

Richmond Recreation & Parks Commission

MINUTES

Wednesday, March 2, 2022 6:00 PM



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CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Meeting called to order by Chair Joey Smith at 6:03 P.M. who led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Joey Smith, Soheila Bana, Allison Blakeley, Brendan Havenar-Daughton, Catalin Kaser, Aaron Rowden, and Eleanor Thompson

ABSENT: Maryn Hurlbut (Excused)

Vice Chair Havenar-Daughton requested that the Commission embrace a genuine acknowledgement that the City of Richmond was situated on land that was previously and currently occupied and cared for by First Peoples, the Huichin: Confederated Villages of Lisjan, Chochenyo Ohlone Territory, made up of the seven Tribes of Lisjan (Ohlone), Karkin (Ohlone), Bay Miwok, Plains Miwok, Wappo, Delta Yokut and Napien (Patwin) whose territory included Alameda, Contra Costa, Solano, Napa and San Joaquin counties. The intent was to relentlessly identify and pursue opportunities for genuine engagement with local indigenous communities to understand indigenous struggles, needs and goals, with a specific focus on exploring pathways to return indigenous lands to indigenous hands.

Chair Smith provided a brief overview of the meeting procedures and the Mission of the Recreation & Parks Commission.

AGENDA REVIEW

By consent, the agenda was approved as submitted.

OPEN FORUM

Kenoli Oleari, representing Arts of Point Richmond, an association of local artists providing artists and art activities in the local schools, believed that community centers in Richmond should be subsidized to make them affordable to the community. He stated that Arts of Point Richmond had used the Rec Center for the last ten years but the fees now being charged were prohibitive, and the rental process now through the City Manager's Office was difficult.

Mr. Oleari stated that Arts of Point Richmond had recently been approached by the Community Center to provide art for the library at the center, which had been done for other venues in Point Richmond. He asked to meet with the Recreation & Parks Commission or with staff to address the concerns.

Ranjana Maharaj, Deputy Director, Community Services Division, advised that she would provide Mr. Oleari's full email to the Commission.

Cordell Hindler, Richmond, invited Commissioners to attend a performance of *Anton in Show Business* at the Contra Costa Civic Theater on Friday, March 4 at 7:30 P.M., proof of vaccination required; and invited Commissioners to the Richmond Rotary Club weekly meeting in person on March 11 at 12:30 P.M. at the Richmond Country Club.

Linda Whitmore, a member of the Santa Fe Neighborhood Council commented that there were two parks in the neighborhood. Speaking to Southside Park, she expressed concern that it would be lost because of the current homeless encampment. She had submitted photos of what was happening in the park with the homeless encampment and stated it had started to attract dumping and the drainage area was becoming a storage area for trash and debris. She asked for help to address those issues given that the homeless were taking over and the neighborhood family park could no longer be used as intended.

Chair Smith noted that Ms. Whitmore had previously sought help and had received some help, although the dumping problems had continued. She would share with the Commission the email from Ms. Whitmore received this date.

Darlene Rios Drapkin, USA Pickleball Association Ambassador, East Bay Pickleball Association, spoke to the item on the agenda to convert one tennis court to fixed pickleball courts at Booker T. Anderson, Jr. (BTA) Park and expressed a preference to install the two courts closer to the main gate and not closer to the play structure as recommended by staff. Not being able to remain on Zoom until the item was to be considered, she asked the Commission to take that into account when making its decision.

Vice Mayor Eduardo Martinez spoke to the issue of equity in terms of city fees and stated that the organizations that promoted Richmond and brought the Richmond community together and organizations that had done a lot to improve Richmond by bringing grants to the city, should be able to work in partnership with the city to make it easier for them to do the work they do. He wanted all organizations to have the same consideration where fees were concerned.

Ms. Maharaj stated that the Community Services Division was working with the Interim Director to develop policies and processes to address some of the issues with respect to fee waiver and the partnership and sponsorship process and policies, to be taken to the City Council in the near future. The fees as part of the Master Fee Schedule were to be developed, refined, and made available to organizations and partners that had raised concerns about the fees.

ANNOUNCEMENTS THROUGH THE CHAIR

1. Chair Smith advised that the Next Commission meeting would be held on April 6, 2022 via Zoom.
2. The balance in the Commission Trust account was reported to be \$413.08, with an additional \$1,000 in the Trust for the RTA Snow Ball account.
3. There were no membership changes.

Chair Smith clarified that the RTA Snow Ball event was not just a party but a way to honor outstanding

high school students through a scholarship program. She urged people to donate what they could, which could be done online through the RTA site.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Approve Minutes of the February 2, 2022 Meeting

Motion by Commissioner Kaser to approve the minutes of the February 2, 2022 meeting as submitted, seconded by Vice Chair Havenar-Daughton, and carried unanimously by a voice vote.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS FOR INFORMATION

Public Works: Facilities

Ranjana Maharaj presented the report from Jose Urquilla, Superintendent of Facilities.

Parks & Landscaping Divisions

Greg Hardesty, Superintendent of Parks & Landscaping, provided a verbal and visual report, and responded to questions including an identification of the materials used for irrigation. He described the materials and explained that 99 percent of the City's systems ran off irrigation clocks with watering during the middle of the night.

Commissioner Blakeley asked about the dogs on leash multilingual signs, particularly at Mira Flores Park since someone had been bitten by a dog and there had been no consequences since no signs had been posted. Mr. Hardesty stated that some signs had been installed at Judge Carroll Park and he was working to get at least temporary signs out as soon as possible pending the ability to install permanent signs.

Community Services Division: Recreation and Neighborhood Services

Ranjana Maharaj, Deputy Director, CSD, provided an extensive oral and visual report and responded to comments from the Commission.

Stephanie Ny, CSD staff, provided the Love Your Block update and stated a clean-up focus had been held at Nevin Park in collaboration with Developing Personal Resources Center (DPRC) staff, an event attended by 21 volunteers who had picked up 15 bags of trash, where Urban Tilth had helped with bio swale clean up and plantinFg, and where donations had been received from the Watershed Nursery.

Ms. Ny thanked the Commission for attending the event and also for supporting the Juneteenth Mural and Underpass Renaming Project, which the City Council had approved. She also reported that YES Nature to Neighborhoods had received a Love Your Block mini grant last year and had just finished the mural on the Nicholl Park restrooms, which had been painted by local artists. She reported there was a current grant application for upgrades to Richard J. Boyd Park and meetings with the community had been held. Staff was currently working to draft a diagram for the upgrades to that park.

Ms. Maharaj reminded Commissioners to sign up for the e-newsletter to be apprised of what was happening in the CSD.

PRESENTATIONS: None

AD HOC COMMITTEE STATEMENTS

Sustainability and Climate Responsiveness Committee (Brendan/Catalin/Maryn)

Vice Chair Havenar-Daughton reported that neither he nor Commissioner Kaser had any updates at this time.

Willie Mays' Day Project (Maryn/Eleanor/Joey)

Chair Smith reported that the committee had been meeting weekly and had been making progress on the Willie Mays' Day Project, especially now that the go-ahead had been given by the City Council for both Willie Mays' Day and for renaming the existing diamonds at Nicholl Park. Another meeting on March 4 had been scheduled.

Commissioner Thompson advised that while not yet confirmed the Giants and Mr. Mays had tentatively set the date of May 14, 2022 for the event.

Commissioner Kaser recommended that bike racks be installed at Nicholl Park prior to the event and that any sponsorship be tied into the event.

Associate Commissioner Committee (Maryn/Allison/Joey)

Chair Smith stated that the Associate Commissioner Committee had not met given the time devoted to the Willie Mays' Day Project.

Statement of Policy and Guidelines for Naming or Re-naming of Parks, Facilities and Streets

Ms. Maharaj advised that a meeting would be scheduled to discuss the two versions of the document that had been submitted to the Committee for discussion.

DISCUSSIONS & ACTION ITEMS

a. COORDINATE Open Conversation on How the City can Support the Native Stewardship of Ookwe Park:

Vice Chair Havenar-Daughton thanked Mr. Hardesty for connecting him with the stakeholders listed and reported he was in the process of getting some availability from those listed and with the friends and the community members of the Sogorea Te' Land Trust to schedule a meeting.

Vice Chair Havenar-Daughton would share the agenda for that meeting when finalized.

- i. Recreation and Parks Commission
- ii. Sogorea Te' Land Trust
- iii. Arts and Culture Commission
- iv. Planning Commission

b. APPROVE a Nomination Request for Memorial Signage to Honor James "Jim" Matzorkis, Former Port Director

Trini Jackson-Lincoln, staff for the Zhoushan Friendship Commission, reported that the Friendship Commission, Councilmember Bates, and business people at the port were very serious about honoring

Jim Matzorkis and had been working hard to come up with ideas. She presented three options for consideration: Option 1, having a sign hang from the Point Potrero entry sign; Option 2, affixing a memorial plaque to the port administration office or nearby on a freestanding podium; and Option 3, a bench. She reported that Option 1 or 2 was preferred. The Friendship Commission would fundraise for funding but wanted to start the application process with the Recreation & Park Commission.

In response to the Chair's concern for the height of the entry gate, Ms. Jackson-Lincoln explained that she had spoken with the Public Works Department and had been given the height and design requirements to avoid creating any safety issues.

The following public comments were offered:

Stanley Li, Chair of the Richmond Zhoushan Sister City Committee, sought the Commission's approval prior to proceeding with size, fixture and other details for the memorial signage.

Chair Smith verified that once the final information was available the Commission would be able to consider the proposal.

Ed Medina, retired Deputy Chief of Police, also a member of the Zhoushan Sister City Committee, appreciated the Commission's review and eventual approval of the signage in memory of Jim Matzorkis.

Vice Mayor Martinez commented that he had traveled to China with Mr. Matzorkis many times and had seen what he had done for the City of Richmond and the port. He noted that Richmond was the only City in the U.S. that was part of the World Tourist Conference, which had put Richmond on the international map. He suggested one option was not enough and recommended two of them, with one sign to replace Point Potrero with *In remembrance of James "Big Jim" Matzorkis, Port Director from 2001 – 2020*, and with a smaller photo relief plaque to inform why Mr. Matzorkis was being honored. He sought the blessing of the Recreation & Park Commission to move ahead and flesh out ideas to present to the Commission.

Commissioner Kaser suggested that naming things about people could potentially be controversial in the future. She asked how the Commission would know whether there were some people who did not support the renaming that had been requested.

On the discussion, it was noted that letters of support or a petition in support of the renaming was usually offered and that type of document support was important, Ms. Jackson-Lincoln explained through "chat" that the process called for notification to the public with a public hearing to be posted and conducted at the City Council approval level subject to the usual noticing requirements.

The Commission recommended the use of available social media outlets, searches, or other means to verify Mr. Matzorkis' history.

Mr. Li expressed his hope to get the process done within the next 60 to 90 days and assured the Commission that the Friendship Commission was obligated to make sure that everyone was satisfied with the recommendation.

Motion by Vice Chair Havenar-Daughton, seconded by Commissioner Kaser to move forward to the next stage with respect to the request for memorial signage to honor James "Jim" Matzorkis, former Port Director, carried unanimously by a voice vote.

c. APPROVE a Request to Convert One Tennis Court to Fixed Pickleball Courts at BTA

Tetteh Kisseh, Recreation Program Coordinator, presented the staff report on the request to convert one tennis court to fixed pickleball courts at Booker T. Anderson, Jr. (BTA) Park tennis courts. He noted that the popularity of pickleball was growing and currently there were two permanent tennis courts at BTA and six pickleball lines embedded into the tennis courts. When pickleball participants were ready to play they had to carry their nets to the courts and back, an inconvenience since the nets were 14 to 50 pounds. He presented a diagram to show where the two permanent pickleball courts had been proposed along with four other courts that could be used as temporary pickleball courts.

Having met with the Southside Plus One Neighborhood Council on February 23, Mr. Kisseh stated the Council had approved the presentation on the condition that the permanent pickleball courts be located closer to the play structure at the park. He noted that Mr. Hardesty had attended a subsequent meeting on February 28 when the Council had restated its request for the placement of the permanent courts on the west side of the tennis courts along with a gate on that side to allow participants to enter the courts. He had reached out to Ms. Drapkin to identify the proposal who had mentioned that the pickleball courts had been preferred at the east end of the tennis courts. Prior to the meeting, he had received an email from Ms. Drapkin to request a reconsideration of the pickleball courts on the east side of the tennis courts. Given that situation, he wanted to return to the Southside Neighborhood Council to verify the location of the permanent pickleball courts, after which he would return the proposal to the Commission for consideration at its April 6, 2022 meeting.

Chair Smith verified that the primary concern was the condition of the court on the side nearest the play structures and concern for people being injured. Also, that an additional gate would be needed if it were to be on the other side, and Mr. Kisseh verified that either way a gate had to be installed.

As to the schedule for resurfacing the court, Mr. Kisseh stated the pickleball association had applied for a grant to do that project and Mr. Hardesty was looking into that. With respect to the cracks on the tennis courts, he noted widespread cracks throughout but would revisit to see if that damage was evenly distributed throughout the tennis courts.

Vice Mayor Martinez acknowledged that both tennis courts at BTA needed resurfacing and the pickleball association had requested that the permanent courts be closer to the main gate, not to the play structure. He asked why two gates were needed now when two gates had not been needed when just dedicated to tennis. He added that pickleball was a sport gaining momentum and the pickleball association was bringing not only enthusiasm but financing to improve the City's parks. He emphasized the need to ensure that all organizations were able to have equal access. He understood that the Richmond Tennis Association paid no fees for the use of city courts while the East Bay Pickleball Association had paid court fees in the amount of \$1,561, which was scheduled to double in cost.

Vice Mayor Martinez also understood that to reserve a city tennis court reservations had to be made with the RTA.

Mr. Kisseh clarified that to reserve a tennis court one would go to or call the CSD reservation office to reserve a tennis court to use. Apart from the tennis courts at Nicholl Park, most courts were open for play to community members. He referred to Lucas and Tiller Parks that were open and where there was no need to reserve the courts for use. Courts had only to be reserved for programs where fees were charged. With respect to fees, he explained that when RTA started a few years back the City had a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with them and RTA had not been paying fees because they were resurfacing tennis courts and supporting youth programs, although there were currently considerations of revising the ordinance to make it equitable for every organization and non-profit so that the same services would be provided equitably.

Cordell Hindler, Richmond, urged the Commission to approve the concept for the pickleball courts.

COMMISSIONER LIAISON REPORTS

There were no reports.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Chair Smith stated she had been posting and facilitating the meetings for the Willie Mays' Day Project, had participated and been joined by Commissioners Kaser and Rowden at the Nevin Park clean-up, and had dealt with many emails.

Vice Chair Havenar-Daughton had met with Mr. Hardesty to talk about the various organizations he was working with regarding improvement projects in the Richmond Greenway; had been organizing and coordinating the open conversation with the Sogorea Te' Land Trust; and had been starting the review process with the Love Your Block mini grants and would share the types of projects and programs proposed through that program.

Commissioner Blakeley asked if she should continue to send out the link to Google docs that the Vice Chair had started, and Chair Smith characterized it as a wonderful option that helped to document what was going on. As a result the link would continue to be sent out.

Commissioner Kaser had spent some time helping to paint the mural on the side of the bathrooms at Nicholl Park and met with someone who helped paint over the graffiti at the skate park using extra paint from the mural; participated in the trash pickup at Nevin Park; reported the Richmond Grows Seed Library had adopted the Rose Garden at John F. Kennedy Park and she had helped work on weeding at the Rose Garden; and hoped to be up to Lucas Park soon since she rode by it on her way to work every day.

Commissioner Thompson continued to work along with staff in the booth at Willie Mays Ball Field and hoped to continue on the planning for Willie Mays' Day; she noted the grass at Shields-Reid Park had not been well maintained; confirmed that the homeless had been moving back into Nevin Park; and urged that the grass be cut and that all the parks be better maintained.

AGENDA SETTING FOR NEXT MEETING AND FUTURE TOPICS

The pickleball request would return on the agenda for the April 6, 2022 meeting.

Commissioner Bana noted that Mr. Oleari, who had earlier expressed concern for the fees being charged at the community centers had expressed a desire to be involved in the process of setting the fees.

Ms. Maharaj explained that few changes could be made to the Master Fee Schedule from the Finance Department because there was little time to do so given the process, which was why the CSD was working on documents to help organizations get a break in fees such as the fee waiver process, and partnership and sponsorship documents, which could help all the organizations that had issues with the fees.

Commissioner Thompson asked that the Vice Mayor check to see if the North Richmond Ball Field and Nevin Park could be better maintained.

Commissioner Kaser referred to the comments from Mr. Oleari who had asked to meet with the Commission and suggested that he be invited to a meeting to help address the concerns he had expressed.

Chair Smith agreed that Mr. Oleari should be invited to the next Commission meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Anita L. Tucci-Smith
Minutes Clerk