



REGULAR MEETING OF THE
PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
MEETING AGENDA

Wednesday, June 24, 2015
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 Management Assistant at 510-559-7001. 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 – Robin Mitchell, Ben Chuaqui, Manish Doshi, Gary Hill, Seth Kaplan, Steve Lipson, Glen Lubcke.
2. **Commission / Staff Communications / Announcements** (*Informal reports on matters of general interest which are announced by the Park and Recreation Commissioners and City Staff*)
3. **Oral Communications From The Public**
All persons wishing to speak should sign up with City Staff. Remarks are generally limited to 3 minutes per person. Please state your name and city of residence for the record. Comments related to non-agenda items will be heard first. Comments related to items appearing on the agenda are taken up at the time the Park and Recreation Commission deliberates each item.
4. **Council/Staff Liaison Announcements and Reports**
Staff and/or Councilmember Abelson may report on matters of general interest to the Park and Recreation Commission, Council policies, priorities and significant actions taken by the City Council.
5. **Approval of Minutes:** Exhibit 1: Meeting Minutes from April 22, 2015
Approval of the April 22, 2015 Regular Meeting of the Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes.
6. **Presentation and Discussion of Urban Greening Plan Final Draft:** Emily Alter, Community Planning Analyst – Community Development Department
Receive an overview of the Final Draft of the Urban Greening Plan followed by a question and answer session and potential recommendations. Consider a motion to recommend the Urban Greening Plan to City Council.

7. **Presentation and Discussion of the Measure A Tax Rate for the El Cerrito Swim Center:**
Christopher Jones, Recreation Director
Receive an overview of the funding provided by Measure A for the Swim Center and the authorized uses of it. Consider a motion to recommend raising the tax rate to the City Council in order to fund a capital replacement plan for the next 10-20 years.
8. **Recreation Department Update:** Sarah DiBenedetto, Management Assistant
Update on items of interest in the Recreation Department
9. **Items For Next Agenda**
 - a. **Huber Park**
10. **Meeting Adjournment**

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REGULAR MEETING OF THE
PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
PROPOSED MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, April 22, 2015
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 Management Assistant at 510-559-7001. 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 - Manish Doshi - excused, Ben Chuaqui - excused, Gary Hill, Seth Kaplan, Steve Lipson – arrived 7:15pm, Glen Lubcke, Robin Mitchell.
2. **Commission / Staff Communications / Announcements** (*Informal reports on matters of general interest which are announced by the Park and Recreation Commissioners and City Staff*)
 - Kaplan – Vision for Huber Park flyer dated December 2, 1997 found by neighbor
 - Hill – Hillside Campaign donor sign located on Moeser has been updated with all donors and will displayed at the upcoming Hillside Festival. Hill gave an overview of what to expect at the Hillside Festival. Also mentioned that the ECHS Mountain Bike Team season is ending and that NorCal and State Championships coming up.
3. **Oral Communications From The Public**

All persons wishing to speak should sign up with City Staff. Remarks are generally limited to 3 minutes per person. Please state your name and city of residence for the record. Comments related to non-agenda items will be heard first. Comments related to items appearing on the agenda are taken up at the time the Park and Recreation Commission deliberates each item.

 - None
4. **Council/Staff Liaison Announcements and Reports**

Staff and/or Councilmember Abelson may report on matters of general interest to the Park and Recreation Commission, Council policies, priorities and significant actions taken by the City Council.

 - Abelson – Spoke about items of interest from the April 21st City Council meeting including approval of housing element which is online.
 - Marin Clean Energy – City joined MCE which is now El Cerrito’s default electricity provider instead of PG&E. PG&E provides 22% renewable energy to its customers, MCE Light Green is 50%, MCE Dark Green is 100%. Light Green is currently the most affordable plan, then PG&E, then Dark Green (maybe \$5.00 more per month on average than Light Green). Energy will still be delivered by PG&E. PG&E discounts

apply to MCE accounts as well. MCE is a Joint Powers Authority made up of cities in Marin, Richmond, El Cerrito, San Pablo, Benicia, unincorporated Napa County and others. Both companies have to go through same approval process for rate changes with State. Residents have a choice, if they don't make a choice they will be light green. They can opt out system and remain with PG&E.

- Lipson – MCE is an aggregator, they are selling power to PG&E who adds MCE's power to the pool.
- Abelson – the change increases the amount of clean energy in the pool. Inexpensive way of going green, don't have to do anything in your house. You can change provider choice if you would like to. Default will change in May for customers who have not already opted out of MCE.

5. **Approval of Minutes:** Exhibit 1: Meeting Minutes from March 25, 2015

Approval of the March 25, 2015 Regular Meeting of the Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes.

- Kaplan moved approval, Hill seconded. Mitchell, Kaplan and Hill voted aye. Lubcke and Lipson abstained.

6. **Presentation and Discussion on Hillside Festival:** Howdy Goudey, Environmental Quality Committee Vice Chair

Explain plans and goals, answer questions, and solicit feedback for upcoming Hillside Festival II on Sunday, May 17, 2015. Discussion and possible action for the Park and Recreation Commission to co-sponsor the event.

- Goudey – on behalf of the Environmental Quality Committee (EQC) he is hoping that the Park and Recreation Commission will co-sponsor the Hillside Festival event again. Last year the focus was on fundraising for the purchase of the Madera Hillside Property. This year will see a transition to promoting the Hillside Natural Area as a recreation opportunity and amenity. Fundraising for maintenance, renovations, fire abatement, etc. will also begin. There will be lots of events including a pop up bike park, and a ceremonial celebration of Madera Hillside Property acquisition. Hope is to spread word of event in circles and networks to encourage people to attend. Manish Doshi was generous in donating as well as Spurs Soccer Club. Most of budget for event is from the EQC, MCE may also sponsor and donate as well as be part of the outreach efforts. Hill will be at event and miss bike championship, he will also create map again. Happy for commissioners to attend or take advantage of volunteer opportunities.
- Hill – festival could be milestone for annual event and grow over time. Potential of food vendors, etc. wanting to attend because Hillside is a regional destination. Events are spread out so people may need to pick and choose what they do. Dave Weinstein worked really hard on acquisition and festival organization; people should give all help they can.
- Hill moved to co-sponsor 2nd Annual Hillside Festival, Lipson second. Unanimous approval.

7. **Recreation Department Division Overviews & Budget Update:** Recreation Department Supervisors

Receive a presentation from each Recreation Supervisor which will give an overview of their division as well as a snap shot of its budget year to date.

- Presentation received (attached)

8. Proposed Recreation Department Master Fee Schedule FY 2015-16: Christopher Jones, Recreation Director

Receive a presentation on the Recreation Department Staffs' proposed additions, changes, and revisions to the Master Fee Schedule for fiscal year 2015-16. Possible action to recommend adoption by the City Council.

- Jones – current recommendation from Finance Department is for a 4% general increase due to a 2.5% increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and increased personnel costs. Staff has made many cosmetic changes, rearrangements, in order to make the Master Fee Schedule clearer. Many fees are market driven; staff compares comparable facilities and services to surrounding communities to ensure items are not priced too high. The most significant change is the proposed elimination of non-resident fees for childcare and school based enrichment programs. This is a strategy to attract more enrollments from non-El Cerrito residents into programs that typically have capacity.
- Lipson moved approval of recommendation of Master Fee Schedule as presented, Lubke second. Unanimous approval.

9. Reorganization of the Park and Recreation Commission

Annual election of Park and Recreation Commission Officers.

- Commissioner Mitchell called for reorganization of the Park and Recreation Commission
- Jones – declared the offices of Chair and Vice-Chair vacant and called for nominations for the office of Chair
- Commissioner Hill nominated Commissioner Kaplan for Chair, Kaplan declined
- Commissioner Kaplan nominated Commissioner Mitchell for Chair
- Commissioner Lipson moved for nominations to be closed, Hill seconded. Unanimous approval.
- Commissioner Mitchell was voted in unanimously as the new Chair of the Park and Recreation Commission
- Chair Mitchell called for nominations for the position of Vice Chair
- Commissioner Hill nominated Commissioner Kaplan for Vice Chair
- Commissioner Lubcke nominated Commissioner Hill for Vice Chair, Hill declined
- Commissioner Lipson moved for nominations to close, Commissioner Hill seconded. Unanimous approval.
- Commissioner Kaplan was voted in unanimously as the new Vice-Chair of the Park and Recreation Commission.

10. Recreation Department Update: Christopher Jones, Recreation Director

Update on items of interest in the Recreation Department

- Sarah DiBenedetto attended an advanced RecTrac training in preparation for big upgrade. Upgrade should have several improvements for the customer and employee user. New version will be web based; authorized users can log-in anywhere.
- PG&E installed a significant amount of landscaping at Casa Cerrito Preschool due to the future construction of a ten foot wall near the preschool. Other improvements are slated for the future.
- Successful golf tournament held on April 13, 2015. There were 16 hole sponsors and several other generous prize donors.

- Landscaping work completed in Splash Park to increase shaded areas for people to sit in using drought tolerate plants.

11. Items For Next Agenda

- Huber Park
- Commission Work Plan

12. Meeting Adjournment

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AGENDA BILL

Date: June 24th, 2015

To: Parks and Recreation Commission

From: Emily Alter, Community Development Analyst
Melanie Mintz, Interim Community Development Director

Subject: Urban Greening Plan

ACTION REQUESTED

Receive a presentation and consider making a recommendation that City Council adopt a resolution adopting the Urban Greening Plan.

BACKGROUND

The proposed Urban Greening Plan (Plan) has been underway since 2013, when the City received grant funding from Proposition 84 to Improve the Sustainability and Livability of California's Communities, through the Strategic Growth Council's Urban Greening for Sustainable Communities grant program. The Plan identifies projects, policies and programs to achieve environmental sustainability, support environmental stewardship, promote active recreation and transportation, encourage economic vitality and prioritize urban livability. These goals are consistent with the grant program and recent and concurrent City planning efforts, including the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan (2014), Climate Action Plan (2013), Strategic Plan (2013) and Active Transportation Plan (draft) as well as with the City's General Plan. The Plan is intended to build upon these efforts and carry forward existing policy direction from other City documents, where relevant.

A citywide Urban Greening Plan is naturally broad in scope. The policy and project framework have been defined by community priorities identified throughout the planning process. Other communities have opted to tackle a specific environmental topic, such as urban forestry or low impact development stormwater design guidelines, but this Urban Greening Plan, was developed as a broader, more comprehensive Plan to help coordinate and build consensus for community and City efforts. The Climate Action Plan identifies the importance of increasing transit-oriented development along our transit corridors in order to reduce reliance on the private automobile and cause a reduction in vehicle-miles travelled and greenhouse gas emissions. The San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan implements this goal. These plans both also identified the need to provide green amenities and open space in order to achieve a livable urban fabric, but additional analysis and community engagement was needed to define how this would be achieved. This Plan has been developed over two years with extensive community engagement that helped defined the goals and objectives that guided plan development, identify opportunity sites and define priority projects, programs and policies.

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The City has access to limited funds for park and street improvements. Measure J, Measure WW as well as a number of regional, State and federal grant funding sources exist to help pay for parks improvements, natural area and creek restoration activities, landscape, sidewalk and green infrastructure projects. One of the goals of this planning effort was to identify focus area projects that would likely be eligible and competitive for these funding sources. Conceptual designs and a catalog of improvements for these fourteen focus areas were developed and presented to the community at the second community workshop and design Charrette. Additional design and community engagement would be required for many of these projects to move forward.

Public Comment Themes

The City released a public review version of the Plan for public comment to be considered and incorporated into the final draft from May 1st through May 18th. Sixteen community members submitted comments. These comments were reviewed and incorporated, as appropriate, in a redline version of the Plan. The major themes of the public comments are summarized below:

Aspirational Planning: Staff received comments that the range of policies and programs laid out in the Plan were either too broad and that program specifics had not been adequately defined, while others thought that as an aspirational plan, it could have covered other topics and pushed policy direction farther.

Response: The Plan was developed through extensive community and staff engagement. Urban greening plans, which are a relatively new planning mechanism, are often broad in scope. The overall vision framework and list of key objectives went through several iterations to incorporate community feedback received at the second community workshop, task force meetings and a Joint Study Session with the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Environmental Quality Committee. Specific policies and programs were then identified based on existing policy, existing practice and a catalog of national best practices.

Connectivity Analysis: Staff received comments on the Connectivity Analysis, including that the Ohlone Greenway was given too much emphasis on several of the maps and that there may be some inaccurate service gaps identified near the Hillside Natural Area.

Response: The Connectivity Analysis was completed early on in the planning process and was undertaken as a preliminary planning exercise to help identify major level of service gaps. Based on the common metrics used, there were no major service gaps which led staff and the consultant team to propose and develop projects based more on the qualitative results of the survey and community input, rather than the connectivity analysis.

Plant Palette: Several people submitted comments on the Plant Palette, encouraging staff to redefine the proposed space types, plant selection criteria and provide further clarification of the purpose of the Plant Palette.

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- Native Plants: Commenters felt that there were insufficient native plants and that several were misidentified in the draft Plant Palette.
- Drought Tolerant Plants: Commenters felt that there was a need for additional drought tolerant plants and that these plants should be given priority in the Plant Palette.

Response: The Plant Palette released during the public comment period was an initial draft. It had not yet been vetted by the community and staff was happy to receive extensive comment on plant selection and landscape criteria. Most of the comments were received and staff has worked closely with the landscape architect on the consultant team to create a more robust plant palette.

Maintenance and Maintainability: During community engagement and as part of the public comment period, staff received comments about the current level of maintenance in existing parks and natural areas. Staff discussed these issues in detail as part of the Staff Charrette and other interdepartmental meetings. Staff and the consultant team carefully considered opportunities to improve maintenance through the Urban Greening Plan. The Plan proposes maintenance projects at focus area sites and identifies where current maintenance practices either hinder or support the natural function of creeks, fields, groves, riparian corridors and native plantings. The Urban Greening Plan is part of a larger decision-making process to identify and prioritize maintenance needs. The dialog undertaken as a part of the planning process and the Plan itself will help frame the discussion and community priorities as maintenance considerations relate to the environmental impacts of certain practices. Additional funding sources for maintenance are clearly needed and this Plan underscores the need to adequately consider the maintenance requirements of a project prior to construction.

Response: Staff amended the Supporting Policies: *Sustainable Landscape Maintenance* section to better highlight existing City policies and to more succinctly convey and balance maintenance needs. Staff amended language in the focus area projects, where appropriate, to capture current maintenance issues and to ensure that project design would account for maintenance needs.

Project Specifics: Commenters submitted comments on project specifics, including:

- The need for traditional play equipment at Fairmont Park, as it is the only park serving the surrounding neighborhood and there is a lack of playground facilities
- Route suggestions for the Blue-to-Green Connections
- Additional improvements in the Hillside Natural Area catalog and a better discussion of the vegetation management concerns
- That projects involving Cerrito Creek should incorporate existing City policies outlined in the General Plan, Resolution 1996-103 and the Cerrito Creek Trail Connector Study

Response: Staff incorporated additional project elements and revised project language, where appropriate. In some instances, comments were submitted that contradicted earlier direction received from the community, so these comments were not incorporated.

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Where comments were not relevant to the Urban Greening Plan scope, they were cataloged and/or conveyed to appropriate City staff.

Drought: The draft Urban Greening Plan was in development when Governor Jerry Brown issued his Executive Order for the State of California to reduce its water consumption by 25%. The Plan, which has taken direction on drought issues from local, regional and Statewide initiatives, makes reference to and incorporates drought related policies, as appropriate. Several people had hoped that the Plan would include further guidance on how to address questions about new landscaping and street trees and the maintenance of existing plantings.

Response: In a number of projects and policies the issue of transitioning water-intensive landscapes to less water-intensive landscapes is highlighted. Staff has incorporated additional language about the need to conserve water and consider drought conditions when planning new fields, landscaping, and other major projects and identified the need for a specific Drought Response and Management Plan .

Existing City Policies: Commenters encouraged City staff to review, cross-reference and incorporate specific existing City policies including: the Urban Forest Management Plan (2007), the Landscape Management Plan (2003), Hillside Natural Area Fire Hazard Reduction Plan (1994); Hillside Natural Area Vegetation Management Plan (1987), the General Plan as it relates to Cerrito Creek, Resolution 1996-103 and the Cerrito Creek Trail Connector Feasibility Study.

Response: Staff added language referencing Appendix D: Existing Policies and Programs, which provides a summary of relevant adopted policies, and have added specific reference to existing policies in some cases, such as in focus area descriptions. As a part of implementing the Plan, after it is adopted, an additional tool will be developed to help provide an easier way for staff and the public to access and cross-reference all existing urban greening related policies to assure consistency, facilitate implementation and help avoid redundancy.

Creeks: Commenters submitted additional creek segments to be added to the maps and questioned some of the identified creeks.

Response: Staff added a note to maps depicting creeks explaining the origin of the creek alignments depicted. The creeks illustrated were derived from the City's GIS, which was created based on the Oakland Museum of California's Creek and Watershed mapping effort. These maps may not capture all existing creeks and creek alignments may not be exact.

Implementation

The Plan is an aspirational, long-range planning effort. It identifies both policies and projects that may be implemented over time. Project design and construction is contingent on additional funding and may be incorporated as part of other projects. The additional planning and policy-making efforts identified as part of this Plan provide a framework. Specific efforts may be undertaken over time when the need or opportunity exists, based upon staffing levels, regulatory mandates and funding opportunities. The

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City's overall environmental sustainability is not contingent on the full implementation of this Plan, but the Plan should be used as a reference point for future efforts.

ATTACHMENT:

June 16, 2015 Final Draft Urban Greening Plan (with Redline/Greenline revisions included to help facilitate review and differences from the earlier Public Review Draft.)



Friends of Five Creeks

Volunteers preserving and restoring watersheds of
North Berkeley, Albany, Kensington, south El Cerrito and Richmond since 1996
1236 Oxford St., Berkeley, CA 94709
510 848 9358 f5creeks@gmail.com www.fivecreeks.org

June 15, 2015

Department of Community Development
Environmental Quality Committee
Parks and Recreation Commission
City Council
City Clerk
City of El Cerrito
10890 San Pablo Ave.
El Cerrito, CA 94530

Re: Second Set of Comments on Public Draft, proposed Urban Greening Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a second set of comments on the draft El Cerrito Urban Greening Plan.

We appreciate effort that has gone into this plan. We also appreciate that the staff has incorporated many of our suggestions into the revised draft Urban Greening Plan, particularly in sections dealing with “sustainable landscape and maintenance policies” (p. 91) and maintenance in the Hillside Natural Area (p. 125).

We hope you will consider the following remaining recommendations, summarized in ***bold italic***:

Objective 7, “Enriched Natural Areas,” needs more specific language to become useful.

Sections 7.1 and 7.2 (p.71), both headed “Strengthen and, where needed, restore natural areas in existing open spaces to restore their natural function and wildlife habitat, and ensure ecological resilience, as appropriate” should be combined. The measures listed should go beyond making plans, considering buying land, and dealing with light pollution (which is just one aspect of the goal). Wording could be as simple as “Maintain natural areas so as to encourage habitat and biodiversity.”

In the section on the Hillside Natural Area, p. 125, the “Opportunities” and “Catalog of Improvements” sections should include natural values such as diverse plant and animal communities, forests, and grasslands – not just creeks (although we appreciate the interest in creeks).

The two following recommendations could help reduce the cost, and increase the effectiveness, of the large number of ordinances, plans, policies, and guidelines envisioned by this plan. We counted 30+ total, more than 12 dealing with plantings alone. For a city of 25,000, that represents a heavy cost in time and effort, and the likelihood that many will be forgotten.

Use hyperlinks to existing cross-reference city plans, policies, guidelines, etc. by specific topic. Staff, council and commission members, and the public all need this. It should reduce duplication, conflicts, and the need for new rules. In one example, the draft Urban Greening

Plan's recommendations for Cerrito Creek from the Ohlone Greenway west are much weaker than pre-existing zoning and the General Plan, which zone the creek corridor as park and explicitly call for a creekside trail and daylighting buried reaches. The staff didn't know these requirements existed.

In the plan, make it clear that recommendations for new plans, policies, guidelines, etc. are conditional. To make them operational, (1) Prioritize the need for new rules, (2) Write new rules only where it is clear that a specific goal cannot be achieved under existing rules, and (3) When new rules are written, make them specific (for example, require three years of landscape maintenance for new city projects, in order to establish plants).

Thank you for considering these recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Schwartz", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Susan Schwartz, President
Friends of Five Creeks