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 Zoom using the meeting information listed above.

Public comments may be submitted one of two ways:

1. Via Zoom using the “Raise Hand” icon to request to speak. If joining by phone, dial *9 to “raise your hand”, and when prompted *6 to unmute/mute.

2. Via email to cjones@ci.el-cerrito.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.

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.

6:00 P.M. CONVENE SPECIAL MEETING

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

2. TELECONFERENCE AND PUBLIC COMMENT INSTRUCTIONS

3. CONSIDERATION OF PERMANENT PICKLEBALL COURTS AT CASTRO PARK

Recreation Department Director, Chris Jones provided background information relating to the consideration of permanent pickleball courts at Castro Park. In the El Cerrito Parks & Recreation Facilities Master Plan (2019) Policy A2.1 Castro recommendation 72 (early win) to add pickleball amenities at existing tennis courts
courts – court striping, nets and storage. Priority Score 8 (of 13 possible points) however, there is a possibility for a score of 10 when adding in the revenue generating score.

One question that has come forward has been, why can’t we share (tennis and pickleball)? Unfortunately, the tennis courts in El Cerrito are not the standard size meaning that there is not enough space in between pickleball and tennis courts to play safely.

Director Jones provided an overview of court hours used by location and date range – April through March (5 years) this excludes casual play without reservations. He presented Castro park hours used by date and daily reservations by type (City reservations, Korematsu Middle School and private reservations)

Following the presentation by Director Jones, commissioners had a discussion and ask follow-up questions.

Bob Guletz, representing the El Cerrito Tennis Club (ECTC) gave a brief presentation to the Commission. The presentation verbally relayed what was in the letter submitted to the Commission on April 6, 2021. The bottom-line recommendation by ECTC is continue the shared use of the Castro courts. ECTC is concerned about preserving the courts in El Cerrito for tennis use. Guletz presented some of ECTC’s greatest accomplishments in El Cerrito including procuring grants. Guletz provided reasons for ECTC’s concerns with converting tennis courts to permanent pickle ball courts including the Castro park neighborhood would lose out by no longer having tennis courts, El Cerrito would lose two out of 15 tennis courts and one of the three backboards. Guletz provided recommendations to the El Cerrito pickleball community and the East Bay Pickleball association including having an El Cerrito specific association.

The presentation was followed by questions from the Commissioners. Member Codron asked how much was given directly to the Castro courts over the past 75 years by ECTC? Guletz, primary use of funding provided by the Club was used to construction the third court at Arlington, lights at Cerrito Vista, and the water bottle filling station at Arlington.

Member La Force asked a question regarding number of El Cerrito residents on ECTC’s board. Guletz replied stating he did not mean to imply the recommendation of an exclusive pickleball El Cerrito resident club but rather to see what interest there would be for El Cerrito and not the larger area of the East Bay. Member La Force asked if ECTC tried to work with the East Bay Pickleball Association to find an alternate place for permanent courts and has ECTC identified other locations for pickleball? Guletz responded that no, the Club had not done either.

Vice-Chair Chuaqui asked clarifying questions including fees and the use of the Castro courts by ECTC. Castro is no longer used by ECTC for competitive play.
Vice-Chair Chuaqui suggested that ECTC or the City look into adding backboards elsewhere or fixing ones at Tassajara.

Public Comments:
Sam Davis – agrees with shared not exclusive use of the courts.

Jason Manalac - disagrees with exclusive use of courts by pickleball and would like it to be a continued shared space. Recommended that the City convert the courts at Tassajara instead of Castro.

Johnny Young - lives close to Castro courts and is in favor of keeping the shared space. Commented that noise complaints are an issue with pickleball. Expressed the need to have tennis courts as shared use spaces and that residents should have free access.

Shoshana Grammar - tennis player in high school but has now picked up pickleball. Commented on the growth of pickleball. Commented that regardless of being East Bay Association, pickleball players are still providing revenue to El Cerrito. There is a lack of dedicated courts for pickleball which is a family sport for ages 4-90 years old. In favor of dedicated courts.

Debra Bernhardt- former racket ball and tennis player. Converted to playing pickleball. There are approximately 17-22 tennis courts in El Cerrito, but no permanent pickleball courts. Discussed the disadvantages of “shared” courts.

Roy Harkow- talked about the issues of noise, walk on play, and the increasing number of pickleball reservations. Supports keeping tennis courts at Castro and finding another place for pickleball to play.

Cathy Taruskin- read through the written comments submitted to the Park and Recreation Commission and found that out of 165 public comments there were 60 against converting Castro courts to permanent pickleball courts and 105 in favor. Asked the Commissioners for her letter to be read that responds to ECTC’s comments. Disputed earlier comments that were made in favor of keeping the courts at Castro as Tennis courts.

Margo Takemiya- member of the El Cerrito Tennis Club Board commented about neighborhood residents’ concerns and including noise concerns expressed by the principal of Korematsu Middle School.

Marilyn Ashlin- neighborhood resident, main concern has to do with an increase in traffic and parking. She is also opposed to single use instead of shared use.

Bill Powning- commented on the currently exclusivity of tennis courts and is in favor of pickleball having a permanent space. Spoke about solutions to noise issues. Believes that pickleball could be an asset to Korematsu’s PE program. Is in favor of increased accessibility for pickleball.
Indy Rishi Singh- court usage should be open to all races and socio-economic needs. Courts should be fully inclusive and accessible.

Martin Fivian- lives in the neighborhood of Castro park. The court is used by broad range of people. He is in support of shared usage. Commented on the louder sound of pickleball compared to tennis. Also commented that he believes tennis is a larger generator of revenue compared to pickleball.

Laurel - hears concerns on both sides and recently discovered pickleball. Understands concerns about parking. Proposed one pickleball and one tennis court. The current set up at the Castro courts is not working properly. There should dedicated courts for pickleball. Sound is a legitimate concern, but this concern can be addressed by possibly limited the hours or having use of equipment that makes less noise.

Recreation Director Chris Jones reported that there were 166 comments on this item before 4:00pm, and they were posted online with this meeting’s agenda. Letters that came in after the meeting but prior to the end of the meeting, will be sent to the Commissioners and will be a part of the supplemental materials for this meeting.

Member Codron recognizes the noise issue concern and asked staff to comment on whether the City has received complaints from residents.

Recreation Director Jones responded that staff has not been made aware of current noise complaints, however, this could increase with 6 permanent courts.

Member Codron asked if other locations being considered such as Canyon Trail. Director Jones reported that Castro was identified by the Master Plan as the best location of all the tennis court sites as it is furthest away from homes.

Member Codron suggested to get a commitment from WCCUSD to again provide the El Cerrito High School tennis courts for reservation. Member Codron commented on the trend of pickleball growing - and how to incorporate the pickleball community that we are addressing their needs and not just tennis.

Director Jones responded that the School District has reported that if they have adequate staffing, El Cerrito High School will be open for tennis in June 2021.

Member Kaczor- pickleball is a hugely popular sport, courts would be used, and a valuable addition to El Cerrito recreational offerings. Biggest concern is a noise issue. Curious to understand more about the noise considerations for the residents and the school. Asked what authority the School District has in this decision. Posed the question if there is any way to make the shared court option easier? Understands the difficulty pickleball players are having but are there opportunities to make that work better?

Discussion by the Commission followed. Member La Force would like the commission to move forward and find a solution. He further commented that the
Master Plan did incorporate pickleball, the sport is becoming more popular and needs to be accommodated by the City. He appreciates the El Cerrito Tennis Club and all that it has done over the years working in coordination with the Recreation Department. The comments about noise issues he can appreciate but it is a part of urban living and the environment. He would like to try to work with the School District on the conversion and possible time constraints if noise is an issue for Korematsu but would still like to move forward with approval to conversion.

Vice-Chair Chuaqui, agreed with fellow members, did understand during the Master Plan that the City would be converting to permanent courts. Does not agree that the noise levels are within normalcy. Also addressed parking concerns, Castro has been a destination for soccer and baseball and parking has never been brought as a reason for not doing an activity. Ultimately having these courts would be an amenity to El Cerrito.

**Action:** Motion to recommend to move forward with the conversion of the two Castro tennis courts at Castro to six permanent pickleball courts with Staff coming back to the commission this summer with other conditions the staff feel are appropriate, including public access to the courts and noise levels, for how to move forward with the recommendation (Member La Force/Member Kaczor).

**Ayes:** Vice-Chair Ben Chuaqui; Members, Avis Codron, Norman La Force, Jennifer Kaczor

**Noes:** None

**Abstain:** None

4. **ADJOURN SPECIAL PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING - 7:59pm**
1. ROLL CALL – 8:06 pm  
Present: Vice-Chair Ben Chuaqui; Members, Avis Codron, Norman La Force, Jennifer Kaczor  
Absent: Art Machado, Shawn Purcell

2. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC  
None

3. COUNCIL/STAFF LIAISON ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REPORTS  
Recreation Director Chris Jones reported that the West Contra Costa Unified School District is planning to relocate two charter schools to the temporary campus below the old Portola middle school.

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

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

5. RECREATION DEPARTMENT PROPOSED MASTER FEE SCHEDULE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021-22  
Reviewed, discussed and took action to recommend the proposed Master Fee Schedule for the Recreation Department for fiscal year 2021-22.

Director Chris Jones provided background that fees are raised by CPI which was 2% for the Bay Area. The Department staff factor in cost recovery, market rates, and cost of doing business for the proposed fees. The State Auditor made recommendations to increase fees at Swim Center and Senior Services. The Department has made a series of moves to improve the bottom line in those two divisions. Major steps within the Aquatics Division have been made, including the layoff of the Assistant Supervisor, and transferring some expenditures (maintenance, chemicals and utilities) to be covered by Measure H. One of the largest expenditures for the Senior Services Division is cost of the modular buildings. The presentation is going to focus highlights and give more details on any fees being raised more than the standard.

Recreation Supervisor Taylor Melton reported on the facility rental fees which are mostly following the standard 2% increase except for small room/clubhouse storage rate. There is a new, light surcharge at the Cerrito Vista tennis courts - other cities are charging such fees. El Cerrito co-sponsored youth group play field increase is designed to match the average hourly rate last year. The Department has switched from flat seasonal rate to an hourly rate. Conversations and meetings did occur between the City and Co-Sponsored
groups. At the new hourly rates, co-sponsored groups are still requesting the same, if not more, amount of time.

Director Jones - The State Auditor recommended higher fees for the El Cerrito Swim Center. The Swim Center is already charging higher fees when compared to other pools in the area however, Albany is comparable which has been helpful for retaining customers. The State Auditor also suggested a seasonal increase in prices, but the weather in El Cerrito must be kept in mind. The Recreation Department has strategies that could result in higher revenue without significantly affecting those that use the pool on a regular basis.

Member La Force provided feedback, questions and comments about the Swim Center fees including being concerned that people are going to be priced out. Urges having a yearly payment at a discounted rate that is not refundable. Vice-Chair Chuaqui also provided feedback and asked questions about the proposed fees that had been presented.

Recreation Supervisor Eden O'Brien-Brenner provided the Commission with context for camps which is a range of prices because there are different costs associated with different camps. O'Brien-Brenner provided context for the proposed childcare fees. Some key points are that the programs are focused on being run as efficiently as possible, paying living wages to employees, what parents can afford, and dealing with big increases to minimum wages.

Member La Force expressed concerns with the fees that had a much higher increase percentage than 2%. Supervisor O'Brien-Brenner pointed out the differences in costs for programs that run a short number of hours versus longer and the discounts that are provided to families that qualify for the free and reduced lunch program through the School District.

Recreation Director Chris Jones presented the proposed fees for Adult Programs and Services. The Recreation Department is going to have to minimize the number of activities that are low-cost recovery instead of prosing to dramatically increased fees because no one charges high fees for such services. Director Jones talked about the loss of staff in the Recreation Department and the effects this has had and will continue to have on the Department in the future. Loss of staff and more efficiency is the reasoning behind combining the two Recreation Department offices to one at the Community Center.

Recreation Analyst Sarah DiBenedetto explained the 5% increase to cancellation fees was due to rounding. The Department is proposing a change to the discount that is offered to seniors from 20% to 15%.

Moved/Seconded: Vice-Chair Chuaqui / Member Codron made a motion to recommend the proposed Master Fee Schedule for the Recreation Department for fiscal year 2021-22.

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

6. **REORGANIZATION OF THE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

Per City ordinance, select Chair and Vice Chair of the Park and Recreation Commission for 2021-2022.

Member Cedron nominated Member Chuaqui as Chair.

Moved/Seconded: Vice-Chair Chuaqui/Member Kaczor

Action: Closed nominations and appointed Member Chuaqui as Commission Chair.

Ayes: Members, Avis Cedron, Norman La Force, Jennifer Kaczor
Noes: None
Abstain: Vice-Chair Ben Chuaqui

Chair Chuaqui nominated Member Cedron as Vice-Chair.

Moved/Seconded: Chair Chuaqui/Member Kaczor

Action: Closed nominations and appointed Member Cedron as Commission Vice-Chair.

Ayes: Chair Ben Chuaqui; Members, Avis Cedron, Norman La Force, Jennifer Kaczor
Noes: None
Abstain: None

7. **RECREATION DEPARTMENT UPDATE**

Recreation Analyst Sarah DiBenedetto presented the Recreation Department update. In the Aquatics Division, water aerobics began on April 20, 2021 physically distanced private/semi-private swim lessons are expected to start mid-May. The Childcare and Youth Divisions are in the final session of school year programming. In-person summer camps are approximately 75% full and an additional sports camp has been added at Castro to accommodate children on the waitlist. Recreational facility updates include picnic reservations reopened to the public on April 15, 2021 and the proposal for 6 permanent pickleball courts at Castro was approved for recommendation to the City Council at tonight’s Park and Recreation Commission Special Meeting. The Senior Services meals-to-go program has officially moved to the El Cerrito Community Center.

8. **ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS**
   - Next Regular Meeting: Wednesday, May 26, 2021 at 7 p.m.
   - Brown Act Refresher and Commission Policies & Procedure Updates – May
   - Parks and Recreation Facilities Projects Update (CIP) – May
   - Pickleball Considerations - Future

9. **ADJOURN REGULAR PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING**
   - 9:13pm
This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Special and Regular Park and Recreation Commission meetings on April 28, 2021 as approved by the Park and Recreation Commission.

Christopher Jones, Staff Liaison