approved as written

Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District
Board of Directors Meeting

M I N U T E S

Wednesday, September 4, 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 Josh Gray.

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, Paul Friedeborn, Danielle June, Richard Lemmo, David Melody, Zach Miller, Wayne Nakaoka, Dan Paranick, Theresa Pennington, Erin Pierik, Jose Rivas, Jennifer Santos, Alex Stumfall, Gina Viecco, Jennifer Lynn White, and District Council Ryan Guiboa.

   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 – There were no requested changes to tonight's Agenda.

4. PUBLIC STATEMENTS (ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA)

   Glen Lipman speaking on behalf of Longball Academy is requesting the removal of Ordinance No. 25 in relation to rentals of baseball and softball fields. Teams are scrambling for practice fields, but they remain empty due to the Ordinance No. 25. He has met with staff and they are not open to removing this and opening the fields.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

   a. Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District Board of Directors Meeting - August 21, 2024 – Vice Chair Abele requested two changes to the minutes: 1) Change to page 2 of 6 under New Business - his statement should read "He questioned why the District is not being more aggressive with investment strategies"; and 2) The Closed Session vote was unanimous with Abele being absent for the vote. Motion: Director O'Brien moved to approve the Minutes as amended. Vice Chair Abele 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 8/15/24 Accounts Payable Check Register and 8/9/24 & 8/23/24 Payroll Check Registers – Staff responded to questions from the Board.

   b. Approval for the Purchase of one 3370E Triflex LI-ION Electric Mower through California Multiple Awards Schedules (CMAS) – Staff Report was provided by Wayne Nakaoka, Director of Planning and Maintenance.

   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 Service Award to Jennifer Lynn White in Honor and Celebration of 40 Years of Employment with the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District – Verbal Report was provided by Laura Ballantoni, Recreation Supervisor. Laura provided a timeline of Jennifer's work and dedication to the District and honored her with a poem. The Board thanked Jennifer for the many ways she has helped to make the District a great place. Jennifer thanked everyone, this has been a great part-time job and her children now work with the District.

   b. Presentation of the Full-Time Employee of the Month for August 2024 to Jose Rivas, Crew Leader – Staff Report was provided by Theresa Pennington, Director of Administration. Jose has been with the District for 18 years; this is his 2nd award. Jose thanked the Board, adding it is a pleasure to work for the District and he has a great team. Paul Friedeborn added he has done a great job in working towards certifications, the District is lucky to have him. The Board and District Manager thanked Jose for working on the front lines for the community and maintaining the beautiful parks.

8. CONTINUED BUSINESS

   a. Continued Discussion to Consider Approval of an Agreement for Consulting Services Between the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District (RSRPD) and GGA Partners for the Simi Hills Golf Course (SHGC) Market Analysis, Fee and Rate Structure Analysis, and Recommendations Report – Staff Report was provided by Dan Paranick, District Manager. During their meeting on August 21, 2024, the Board requested that Golf Course Manager David Melody be available to answer questions regarding this proposal. Melody is concerned with rising operational costs of the courses due to water, employee payroll, and no-shows. He has received no complaints within the last 30 days on the current golf fees. He is in favor of reviewing pricing for the health and viability of the courses. He is happy to do whatever is asked but he is busy with the operational aspects of the course, as well as a large irrigation project and new concessionaire. The consultants are the experts, and he is confident they would provide the needed data.

Abele has no question that Melody could do the analysis, but he does have other work duties taking his time. Paranick added staff is pretty tapped out at the courses with limited full-time employees, plus there is currently extra work with the irrigation project and a new concessionaire.

Dennert supports and respects Melody's duties within the Golf Courses. The consultants would provide a service that Melody does not have the time to complete, so he fully supports hiring the consultants.

O'Brien agrees, Melody is the expert, and she agrees with his preference.

Chair Freeman opened public comments at 7:20pm; hearing none, Freeman closed public comments.

Abele is torn, Melody has so much of the talent and expertise that is needed, he does not really see the need for the consultant any longer. However, he has many other operational duties to perform, and Melody's preference does tip the scales for him.

Motion: Director Gray moved to approve Alternate #2 as presented in staff's report. Vice Chair Abele seconded. The motion carried with the following Roll Call Vote:

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

9. NEW BUSINESS

a. Authorization to Solicit Public Bids for the Deerhill Park Pickleball Court Conversion Project in Oak Park – Staff Report was provided by Wayne Nakaoka, Director of Planning and Maintenance. The project plan was deemed complete on July 25, 2024, and construction plans were submitted to the County's Building and Safety Department on August 2, 2024. Results of the plan check review are still pending. Anticipating the issuance of building permits for the project, staff are requesting Board authorization to solicit bids for the project.

   Abele asked if the project would still be done on schedule and if more funding would be needed. Nakaoka responded, they are targeting February 2025 for possible completion. It will be close, there is a possibility there may be a need for more funding.

   Motion: Vice Chair Abele moved to authorize staff to solicit bids for Deerhill Park Pickleball Court Conversion Project. Director Dennert seconded. The motion carried with the following Roll Call Vote:

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

Dennert attempted to work with the Oak Park School District to open more Pickleball courts, but they have been resistant to working with the District through a Joint Use Agreement.

b. Review and Approve Proposed Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District (RSRPD) Mental Health and Wellness Initiative – Staff Report was provided by Danielle June, Recreation Supervisor. As directed by the Boad of Directors, staff have been working on a long-term initiative to enhance mental health and wellness within the District. Staff have worked internally and with local agencies to outline the role of RSRPD within the community and provide opportunities for mental health and wellbeing.

Abele asked who had worked on this initiative and if they conducted a survey of the local area. June replied, several people from Recreation worked on this. Staff did not conduct a survey but did use data compiled by other local agencies.

Gray thanked staff for their work, acknowledging it was a large net to cast. He asked which organization appears to have the best resources. Gray offered to reach out to the local County Supervisors if that would be helpful, especially to secure additional resources for the East side of Simi Valley. June replied, the County of Ventura seems to be the current best resource, they have the experience and resources but not the space locally.

O'Brien inquired if the work generated due to the initiative will overextend any staff members. Miller feels it will be manageable at the level presented tonight.

Freeman asked if the partner agencies will promote the District programs. June replied, yes, they were impressed with the programming by the District and the county is actively looking to expanding their presence in the area.

Chair Freeman opened public comments at 8:04pm; hearing none, Chair Freeman closed public comments.

Abele appreciates the research and detailed outlining of the initiative. This takes us about two-thirds of the way, but not all the way. Surveying the public and listening to all the staff and employees is the most important area we can make changes. He is concerned about the methodology and that it will become an extra burden on staff and employees. He is familiar with workplace issues concerning stress, anxiety and depression. He feels the District is outdated in their approach and that employee morale is at an all-time low. We need to make life easier for employees, so he cannot support a methodology that would cause issues amongst staff. He needs more specifics on the methodology to be used in the implementation of this initiative.

Dennert would like to look at ways, both external and internal, to make employees aware of what assistance is available. He would like the District to commit to using the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights. Using this within the After School Clubs is an immediate step that staff could take. He would like the District Manager to authorize funding in the budget for supplies the clubs might need for this.

Gray does not fully understand what the issue with the methodology is about. He sees this proposal as a good start and is happy to support this.

Freeman stated the methodology seems reasonable and a good approach, getting out there and providing the information to the public. We honor employees every month, with awards, annual holiday parties and lunches, efforts are being made to provide for employees.

Direction: The Board directed staff to bring back the initiative with additional information regarding employee wellness and services. The Board would also like a resolution supporting the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights.

Chair Freeman called a Recess at 8:31pm. Chair Freeman called the meeting back to order at 8:40pm.

c. Approval of Award of Contract for the Knolls Park Playground Replacement Project and Approval of Resolution No. 2082 Authorizing the Recordation of a Deed Restriction for the 2018 Parks Bond Act Per Capita Program as Requested by the State of California Department of Parks and Recreation over that Real Property Commonly Referred to as Knolls Park, Simi Valley, California – Staff Report was provided by Wayne Nakaoka, Director of Planning and Maintenance. Staff recommends awarding the contract to the apparent lowest bidder, Ardalan Construction of Thousand Oaks. They have completed several projects for the District and the staff is confident in their work. The District received a public Bid Grievance from Pacific Tennis claiming Ardalan did not submit a Bid Bond. Staff has verified Ardalan did in fact submit the required Bid Bond.

Dennert asked about the playground layout. Nakaoka stated the upper play area will be fire station themed and the lower area is railroad. The local area and history are represented within the design plans.

Gray asked why Nakaoka prefers wood chips. Nakaoka replied, rubber is very expensive, and the pieces are easily separated, while wood chips are easy and inexpensive.

Gray suggested an event for the community once the play area is installed.

Motion: Director Dennert moved to approve Resolution No. 2082 and approve an Award of Contract for the Knolls Playground replacement project to Ardalan Construction Company of Thousand Oaks, CA, in the amount of $140K, and that the Bid Bond submitted by Ardalan substantially complies with the requirements of the project manual, conferred no competitive advantage upon the low bidder, and that the Board award a construction contract to Ardalan while waiving the irregularity. Director O'Brien seconded. The motion carried with the following Roll Cal Vote:

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

10. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS OF NOTE – Abele watched his friend, the second gentleman Doug Emhoff's speech at the Democratic National Convention. It was impressive and beyond anything he expected, he reached out and they exchanged emails after the speech.

11. REPORTS BY BOARD MEMBERS

Director Dennert is concerned about billing Oak Park School District for use of District services. Without a Joint Use Agreement, we should charge them, as they are charging the District. Miller added staff has started to bill to them for large events about three years ago.

Director Gray commended the District's social media; recently the posts have been outstanding. The Simi Valley tourism page has been promoting the District as well. Gray was a little jealous of Abele's comments about the DNC, most of his friends were exhausted from writing the speeches.

Director O'Brien attended Rotary's Hot August Nights with Freeman at Strathearn Park, the event was great, the park is perfect for this type of event. She noticed a complaint on Social Media about Rancho Tapo Community Park and the homeless issue causing people to be afraid of using the park. She received a request to paint the bridge at Mayfair Park. Nakaoka replied, this project has recently been completed.

Chair Freeman thanked Jeannie Liss and her staff for the Rotary's Hot August Nights event, it was a beautiful night. She thanked Lemmo for attending the Chamber legislation meeting for her. Freeman requested an item be placed on an upcoming Agenda to address the roll of a Board Member regarding staff and the District Manager. She would like District Counsel to review current District protocols and review them with the entire Board.

Vice Chair Abele stated both he and Dennert communicate with staff and get their opinions, he does not require staff to speak with him. He and Danielle June guested on Ranch Radio, she did a great job, they discussed the many upcoming District events. One of his goals as Chair next year is to attend all Ranch interviews with 1 other staff or Board member. He met with Davie Melody to discuss the Golf Courses, he is a great guy and very connected and knowledgeable about golf. He stated several of his predictions have come true: being short on the golf fees, the need for security cameras, and being way over budget on Phase III of the Activity Center. He credited the input and comments he received from the community and staff to help inform him. He felt he got too caught up in having the gym in the plans for the Activity Center and took a step back to look at the entire picture. He feels there is no theme and/or objective for the current plans, it is a $7 million project with only a play area providing the wow factor. He requested the plans be placed on an Agenda in January to discuss how the space will be used. He would like to get more eyes on the project by getting more staff involved and possibly survey the employees and community to see what they want for the Activity Center.

Paranick stated if there are any changes this should be done before January. Abele replied, Nakaoka told him change orders could still be submitted at that time. Paranick doesn't feel it would be wise to add change orders to the project in January. He suggested a special meeting next week with the entire Board to clarify what, if any, changes they would want.

Dennert does not want to discuss the same issue with having a gym, this is a different issue relating to the use or programming of the Activity Center. He does not want to see the project delayed or to issue change orders in January.

Miller stated there is a plan for the operation of the Activity Center, and every full-time

Recreation staff member has been given the opportunity to provide input on both the design and activities. Abele is welcome to come to Miller's office and he is happy to walk him through the plan at any time. Abele replied, he was not aware of a full operational plan, this is the first he has heard of it. Abele will meet with both Paranick and Miller next week to discuss the plans.

12. REPORT BY DISTRICT MANAGER – Comments were provided by Dan Paranick. He commended Danielle June for her work on tonight's Mental Health initiative presentation. He also commended Golf Course Manager, David Melody for the excellent work after only 30 days in the position. SHGC hosted the Police Foundation Golf Tournament which was a great success. Oak Park has secured an additional grant for work in Medea Creek. The plan for Frontier Park is complete. The Simi Valley Police have made several arrests in the community relating to local graffiti and vandalism. He has met with the Equestrian group, and they are finalizing the final agreement. He spent some time with last week's public speaker to discuss how the natural oil seepage in Chivos Canyon is handled. The Gas Company requested access to fix gas lines in OP. He will be attending the CSDA Conference next week with Freeman, O'Brien, and District Accountant Kris Barrella.

    Upcoming Events: Strathearn Park will be hosting the 1st Apricot Festival on Sept 21 and Heritage Halloween on Oct 19, Junk in the Trunk on Sept 28 and Oct 19, Classics at Corriganville on Oct 26, SV and OP Halloween Carnivals on Oct 31, Snowfest on Nov 3, and Veteran's Day on Nov 11.

    Future Agenda Items: Concessionaire at SHGC, a request for land in lieu of fees, Heney Dong Architect contract for Activity Center Phase III, Closed Session items, and District Manager evaluation.

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

13. CLOSED SESSION - NONE

14. ADJOURNMENT – Chair Freeman adjourned the meeting at 9:45pm in honor of Jan Smith.

Dan Paranick

Dan Paranick, District Manager/Clerk