lake Merritt in memory of Leon Olson: Officer Thurman will be invited to attend next meeting to discuss location of plaque. Item to be agendized as New Business.

8. **PRAC COMMITTEE REPORTS:** None
9. **ADVISORY COUNCIL REPORTS:** None
10. **CONDITIONAL USE PERMITS:** None
11. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**
- A. Election of Officers:

MOTION: Commissioner Wong moved to elect the slate as nominated (Webb for Chair, Nelson for Vice-Chair). Commission Patterson seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

12. **NEW BUSINESS:**
- A. Pesticide Use Policy: Mr. Jim Ryugo gave a brief summary. The PRAC agenda contains 5 years' worth of staff reports that have gone to City Council and PRAC regarding the OPR Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program. The key staff person who oversaw the IPM program is no longer working for the City. The Oakland Parks Coalition's (OPC) recent report to the City Council discussed the quality of parks including weed control and abatement. It is the public's perception that there are more weeds in the parks and median strips.

The question is how to control the weeds without pesticides other than the use of manual labor, or whether a limited amount of pesticides should be used in the parks, which would require amending the City's IPM policy. Some methods that OPR is using include gas powered weed eaters and propane powered gas burners, which have their own limitations and negative impacts. IPM also includes control of pests such as ants, yellow jackets, roaches, rodents, pigeons. There are a wide range of issues involved, including the fire danger in the Oakland hills due to the overgrowth of weeds, and health issues due to rats, insects, and pigeon droppings. The question was raised about the safety of Round-Up, an herbicide. Round-Up has been used for 25 years and for the most part has shown to be relatively safe for human use and for the environment compared to other herbicides. Research on other types of chemicals as a substitute for Round-Up has shown that Round-Up is the least problematic of the herbicides.

At this point members of the public were invited to speak.

- Valerie Winemiller, Piedmont Avenue Neighborhood Improvement League and volunteer for Glen Echo Creek Park. Opposes City's use of pesticides. City needs to provide better training for staff and increase skill level.
- Eric Mills, Director for Action for Animals – Adamantly opposed to City's use of pesticides.
- Gillian Garro, Oakland Parks Coalition – The most critical factor is that there is no IPM coordinator in the City. Also, cultural changes, i.e., how we prepare the soil, what do we plant, how we irrigate, are to be considered. Urged PRAC to broaden the

discussion: How do we get to the point where we have the staff, training and expertise to really implement the IPM.

- Ken Katz, Chair of Splash Pad Neighborhood Forum – Speaking as an individual, in principal is opposed to use of pesticides but is convinced that in certain situations when there is no alternative pesticides are required, such as the rat infestation near Lake Merritt.
- Jeffery Hughley, Groundskeeper, City of Berkeley – Spoke on an alternative that the City of Berkeley is using for grounds maintenance: A gas-powered machine that cuts weeds and digs into the soil to extract roots.
- Ron Alford, Former Oakland Employee now working for City of Berkeley – Oakland is grossly understaffed.
- Richard Orlando, citizen of Oakland, horticulturalist, licensed pest control advisor, employed by UC Berkeley as lead gardener, teacher in the horticultural department at Merritt College – From his experience as lead gardener, the most time is spent dealing with weed control. Uses Round Up in his work at UCB and considers its hazards and toxicity very low. Does not consider increasing the use of weed eaters as an adequate substitute. Weed eaters have two cycle engines which produce substantially more exhaust than driving a car, adding enormously to the air pollution problem. He supports allowing use of Round Up on a limited basis in Oakland parks, with well trained gardeners wearing adequate clothing and gloves.

Mr. Ryugo continued that OPR needs to determine what is an adequate amount of staffing to maintain parks to a standard expected by citizens of Oakland. The question to the public is what is their tolerance for weeds in a park. OPR needs to fine tune the tolerances on a park by park basis and explore all the alternatives such as reducing surface areas vulnerable to weeds. Commissioners discussed the issue at length.

MOTION: Commission Nelson moved to retain the City's IPM policy with modifications, to hire as soon as possible a qualified IPM program manager to properly implement the City's policy, and to do an evaluation as to whether restrictions on pesticide use should be eased in certain very specific circumstances until we can hire sufficient staff to implement the IPM policy as originally intended. Commissioner Abad seconded the motion which passed which one abstention (William Patterson).

13. **COUNCIL REFERRALS:**

- A. Moving Oakland Forward: Mr. Ryugo reported that MOF made eleven recommendations to the City Manager. These recommendations have been incorporated into the overall recommendations that the City Manager will bring to the City Council. The recommendations pertaining to parks and open space, including the recommendation to move park maintenance to Public Works, is expected to go to the Life Enrichment Committee first (date to be determined).
- B. Resolution appointing Hans N. Carlberg, Mario R. Juarez, Larry Magid and Mary Ellen Tong as members of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission: Mr. Ryugo thanked the new commissioners for stepping up to the plate and helping the PRAC.

14. **DIRECTOR'S REPORT:** None

15. **OPEN FORUM:**

16. **ANNOUNCEMENTS:** There will be a dedication of the Nancy Stark entrance area at Children's Fairyland to honor her contributions, on Saturday, November 16, 1:30 p.m.

17. **ADJOURNMENT:** Meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Ryugo
Secretary

Mary Perisic
Recording Secretary