

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

Agenda date: December 19, 2005  
Date prepared: December 12, 2005  
Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_

**Subject:** Recommendations from the Parks and Recreation Commission regarding outstanding issues related to the parks rehabilitation project.

**From:** Melinda Chinn, Recreation & Community Services Director  
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**PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1) Approve the new design for the area of Ocean View Park south of the Teen Center, which reduces the number of trees to be removed.
- 2) Approve the elimination of the community building/room at Terrace Park and restore the applicable funding to the contingency fund for other project related costs.
- 3) Accept the Arts Committee's recommendations for the public art features of the park rehabilitation project.
- 4) Defer the discussion of how the turf in the northern half of Memorial Park is to be removed and (post-installation) maintained pending further research and Commission action in January.
- 5) Receive the report from Siegel & Strain concerning the Memorial Park improvements as information only and concur with the Commission recommendation to proceed with the approved design for the entry promenade and plaza at Memorial Park

**BACKGROUND**

At the October 17, 2005 council meeting, the Council approved conceptual designs for the park elements that were identified for replacement or rehabilitation at Memorial, Ocean View and Terrace Parks. In addition, the council: 1) Directed staff to return to the November 7, 2005 meeting with a report outlining the budget needed for these projects. 2) Agreed to allocate 2% of the project budget for public art. 3) Agreed to proceed to the preliminary design phase with Landscape Architect John Cahalan.

At the November 7, 2005 meeting, the Council approved the additional funding from Measures R and F for the approved elements of the plan and asked to Commission to consider:

- Whether the plan for the southwest corner of Ocean View Park can be accomplished with the removal of fewer redwoods;
- The possibility of obtaining a grant from Waste Management for a green building at Terrace Park; and
- Whether the removal of the old turf and maintenance of the new turf at Memorial Park can be accomplished without use of any chemicals.

Subsequent to that meeting, the Commission held several public meetings to discuss the tree removals at Ocean View Park with the City Arborist, the community building at Terrace Park with the neighbors living in close proximity to the park, and the public art elements for the parks with the Arts Committee. At its December 8, 2005 meeting the Commission deliberated and made its final recommendations regarding the outstanding issues (with the exception of the use or non-use of chemicals as a means of turf removal as part of the rehabilitation project and as a means for treating weeds or fungus infestations as part of the future maintenance of the area).

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Ocean View Park Improvements:**

The City Council approved the conceptual plans for Ocean View Park on October 17, 2005 with direction to staff to continue to pursue modifications to the design in and around the Redwood grove to minimize the removal of trees, while maintaining the design goal. Staff conducted an outreach to work with concerned citizens to reach a balance between area improvements needed and tree removal. A series of meetings, including a site discussion took place on November 21, 2005 with Steve Batchelder, City Arborist, providing direction in achieving a balanced design agreeable with all concerns. The Commission concluded that the revised plan (drawing attached) provides the balance sought by reducing the number of redwood trees to be removed from 24 to 13, and limiting the trees to be removed to those identified by Mr. Batchelder as best for the overall health of the trees in the grove, while providing sitting and play area suitable to both teens and younger children and maintaining picnic areas.

### **Terrace Park Community Room:**

Late in the public review process a neighborhood advocacy group requested that a community room be added to the restrooms and storage building. The Commission recommended and the Council adopted this addition at its October 17, 2005 meeting. In its research related to this request staff subsequently learned that a number of neighbors opposed the inclusion of the community room for reasons including traffic congestion, parking, increased noise and inappropriate nighttime activity in the park. The Commission convened a public meeting on November 21, 2005. Approximately 30 people from the Terrace Park neighborhood attended and, from their comments it was clear that the meeting attendees included community room advocates and critics. By the end of the meeting all attendees, including the community room supporters, agreed that neither a

community room nor a roofed open-air area was appropriate for the Park. Based on these comments, at its December 8, 2005 meeting the Commission adopted a motion recommending that the Council remove the community room from the project and request that the additional funding be placed back in the contingency fund for park projects for use on other project related costs if necessary. In making this recommendation the Commission noted that a number of Terrace Park neighbors had expressed the desire to retain the funding allocated to the community room for the Park. When the Commission adopted its motion it agreed that reserving the money allocated without a specific project was impractical but that the drainage portion of the Terrace project may draw down a substantial portion of the Parks rehabilitation contingency.

### **Memorial Park:**

South Side: An architectural and engineering analysis is being performed on the Albany Veterans building by Siegel and Strain Architects. The purpose of the review is to provide a better understanding of the physical condition of the building and an estimate of the costs to provide the necessary repairs and the additional upgrades that might be necessary to make the building more useable. In addition, Robert Bruce Anderson, Urban Conservation & Urban Design Consultant, is preparing a report that describes the character-defining features of the building and will assist staff and the Commission in identifying and prioritizing programmatic uses of the building that are consistent with preserving its historical value to the community. These reports will be coming to the Council in January 2006.

The Council concluded that these reviews were necessary before a potential ballot measure is put on the ballot to fund the ownership, rehab, and use of the building. As part of the review of the Veterans Building, staff authorized the consultants to conduct a cursory review of the plaza and promenade features, thinking that the review would validate the approved conceptual design as being consistent with the current architecture, replacing existing improvements needing repair that were completed subsequent to the building construction in 1931 without historical review. The Siegel and Strain draft report concludes that the conceptual plans as recommended by the Parks and Recreation Commission and approved by the City Council on October 17, 2005 are inconsistent restoration of the Veterans Building to conditions *circa* 1931. Staff was surprised by the report's conclusions because project landscape architect John Cahalan had taken into account the existing features of the building and incorporated them into the design for the entryway, promenade and plaza area.

The report was provided to the Commission for review and direction (see attachment #4) and at its December 8, 2005 meeting the Commission reviewed the report and recommends that the designs approved for Memorial Park proceed as previously approved. The Parks' conceptual plans were provided to Alameda County Staff for review and they enthusiastically supported the Cahalan design as long overdue improvements to the entryway and plaza.

North Side: The removal of the existing turf at Memorial Park as part of the rehabilitation project was discussed at the Commission's December 8, 2005 meeting. Several members of the public and several Commissioners have consistently expressed their concern over the industry standard -- use of chemical means (application of "round-up") and plowing of the existing (dead) turf under the mix of soil amendments and topsoil on which the new turf will be planted. Others expressed concern over the additional cost and the environmental impact of removing the turf by digging up and carting away several inches of dirt. Staff is preparing a cost/benefit matrix outlining the environmental and financial costs associated with the two removal methods and the Commission will review this matter at their next meeting (January 12, 2006). Therefore, the Commission requests that the Council defer action on this item until the second Council meeting in January.

### **Public Art:**

On November 30, 2006 the Parks and Recreation Commission held a special joint meeting with the Arts Committee to discuss public art as part of the rehabilitation project. Per the Council's direction, 2% of the rehabilitation budget or \$56,829 had been identified for public art. At the meeting, the Arts Committee indicated support for the chevron design of the Ocean View Park entry sign and suggested the addition of a sculpture, such as ironwork of birds, to the top of the sign. The Committee also recommended lining the exterior walls of the Ocean View and Terrace Park restroom buildings with tile art, perhaps incorporating tiles designed by Teen Center teens and Ocean View School students, and adding artistic climbing elements to the Ocean View play/picnic area.

Art projects suggested for Memorial Park include an interactive piece of art that melds with the landscape in the southeast corner (at Carmel and Portland Streets). Examples would include an earthwork that people could walk around or possibly a labyrinth.

Other art projects for Terrace Park included adding art to the retaining walls near the playground and adding a design element to the lighting and signage. The Commission moved to recommend the Arts Committee's conceptual designs for the art projects. The Council will receive the final designs once the Committee completes its work on this project.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

Further time in completing the final designs and specifications for this project will result in the possibility that the construction costs will increase as we move out of the optimal bidding season. In addition, each change to the design and the new drawings that are created result in additional costs for consultants and project management.

#### Attachments:

- #1. Council Minutes of October 17, 2005
- #2. Council Minutes of November 7, 2005
- #3. Draft Commission Minutes of December 8, 2005

- #4. Draft Report from Siegel and Strain – November 21, 2005
- #5. Revised Ocean View design.