



Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes

City Council Chambers, 200 Old Bernal Avenue, Pleasanton, CA
and Via Zoom

August 11, 2022 – 7:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Chairperson Joanie Fields.

Chairperson Fields provided details about Executive Order N-29-20 and approved AB 361 suspending provisions of the Brown Act allowing meetings via teleconference due to COVID-19 as proclaimed by Governor Newsom on March 3, 2020.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was recited.

Roll Call

Commissioners Present: Steve Berberich, Lisa Brown, Chuck Deckert, Rameshu Immadi, Kira Rittmuller, Michael Vickers, and Chairperson Joanie Fields.

Commissioners Absent: None.

Staff Present: Heidi Murphy, Library & Recreation Director; Michele Crose, Assistant Library & Recreation Director, Matt Gruber, Landscape Architect; Giacomo Damonte, Parks Superintendent; Ania Pawlak, Office Manager; and Edith Caponigro, Recording Secretary.

AGENDA AMENDMENTS

None.

MINUTES

1. Approve regular meeting minutes of July 14, 2022.

A motion was made by Commissioner Vickers, seconded by Commissioner Deckert, to approve the July 14, 2022 meeting minutes. **The motion was approved unanimously.**

MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

2. Introductions/Awards/Recognitions/Presentations

None.

3. Public Comment from the audience regarding items not listed on the agenda.

None.

MATTERS FOR THE COMMISSION'S REVIEW / ACTION / INFORMATION

4. Recommend City Council Approve the Three-Year Agreement for Basketball Officiating Services with Bay Island Officials' Association for \$316,000.

Ms. Crose advised that the City of Pleasanton has historically used contract services to provide sports officiating services for both youth and adult sport leagues. The agreement for youth and adult basketball services expires on July 31, 2022 and staff is recommending an agreement be entered into with the Bay Island Officials Association to provide these services for the period August 1, 2022 through June 31, 2023 with the administrative authority to renew on an annual basis for up to two additional years.

Commissioners were advised by Ms. Crose that this agreement with the Bay Island Officials Association will provide referee selection, training, scheduling, and supervision for youth and adult recreational basketball league games. She noted the compensation will be on a "time and materials basis" with amounts of \$103,000 not to be exceeded for FY 2022/23, \$105,000 for FY 2023/24, and \$108,000 for FY 2024/25. Additionally, it was noted that revenues received by the City from youth and adult recreational sports league registration will offset the cost of the Agreement and funding is included in the Library and Recreation Department Budget.

Commissioner Deckert discussed with Ms. Crose referees provided for other sports groups.

A motion was made by Commissioner Deckert, seconded by Commissioner Berberich, to approve the three-year agreement for youth and adult sports officiating services with Bay Island Officials Association in an amount not to exceed \$316,000.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

AYES: Commissioners Berberich, Deckert, Immadi, Rittmuller, Vickers, and Chairperson Fields.

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

ABSTAIN: None

5. Recommend Location for Cricket Field Placement at Ken Mercer Sports Park

Chairperson Fields reminded commissioners and members of the public that the only charge of the commission at this meeting was to select one of the three recommended options for the location of a cricket pitch at the Ken Mercer Sports Park. She also noted that members of the public wishing to speak on this item would be allowed two-minutes to present their comments.

Ms. Crose reviewed with commissioners a PowerPoint presentation providing information about the project and its background, the process and outreach conducted, results of a survey, staff's recommended location for a cricket field at the Ken Mercer Sports Park, and the next steps for this project.

Information was provided about: 1) the game of cricket, 2) the research that has been conducted to locate a suitable site for a cricket field, 3) funding allocated by City Council towards construction of a field, 4) results from an option presented at Muirwood Community Park, and 5) a cricket pitch opened at Alisal Elementary School by the PUSD.

Commissioners were advised by Ms. Crose that based upon the direction given by City Council, staff evaluated several locations within the Ken Mercer Sports Park and identifies two that could accommodate youth cricket and one that could accommodate both youth and adult cricket. Staff then met with representatives from other sports organizations, placed signage at the three most suitable locations from June 17 to July 11, 2022, lined the fields with the cricket field diameters, shared a survey with residents via social media and conducted an email blast. Information was also made available on the city's website and notice cards were distributed to all residences within a 1,000' radius.

Ms. Crose advised that a total of 536 responses were received from the survey conducted and of the three locations studied. Option 1 was the preferred choice of respondents. She further advised that Option 1 is also being recommended by staff for reasons that include: 1) it can accommodate both youth and adults, 2) the pitch would be constructed between two existing soccer fields without impacting the play of soccer, 3) no trees would need to be removed, 4) may not require the removal of Hard Ball B field fencing, and 5) while the pitch would be a new amenity to the park, cricket is not considered a new use and this would be considered a change of use.

Commissioners were informed by Ms. Crose of potential challenges in selecting Option 1 that included raising a drainage area to accommodate the pitch, determining if safety netting is required, consideration of the proposed east/west layout alignment of the pitch, and the approximately \$200,000 negative impact to City revenues by needing to eliminate the adult softball program to accommodate moving other youth sports.

Ms. Crose reviewed with the commission details about the Option 2 and Option 3 locations noting that both locations would only accommodate youth cricket. She noted that Option 2 would also require removing Hard Ball 8, addressing drainage in the area, the outermost perimeter being close to the walking trail, and the \$200,000 negative impact to City revenues. With Option 3 there would be limited impact to existing sports users, the cricket pitch would be in the middle of two football fields, and the cricket season would be limited to March through May.

In discussing the size and radius of cricket fields Mr. Gruber provided details about the measurements for each of the Options.

Ms. Crose asked commissioners to consider each of the options and provide their comments.

Commissioner Immadi thanked staff for collecting and providing information for all the options to be considered. He discussed damage to the field being used by the softball league, felt removing the Hard Ball 8 fence would not be necessary, and felt the radius for Option 2 could be changed from 180' to 200'. Commissioner Immadi discussed the possible relocation of soccer to Upper Bernal affecting softball play, repurposing of the softball field for girls' softball would make it too big of a field for the girls' program. He also commented on the softball field being under-utilized.

In commenting on Option 2, Commissioner Immadi felt there was available space to increase the area from 180' to 200' by moving more towards the parking lot and creating an oval shaped field. Ms. Crose provided details about cricket field sizes in San Ramon, Dublin, and noted that in both Options 1 and 2, staff would need to relocate or allocate some Upper Bernal space for soccer. Ms. Murphy noted that in all the options, staff was trying to retain field availability for soccer to hold special tournaments.

Commissioner Immadi reaffirmed with Mr. Gruber that Option 2 would offer 180' of play area with an increase to 200' being possible in an oval configuration. Mr. Gruber noted that fields in other areas are more oval shaped than circular. Additional details were provided about fields in other cities.

Commissioner Rittmuller thanked staff for the presentation and asked if adding a safety net or fencing would require creating a larger budget or if the current budget would be sufficient. Mr. Gruber advised that adding either item would be require increasing the budget.

Commissioner Deckert noted that when considering the Muirwood location for a cricket field, staff had referred to it as a "near-term solution" rather than a short-term or temporary solution. He questioned if this were something that could still be accomplished as a near-term solution with other options remaining on the table. Mr. Gruber advised this was still being considered a near-term solution with other more expensive options being available in the future.

Commissioner Deckert questioned the number of individuals who will be lost from not being able to play adult softball and was advised by Ms. Crose that it would be between 200 and 300 people, but at this time staff has not had any communications with the softball group. He expressed his concern about this group losing the ability to be able to play.

Commissioner Berberich was provided details on the radius considered for a cricket field at Muirwood Park. He advised that he was familiar with Dublin and San Ramon cricket fields and after recently walking the Ken Mercer Sports Park felt moving Option 2 to a 200' oval-shaped field would be an acceptable option since it is a radius most adult players would not be able to achieve. Commissioner Berberich discussed the possible displacement of soccer and felt the loss of adult softball was not an option that should be considered.

Commissioner Vickers agreed with Commissioner Berberich that displacing/losing adult softball is not something that this commission should consider.

Commissioner Brown questioned if Option 1 did not require removing the softball backstop, would it still be necessary to remove the adult softball program and move the girls' softball and why would it be necessary to shuffle things around so much. She was confused as to why games would need to be moved around if the cricket pitch placement were to be between two soccer fields. Commissioner Brown also commented on the size of the cricket field in all options being larger than those in other cities. Ms. Crose commented on the many existing uses and the need to further investigate options with existing user groups for field space.

Chairperson Fields commented on the number of softball fields in the area and if only one is to be moved where would that group be playing. Ms. Crose advised that soccer would be moving to Upper Bernal currently being used for softball. This move takes two softball fields and cricket would remove a third, so girls softball would need three fields to replace current field allocations.

Chairperson Fields indicated she was concerned about the possibility of displacing the adult softball program and felt it was important to try and maintain the program. She also noted that she had learned there were less adult softball players since the COVID pandemic. Ms. Crose questioned whether the adult softball program could run feasibly on one adult softball field as the other three fields are being utilized by girls' softball. Staff can have further discussion on this topic including adjusting nights of play and the fact that less people are now playing the sport and see if a limited adult softball program would be feasible.

Chairperson Fields was provided details by Mr. Gruber about the gain in radius if Option 2 was moved to the west. He also provided information about drainage details for Options 1 and 2 noting that Option 1 has two catch-basins which would require additional grading.

Chairperson Fields opened the meeting for public comment at 7:50 p.m. and reminded speakers they are limited to 2-minutes for their presentations.

In-Person Presenters

Karen Lynch – indicated she lived on Mohr Avenue and she and her neighbors are concerned with this new sport exploding on Ken Mercer Sports Park and displacing other things that have worked well. She expressed concern for bowing down to this new sport and its scheduling that will affect other sports. Ms. Lynch felt that the grass height for a cricket field must be different than the grass height currently in place and will eventually kill the grass. She also expressed concern about the increase in traffic that will take place and the proximity of the cricket field to the walking path around the park. Ms. Lynch encouraged the city to continue looking for another location for cricket and suggested the Staples Ranch location be considered.

Eric Stein – stated that he lives adjacent to the Option 3 recommendation and noted that he can see how much the fields in that area are being used and encouraged the commission to be mindful of this. He commented on the Hard Ball 3 and baseball fields that are used every Saturday and Sunday mornings, and noted that adult cricket players are playing at 6:30 a.m. Mr.

Stein felt there was a need for a cricket area, but was concerned about cricket balls that are currently being hit close to the walkway and felt there was a need for a stipulation to be in place on what type of balls can be used. He commented on league and non-league use and the ability to control what takes place. On the matter of installing netting, Mr. Stein felt everybody in Pleasanton has come to enjoy the aesthetics of parks and would be opposed to this suggestion and asked that this be carefully considered before it be done.

Erin Sharpe – stated she was the Director of Coaching at the BUSC and Pleasanton RAGE Soccer Clubs and Girls Softball and values the relationship between the Sports Council the Parks and Recreation Commission and City staff. She noted that as a collective group the three organizations absolutely support the addition of cricket in the community and having it within the Ken Mercer Sports Park. She noted that the groups unanimously agree that having it in the sports will work and since they will be the only groups within the Sports Council that would be affected their preference would be for Option 2.

Ms. Sharpe stated that the reasons for choosing Option 2 is that from a soccer perspective and scheduling they believe there will be some displacement with either Option 1 or 2, but since there are only two fields in the entire city that the clubs have access to in the fall and Option 2 would be the best Option that will work for everyone. She felt that moving the cricket pitch slightly would allow for everything to fit and would not require the displacement of softball.

Ms. Sharpe felt that adding more sports to the community would be beneficial for youth who needed help with mental health for which physical activity is critical.

Tamie Shadle – Director of Operations for RAGE commented on an email distributed by the organization. Ms. Shadle noted that as someone who does scheduling of games, she is constantly working with other groups to make things happen and has had an opportunity to speak with the softball people. She felt that if Option 2 were chosen and moved slightly to the west it would allow for the groups to be able to coexist in the fall and softball would not need to be displaced.

Mark Pasos – indicated he was not against having cricket in Pleasanton. He discussed the way the Options were presented to the neighborhood. Ms. Pasos stated that as he read items on this matter from previous meetings, he felt there was a conflict of interest with principals in this matter because both Steven Berberich and Ramesh Immadi are members of the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Zoom Presenters

Sandeep Kolte – gave thanks for the opportunity to speak and stated it was good to know that the sports groups were unanimously supporting Option 2, the same Option that he too was supporting. He felt it was unfortunate that some people consider the Ken Mercer Sports Park to be a neighborhood park and wondered if the same process being taken for approving a cricket field was taken for other sports in the park, and if so, much community feedback was sought by the city. Mr. Kolte indicated that he looked forward to the opportunity of teaching his kids how to play cricket, a popular sport in many other nations.

Manjunath Mysore – a Pleasanton resident since 2019 stated he spoke for a lot of people who are in favor of cricket a game that is very dear to them. He stated he has played soccer most of his life and wants his son to have the same option with the possibility of pursuing it as a career. He stated he could agree with either Option 1 or 2 but would go with the majority if Option 2 was the choice.

Vanky N. – advised that his son is extremely interested in sports and already plays soccer but would also like to play cricket. He felt Option 2 would be the best choice and encouraged the commission consider this Option and take the opportunity to build this field.

Anugraham Raju – an 8-year resident of Pleasanton. He thanked the city for considering adding a cricket field for the city and stated that his choice would be for Option 2. Mr. Raju indicated that cricket is used as a tool to improve the health and well-being of those who live in the community.

Rajiv Jef – thanked the commission for considering the matter of having a cricket pitch in Pleasanton. He noted that he regularly plays cricket and that a good pitch would be an excellent value to the community and his preference would be for Option 2.

Darshit Timbadiya – indicated he was in favor of either Option 1 or Option 2 but just wanted to encourage people to come out and play and if the choice is Option 2, he would be in favor of that.

Mischit Doshi – stated that he resonated the comments of other speakers and thought that Option 2 would be the best option and asked the commission to work on recommending Option 2 and considering Option 1 as the second choice.

Chairperson Fields closed the meeting for public comment.

Commissioner Vickers indicated that he had originally come to the meeting thinking his choice would be for Option 1 but after learning about the flexibility for making changes, his choice is now for Option 2. He was impressed by all the input and comments received and as a commission representative to the Sports Council was pleased at the comments received from other sports groups in favor of having a cricket pitch at the Ken Mercer Sports Park and felt their remarks were great and honorable. Commissioner Vickers stated that he looked forward to staff sharpening the pencil to make the appropriate changes to Option 2 to make this work for cricket and other sports groups. He also was strongly opposed to the displacement of the adult softball program and was pleased at staff's comments that they would work hard for that program to continue.

Commissioner Berberich commented on earlier comments about the possibility of installing netting and stated that he did not believe that this was going to be necessary. He advised that he has been watching the sport of cricket for many years and felt many people, like him, were wondering why it was not a sport being played locally. Commissioner Berberich commented on people's concerns about being hit with a cricket ball and the issue of displacing the softball league. He commented on the underutilization of the softball fields, noting that softball

membership has been dwindling and teams are being brought in from other cities. Commissioner Berberich stated he too was in favor of sharpening the pencil to improve Option 2 and making sure adult softball is not displaced.

Commissioner Immadi stated he was pleased to hear the perspectives from other sports groups and the consideration for their option choice. He discussed lighting at the softball fields and indicated he was a proponent of having adults having a place to play softball and other sports that will help relieve stress. He felt Option 2 will also allow for more seasons of play for both soccer and cricket, while Option1 will force both sports to share fields.

Commissioner Deckert asked that staff discuss with the softball league before any action be taken on canceling their program.

Commissioner Brown stated that as past President of Little League she was familiar with scheduling issues. She discussed the issue with some fields being under-utilized and appreciated the comments made by people from the sports groups and their willingness to make things work for all sports. Commissioner Brown felt an effort should be made to retain adult softball and noted that when walking the sports park, she sees cricket is already being played. Her choice was for Option 2.

Commissioner Rittmuller felt whatever option was chosen, there would be some impact to soccer and felt this should be considered.

Commissioner Immadi discussed an earlier comment made about the grass height stating he did not believe any change would be necessary to the cutting height of the grass.

Commissioner Berberich commented on a space at the Bernal Park that has already been dedicated for baseball, noting that baseball enrollment is down for both baseball and football and consideration should now be given to reallocating this as a space to be considered as a long-term location for cricket. He indicated he would like to see this happen sooner than later.

Chairperson Fields thanked everyone for their comments especially the sports group representatives.

A motion was made by Commissioner Immadi, seconded by Commissioner Rittmuller, recommending City Council consider approving Option 2 as a suitable location for cricket field placement at the Ken Mercer Sports Park.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

AYES: Commissioners Berberich, Deckert, Immadi, Rittmuller, Vickers, and Chairperson Fields.

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

ABSTAIN: None

Emails received on this item included with the minutes.

COMMISSION REPORTS

6. Committee Meetings

- A. Bicycle, Pedestrian and Trails Committee – no report.
- B. Community of Character – Chairperson Fields provided details about the planned August 20, 2022 BBQ fundraising event with all funds from the event going to the provide scholarships. She encouraged members of the commission to attend.
- C. Heritage Tree Review Board – no report.
- D. Public Art Selection Sub-Committee – no report.
- E. Sports Council – Commissioner Vickers advised that Giacomo Damonte provide a good report noting that Pleasanton has met its goal of reducing water usage. He noted the Assembly Bill 506 which is on mandatory reporting/fingerprinting, etc. was also discussed, as well sports programs setting up a nonprofit to manage the need. Further discussions included the new signage for the Bernal Sports park and vandalism at the park.

7. Other brief reports on any meetings, conferences, and/or seminars attended by the Commission members.

None.

MATTERS INITIATED BY THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Brown asked about changing the street names at the Bernal Park and Ms. Murphy advised that this will be done within the next few months when changing of the park name is completed.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. Murphy provided information on the following:

- a) a possible joint meeting with the Youth Commission in January 2023 to discuss the skatepark proposal.
- b) Century House project being presented to City Council at their next meeting.
- c) Lions Wayside – Delucci project on the next meeting agenda
- d) Quarterly report to be presented at the next meeting.

Ms. Murphy requested commissioners advise staff of any other items they would like to see added to future meeting agendas.

Commissioner Vickers stated that at a future meeting he would like to have some discussion regarding providing doggie bags in parks.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business a motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:39 p.m.