

**CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda date: February 1, 2010
Reviewed by: BP

SUBJECT: Teen Center and Friendship Club location switch

FROM: Penelope Leach, Recreation and Community Services Director

**PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION AND STAFF
RECOMMENDATION**

That Council approve switching the locations of the Friendship Club and the Teen Center

BACKGROUND

Albany offers two afterschool programs for first graders through high school students. The Friendship Club serves first graders through fifth graders at the afterschool site currently located at Memorial Park next to the Veterans Hall. The Teen Center, currently located at Ocean View Park, serves sixth graders through high school students although the majority of the participants are sixth and seventh graders. Both programs offer after school care from the time school lets out to 6:00pm, Monday through Friday. On two Friday nights per month, the Teen Center also offers special events that last until 9:00pm.

Dara Birnbaum, UC Village Community Liaison, recently suggested to City staff the idea of switching the location of the Albany Friendship Club and the Albany Teen Center. The idea was derived due to similar projects that are being considered throughout Albany with the School District, UC Village, and the City of Albany facilities. The suggestion came at an ideal time for two main reasons; (1) City staff has recently been struggling with the transportation of students to the Friendship Club as enrollment is increasing, and (2) a recent audit by the California Highway Patrol (CHP) regarding the City's 15-passenger vans has decreased the number of students staff can transport.

The CHP regulates all vehicles that carry more than nine passengers. While being audited staff was informed that drivers transporting more than nine minors must have a Youth Bus Certification. Currently, City employees driving vehicles that transport more than nine passengers have a Class B license which was believed to be the standard requirement. Unfortunately, the Class B license allows employees to drive vehicles that transport more than nine adult passengers, but does not cover the transportation of more than nine *minors*. The CHP officer auditing the vans has mandated that seats be removed from the City's 15-passenger vans so that the vans will carry a maximum of nine passengers. Staff is pursuing the requirements for acquiring the Youth Bus

Certification; however, in the meantime, staff has removed seats from the three 15-passenger vans that are currently being used to pick up students at four different school sites each day.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Three staff members will be acquiring the Youth Bus Certification so that the three 15-passenger vans can be used to their fullest capacity in an effort to reduce the number of trips to and from schools each day. The fee associated with acquiring the Yellow School Bus certification is \$2,000 per person. Requiring and investing the time and money in full-time staff to acquire the certification is a necessary cost for doing business. However, requiring part-time staff to have a Youth Bus Certification is a little more problematic. Part-time staff turns over more frequently than full-time staff; therefore, keeping part-time staff properly certified on an ongoing basis needs to be considered when trying to find solutions to the City's after school transportation needs. It should be noted that even though the City considered a Class B license sufficient to drive the 15-passenger vans regardless the age of the participants, there is only one part-time staff person that works with teens/youth that currently has a Class B license. Although she has been with the City for about five years, she will be taking a leave of absence in the next few months. This is more evidence that the City needs to address issues concerning the daily transportation of students to after school childcare sites.

One long-term solution is to switch the locations of the Teen Center and the Friendship Club. The number of trips needed to transport students would be significantly reduced throughout the school year. All students from Ocean View Elementary School could walk to the Friendship Club everyday if the Friendship Club were located at Ocean View Park. This would reduce 2-3 trips each day. Similarly, if the Teen Center were located at Memorial Park, participants could walk from Albany Middle School to the Teen Center on most days. Staff would offer to pick up students from the middle school on bad weather days. Nearly all of the Teen Center participants attend Albany Middle School. Part-time staff would walk with participants from Ocean View Elementary and Albany Middle School to their respective after school sites.

The Parks and Recreation Commission recently recommended and the City Council approved Measure WW funds for the expansion of the Teen Center which is currently located at Ocean View Park. If the Friendship Club and the Teen Center switched locations, there is still a need for additional programming space at the Ocean View site. The current facility at Ocean View is approximately 1200 square feet. The Memorial Park facility where the Friendship Club is currently located is approximately 2200 square feet. If the Friendship Club were to move to the Ocean View site, more space would be needed to accommodate the number of students the City currently serves for its grade school participants. With the additional portable at the Ocean View site, the programmable space would be approximately the same size as the current Memorial site. Brad Griffith, the supervisor in charge of the Friendship Club, sees no programmatic disadvantage to having two buildings instead of one building, given the overall space is approximately the same.

When the Commission considered the expansion of the Teen Center it was intended that the site would be used for multiple indoor recreation needs when not being used for Teen Center activities. This would still hold true if the site were to be used for the Friendship Club. The facility would be used for other recreational/education classes as well as rental space when the facility is not being used for Friendship Club activities.

In addition to reducing the number of trips per day, City staff and School District staff have worked together to ensure that a classroom at Albany High School would be made available for a homework/tutoring program for Teen Center participants. Space for homework was one of the original reasons for the Teen Center expansion at Ocean View. Should the Teen Center move to Memorial Park, homework space would not be an issue.

At the December 2009 meeting the Commission asked staff to solicit input from the community regarding the switch for discussion at the January 2010 meeting. Staff sent an informational letter to current Teen Center and Friendship Club members as well as posted the letter asking for input on all the Albany schools e-trees. So far everyone who has responded has been in favor of the switch. Participants spoke with the Friendship Club and Teen Center supervisors as well as corresponded via email to the Recreation and Community Services Director.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT

The number of van trips would be significantly reduced per year if the Teen Center and Friendship Club locations were switched. Moreover, more participants would be walking the afterschool sites each day.

FISCAL IMPACT

Council recently approved \$120,000 of Measure WW funds for the Teen Center expansion at Ocean View. The expansion project costs would not change and Measure WW funds would remain the source of funding.