



SPECIAL MEETING OF THE  
PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, May 23, 2018  
**6:30 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 Recreation Department at (510) 559-7000. 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:** Present Chair – David Zuckermann, Ben Chuaqui, Norman La Force, Art Machado, Robin Mitchell, and Jun Sunseri  
Absent: Tara McIntire

2. **Oral Communications from The Public**

Pam Austin, El Cerrito: Vice President and treasurer of EC Trail Trekkers, reported on the success of the Hillside Festival. The Festival was May 4-6, 2018 at the Hillside Natural Area. There were 300 unique event and/or hike attendees, 14 events, average of 25 participants per event, lower staffing costs than previous years, and increased youth involvement. Austin expressed gratitude for all participants, board members of EC Trail Trekkers, City of El Cerrito Environmental Quality Committee and everyone that helped publicize the event.

3. **Study Session: El Cerrito Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan**

Staff and the City's consultant, RHAA, will present an overview of the Master Plan process, summarize findings, and explain the initial administrative draft components of the El Cerrito Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan for review, discussion and comments from the public and the Commission. Background documents are available online at [www.el-cerrito.org/ParksMP](http://www.el-cerrito.org/ParksMP).

Presenters

Barbara Lundburg, RHAA Principle in Charge: provided an introduction by identifying the Master Plan team members. The team consists of Barbara Lundburg, RHAA Landscape Architecture and Planning, Principal in Charge; Lauren Ivey, RHAA Project Manager; David Ross, mack5; Lauren Livingston, The Sports Management Group (TSMG); Julie Spier, TSMG; and Doug Svensson, Applied Development Economics (ADE).

Lauren Ivey, RHAA Project Manager: presented the key details pertaining to the planning process to date. She spoke on the Master Plan process, Community Advisory Group, inventory and assessment, Community Workshop #1, stakeholder interviews, Community Workshop #2 (including the community profile, recreation trends, and online survey results), and the Recreation Programs

Assessment. Ivy presented the goals and policies developed by RHAA. She continued the presentation with recommendations and prioritization information including factors for consideration, recommendations, Community Workshop #3, and deficient and immediate replacement cost. The next steps of the Master Plan process are the financial evaluation and prioritization, public meeting/parks and recreation commission study session #2.

Comments and questions from the Commissioners received, answered and discussed.

Speakers:

Anne Ogonowski, El Cerrito, 20-year resident of El Cerrito and consistent volunteer creek expressed concern that there is no strong reliance on volunteers in El Cerrito. She commented that this is a huge deficiency and volunteers must be engaged to help accomplish City projects. Ogonowski believes that if the City does not have the money to maintain a new project, then the new project should not be implemented. She requested that Master Plan information be released one week prior to any public engagement to give people time to review the materials. She thinks that the public meeting process has been tedious and repetitious and would like it to be streamlined. She believes there would be more public engagement had the Public Meeting formats been improved.

Susan Schwartz, Berkeley, head of Friends of Five Creeks a 22-year-old volunteer group. Friends of Five Creeks have worked on Cerrito Creek for 22 years including major safety and flood control projects. Schwartz expressed appreciation that the plan considers the risk of rising sea levels, but the plan also needs include fire risks on the Hillside Natural Area. Schwartz does not believe that there is not enough budget for the improvement plans of the Hillside Natural area. She believes that the Master Plan needs to put safety first. An issue with putting safety first, Schwartz believes, is that there will be (and has been) tremendous environmental destruction due to no real understanding of environmental considerations and native habitat. Priority conservation areas need special consideration in the Master Plan. The Urban Greening plan is weaker than the General Plan, there needs to be more consideration of the very difficult problems of safety and saving nature in natural areas in cities. There are not simple answers, but she encourages the City to think about it.

Gary Hill, El Cerrito, previous El Cerrito Park and Recreation Commission member. Commented that the Master Plan is a big step that will help with the Commission Work Plan and implementing projects to address what the City's future needs. Hill was hoping to hear more about the projection for the future of El Cerrito and the park systems in the Master Plan presentation. El Cerrito is in a boom and the city will grow tremendously in the next 5 years. This needs to be addressed. Hill questions if this plan will withstand the fluctuation in population. Hill's passion is bike riding, coaching mountain biking, the unstructured environment biking provides, and the challenges and joy that youth have when they succeed. He believes where we live it is hard to get those experiences daily. A localized and centralized bike park would address this need. Hill is pushing for a bike park at the former EBMUD water tank site as a potential location. Hill feels another assessment needs to be made for another city location, possibly more centrally located. Hill expressed appreciation for hard work by RHAA, the City, Commission and community as well as the public support of a bike park element of the Master Plan.

Drew McGaraghn, El Cerrito, reiterating support for the bike parks and creating safe places in El Cerrito for kids to ride. Asked if there has there been consideration of combining a teen center, senior center and library? The combination may be a successful idea.

Curtis Cooper, Kensington, asked what would initiate the recommended separate Hillside Master Plan to start? Cooper worries, this is the third meeting he has attended, and trails have ranked the highest, so why should it get delayed to additional planning to the hillside? His concern is that monies will get spent on other locations before the hillside area plan is completed.

Howdy Goudey, El Cerrito, expressed appreciation for the comprehensive plan and presentation. Goudey reiterated the importance of the volunteer coordination comment made earlier. He believes that allocating a little money towards catalyzing that contribution could go a long way to help. Goudey thinks that it is great that the Hillside Natural Area has been included in this process. Traditionally, the Hillside Natural Area has been outside of the day-to-day park and recreation management and maintenance. He believes it is great that this plan is considering this area a part of the overall El Cerrito park system and believes it should be getting more resources. Most City staff time and money goes towards play fields and other facilities, but the City has not been investing what is needed to keep the Hillside Natural Area a high quality natural space. The Master Plan is a good step, but institutionalizing the commitment is important. Goudey was surprised see the recommendation for the Dorothy Rosenberg property to be made into rental facility. He believes that this would be challenging, and limited activities would be compatible. Goudey feels it is a shame the property has been vacant for years and thinks a care taker for the property is the best option to pursue.

There was further Commissioner discussion. Followed by additional public comments.

Howdy Goudey, El Cerrito, follow-up to say that the Hillside Natural Area is a rich opportunity site that does not require building, is a natural environmental education site. Environmental education around that area should be a highlight of how we address that space in the future.

Anne Ogonowski, El Cerrito made the recommendation for there to be a liaison between the Arts Commission and the Park and Recreation Commission.

**Action:** Received presentation, public comment and discussion held.

4. **Meeting Adjournment: 8:40pm**