

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

Agenda Date: April 19, 2010
Reviewed by: BP

SUBJECT: Sports field improvements to Ocean View Park and Memorial Park ball fields
FROM: Penelope Leach, Recreation & Community Services Director

STAFF AND PARKS AND RECREION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

That Council approve the request by the Albany Unified School District to construct field improvements at Ocean View and Memorial ball fields so that Albany High School baseball teams may relocate to Memorial Field and Ocean View Field and Albany High School softball teams may relocation of to Cougar Field.

BACKGROUND

Albany Unified School District (AUSD) was first alerted to possible Title IX compliance issues in 2007. **Title IX**, is a law enacted on June 23, 1972, that states: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." Although the most prominent "public face" of Title IX is its impact on high school and collegiate athletics, the original statute made no reference to athletics.

One component of Title IX addresses the effective provision of equitable services, facilities, and supplies for female athletes. Schools have an obligation under Title IX to ensure that its' female and male teams have equal access to comparable facilities, including practice and competitive sites.

DISCUSSION

The Albany High School baseball teams have greater flexibility and a less constrained practice schedule on district owned Cougar Field than the Albany High School softball teams do at city owned Memorial Field. The Albany High School softball teams play on a field with a permanent mound. This presents a safety hazard for players and the integrity of the game is compromised. Both problems (less practice time and playing on a field with a permanent mound) exist because AUSD does not have the property to build enough sports fields to meet the needs of high school athletics. To this end, the City of Albany has allowed the district to use Memorial Field. Then district must share the field with Albany Little League and other teams.

In 2008, the Superintendent worked closely with the City of Albany, Albany High School and Albany Little League and proposed a plan that would move Albany Little League from Memorial

Field to OceanView Field. This move was to occur in concert with a City plan to improve OceanView Field thus allowing the District to financially contribute to the improvements that were necessary to relocate Little League. The Board allocated funds to make the OceanView Field improvements. As a result of moving Albany Little League to OceanView Field, the permanent pitching mound at Memorial Field would have been removed thus creating an equitable field for Albany High School softball teams.

As plans were being developed for the OceanView Field improvements, the State of California experienced an economic decline. The City of Albany was unable to access funds to make the improvements. During this period of uncertainty, new members were elected to the Little League Board and there was push back from the baseball community on the move. The plan to move Little League to OceanView Field became untenable since it no longer had the support of all stakeholders.

Members of Albany Little League and Albany High School Softball supporters met several times during spring and summer of 2009 to see if they could develop a plan that all could endorse. Nothing official was brought to the City or School District as a result of these talks.

In September, 2009, the Superintendent retained a sports field consultant to review the layouts of Cougar Field, OceanView Field and Memorial Field. As a result of that review, it has been determined that Cougar Field is the best site to locate the home field of Albany High School softball teams and Memorial Field is the best site to locate the home field of Albany High School baseball teams.

The Superintendent has met with representatives of Albany Little League, Albany High School Baseball and Softball teams, Albany High School Administration and the City Parks and Recreation Department. All representatives have indicated that they will work collaboratively with the City and School District to help make this solution work.

Albany Little League and Albany High School baseball are working on field scheduling. The plan is that both entities will play home games at Memorial Field and use OceanView primarily for practice. Cougar Field will become a dedicated softball field for high school and community use.

Field improvements will have to be made. The attached spreadsheet outlines the work that will be done. It is anticipated that the costs will not exceed \$107,400. The Board has already committed \$125,000 to solve Title IX problems with field equitability. Baseball and softball supporters have expressed an interest in making this a community volunteer project. The involved parties will work together to relocate the teams for the 2010-11 season.

At the January 2010 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting, the Commission voted in favor of recommending the improvements.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT

The collaboration of the various stakeholders in reaching this agreed upon solution has helped foster community building. Additionally, by having two softball fields in Albany rather than one softball field, City staff and School District staff hope to increase the number of girls in sports by increasing girls softball participation in Albany.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

AUSD to pay \$107,400 funded with 1999 Parcel Tax.

Attachments

Spreadsheet of proposed field improvements