

Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District Board of Directors Meeting

M I N U T E S

Wednesday, July 17, 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 Zach Miller.
2. **ROLL CALL** – Directors Dennert, Gray, O'Brien, Vice Chair Abele, and Chair Freeman were in attendance. Staff in attendance included: Laura Ballantoni, Danielle June, Richard Lemmo, Jeannie Liss, Zach Miller, Edmon Muradyan, Dan Paranick, Theresa Pennington, Erin Pierik, Jim Rosales, Alex Stumfall, Gina Viecco, and District Counsel Ryan Guiboa.

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

3. **AGENDA REVIEW** – There were no changes to tonight's Agenda.
4. **PUBLIC STATEMENTS (ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA)** – NONE

Chris Garland, Coleman Richards, and Ernesto are members of local high school bands. They are requesting these younger, local bands to play before the main acts at the Music in the Park events. It would be a great opportunity for them to perform before larger crowds.

Director Dennert likes the idea of having the opening bands. District Manager Dan Paranick will discuss the possibilities with Director of Recreation, Zach Miller, logistically it can be an issue with different equipment, the sound engineer and the main band's preferences.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District Board of Directors Meeting – June 19, 2024 – Director Gray noted on page 3, under his comments, the word “combing” should be “combining.” Motion: Director O'Brien moved to approve the Minutes as amended. Director Gray seconded. The motion carried with the following Roll Call Vote:

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

Noes:

Absent:

Abstain:

6. CONSENT AGENDA (Matters 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 6/15/24 Accounts Payable Check Register and 5/31/24, 6/14/24 & 6/28/24 Payroll Check Registers.
 - b. Approval of Resolution No. 2079 Modifying District Policy Manual, Chapter 2 Personnel: Section 2700 Policy Against Workplace Violence – Staff Report was provided by Theresa Pennington, Director of Administration.
 - c. Approval of Resolution No. 2080 Modifying District Policy Manual, Chapter 2 Sections 1304 and 1310, Regarding Employee Benefits – Staff Report was provided by Theresa Pennington, Director of Administration.
 - d. Approval to Prepay the District's CALPERS Pension Plan's Unfunded Accrued Liability For Fiscal Year 2024/25 – Staff Report was provided by Theresa Pennington, Director of Administration.

Motion: Director O'Brien moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Director Gray seconded. 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 Full-Time Employee of the Month for June 2024 to Erin Pierik, Recreation Coordinator – Staff Report was provided by Theresa Pennington. Erin has been with the District for 2 years; this is her first award. Erin thanked the Board for the recognition. She enjoys mentoring the employees at the pool and providing the importance of water safety to the community. She thanked the group of Managers and Lifeguards who came to support her tonight and appreciates their commitment to safety, community service, and fun. She also thanked Danielle June and Zach Miller for their mentorship. Zach knew Erin had a passion for the work, she prioritizes safety and leads her staff with care. The entire Board thanked Erin for her dedication, hard work, and impact she is having on the community.
- b. Presentation of the Part-Time Employee of the Month for June 2024 to Austin Lucky, Recreation Counselor – Staff Report was provided by Theresa Pennington, Director of Administration. Austin has been with the District for 3 years; this is his first award. He was unable to attend tonight's meeting but passed along his thanks for the recognition.
- c. Approval of Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) Final Budget for Fiscal Year 2024/25 – Director of Administration Theresa Pennington introduced Basam Mosaad from MRCA and Melissa Smith from Conejo Recreation & Park District (CRPD)

who presented the Budget via ZOOM. The MRCA is governed by a Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement (JPA) which requires preparation of an Annual Budget to be approved by CRPD, RSRPD, and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC.) Mosaad reviewed the Budget, he noted this is their final budget and not preliminary as they were able to complete it sooner this year.

O'Brien asked about their reserve and if it is a fund for Capital Improvements. Mosaad confirmed it is used for Capital Improvements. Smith added that reserve fund is set up as a 5-year payout in increments.

Freeman commented that their project list is so long it must be difficult to manage. Mosaad agreed, it is a difficult task, but their staff has been very skillful and great at handling the workload.

Gray suggested MRCA could partner with some tourism districts to help increase their film revenue.

Dennert asked if the District had acquired open space recently. Paranick replied there was a recent acquisition of 166 acres in the Simi Valley area. Dennert is looking forward to celebrating this and other acquisitions in the future. He also noted Hummingbird Trail starts in Rancho Simi and extends through MRCA. The current trail markers are not clear and would like to see that worked on next year.

Motion: Director Dennert moved to approve the MRCA Final Budget for Fiscal Year 2024/25. Director Gray seconded. The motion carried with the following Roll Call Vote:

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

Noes:

Absent:

Abstain:

- d. Public Hearing on the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District (RSRPD) Annual Budget and Capital Projects for Fiscal Year 2024/25 – Staff Report was provided by Dan Paranick, District Manager. Paranick highlighted key points of the adopted Preliminary Budget via a PowerPoint presentation.

Chair Freeman opened the Public Hearing at 7:10pm. Hearing none, Freeman closed the Public Hearing at 7:11pm.

Dennert is interested in the cost allocation for Oak Park (OP) and the possibility of creating a separate assessment to give OP the opportunity to decide what they want to do in their community. There is currently an operational shortfall in OP.

There was no action taken by the Board at tonight's meeting.

8. CONTINUED BUSINESS – NONE

9. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Discussion and Possible Direction Regarding Public Safety Concerns In Parks – Verbal Report was provided by Dan Paranick. There were two recent incidents in the last week that were violent in nature at Frontier and Verde Parks. There will be a meeting tomorrow between the City of Simi Valley and the District to discuss how to address the issue. Chief Ranger Rosales provided additional information regarding the incidents.

O'Brien asked for clarification on the two violent incidents. Rosales responded, at Frontier Park there was a gang issue resulting in a shooting. At Verde Park there was an assault within the park. Paranick noted the two victims are in stable condition and the police are working on the case.

Abele would like to discuss safety at other locations such as Oak Park and Rancho Santa Susana Community Center as well. He wanted to be proactive, which is why he brought safety concerns to the Board at a previous meeting. He asked if security cameras would be helpful. Rosales agrees cameras can be helpful to capture the activity and help with response time, especially in problem areas.

Chair Freeman opened Public Comment at 7:35pm.

Paul Rock has lived for 43 years in the neighborhood and grew up in Frontier Park. He feels the park has been neglected over the years. The Arroyo Bike Path opens to this park which creates an easy get away. There was another incident three days ago involving two electric bikes and guns drawn. He suggests sealing it off and getting rid of the park all together or securing it.

Amanda DiMaso and Bradley Rodriguez bought a house near the entrance of Frontier Park in 2017. They were hoping to make this their forever home but now they feel so unsafe they are considering moving. This park needs more attention and love to make it safe again. The Rangers patrolled the park last night. There was a large group of young men in her driveway. She suggested CPTED (Crime prevention through environmental design) to control access to the park, provide maintenance, bring in play equipment, and add lighting to encourage the community to come back and drive out the criminal element.

Alessandro Nerri commented via Zoom. He is very concerned about these issues with gang activity in the parks and concerned for this neighborhood.

Allegra Reid lives right next door to Amanda DiMaso and added there is nothing to do in this park any longer. She has had confrontations with gang members over the years and they have threatened neighbors with violence. They are working with the Police Department but feel this is a community problem that needs to be solved. It is a great neighborhood, with great people.

Liz Greenslitt lives next to the SCE easement near Frontier Park, she has cleaned out that area herself several times. The park is so dark at night that it is unsafe. She loves the idea of adding lights and cameras.

Dennert understands the community is outraged and not able to use their local park. He

suggested keeping the gated entrance on Elizondo closed earlier at night, possibly the neighbors could assist. He suggested adding lighting and cameras, more bike patrols in the Arroyo, and possibly park an older ranger vehicle on Elizondo by the park entrance. He would like to discuss the easement and if the District can assist with that. He thanked the speakers and encouraged them to come back until progress is made.

Abele realizes people live in Simi Valley for safety, while we are safer than most we can do better. Avoiding parks for safety reasons is a problem and safety must be taken seriously. He is in support of any measures that can be done in the short term. Adding security cameras as a deterrent and possible evidence. Also, taking some measures to entice people to come back to the park.

Gray thanked the speakers, rangers, and Police Department. He is in support of any ranger requests to assist with these issues. He suggested some scheduled District programming that could possibly be applied to this park and other problem parks. He suggested Mobile Rec Van visits, tree planting or other beautification projects so residents can reclaim this park.

O'Brien agrees something must be done right away, she asked if Frontier could be included in the field lighting project. Paranick replied, Frontier would have to be separate. She would like more information on CPTED as proposed by public speaker DiMaso. She suggested the community create a Neighborhood Watch. She likes adding security cameras and suggested the District could partner with the City of Simi Valley.

Freeman suggested using solar if the infrastructure for lighting is not already in the park. When the District had an issue with the Berylwood Skate Park private security was brought in for a period of time, she suggested this may help at Frontier. The special assessment funds are used to provide security and the ranger program. She thanked everyone who came out with their concerns and the rangers for the work.

Direction: The Board agrees this is a high priority right now. Paranick will be attending the meeting with the City tomorrow.

Chair Freeman called a Recess at 8:20pm and called the meeting back at order at 8:28pm.

- b. Discuss and Provide Direction Regarding the Timeframe for Installation of Newly Elected Members of the Board of Directors and for Selection of the Board Chair and Vice Chair – Staff Report was provided by Dan Paranick, District Manager. The District's current practice has been to install newly elected Board Members and/or select the Chair and Vice Chair during a regularly scheduled Board Meeting in December. Due to varying dates the regular scheduled meetings may not always be in alignment.

Abele met with Paranick and Pennington and feels the District Policy should be changed. He suggested a special meeting in December to swear in newly elected members and elect the Chair and Vice Chair. This would also allow time for the ceremony of the transition.

Paranick added the policy should be flexible, as the situation is very changeable. It was suggested that the current policy be amended to include "At a meeting held after the first Friday of December."

Direction: The Board directed Staff to make the policy change as discussed.

- c. California Special Districts Association (CSDA) Call for Vote from Member Agencies to Fill Coastal Network Seat A on the Board of Directors for the 2025 - 2027 Term – Staff Report was provided by Dan Paranick, District Manager. Staff are seeking direction from the Board on which candidate, if any, they would like to nominate.

O'Brien suggested Elaine Magner as the Board's nominee.

Motion: Vice Chair Abele moved to nominate Elaine Magner. Director O'Brien seconded. The motion carried with the following Roll Call Vote:

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

Noes:

Absent:

Abstain:

10. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS OF NOTE

Paranick noted the emails that were received from the neighbors of Frontier Park. There have also been communications regarding vegetation and weed abatement in various areas of the District. The process has been started and crews are working hard to clear the vegetation.

All Board Members received correspondence from a local group that holds a free event at Rancho Tapo Community Park from 1:00 to 3:00 pm on the 3rd Saturday of the Month. They received a notice to pay a fee, which they have not had to do before.

11. REPORTS BY BOARD MEMBERS

Vice Chair Abele respects the votes of his fellow Board Members regarding the annual assessment. However, he felt the Chair's comment about only voting against the assessment for political reasons is an irresponsible comment. He attended the Concert in Oak Park and DSB, a Journey cover band was an excellent choice, it was a great event. Shout out to Sandra Salute and the staff in Oak Park on a great job. He attended the 4th of July event; it was a nice event, but he did not stay for the fireworks. His feel-good moment of the month did happen at the 4th event. Another attendee commended Laura Ballantoni as they work together on the Visit Simi Valley Committee together, adding she does an excellent job on the Committee. Abele added hearing unsolicited praise of District employees is something that really makes him proud.

Director Dennert feels staff has done a great job this year with the bands at the Concerts in the Park. He suggested if Board Members are in attendance they could introduce the bands. He visited Lake Tahoe, and they have a great pump track for bike riding. He thanked the RC Crawlers group for cleaning up graffiti and overgrowth at Chumash Park. He also thanked Paul Friedeborn for always being available to help with the volunteers. At the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy meeting, he had legitimate concerns with a letter regarding a large housing project, he abstained from the vote. He suggested the District look into drone

shows for fireworks, he hears they are getting better and better. Gray has seen the drone show at Dodger Stadium which was impressive.

Director Gray gave a shout out to Jeannie Liss, the Steampunk event at Strathearn was truly something special. There were so many people who came from all over wearing elaborate costumes, even though the weather was very hot. The whole crew did a great job, with lots of different themed events. It felt unique, and he hopes it can be an annual event. He missed the 4th of July due to his Dad having surgery, he is doing well. He reported the Gold Spotted Oak Borer Beetle, has been spotted in Chatsworth. This most likely means they are already in this area. It is devastating to the Oaks, and it targets older trees first. Paranick will be meeting with staff to discuss this issue.

Director O'Brien was sorry to have missed the Steampunk event. She attended the 4th of July event, and the fireworks were great. She would be open to drones if the show is good. O'Brien announced she will be stepping down from her seat on the Board and will not be seeking re-election this year. She has served 6 terms over 24 years and feels the time is right to step down.

Chair Freeman thought the Steampunk was great, she suggested a time of the year with more moderate weather in the future. She and O'Brien attended the first Pat Haven Scholarship meeting, it was a great start. She is sorry to have missed the 4th of July, Jack was in the hospital, he is recovering now.

12. **REPORT BY DISTRICT MANAGER** – Comments were provided by Dan Paranick. Staff has reviewed the May financials, and everything looks good within the Budget. There have been RFPs sent for the Golf Course concessionaire, there was a lot of interest initially, but staff may have to do some recruiting. Next week will be interviews for the Golf Course Manager position and later in the Month with Abele and Freeman for the Golf Consultant. The District has received a Grant from the City to purchase an additional van for Mobile Recreation. Staff will be meeting with all Board members to brief them on the Activity Center Phase III plans. He and Nakaoka will be meeting with Triunfo Water, they have a property near Deerhill Park in Oak Park adjacent to the District. They are interested in possibly using the District property. The development on Tapo and Cochran is requesting to meet again regarding a waiver of park dedication fees, he and Nakaoka did not feel it was appropriate after the first meeting. There were fires in Simi and Oak Park. In Simi Valley they used the local parks as the incident command center; all fires were extinguished quickly. Paranick thanked District staff, especially Laura Ballantoni, her staff and the Rangers for their work on the 4th of July event. Dennert requested the District invite the 4th of July service group to a Board Meeting to thank them. Paranick reported Ventura County is working on improvements to the park/campground on Easy Street, Miller will be meeting with them to discuss the design and possibility of a disc golf course. The Simi Valley Police Department received new radios and donated the older radios to the Rangers, thanks to the City of Simi Valley. There have been requests for campaign related events at the Simi Hills Golf Course, the District policy does not specify but he feels political events should not be held at the Golf Course. There will be a memorial for Tex Ward who served for 38 years at Conejo Rec & Park District on August 1st.

Upcoming Events: RSRPD Concerts in the Park will be held the 3rd Saturdays of July and August.

Future Agenda Items: OP Budget Hearing, Community Volunteers recognition, Certificates for Scout projects, Mental Health Initiative, Security cameras, Financial Advisor Contract, District Manager Annual Review, and review of BMX plans.

Committee Activity: The Historical Society Committee meets this first Monday of the Month.

13. CLOSED SESSION – Chair Freeman announced Closed Session at 9:17pm.

- a. Closed Session Pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.9

Claimant: Stephanie Powers

Agency Claimed Against: Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District

- b. Closed Session Pursuant to Government Code Section 54957.6

CONFERENCE WITH LABOR NEGOTIATOR

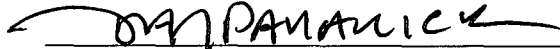
Agency Negotiators: Dan Paranick, District Manager and
Theresa Pennington, Director of Administration

Employee Organization: Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District -
Middle Management Association

Chair Freeman called the meeting back to Open Session at 10:24pm.

There was no reportable action taken by the Board.

14. ADJOURNMENT – Chair Freeman adjourned the meeting at 10:25pm.



Dan Paranick, District Manager/Clerk