

**CITY OF ALBANY  
CITY COUNCIL  
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda date: November 2, 2009  
Reviewed by: BP

**SUBJECT:** East Bay Regional Park District Measure WW – Local Grant

**FROM:** Penelope Leach, Recreation and Community Services Director

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**PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

The Parks & Recreation Commission recommends the following allocations for the City of Albany’s Measure WW per capita Local Grant program totaling \$771,363:

(a)	Pierce Street Park	\$456,000
(b)	Teen Center Expansion	\$120,000
(c)	Ohlone Greenway Improvements	\$125,000
(d)	Improvements to the Cove at the Albany Waterfront	\$50,000
(e)	<u>Additional Rubberized Surface at Ocean View Park Playground</u>	<u>\$20,000</u>
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$771,000</b>

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommendations for Measure WW per capita Local Grant Program are:

(a)	Improvements to the Cove at the Albany Waterfront	\$50,000
(b)	Teen Center Expansion	\$120,000
(c)	Additional Rubberized Surface at Ocean View Park Playground	\$20,000
(d)	<u>Unallocated</u>	<u>\$581,000</u>
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$771,000</b>

**BACKGROUND**

East Bay Regional Park District Measure WW, which passed in November 2008, is an extension of Measure AA passed by East Bay voters 20 years ago. Measure AA helped preserve 34,000 acres of open space, developed over 100 miles of new trails, and funded hundreds of local parks and recreation projects. While much has been accomplished, the growing East Bay population further increases the need for acquiring new parklands, protecting and restoring natural habitat, and helping communities with their local park and recreation facilities. Measure WW will be used to continue to restore urban creeks; protect wildlife; purchase and save open space, wetlands, and bay shoreline; and acquire, develop, and improve local and regional parks, trails,

and recreational facilities close to home for East Bay residents.

The Local Grant portion of Measure WW allocates funds to cities based on population. The City of Albany has been allocated \$771,363, and has up to the year 2018 to use the funds. Cities are able to submit projects to East Bay Regional Park District in February and March of each year. This allows East Bay Regional Park District the ability to sell enough bonds, on an as-needed basis, to pay for the submitted eligible projects.

In order for a project to be considered, staff must submit an application form, cost estimates, California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) certification forms, evidence of ownership or lease and site control of the property, project location map, site plan, photographs, required permits, etc. Cities are required to pay for the project upfront. Cities may be reimbursed throughout the project with 20% of the total cost of the project being retained until the project is complete and signed off by EBRPD.

At the February 2, 2009 Council meeting, the City Council voted to refer to the Parks & Recreation Commission for discussion, deliberation and recommendation regarding the use of the City of Albany's per capita portion of Measure WW funds, and to also refer to the Waterfront Committee for its recommendation. The Parks and Recreation Commission met jointly with the Waterfront Committee on April 27, 2009, to discuss projects and answer question regarding the eligibility of projects. The Waterfront Committee presented three projects to the Parks and Recreation Commission. Please see the attachment for a description of the Waterfront Committee's projects.

In addition to the projects submitted by the Waterfront Committee, Commissioners considered information brought forth by Albany residents as well as projects, which have not been fully developed, from the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan completed in 2004. At each of the Commission meetings beginning December 2008 through May 2009, Commissioners and residents submitted and discussed potential projects. At the May 2009 meeting, Commissioners voted on their top five choices allotting 5 votes for their top choice, 4 votes for their second choice, 3 votes for their third choice, 2 votes for their fourth choice, and 1 vote for their fifth choice. Those projects receiving the most votes are the ones being recommended to Council. Attached is the full list of projects the Parks and Recreation Commission considered including the three projects submitted by the Waterfront Committee. The projects are listed in order of the number of votes each project received.

## **ANALYSIS**

Although the recommendations from staff and the Commission differ, staff and the Commission discussed reasons and philosophies for those differences at the October 8, 2009 Commission meeting. The Commission stated that they are aware there will be times when staff and/or the City Council have different perspectives on issues and maintain that varying perspectives and the ability to express those perspectives is all a part of the process in reaching a final decision. At the October 8 meeting, the Commission chose to uphold their original recommendation made at the May 2009 meeting.

The Water Front Committee (WFC) also discussed their recommendations again at the October 12, 2009 Committee meeting. The WFC is proposing that if the Council decides *not* to allocate funds towards the purchase of the to Pierce Street Park property, the WFC would like funds allocated to all three of the projects submitted to the Parks and Recreation Commission. Currently, the Parks and Recreation Commission is recommending the Cove Improvements project. The other two projects not recommended by the Parks and Recreation Commission are the Waterfront Trail Park Improvements and the Albany Bulb Safety Enhancements. A description of all three projects the WFC submitted is attached including a more detailed description of the Cove project.

### *Parks and Recreation Recommendations*

The five projects the Commission is recommending are: (1) purchase of the Pierce Street Park property; (2) expansion of the Teen Center; (3) Ohlone Greenway improvements; (4) improvements to the Cove at the Albany waterfront; and (5) additional rubberized surface at Ocean View Park. An expanded description of the five projects the Commission is proposing is attached.

### *Staff Recommendations*

In setting priorities, staff recommends that Council consider project readiness and feasibility, ownership or site control, extent of use, and both the indoor and outdoor recreation needs of the community. In applying these criteria, staff recommends allocating funds for the Teen Center expansion, improvements to the Cove at the Albany waterfront, and the rubberized surface at the Ocean View Park playground. Staff is also recommending that \$581,000 remain unallocated for the time being.

The primary reason staff is recommending that \$581,000 remain unallocated is three-fold; (1) the City is under no obligation to allocate all of the funds now as the deadline for using the funds is 2018, and (2) at least three projects that have been discussed are at a phase in their development whereby allocating funds may be premature at this time; and (3) There may be grant opportunities that arise during the course of project planning that could provide alternative funding. Those three projects are:

1. The area in the vicinity of the proposed Pierce Street Park is identified in the Master Plan as an underserved area for recreation amenities, and the neighborhood has been expecting the City's acquisition from Caltrans of a portion or all of the 4.5 acres between Pierce Street and Cleveland Avenue for more than ten years. The allocation of \$580,000 by the City Council of Measure F 2002 funds was based on an appraisal of the property. To date, the City and Caltrans have not been able to agree on a purchase price, and negotiations are ongoing. Until or unless there is an agreed upon

2. In March 2009, the City purchased the property next door to the Senior Center in hopes of eventually expanding the Senior Center. Staff recently submitted a Request for Proposal (RFP) for architects interested in creating concept designs for the Senior Center Expansion Project. A community member bequeathed \$20,000 to the Senior Center of which a portion will be used to pay for the development of concept plans. As part of the design process, staff plans to meet with the community and with Friends of Albany Seniors to gain input for the creation of the concepts plans. Once the concept plans have been developed, staff will have a better indication of the project costs and will be better able to address funding options.
  
3. The Ohlone Greenway improvements project is another project that has been discussed and is being recommended by the Parks and Recreation Commission. Staff also recommends that improvements be made to the Ohlone Greenway as the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan identified it as the most used park in the City. However, staff would like to spend time working with the Commission and the community to prioritize a list of projects with estimated costs before funds are allocated to the improvements. Gates and Associates worked with the City to develop 35% plans for the Greenway which were submitted to BART as part of its upcoming retrofit project. The 35% plans include three areas of improvement: (1) the bicycle/pedestrian path; (2) the replanting of dozens of trees; and (3) the irrigation system. All three areas of improvements will be completed as part of the retrofit project. While working with Gates and Associates in 2008, a basic concept plan was developed for the Ohlone Greenway that included plazas at some of the intersections and a reconfiguration of planting areas. Also mentioned during the concept design phase was a tree demonstration area, a community garden, and a play area. Until such a time that a list can be prioritized with estimated costs, it may be premature to allocated funds at this time. Furthermore, per agreement with BART, the City cannot construct changes to the Ohlone Greenway until after completion of BART's retrofit project in approximately two or more years.

#### *Overview of projects being considered*

During discussions regarding the allocation of Measure WW funds, it was mentioned that the City should spend the funds on parks as that is where most other cities at this point are spending their Measure WW funds. It was also mentioned that when Measure AA passed, the City chose to use those funds on the construction of the Community Center/Library; therefore, the funds should be spent on parks this time around. It should be noted that the City successfully completed three major park renovation projects in 2007 at Terrace Park, Memorial Park, and Ocean View Park that totaled more than \$3.5 million. Park renovations were funded by a combination of Measure R, Measure F, and State Park grants.

All of the projects being considered are recommended both directly and indirectly in the 2004 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan. Improvements to the Ohlone Greenway and the acquisition of the Pierce Street Park property are specifically listed in the Master Plan. The Teen Center expansion and the Senior Center expansion are not listed specifically in the Master Plan, but a need to increase indoor recreation is listed in the Plan. Additionally, the “Cove” project is not specifically listed as it was thought at the time the Master Plan was being developed that the City may not maintain ownership of the Bulb. However, the Master Plan does list as a recommendation to enhance waterfront land owned by the City. Lastly, the rubberized surface at Ocean View may not be specifically listed, but it does support the overall goal stated in the Master Plan that Albany provide “high quality services and inviting, well-kept facilities that foster public enjoyment.” The rubberized surface enhances the enjoyment of the park for those with disabilities.

### **SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT**

Measure WW supports the continued restoration of urban creeks; protect wildlife; allows for the purchase of open space, wetlands, and bay shoreline as well as allows for the improvement and development of local and regional parks, trails, and recreational facilities close to home for East Bay residents. All projects being considered promote health and wellness by expanding the recreational opportunities in Albany.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The Local Grant program allocates \$771,363 to the City of Albany.

### **Attachments**

1. Complete list of projects considered by the Parks and Recreation Commission
2. Expanded Description of projects being recommended by the Parks and Recreation Commission
3. Expanded Description for Cove Improvements at the Albany Bulb
4. Full list of projects submitted by the Water Front Committee to the Parks and Recreation Commission