



FILED  
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK  
OAKLAND

2014 JUL 10 PM 4:12 **AGENDA REPORT**

**TO:** HENRY L. GARDNER  
INTERIM CITY ADMINISTRATOR

**FROM:** Audree V. Jones-Taylor

**SUBJECT:** Parks and Recreation Advisory  
Commission Annual Report

**DATE:** June 26, 2014

City Administrator  
Approval

Date

7/10/14

**COUNCIL DISTRICT:** City-Wide

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Life Enrichment committee accept:

The Annual Report to the Oakland City Council from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission's (PRAC) Annual Report (*Attachment A*) highlights milestones, achievements, and progress made by the Commission from January 2012 to January 2014.

The PRAC reviewed and evaluated numerous proposed improvements to Oakland parks ranging from art murals to signage, to capital improvement project design such as the expansion of Snow Park. The PRAC advised the Planning Department / Commission on nine separate Conditional Use Permit (CUP) applications for projects in parks. The PRAC meetings are considered an official public hearing with opportunities for comment by the general public. Notable CUP applications heard by PRAC include lighting for the Champions of Humanity sculpture, community gardens at Allendale and Stonehurst parks, and proposed dog play areas at Astro and Snow parks.

The PRAC created an ad hoc Committee on dog play areas in 2011. The committee members attended Oakland Parks and Recreation hosted focus group meetings with the community, researched best practices, conducted an on-line survey, and ultimately produced a draft report which includes recommendations for siting new dog parks and amending leash laws in Oakland's parks. The PRAC's recommendation to amend the Municipal Code to allow leashed dogs in a limited number of parks where they were banned and to create five new off-leash areas was approved by City Council on April 1, 2014.

Item: \_\_\_\_\_  
Life Enrichment Committee  
July 22, 2014

The PRAC has been a forum for public discussion on urban agriculture, edible parks and landscapes, community gardens and other issues related to food access in our community. The PRAC also considered tree appeals (4), and requests (89) from organizations to sell goods or collect money in Oakland parks.

The PRAC serves as a sounding board for long-range plans with implications for parks and recreation in Oakland. As Oakland continues to grow the city must plan ahead to meet the demand for open space, and think about new ways to finance park acquisition, improvement, and operation. The PRAC anticipates the use of naming rights as a revenue source for capital improvements and on-going maintenance as an emerging policy issue for the commission and has formed a Naming Rights Subcommittee which is currently studying best practices from other cities, with the goal of bringing a recommendation to Council late this year.

### **BACKGROUND/LEGISLATIVE HISTORY**

The Park and Recreation Advisory Commission (PRAC) was established by Oakland City Council Ordinance No. 8065 C.M.S. in 1969. As stated in the revised 1994 Ordinance No. 11731 C.M.S. the purpose of PRAC is to “research and formulate policy recommendations and plans for the future development of the Office of Parks and Recreation (OPR), and to advise the City Manager and City Council on matters affecting the operation of the OPR and their facilities, functions, exhibits, and duties.” Section 1(b) of PRAC’s enabling legislation requires the submittal of regular status reports to the City Council committee designated as liaison to the Commission.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH/INTEREST**

This item did not require any additional public outreach other than the City’s established posting requirements.

### **COORDINATION**

The following agencies and groups were consulted while developing this report.

- Oakland Office of the City Attorney
- Oakland Budget Office
- Oakland Office of the City Administrator
- Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission

Item: \_\_\_\_\_  
Life Enrichment Committee  
July 22, 2014

Henry L. Gardner, Interim City Administrator

Subject: Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission Annual Report

Date: June 26, 2014

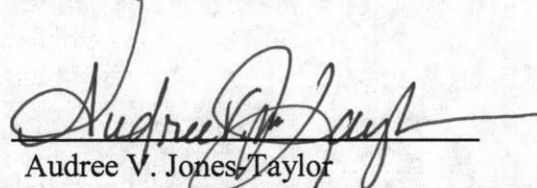
Page 3

**COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS**

There are no cost implications of this informational report.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Dana Riley, Assistant to the Director, at 510-238-6495.

Respectfully submitted,



Audree V. Jones Taylor  
Director, Oakland Parks & Recreation

Prepared by:  
Dana Riley, Assistant to the Director  
Oakland Parks and Recreation

Attachments: A - Annual Report to the Oakland City Council from the Oakland Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission

Item: \_\_\_\_\_  
Life Enrichment Committee  
July 22, 2014

**ANNUAL REPORT TO THE OAKLAND CITY COUNCIL  
FROM THE OAKLAND PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION**

**BARRY MILLER, CHAIR**

**June 20, 2014**

**Introduction**

In 1969, the Oakland City Council adopted Ordinance No. 8065 creating the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission (PRAC). As stated in the 1994 revised Ordinance No. 11731, the purpose of PRAC is to “research and formulate policy recommendations and plans for the future development of the Office of Parks and Recreation (OPR), and to advise the City Manager and City Council on matters affecting the operation of the OPR and their facilities, functions, exhibits, and duties.” Section 1(b) of PRAC’s enabling legislation requires the submittal of regular status reports to the City Council committee designated as liaison to the Commission.

As Chair of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission, I am pleased to submit this annual report. Because it has been several years since a report has been prepared, this report goes back to January 2012 when I was elected as Chair by my colleagues on the Commission. The report describes milestones, achievements, and progress over a two year period.

**Who is the PRAC?**

The PRAC is an 11-member body, with duties defined by the Oakland Municipal Code. Currently there is one vacant seat. Our members serve three-year terms, and may serve a maximum of two consecutive terms. Our ten active members include two members appointed in 2009, one member appointed in 2010, one member appointed in 2011, five members appointed in 2012, and one member appointed in 2013. Our meetings take place on the second Wednesday of each month at 4:30 PM at the Marsha J. Corprew Garden Center located within Lakeside Park.

**Park Improvements Considered by PRAC**

PRAC reviews and evaluates proposed improvements to Oakland’s parks. Between January 2012 and March 2014, the Commission provided opportunities for public comment and Commissioner input on the closure of 20<sup>th</sup> Street and expansion of Snow Park, the redesign of the Sailboat House Parking Lot, improvements to Durant Mini-Park and Linden Street Park, and the installation of interpretive signage at Joaquin Miller Park, Dimond Park, Montclair Railroad Park, Frog Park, and Leona Heights Park.

The Commission also approved the construction of mosaic walls in Maxwell Park, murals at DeFremery Park, decorative bird houses at Mosswood Park, and a public art installation in the Snow Park expansion area. We denied an application for a non-profit organization to take over a mini-park in West Oakland and convert it to a community “healing” space, and we provided guidance to

remediate an illegally constructed outdoor classroom in Fitzgerald/Union Plaza Park. In our consideration of these items, PRAC members discussed issues such as safety, security, maintenance, operating costs, liability, aesthetics, potential for impacts on existing activities and nearby uses, and the level of support in the community.

### **Conditional Use Permits**

One of the functions of the PRAC is to advise the Planning Department on Conditional Use Permit applications for projects in parks. In the last two years, we have held hearings on Conditional Use Permits for nine separate projects. These included a new \$5 million Recreation Center in North Oakland's Golden Gate Park, an air quality monitoring station in Raimondi Park, new lighting for the Champions of Humanity sculpture in Henry J Kaiser Park, community gardens at Allendale and Stonehurst, relocation of the restroom at the Chabot Golf Course, and improvements to Fairyland and the Bellevue Drive entrance to Lakeside Park.

Each of these CUPs was considered in an official public hearing, with opportunities for comments by the general public and the Commission. The PRAC hearing process created an important opportunity to make sure these projects took place with public input and without diminishing the quality of these parks.

### **Collection of Funds**

Typically, the largest part of the PRAC monthly agenda is our review of requests from organizations to sell goods or collect money in Oakland parks. These activities require PRAC approval under the Municipal Code. These requests often involve fund-raising drives by non-profits hosting walkathons around Lake Merritt, or holding concerts or special events in City parks. The fund-raising can range from entrance fees collected at the door to food and beverage concessions or craft sales.

In the last two years, PRAC has considered requests for 89 separate special events. These have ranged from dance competitions at Ira Jenkins Rec Center in East Oakland to the Black Cowboys Association Annual Parade in West Oakland. They've included the Day of Music at Carmen Flores Park, the EastSide Arts Festival in San Antonio Park, the Tongan Cultural Festival in Bill Patterson Park, the Lantern Festival at the Lake Merritt Garden Center, and the Running Festival at Snow Park. They have included fundraisers sponsored by groups as diverse as the American Diabetes Foundation to the Carl Munck Elementary School PTA.

No other item on the PRAC monthly agenda attests to the value of Oakland parks more than these applications. The volume of requests to use parkland for fundraisers and special events shows that our residents rely on our parks not just for recreation but for contemplation, commemoration, and celebration. Our parks are Oakland's common ground. They are under constant pressure to meet the needs of communities that are growing, changing, and evolving.

## **Liaisons to the Community**

Another important function of PRAC is to serve as ambassadors to the community. Our Commissioners are tasked with serving as liaisons to the City's 20 Recreation Advisory Councils and numerous athletic organizations.

We represent the City at special events, offering a local perspective on projects proposed by East Bay Regional Park District, the Oakland Zoo, the Oakland Unified School District and other special districts. When there was a budget proposal to merge the Parks and Recreation Department with the Department of Human Services last year, PRAC held a public hearing to take community input and provide feedback to the City Administrator's office. In late 2012, we participated in seven community focus groups to listen to the public on issues related to park safety and dog play areas.

In 2013, one of our Commissioners was instrumental in making the East Oakland Sports Center (EOSC) a participant in the World's Largest Swimming Lesson—an international event that involved a swimming lesson occurring all across the world at the same time. Another Commissioner has been instrumental in promoting the Sunday in the Redwoods concert series and other Oakland OPR programs via social media.

PRAC members are currently participating in the development of the City's public safety action plan. A Public Safety subcommittee is working with staff to improve park safety and to advocate for recreational programs and activities serving Oakland youth. In the last two years, we have established hours of operation for City parks, and offered important feedback on issues such as lighting, fencing, and graffiti abatement. We have also finalized and published the manual which provides the bylaws for the Recreation Advisory Councils.

## **Dogs, Gardens, Nature, and Recreation: The Balancing Act**

In 1996, Oakland adopted a goal of providing 4 acres of active open space for every 1,000 residents. As of 2014, there were only 1.4 acres per 1,000 residents. The demand to use our limited inventory of park space for different forms of active recreation is significant. One of PRAC's greatest challenges is balancing competing requests from different user groups.

PRAC regularly receives requests for new community gardens, soccer fields, playgrounds, dog parks, art installations, and other park improvements. These kinds of improvements are an essential part of sustaining a healthy, vibrant community. But they make it more challenging to make sure we also provide places that are simply open spaces for a picnic, tossing a Frisbee, or enjoying the view and the sunshine.

In 2011, PRAC created an ad hoc Committee on dog play areas. In the last two years, no other issue generated bigger crowds and more contentious meetings than the proposals for dog play areas at Astro Park and Snow Park. As a follow-up to these hearings, the Commission attended OPR hosted focus group meetings with the community, researched best practices around the country, conducted

an on-line survey, and ultimately produced a draft report which includes recommendations for siting new dog parks and amending leash laws in Oakland's parks.

In January 2014, the Commission recommended an amendment to the Municipal Code to allow leashed dogs in a limited number of parks where they were banned and to create five new off-leash areas. That amendment was approved by the City Council in March 2014. The new provisions for dogs are a big step toward making our parks more dog-friendly, while still recognizing the limits of our park and open space inventory.

The Commission has also been a forum for public discussion on urban agriculture, edible parks and landscapes, community gardens, and other issues related to food access in our community. We work closely with City community gardening staff, and participate with the various food justice organizations and gardening non-profits that are active in Oakland. During the last two years, the Commission also worked with the City Administrator's Office, the Office of Parks and Recreation, and the Planning Department to develop a policy for mobile food vendors in City parks.

### **Tree Appeals**

The Oakland Municipal Code designates PRAC as the appeal body for non-development related tree removal permits and City-owned tree removal permits. The property owner or owner of an adjoining property to the application address may appeal staff's decision to allow or deny a tree removal permit application. In such instances, PRAC weighs staff's recommendation against the case made by the appellant and either approves or denies the appeal request. Four tree appeals were heard in 2012 and 2013. PRAC denied the appeal (and upheld staff's decision) in three cases, and approved the appeal (and reversed staff's decision) in one case.

### **Naming Rights**

PRAC has recently taken up the issue of naming rights in City parks. This is not a new issue, as the Commission routinely receives requests for commemorative naming of benches in remembrance of loved ones. However, the use of naming rights as a revenue source for capital improvements and on-going maintenance is an emerging policy issue for PRAC. We anticipate extended discussion on this topic in the coming months and welcome input from the City Council and the community as we proceed. PRAC has formed a Naming Rights Subcommittee and is currently studying best practices from other cities, with the goal of bringing a recommendation to Council later this year.

### **Looking Toward the Future and the Needs of a Growing City**

Oakland Parks & Recreation strives to expose, enlighten, empower, and encourage educational excellence through recreational experiences. PRAC supports this mission through sustained leadership and strategic guidance. We strive to make parks and recreation a catalyst for positive change in our city.

With this mission in mind, PRAC serves as a sounding board for long-range plans with implications for parks and recreation in Oakland. During the last year, PRAC has provided feedback on plans

for West Oakland, the Broadway corridor, and the Lake Merritt BART station area. We've heard from the public on the changes envisioned for these areas, and discussed what growth will mean for Oakland's parks.

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) projects that Oakland is going to add 51,000 housing units and 85,000 jobs in the next 25 years. By 2040, our population may exceed half a million residents. Oakland must plan ahead to meet the growing demand for open space, and think about new ways to finance park acquisition, improvement, and operation. While there are exciting opportunities at Brooklyn Basin and the Bay Bridge Gateway, these will not meet the need for neighborhood parks in established areas that are becoming more densely populated. Park impact fees, dedication requirements, and other steps may be needed to meet future needs.

PRAC stands ready to assist the City Council in meeting these challenges. As Commissioners, each of us is committed to the common goal of planning for the recreational needs of our growing, prosperous, healthy, beautiful city.