

# Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District Board of Directors Meeting

## MINUTES

Wednesday, October 4, 2023, 6:30pm

Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District • Activity Room 3  
4201 Guardian Street, Simi Valley, CA 93063 • (805) 584-4400

A video recording of tonight's meeting is available on  
the District Website at [www.rsrpd.org](http://www.rsrpd.org).

1. CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Chair Gray called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Paul Algarotti.
2. ROLL CALL – Directors Abele, Dennert, O'Brien, Vice Chair Freeman, and Chair Gray were in attendance. Staff in attendance included: Juli Algarotti, Richard Lemmo, Lee Martin, Zach Miller, Wayne Nakaoka, Dan Paranick, Theresa Pennington, Alex Stumfall, Gina Viecco, and District Counsel Brian Hamblet.

Guests attended tonight's meeting in-person and via Zoom. Those who made public comments are listed under the appropriate Item below.

3. AGENDA REVIEW – Staff reported there are 3 supplemental items regarding Item 9.a that have been distributed to the Board. Director Abele suggested moving the Public Hearing for Districting (Item 7.b) after Pickleball (Item 9.a) due to the large number of guests for Item 9.a. The Board chose to leave the Agenda as-is with no changes.
4. PUBLIC STATEMENTS (ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA)

Maverick Chutley submitted a Comment Card requesting a Skate Park in Oak Park.

### 5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District Board of Directors Meeting – September 20, 2023 – Director O'Brien requested the following changes: Item 9.a, she voted yes, but with misgivings. Regarding the Item for Term Limits: "she has mixed feelings, it is okay at the State level, but she's not in favor at the local level." District Counsel requested the following change to the Closed Item: The Board voted unanimously to "reject" (not eject) the claim.

Motion: Director Dennert moved to approve the Minutes as amended. Chair Gray seconded the motion. The motion carried with the following Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Abele, Dennert, Freeman, Gray, O'Brien

Noes:

Absent:

Abstain:

6. CONSENT AGENDA (Matters listed under the Consent Agenda are considered routine and shall be acted upon without discussion by one motion approving the Consent Agenda. If discussion is desired the item may be removed from the Consent Agenda upon a Director's request.)
  - a. Approval of 9/15/23 Accounts Payable Check Register and 9/22/23 Payroll Check Register.
  - b. Approval of Notice of Completion and Final Acceptance for Weed Abatement Services at Various District Parks and Open Space Areas.

Motion: Vice Chair Freeman moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Director O'Brien seconded the motion. The motion carried with the following Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Abele, Dennert, Freeman, Gray, O'Brien

Noes:

Absent:

Abstain:

## 7. PRESENTATIONS, SCHEDULED ITEMS AND PUBLIC HEARINGS

- a. Presentation of the Part-Time Employee of the Month for September 2023 to Juli Algarotti, Administrative Assistant VI – Staff Report was presented by Theresa Pennington, Director of Administration. Juli has worked with the District for 1 year; this is her first award. Juli was hired to assist during a scheduled leave of absence in Human Resources and did an outstanding job filling in and assisting with all aspects of Human Resources. During that time, Juli processed 101 new employees, posted job listings, assisted with personnel matters, monitored due dates for evaluations and communicated deadlines to supervisors, amongst many other tasks. Her dedication is commendable!

Abele stated this is a well-deserved award, Juli had big shoes to fill, and she did so admirably.

Dennert congratulated Juli and appreciates her can-do attitude.

Freeman and O'Brien appreciate her monthly Human Resources correspondence and thanked her for the great work.

- b. First Public Hearing Regarding the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District's (RSRPD) Process to Establish "By-Division" Elections for Board Members, Including an Introduction to Districting – Staff Report was presented by Dan Paranick, District Manager. Staff have formally secured National Demographics Corporation (NDC) to provide consulting services to assist the District through the transition from at-large to by-division elections. In accordance with the adopted timeline, this Item represents the first of 5 public hearings in the implementation process. A representative from NDC presented an introduction to a Districting PowerPoint presentation which provided a framework of the process and guidelines for map boundaries.

Chair Gray opened the Public Hearing at 7:23pm.

Joe Piechowski was concerned about Districting after reading the article in The Acorn regarding the last Board meeting. He went to the meeting Minutes to see the vote and was

surprised to see a 5-0 vote in favor of Districting. He is concerned about Wood Ranch and Oak Park combining into 1 district. He feels Oak Park deserves their own representation.

Oak Park resident Mark Perryman encouraged the Board and legal team to specifically look at what defines a Community of Interest in regard to Oak Park.

Jana Orkney is in support of Elections by District as it is wonderful to have more representation. She wants to keep the Oak Park community of interest together, they can drive to and from Wood Ranch, she feels this would be the most logical link.

Carolyn Cass-Barton is very positive about Districting, she thinks it is a great idea. She is concerned about how Oak Park will be joined to another community to meet the minimum resident count.

Steven Kozal inquired if the Oak Park Advisory Committee will cease to exist. He does not feel the Simi Valley Knolls area is a good fit for Oak Park as it is the most distant location.

Brian Trushinski is wondering if the 5 Districts could be split as 4 incorporated and 1 purely for un-incorporated.

Chair Gray closed the Public Hearing at 7:36pm.

Abele requested this presentation be given at the next Oak Park Advisory Committee meeting. Abele added there are 5 Community parks within the District with one being in Oak Park that would serve as a good starting point for the 5 districts. He would like to see a map with this layout. He is enthusiastic about the Districting process; it brings representatives closer to the people they serve.

Dennert is interested in keeping communities of interests together within the guidelines. He would like the maps drawn with current Board members in mind. Likes the idea of using the Community Centers as possible borderlines for Districts. He is open to hearing input from the community. He voted to move forward with Districting as it is likely to happen no matter what, it is better to be proactive and do it correctly.

Freeman is concerned about certain areas, such as equestrian areas. She would not want them split between districts. She will be looking at this as the mapping moves forward.

O'Brien likes Abele's idea of a Community Park in each District. She suggested the Districts could be named after the park they contain. She is wondering if it would be possible for the District to end this process if it's not working for us. Paranick replied, stopping the process would open the District to a lawsuit, unless there is a change in the law.

Gray stands by his comments at the previous Board meeting. He is concerned about renters in the area which make up 25 to 30% of the population. He would have had to give up his seat on the Board due to moving if Districting was already in place. He is concerned about tribalism as opposed to repping the entire District. It can eliminate good candidates and encourage more negativity in campaigns. He did vote yes to support the process, but he is concerned. He would like to see Simi Valley's City and School District areas on a map.

Board Direction: Paranick will have this presentation added to the next Oak Park Advisory Committee Agenda on October 12, 2023.

Chair Gray called a Recess at 7:57pm. Chair Gray called the meeting back to order at 8:07pm.

8. CONTINUED BUSINESS - NONE

9. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Review and Provide Direction regarding Tennis and Pickleball Court Usage in Oak Park, Including Consideration of Conversion of Tennis Courts to Dedicated Pickleball Courts – Staff Report was provided by Zach Miller, Director of Recreation. Pickleball has experienced exponential growth in the last few years and is projected to continue at a rate of 7%. Currently, Simi Valley has 30 Pickleball courts and 4 shared courts in Oak Park. The Pickleball community in Oak Park has been vocal in their desire to have dedicated courts to accommodate the growth. Staff conducted an observational analysis from September 5 – 19, 2023. Employees spent many hours of time in-person gathering data. The results confirmed that Deerhill Park is primarily used by Pickleball with very few Tennis players at any given time. Both Indian Springs and Mae Boyar had courts in use for Tennis, but typically with no waiting and empty courts. Pickleball is not allowed at these 2 locations.

O'Brien and Abele asked if there is money in a reserve fund for Oak Park to build a new complex. Paranick replied, there is a fund, but Oak Park is in a deficit position and the reserve money is currently used to pay that down.

Abele thanked Miller and his staff for the outstanding report. The data the District gathered in 2019 showed Pickleball on the rise and it has continued to grow since then as this report indicates. Abele inquired about a timeline for converting the Deerhill courts to Pickleball only. Nakaoka replied, about 6 to 9 months to complete with the last 2 months for actual construction.

Dennert would like Staff to reach out and see what more can be done with the Oak Park School District. Courts at Medea Creek Middle School could help with the issue. Miller responded there was a joint use discussion regarding sand volleyball courts the school district wanted. Staff have reached out to the School District regarding Pickleball.

Gray inquired if there are any plants that can be used for a sound barrier. Nakaoka replied, Italian Cypress is used for that purpose but can be messy, the cost for a sound barrier is approximately \$28,000. Gray would like additional feedback regarding noise pollution and sound barriers.

Chair Gray opened Public Comments at 9:00pm, each speaker is allowed a maximum of 3 minutes.

Z.S. Liang supports 6 courts for Pickleball; it became very popular during the Pandemic.

Michael Julius has played Pickleball for 4yrs and supports additional courts.

Frank Balding supports more Pickleball courts. It is quite unique, always someone to play

with, range of ages, great way to connect, and get exercise

Randy Serrano plays Pickleball 4 times per week with his wife, they support dedicated courts at Deerhill.

Ken Neville supports more Pickleball courts. Just look at the data, the players need more courts.

Steven Hoffman thanked the Tennis and Pickleball communities for coming out. This is the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> time he's addressed the Board asking for more courts. The detailed data shows the need for dedicated courts at Deerhill.

Rob Taylor feels this shouldn't be Tennis against Pickleball, let's work together to provide a solution.

Steve Hu feels the data collected is flawed. The analysis should be 6 months at least, not just 2 weeks.

Ming Fei plays both Tennis and Pickleball. He urges the Board to vote against conversion of Deerhill courts because it will cause additional noise and traffic. Build new courts for Pickleball.

Neel Morey would like a proper solution for this issue. He knows at least 300 people that play tennis. Expand the Pickleball courts at an appropriate location.

Adam Nielson, Tennis Coach at Oak Park High School, wants to keep Pickleball facilities and Tennis separate. There is too much tension now, both groups need their own courts. Get it done and find the fun.

Hiren Patel's daughter plays Tennis at a highly competitive level, and they want to keep their courts. He supports building a separate facility for Pickleball.

Anne Strauch works at Oak Park High School. She is a former Tennis player and Pickleball enthusiast for the last 2 years. She now has 30 new friends, Pickleball is so inclusive.

Mahri Mendenhall supports dedicated Pickleball courts.

Jay Markowitz stated the need for Pickleball courts is obvious, he supports dedicated courts.

Susan Forszia played Tennis and is now a Pickleball player. Parks are not just for children, she supports dedicated Pickleball courts.

Q Smart a younger Pickleball player, was in a dark place and the Pickleball community has helped her through. She supports dedicated courts.

John DeShane a former Tennis player and now Pickleball coach. Times are changing and Pickleball needs more space.

Glen Harris supports more dedicated Pickleball courts.

Aggie Henry supports Deerhill courts for Pickleball only.

Stacy Ornstein is happy to be able to play Pickleball, she supports dedicated courts.

John Koval feels Tennis is growing as well. He supports separate facilities for both sports, with Pickleball placed in a location away from residential areas. There have been complaints filed against Pickleball players for harassment.

Louis Lam a Tennis Coach has all students in Oak Park. He wants to save Tennis courts and supports building new Pickleball courts.

Wendy Chatley stated they need Tennis and Basketball courts and don't want these taken away. She has had arguments with the Pickleball players as they don't want to share courts.

Paul Garron is the Tennis Director at Oak Park. They hold their camp at Mae Boyar and Indian Hills, but the lighting is terrible there. The High School now charges rent to their groups for courts.

Mark Perryman, Chief of Staff for Ventura County Supervisor Jeff Gorell, and a resident of Oak Park near Deerhill. They are advocating for Deerhill courts to be dedicated to Pickleball.

Tina Wang, Vice President of Oak Park School District Board. The School Board has not discussed a proposal for a Joint Use Agreement. She is against dedicated courts at Deerhill, it is their local park, and their children are not able to use the courts.

Ning Rosenthal spoke 5 years ago when the courts were made dual use, they thought they would not have to address this again. The noise and traffic caused by Pickleball is a nuisance for their neighborhood. The stress caused by the noise is detrimental to their health.

Pam plays both sports and is not opposing Pickleball, just the conversion to dedicated courts at Deerhill park. The noise is a safety issue for their neighborhood. The best solution is to build new courts. Pickleball players are aggressive towards Tennis players.

Soyon Hardy thanked staff for the thorough data. She plays and enjoys both sports but is not convinced dedicated courts at Deerhill would solve the issue. The disruption to the neighborhood is the issue. She supports building a new facility with meaningful input from the community.

Dr. Lisa Oki is an avid Pickleball player and took her first class at Deerhill Park. Pickleball is a social sport, anyone can play and are welcome. She suggested Round Robin Tournaments or League play to raise funds.

Carol Henry stated Oak Park is a special community. People move there for the excellent schools and parks. She would like to find a mutually agreeable solution with input from all different groups. People shouldn't be arguing over recreational activities.

Chair Gray called a Recess at 10:23pm.

Chair Gray called the Meeting back to Order at 10:31pm. The meeting continued at this time with public comments via ZOOM.

Deet Ezra stated the Pickleball players are aggressive and not willing to share courts. Wants to keep the Tennis Courts and build new Pickleball Courts in another location.

Ragul's son who plays tennis at Deerhill park was bullied from the courts. These statistics are after shutting people out and feels the report is skewed. Does not want the traffic and noise in the area.

Jay Kapitz feels the statistics are a little misleading. He is against making any courts dedicated and exclusive. He feels all courts should be mixed use, everything should be.

Clyde Newman and his wife are long time Oak Park residents and Tennis is a large part of their lives.

Laura lives above Deerhill Park and moved here for the schools and parks. Her family loves both sports. Please do not convert Deerhill courts, Pickleball needs new courts. This is not fair for their neighborhood; the noise and traffic are a nuisance. Their children are afraid to go to the park due to Pickleball players.

Vicky Bishop is a widower who has found a community in Pickleball. They need more courts.

Drew Koval, a student at Oak Park High School. Feels the data in the report is skewed. He has been harassed by Pickleball players at the park. Does not want Deerhill courts converted.

Mike loves to see the coaches, kids, and even Pickleball players speaking on the topic. He moved to the area for his family to be able to use the local park. The traffic, noise, and disruption are the issues. Taking away Tennis courts is not the right thing to do.

Yee is concerned about heavy traffic and the safety of the neighborhood. He and his children have not been able to play Tennis at Deerhill.

Denise Helfstein is the President of Board of Education. This item has not been on any School District Agenda and there have been no discussions of a Joint Use Agreement. The High School Courts from 8am to 6:30pm, Monday through Friday are reserved for students, otherwise the courts are open. As a resident of Oak Park, she is troubled by the notion of something being taken away from the community, parks should be for everybody.

David Katzner has played Pickleball for 8 years and the sport is growing. Everyone is welcome, from all walks of life. He has had obscenities yelled at him at Deerhill Park. There are plenty of places to play Tennis, but currently only 2 courts for Pickleball.

Oak Park student who plays Tennis stated he has been bullied out of his local park. He is against conversion of courts; we need to build more Pickleball courts.

JL Diaz feels dual use is not working and dedicated Pickleball courts are needed. He does suggest looking at other areas other than Deerhill.

Geoff coaches Junior Team Tennis all over Ventura County. The kids will lose if you take courts away, Tennis courts are still needed.

William feels people should go to their own cities for activities. Sharing the courts at Deerhill is causing issues within the community.

Matthew Melman is a member of the Oak Park High School Tennis Team. It is unjust to take away courts at Deerhill. Pickleball players are aggressive with the Tennis players, and they are bullied out of the park.

Chair Gray read into the record 9 Comment Cards in favor of converting Deerhill Courts to dedicated Pickleball.

O'Brien feels the best idea is Alternate 1, converting Deerhill to dedicated Pickleball. She suggested community fundraising towards building a new complex and exploring possible joint use with the Oak Park School District.

Freeman can't support converting courts to Pickleball only, it's not fair to the Deerhill residents.

Abele commended Miller and the Oak Park staff for their excellent report, the thoroughness was extremely helpful. In 2019 it was clear the sport was growing, and it has only exceeded projections. Dual use is not working at Deerhill Park, the speakers in favor of Tennis made this point tonight. He loves Tennis and grew up playing. These are both recreational activities and should not be causing tension. There are no funds currently available in the Budget to build new courts, dedicated courts should help remove tension. He appreciated Supervisor Gorell's well thought out statement with input from the community.

Dennert thanked all the participants tonight. Multi-use courts are not currently working. The Staff Report is solid and shows the growing need for more Pickleball courts. He would like staff to research a sound barrier for noise issues. He is not happy to hear about the rudeness between the different groups. Oak Park needs some dedicated courts and there is currently no funding to build a complex.

Gray agrees with Abele and Dennert and would like to see some noise reduction options.

Motion: Director Abele moved to dedicate Deerhill courts to Pickleball and expand those to 6 courts, re-stripe the dual use for better current visibility, and explore noise reduction options. Director O'Brien seconded the motion. The motion carried with the following Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Abele, Dennert, Gray, O'Brien

Noes: Freeman

Absent:

Abstain:

## 10. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS OF NOTE - NONE

## 11. REPORTS BY BOARD MEMBERS



Due to the late hour, Director Dennert chose to save his report until the next Board meeting.

Director Abele reported, 9 days until the City Council meeting regarding BMX on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>. His wife Jill had high praise for the staff at Oak Park, especially Dave Podschun, who assisted her with a non-district related item. He spoke on Ranch Radio with Richard Lemmo, they received especially positive feedback. Thanks to Lemmo for drafting an outline which touched on upcoming District events including Halloween events, Veteran's Day, Snowfest, and the rescheduled Youth Power Wheels race. These events really highlighted the great work by Recreation staff members Jeannie Liss, Shana Moore, Nikki Collier, Laura Ballantoni, and Dave DeMaio. He attended some After School Club visits with his wife Jill. Thanks to Danielle June and Zen Flores for arranging. They visited Valley View Middle School, Township, and Vista. All the sites were impressive, and the staff members were doing an amazing job, it was awesome to see. He wanted to thank the Maintenance staff for their great work, so he brought them donuts in the morning before one of their starting shifts. They were very appreciative, and all employees were there early and ready to work. He was impressed and proud of the District and praised Robert Mendez and Wayne Nakaoka for their leadership.

Chair Gray kept his comments short but thanked Recreation staff for arranging After School Club tours for himself and O'Brien. He agreed with all of Abele's comments about the tours, it was very impressive. He thanked Danielle June and Richard Lemmo for meeting regarding the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights Act.

Vice Chair Freeman attended the Historical Society meeting at Strathearn, they discussed mutual maintenance issues. Upcoming Society events: Garden therapy on Oct. 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, Dia de los Muertos Oct. 29<sup>th</sup>, Annual meeting on Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup>, Barn Sale Nov. 17 – 19<sup>th</sup> and Holiday parties on Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. The Historical Society has received a Grant from the City to digitize their documents. She attended the VCSDA meeting, the speaker was a 6<sup>th</sup> generation Ventura County Fire Chief who was very interesting.

Director O'Brien attended the Historical Society meeting with Freeman, they are still in need of docents. High School students may not work due to the lengthy docent training. She attended the District's mandatory Harassment training. She also attended VCSDA with Freeman and agreed the speaker was interesting. The Samaritan Center Gala was a nice event, and they raised a lot of money. Shout out to Danielle June for arranging the After School Club tours with Gray.

12. REPORT BY DISTRICT MANAGER – Comments were provided by Dan Paranick. Staff are currently working with MRCA for a \$1.2 million Open Space acquisition of 166 acres above the Santa Susana Knolls area near Sage Ranch. He and staff will be applying for another Fire Resiliency Grant for Oak Park through the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. He will be attending a briefing on \$2 million funding for the Pool Renovation project. Staff are working on a Poe Dedication ceremony. He has spoken with the County regarding the Oak Park Campground on Easy Street which will house a new Disc Golf course, they are looking to break ground in 2025. Staff are working on implementing the new Mental Health programs based on direction given by the Board. The Friends of Oak Park have received funding to plant trees near the Oak Park Dog park. The School District has invited the Board to several Ribbon Cutting ceremonies. The Chamber of Commerce Leadership Day is being hosted at the Guardian building this Friday, the Board should have received the information. Crew leader Mark Lopez has retired, congratulations to him for 25 years of service. He is looking for Board feedback regarding moving District Counsel and District Manager back to the Board dais. The update on BMX: the City is actively working on

the project and making progress, but they have no specific dates.

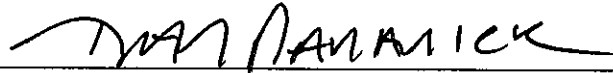
Future Agenda Items: the 2<sup>nd</sup> Public Hearing on Districting, the Equestrian final agreement, Filming policy update, introduction of the new Rangers, and a Golf report.

Upcoming Events: The Little House on the Prairie 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event on March 22 – 24, 2024, primarily at Rancho Santa Susana Community Park, this is likely the largest permit the District has issued. They rescheduled Youth Power Wheels Race to October 15, 2023, and the Guardian building will be hosting a Ventura County Art Exhibit the first week in December.

Committee Activity: The Oak Park Advisory Committee will meet on Thursday, October 12, 2023.

13. CLOSED SESSION – NONE

14. ADJOURNMENT – Chair Gray adjourned the meeting on Thursday, October 5, 2023, at 12:04am.



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Dan Paranick District Manager / District Clerk