Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District
Board of Directors Meeting
M I N U T E S

Wednesday, February 21, 2024, 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.

1. CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Chair Freeman called the Meeting to Order at 6:30pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Director Abele.

2. ROLL CALL – Directors Dennert, Gray, O'Brien, Vice Chair Abele, and Chair Freeman were in attendance. Staff in attendance included: Laura Ballantoni, Nikki Collier, Douglas Duran, Paul Friedeborn, Danielle June, Richard Lemmo, Jeannie Liss, Zach Miller, Wayne Nakaoka, Dan Paranick, Theresa Pennington, Jennifer Santos, Alex Stumfall, Carol Thomsen, 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 requested Item 7.a (presentation of Employee of the Month) be heard later in the Meeting so the employee can be present.

4. PUBLIC STATEMENTS (ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA) – NONE

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

   a. Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District Board of Directors Regular Meeting – Feb 7, 2024 – Chair Freeman noted on page 5 of 6 under District Manager comments, the date of February 24, 2024, should be February 21, 2024. Motion: Director O'Brien moved to approve the Minutes as amended. Chair Freeman seconded the motion. The motion carried with the following Roll Call Vote:

      Ayes: Abele, Dennert, Freeman, O'Brien
      Noes:
      Absent:
      Abstain: Gray

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 2/15/24 Accounts Payable Check Register & 1/26/24 Payroll Check Register – Staff responded to questions from the Board.

b. Approval of Resolution No. 2072 Accepting a 0.1-Acre Parce of Open Space from Mary A. Lukes Located West of Las Llajas Trail in the Marr Ranch Open Space Area of Simi Valley, California – Staff Report was provided by Jennifer Santos, Senior Management Analyst. The Board requested a thank you letter be sent to Ms. Lukes.

Motion: Director Gray 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 January 2024 to Carol Thomsen, Specialist Instructor – Staff Report was provided by Theresa Pennington, Director of Administration. Carol is a Specialist Instructor in the Recreation Department. She will celebrate her 30-year anniversary with the District in August; this is her 1st award. Carol thanked the Board, adding it is so nice to see everyone in person. It means so much to be recognized during the Board meeting. She thanked her students and husband for encouraging her and allowing her to do what she loves. Carol's students were in attendance, adding she's simply a wonderful person and that's the reason her classes are always full. Paranick thanked Carol for continuing to teach her classes outside on the patio during the Pandemic.

The entire Board commended Carol for this well-deserved recognition and thanked her for staying with the District for 30 years.

8. CONTINUED BUSINESS

a. Continued Discussion and Direction Regarding the Oak Park – Park and Recreation Planning Committee (OP-PRPC), Including Discontinuing or Further Restructuring the Committee – Staff Report was provided by Dan Paranick, District Manager. The Board weighed the options for restructuring or disbanding the Committee.

The following public comments were made via ZOOM:

OP-PRPC member Harry Medved spoke with Abele and Dennert who answered his questions. He appreciates the Board and the job they've done representing Oak Park. The Committee has done a great job advising the Board since 1976.

OP-PRPC member Brian Mattson agreed with Medved.

Abele requested the effective date of February 22, 2024 (tomorrow) be used if the Committee is disbanded. He would like continued outreach to Oak Park monthly or quarterly by District Staff. He has heard nothing tonight to sway his decision, he's suggesting disbanding the Committee with tomorrow's date. All Board Members are available and interested in Oak Park. Zoom has enabled the public to participate in all meetings.

Dennert feels the Committee had a role prior to Zoom due to Oak Park's location. But now it has just become more confusing as to who Oak Park residents go to with issues. He suggests Alternative 1 with tomorrow's date, plus 3 informal meetings by District staff prior to the next election.

Gray agrees with Abele and Dennert. All Board members should represent the entire District. His preference is Alternative 2, which seems to be a more cautious approach. He would be okay with Alternative 1 with staff outreach in Oak Park.

O'Brien agrees with Abele and Dennert and prefers Alternative 1, she feels it is necessary.

Freeman feels the Committee has been useful, but Zoom has alleviated the need. She plans to set up regular office hours at the Oak Park Community Center once or twice per month to connect with residents.

Motion: Vice Chair Abele moved to approve Alternative 1 from Staff's report with an amended date of February 22,2024. Director Dennert seconded the motion. The motion carried with the following Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Abele, Dennert, Freeman, Gray, O'Brien
Noes:
Absent:
Abstain:

The Board heard Item 7.a (Employee of the Month) at this time.

9. NEW BUSINESS

a. Review and Consideration of the Approval of Finishes and Materials for the Proposed Activity Center Phase 3 Project – Staff Report was provided by Douglas Duran, Landscape Designer. The Board viewed a PowerPoint presentation which highlighted the amenities and design of Floor 1 and Floor 2 of the Activity Center. Staff and the architect have worked on finishes and details using long lasting commercial based products and applying a nature inspired color palette to be carried throughout the Center. Once the Board approves the proposed finishes and materials, the Architect Heney Dong and Associates will finalize the construction drawings and submit to the City's Building Department for review and approval.

Paranick added the pricing is significantly higher than previous estimates as construction costs have increased by about 22 percent. The HVAC system needs to be replaced for the entire building which is one significant increase. The Board has the option of using capital reserve funds to cover the increased costs, scale back on certain project items and/or amenities or re-prioritize other District projects. There are currently $3 to $4 million in reserve funds not allocated to other projects.

Abele stated the design is amazing and the first floor is a total wow for him. The budget news is not a surprise, he anticipated higher costs of construction. He asked if the District could save by holding off on completing the 2nd floor. Duran replied that could be an option, but some essential items such as the elevator and restrooms would still need to be completed. However, construction costs will continue to rise, and it could cost more to complete later.

Chair Freeman called a recess at 8:05pm. Chair Freeman called the meeting back to order at 8:11pm.

Chair Freeman opened Public Comment at 8:12pm.

Stan Khouw representing the badminton community would like this to be included in the Activity Center plans. Their courts are the same size as pickleball but with additional lines on the court. There are currently no courts specifically dedicated to badminton. Director Gray asked how many courts it would take to create a community. Khouw replied 3 courts is preferable.

Fred Weniger, a Simi Valley resident since 1988 requested table tennis for the senior community. There are currently 3 tables squeezed into a small exercise room at the Senior Center which is not conducive to play. Seniors have time during the week, especially during school hours. He offered to volunteer his time for the program.

Creighton Van Hern submitted a comment card requesting badminton at the Activity Center.

Abele feels the priority is to get something nice opened and just the first floor would be a wow for the Community. Currently, the second floor does not make sense to him with the higher costs, and he is not sure how often a kitchen would be used. There are other projects, such as soccer fields, which have been on hold and need to be completed as well.

Dennert feels the Activity Center meets the needs of the community with the first floor and is open to postponing the second floor if needed. However, he feels there are options for corporations and businesses to utilize the second floor. He appreciates the inclusion of e-sports. Royal High School currently has a winning e-sports team that is using the Teen Center at Berylwood Park.

Gray added the plans look incredible, thanks to staff for all their work, the play area makes him want to be a kid again. He would like to see both floors completed, the Center could be a great gathering place for the community, he feels local business and community groups especially could utilize the second floor. There is only one chance to make a first impression and you lose some of the wow factor when a project is not complete. The reserves are there for these reasons and this project is a top priority. He would like to see the funds dedicated here and continue with the full vision.

O'Brien understands the savings without the second floor. But she likes the idea of parents staying and utilizing the upstairs. She suggested completing the second floor but holdoff on the pricier virtual reality features. She also suggested the Board review the capital projects priority list again.

Freeman stated the decision tonight is just the approval to move on to the next step with the plans and decisions can be made later. She suggests getting the working drawings and addressing the budgetary issues later. Certain groups would find a kitchen as an integral part of a rental. With the inclusion of the kitchen, it makes the area more marketable.

Abele understands serving the youth and seniors in the community but not necessarily the corporations. The Board needs to be realistic about what can be provided, he would not want to

see a kitchen built at the expense of soccer fields.
Motion: Director Gray moved to approve the proposed materials and finishes for the Master Plan of the Activity Center Phase 3 project. 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:

b. Review and Consider Before and After School Club (B/ASC) and Teen Club Fee Adjustments for School Year 2024-2025 – Staff Report was provided by Danielle June, Recreation Supervisor. Each year the Board review fees with a commitment to keeping prices affordable while maintaining the programs sustainability. The operating budget has increased by 6.2% in FY 2022/23 and is anticipated to rise to 12.1% in the current fiscal year. This is primarily due to rising costs in utilities, insurance, and part-time labor. The Extended Learning Opportunities Program (ELOP) provides significant assistance with affordability by providing fees for families who demonstrate financial need.

Abele is not comfortable with more than a 3 percent increase and would not vote for a higher percentage.

Gray stated he will march to Sacramento if ELOP funds are cut. He is open to a 6 percent increase but does not want to go up to 9 percent, he prefers 3 percent if possible.

O'Brien added operating costs for the program have increased by 6.2 percent, so she is leaning towards a 6 percent increase.

Freeman added 6 percent is a little over $1 per day to maintain the quality of the program. She agrees with a 6 percent increase.

Motion: Director O'Brien moved to approve Alternative 3, a 6% increase, as presented in Staff's Report. Director Dennert seconded the motion. The motion carried with the following Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Dennert, Freeman, Gray, O'Brien
Noes: Abele
Absent:
Abstain:

c. Adoption of Resolution No. 2071 Directing Preparation of the Engineer's Report for the Continuation of the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Maintenance and Improvement District of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District – Staff Report was provided by Theresa Pennington, Director of Administration. The assessment process requires an Engineer's Report to establish the proposed budget for park and recreation services to possibly be funded with the 2024/25 assessment.

Dennert stated if the District loses the assessment funds, that would be 2 million in cuts every year, not just the current year. 58.9 percent of the community supported this assessment via a mail-in vote.

Freeman added the majority of residents returned a yes vote to keep the parks maintained and safe.

Abele doesn't feel the vote would have been the same if presented in a ballot. This never went to the ballot box; it was just a mail in vote. Revenue could be raised through other sources, such as golf fees.

Dennert is not sure why Abele would assume the vote at the ballot box would be lower and not higher.

Motion: Director Gray moved to approve Resolution No. 2071. Director Dennert seconded the motion. The motion carried with the following Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Dennert, Freeman, Gray, O'Brien
Noes: Abele
Absent:
Abstain:

d. Consideration and Approval of Legal Services Agreement for General Counsel Services Between Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District and Best, Best & Krieger LLP (BBK) – Staff Report was provided by Dan Paranick, District Manager. The District's current legal counsel Burke, Williams, and Sorenson recently accepted an engagement with another local public agency that could create possible legal conflicts for the District moving forward. As a result, the District has selected BBK as the preferred choice for representation.

Motion: Director O'Brien moved to Approve the Agreement with Best, Best & Krieger LLP. Director Gray seconded the motion. The motion carried with the following Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Abele, Dennert, Freeman, Gray, O'Brien
Noes:
Absent:
Abstain:

Paranick presented current Legal Counsel Brian Hamblet with a framed photo and certificate in gratitude for his service to the District. Hamblet thanked the Board for the photo and their public service, adding it has been a pleasure working with them. He is honored and proud to have assisted the District.

The entire Board thanked Hamblet for his service and welcomed the new Legal Counsel.

10. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS OF NOTE

Director Dennert received a letter regarding the Simi Town Center suggesting they open a Pickleball Center. He received an email from Oak Park regarding flooding. He received letters from 3 Sinaloa students: Mallory regarding the high cost of youth sports, Reagan regarding special needs

athletics, and Dylan regarding Big Sky Dog Park. Thanks to them for their suggestions on these issues.

11. REPORTS BY BOARD MEMBERS

Vice Chair Abele and Richard Lemmo were guests on the Ranch Radio, it went well again. They highlighted the Huck Finn Fishing Derby, Medallion Hunt, and Spring brochure. March 1st is National Employee Appreciation Day, thanks to all the employees for their work. He attended the Elks Lodge First Responder Awards, thanks to Theresa Pennington for preparing the presentation. Congratulations to the Rangers and Ranger Curran for being acknowledged at the dinner.

Director Dennert attended the City Council Meeting with Paranick, they thanked them for assisting with the Pool project. He noticed the Arroyo Greenway seems to be getting close to completion. Paranick replied, it could possibly be completed next week. Staff will schedule a ribbon cutting as soon as possible.

Director Gray thanked Paranick and Lemmo for meeting with him and Abele before tonight's meeting to discuss the mental health initiative. He congratulated Dennert on his award of Director of the year, it was well deserved. He hiked part of Long Canyon between rains, the views were beautiful. He has joined the pickleball craze and has been playing Saturday mornings, it's been fun, and they haven't waited long at all to play.

Director O'Brien attended the First Responder Dinner which was great. Thanks to Pennington and congratulations to the Rangers. The Rotary have discussed the possibility of placing a Peace Pole at Corriganville Park. There is a Camp Rotary sign already there, O'Brien asked Legal Counsel for clarification on the process.

Chair Freeman attended the First Responders Dinner, thanks to the Elks Club for hosting the event. She attended the CSDA Legislative Committee, Feb 16th was the last day to file Bills. There were 1503 Bills filed in the Assembly and 619 in the Senate.

12. REPORT BY DISTRICT MANAGER – Comments were provided by Dan Paranick. There were some storm drainage issues with the recent rains but nothing significant. He attended Simi's City Council meeting with Dennert. After several years of hard work Theresa Pennington has closed out the Woolsey Fire claim at $5.2 million. Great work by Pennington and her staff on achieving the full amount of compensation. Current District financials are positive and looking fine. Grant funds that were allocated to the Knolls parking lot can be repurposed to a different project. The City has a 3-minute timer they use for public speakers in Zoom, staff will try this out at the next District Board meeting. Paranick and Nakaoka will present conceptual plans for pickleball at Deerhill Park at the Oak Park MAC Meeting. The BMX track is still being discussed by the City of Simi Valley.

Upcoming events: Arroyo Ribbon cutting will be scheduled as soon as possible.

Future Agenda Items: Golf consultant, District Policy update on Flex Benefits, plans for Earth Day, playground purchase for the Knolls Park, HVAC for the Activity Center, and contract update with the Birdie Bar.

Committee Activity: The Historical Society meets on the 1st Monday of the Month.

13. CLOSED SESSION – NONE

14. ADJOURNMENT – Chair Freeman adjourned the Meeting at 10:00pm.

Dan Paranick District Manager/Clerk