MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Wednesday, March 24, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

VIA TELECONFERENCE

https://elcerrito.webex.com/elcerrito/onstage/g.php?MTID=e8119190512886e6a4058333ba68d8301

Event ID: 187 803 8653
Event Password: xJQgDr2Xz99
or
Join by Phone: 1-408-418-9388
Access code: 187 803 8653

Pursuant to Executive Orders N-25-20 and N-29-20, and in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic Teleconference Restrictions of the Brown Act Have Been Suspended, as well as the requirement to provide a physical location for members of the public to participate in the meeting.

Members of the public can watch or listen to Park and Recreation meeting via WebEx using the meeting information listed above.

Public comments may be submitted one of two ways:

1. Via WebEx using the meeting instructions included above. Each period for public comment will be announced, and attendees may use the “Raise Hand” feature to request to speak.

   **Please note** - If a member of the public can join via phone only, a request to speak must be submitted via email to cjones@ci.elcerrito.ca.us. The request must contain in the subject line Request to speak – Agenda Item # and must include a name and the full phone number that will be used to call in.

2. Via email to cjones@ci.elcerrito.ca.us. Email must contain in the subject line public comments – not on the agenda or public comments – agenda item #.

To ensure that the Park and Recreation Commission receives your written comments prior to taking action, they must be received by 4:00 p.m. the day of the meeting. All written comments received by this deadline will be provided to the Park and Recreation Commission and posted online in advance of the meeting.

Written comments received after the deadline will be provided to the Park and Recreation Commission and included with supplemental materials after the meeting. No written comments will be read into the record.

7:00 p.m. CONVENE REGULAR MEETING

1. ROLL CALL – Present: Vice-Chair Ben Chuaqui; Members, Avis Codron, Norman La Force, Jennifer Kaczor, Art Machado
   Absent: Shawn Purcell

2. COMMISSION/STAFF COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS
   Informal reports on matters of general interest which are announced by the Park and Recreation Commissioners and City Staff.
Member Codron asked staff if there was a response or update from the Art and Culture Committee in regard to Joint Ad Hoc Committee on Public Art in the Parks. Recreation Director Chris Jones reported that he would follow up and be in communication with the Commission on any updates.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC
Indy Singh – thanked the Commission and staff for taking the time to do this work for the community. Singh commented on his belief that this committee could help elevate stressors of the public and that he is interested in building community resilience. He called for a social/emotional task force to be developed, within the community, that included youth participants. Singh commented on the idea that something can be done within parks that could further connect the community with one another.

Vice-Chair Ben Chuaqui supported this idea and member Art Machado asked staff how the community would organize something like what Indy Singh had proposed. Recreation Department Director Chris Jones commented that there would need to be a proposal and/or a co-sponsorship application submitted to the City if appropriate. Director Jones suggested that such a request could also be made to the Human Relations Commission. Vice-Chair Chuaqui suggested that such a proposal, specifically if it were to include youth involvement, should be a future Park and Recreation Commission agenda item.

4. COUNCIL/STAFF LIAISON ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REPORTS
Mayor Paul Fadelli reported on matters of general interest to the Park and Recreation Commission, Council policies, priorities and significant actions taken by the City Council. Mayor Fadelli gave thanks to both David Zuckermann and Tara McIntire, both of which this is their last meeting, for their service and support as Park and Recreation Commissioners. Mayor Fadelli also thanked and welcomed new Commission members Purcell and Kaczor.

Mayor Fadelli reported on the financial hardship of the City, the Recreation Department, and the probability of future cuts. Fadelli shared that the Recreation Department will not be the only department receiving cuts – and certainly should not be. All departments need to chip-in to help improve the City’s financial situation. Mayor Fadelli reported that the State audit report was recently was released and that some suggestions were good, there were some things not mentioned that the City has already done.

Mayor Fadelli expressed positive feelings regarding the federal monies coming into El Cerrito in the amount of $4.8 million, most of which will go to the City’s reserve that has been depleted. The monies will help improve the City’s credit score.

Mayor Fadelli is excited about the possibility of pickleball courts at Castro Park that would be funded by the East Bay Pickleball Association. Mayor Fadelli expressed his belief that the El Cerrito Recreation Department is one of the best in the area including running the best pool. The Recreation Department positively
impacts the way of life in El Cerrito and the residents continue to vote to keep the Recreation Department alive. The Recreation Department is one of the City's biggest assets. Mayor Fadelli encourages the Department staff to continue to provide the great programs and services and he is appreciative of the Department's efforts. Mayor Fadelli asked that everyone bares with the City's process over the next few months.

Member La Force commented that the City really needs to keep in mind that parks and recreational facilities are critical for people during this time not only physically, but also mentally. He urged the City to keep this in mind while making budget cuts. He further commented that recreation programs need to be maintained and at a level that is affordable for the community.

Mayor Fadelli responded by expressing that he wants every City department to make contribution to restrengthening the City's financial health. All departments can find cuts.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
Moved/Seconded: Member Codron/ Member La Force. Pass a motion to approve, with amendments, the minutes of the Park and Recreation Commission meeting on February 24, 2021.

Ayes: Vice Chair Ben Chuaqui; Members, Avis Codron, Norman La Force, Jennifer Kaczor, Art Machado, Shawn Purcell.
Noes: None
Abstain: None

6. PRESENTATION: PROPOSAL FOR PERMENANT PICKLEBALL COURTS AT CASTRO PARK
Received a presentation from Cathy Taruskin of the East Bay Pickleball Association regarding their proposal and fundraising efforts for the installation of permanent pickleball courts, which are to be funded by the East Bay Pickleball Association, on the Castro Park Tennis Courts.

Taruskin provided an overview of the sport of pickleball, how it differs from other sports, why it is beneficial, who plays, and where pickleball courts are located throughout the East Bay. Taruskin presented a history of pickleball in the East Bay starting in 2014, the growth and popularity of the sport -specifically addressing El Cerrito temporary courts, increased play, interest, progress, and potential plans for the future of pickleball in El Cerrito. Taruskin presented the impact of COVID-19 on pickleball and new patterns that developed during the pandemic. Taruskin presented the issues that arise from non-dedicated courts and portable pickleball nets. Taruskin then requested that the City of El Cerrito with support from the Park and Recreation Commission move from non-dedicated courts, to installing permanent pickleball courts at the Castro location with funds issued by the East Bay Pickleball Association. Taruskin outlined impacts of installing permanent pickleball courts.
Following the presentation there was discussion and questions from Commissioners. Some concerns were brought up about what the El Cerrito Tennis Club's position is regarding the installation of the pickleball courts.

**Public Comments:**
Connie Wong- spoke thanking Cathy Taruskin for her presentation and read out loud the letter, in support of the installation of the pickle ball courts being installed, that she had submitted to the Commission.

Ken Salonen- spoke in support of Cathy Taruskin’s proposal to install permanent pickleball courts at Castro.

Margo Takemiya – spoke in opposition of the conversion of the tennis courts into pickleball courts at Castro.

Further discussion and considerations were discussed between Commission members.

7. **REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF PARKS AND RECREATION RELATED PROJECTS**
Director Chris Jones presented the Parks Projects Status Sheet of funded and unfunded capital improvement program projects related to Parks and Recreation. The Hillside Natural Area Signage Improvements project will finalize bidding by May 2021 to meet completion deadline of December 2021.

8. **RECREATION DEPARTMENT UPDATE**
Recreation Analyst Sarah DiBenedetto presented the Recreation Department update including information on water aerobics returning to the El Cerrito Swim Center in April 2021, Super Soccer Stars youth programming returning in April 2021, the new Constructing Collage virtual class and the relocation of C.C. Café to-go meals for Seniors to the El Cerrito Community Center starting on April 16, 2021.

9. **ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS**
- Next Regular Meeting: Wednesday, April 28, 2021 at 7 p.m.
- Courts – Tennis Club
- Parks and Recreation Facilities Related Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Projects – April/May 2021
- Review Recreation Department Master Fee Schedule & CIP – April/May 2021
- Re-Organization of the Park and Recreation Commission – April 2021
- Social/Emotional Task Force discussion
- Castro Court Pickleball proposal - Special Meeting April 28, 2021 at 6pm

10. **ADJOURNMENT 8:54pm**
This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the regular Park and Recreation Commission Regular meeting on March 24, 2021 as approved by the Park and Recreation Commission.

Christopher Jones, Staff Liaison