



PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: AUGUST 24, 2005

ITEM NUMBER: 8d

SUBJECT: FIELD USE RECOMMENDATIONS TO CITY COUNCIL

DATE: AUGUST 16, 2005

FROM: ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DEPARTMENT, RECREATION DIVISION

PRESENTATION BY: JANA RANSOM, RECREATION MANAGER

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: JANA RANSOM, (714) 754-5654

RECOMMENDATION

Recommend that the City Council take the following actions on field use issues as referred to Commission:

- 1) Group 5 and Group 6 organizations' use of fields
 - Make no changes to Group 5 organizations' use of fields
 - Change Group 4 status to groups with at least 75% residency requirement (from groups with at least 90% residency) to encourage more adult user groups to attempt to qualify as resident – see field restriction under #2
- 2) Adult soccer organizations' permitted use of elementary schools
 - Restrict adult soccer use to Costa Mesa and Estancia High School fields, Parsons School field, Davis School field, Balearic School fields and TeWinkle Park fields
- 3) Year-round use of fields
 - Make no changes to year-round use of fields by any organization
 - Direct City staff (Recreation and Maintenance Divisions) to initiate and/or assist with development of rest and renovation periods at school and City fields that will ensure maintenance standards are met
- 4) Allocation of lit fields
 - Make no changes to allocation formula
- 5) Joint Use Agreement with the Newport Mesa Unified School District
 - Support City staff efforts to revise existing Joint Use Agreement with Newport Mesa Unified School District with the City acting as the agent for community use
 - Support inclusion of maintenance standards in any re-worked Joint Use Agreement with Newport Mesa Unified School District

BACKGROUND

At its meeting of July 19, 2005, City Council referred the above issues to the Parks and Recreation Commission and requested that Commission undertake whatever measures it felt appropriate in order to provide recommendations to City Council by September 6, 2005. These issues have been

reviewed by the Commission at three meetings (June 22 Regular Meeting under New Business, July 27 Regular Meeting under New Business, and at the August 10 Study Session). User Group representatives were notified of each of these meetings. The Commission additionally requested staff to let all other persons who had testified or interacted with the Recreation Division on field issues in the past know of the August 10 Study Session.

DISCUSSION

During the discussion at the regular meeting held July 27, 2005, many of the persons who addressed the Commission indicated that the issues of greatest concern were maintenance of Newport Mesa Unified School District fields and the critical lack of athletic fields with lights. Several speakers representing youth user groups stated that the current policies and procedures “weren’t broken.”

Specific Issues

Groups 5 and 6

Group 5 organizations are defined as youth groups with fewer than 51% residents. Group 6 organizations are adult groups with fewer than 90% residents. Group 5 organizations’ requests are not filled until after Group 1 through 4 organizations’ requests have been scheduled. Group 6 organizations’ requests are processed only after all the other higher priority groups receive fields. Exception is that adult groups, Group 4 and 6 organizations, have priority for use all day Sundays and after 8:00 p.m. on weekdays.

Group 5 and 6 organizations account for approximately 5,600 annual hours of use, or about 13% of all permitted field use. Most of the usage is by youth and adult soccer organizations. Revenue from field rental by these user organizations is just over \$170,000. Currently, there are no Group 4 organizations, where 90% of participants are residents, so elimination of Group 6 use, without modifying the definition to some lower percentage of residency, will effectively eliminate adult user groups from being able to reserve fields in Costa Mesa.

Lowering the percentage needed to qualify as a resident adult user from at least 90% to at least 75%, while restricting access to fewer fields, should enhance the incentive for groups to achieve this priority status level. This change would ensure that residents, youth and adult, are served first.

Adult soccer use of elementary schools

If adult soccer use is restricted to Costa Mesa and Estancia High School fields, Parsons Field, Davis School Field, Balearic School Fields and TeWinkle Park Fields, then there will be more requests for fields than there will be fields available. While it will make illegal use easier to identify, enforcement efforts will have to be increased. Then, if the City establishes soccer leagues for adults, there may be no other available field time remaining.

In the event that Commission endorses this recommendation and Council directs staff to make this policy change, staff will consider the following factors to establish priority for use within the Group 6 classification: length of use of fields as an established user group, “strike” history (fewer strikes / higher priority), organization serves an underserved population (persons with disabilities, for instance).

From a public relations standpoint, staff believes that most neighbors of elementary school would support this decision. Many of the adult soccer organizations would have to seek additional fields outside of Costa Mesa. It should be noted that there might be some revenue loss associated with constraints placed upon use of fields by adult soccer groups.

Year-round use of Fields

Most youth and adult sports organizations/leagues are now year-round. Staff recommends that no changes be made in the policy to legislate use. However, since year-round use contributes to the deterioration of fields, staff (Recreation and Maintenance Divisions), if directed, can identify what rest and renovation periods need to be implemented in order to provide sufficient time for fields to rejuvenate. Additionally, a concerted effort to renovate fields to correct problems before they become severe should be investigated. Several of the youth sports user groups have expressed a willingness to participate with the City and the School District in terms of both money and labor. Other funding mechanisms for field renovation could also be explored.

Last August, the City and School District jointly assessed the condition of every School District field that is available for use under the existing Joint Use Agreement. The rating sheets for these fields as well as the internal report and criteria, are attached (see Attachment 1).

Allocation Formula for Lit Fields

The City has lit athletic facilities at TeWinkle Park (after renovation, there will be three softball and one baseball field), The Farm Sports Complex (two lit soccer fields out of six total soccer fields), and Lions Park Davis Field (one lit softball field). There are two lit baseball fields (one soccer “overlay” field) at TeWinkle School. As there simply are not enough lit fields, the necessity to implement an allocation formula based upon numbers of residents in Group 1 organizations at least provides a rationale for splitting up what is available. As additional lit fields come on line, the Recreation Division will continue to use the allocation formula to ensure equity to like groups. *The only element that could impact the allocation of lit fields at this point is to re-classify AYSO 97 (a “grand-fathered” Group 1 organization).* If the Parks and Recreation Commission elects to recommend that the status of AYSO 97 (and Newport Harbor Baseball Association, though there is no lighted field time assigned to this group) be reconsidered, conceivably, all of the Costa Mesa residents currently playing in those organizations could join existing Group 1 organizations, in which case the demand for lit field time would still exist, just becoming one between large organizations (such as AYSO) and smaller ones (such as Pop Warner football).

Although the amount of lit field time that any one group gets is not nearly enough, at least the existing formula provides for an equitable way to ensure available lit field time is divided between like groups.

City staff makes every effort to honor historical use, but since the available lit fields are not equally spread to the various parts of the city, there will be territorial issues as long as fields are considered the domain of any one group. The user groups have been able, for the most part, to come to resolution on their own terms (again, acknowledging that the number of lit fields is inadequate). Further legislation of the allocation process could include going to a draft system and then giving organizations the right to retain or trade the allocations for a short time before permits are finalized. Staff’s interest is only that the allocation, in the end, is fair.

Joint Use Agreement

In the existing Joint Use Agreement between the City and the Newport Mesa Unified School District, the City acts as the agent for the community, ensuring that access to fields is equitable. So, while the City tends to bear the brunt of criticism for field use issues, the absence of the City’s oversight via the JUA would be even less than ideal.

There have been inquiries as to whether a Costa Mesa group could reserve a Newport Beach school (one that is in the NMUSD). The answer is yes. Costa Mesa residents and Newport Beach residents have equal priority for any District school if the School District is the entity making the decisions as to who gets use. The JUA gives Costa Mesa residents priority at NMUSD schools located in Costa Mesa – because the City’s Field Use and

Allocation Policy is the implementing legislation. So that Costa Mesa residents have priority of use of school fields in Costa Mesa covered under the Joint Use Agreement.

There are problems with NMUSD fields, mostly related to irrigation, some due to the fact that the fields were not built to be athletic fields. Most were initially designed as playfields and are being used as athletic fields. The City and the District have renovated several fields, but Measure A construction has definitely set back District field maintenance. Until Measure A work is completed, field maintenance issues will take a back seat (although the District is considering a Bond Measure this Fall that would allocate funding to major field renovations, among a host of other improvements).

The proposed Joint Use Agreement calls for certain language changes and responsibility changes. The main semantics change is that ACTIVE USE AREAS now will include most outdoor areas (i.e., fields, parking lots, playgrounds) and FACILITIES will be considered most indoor areas or structures (i.e., pools, gymnasiums, auditoriums). Under the existing agreement the City permits ALL school usage after 4:00 p.m. (5:00 p.m. at the High Schools) weekdays, and anytime weekends and school breaks. The proposed agreement returns the permitting function of FACILITIES back to the School District. This change will allow the school to better schedule maintenance, monitor payments and hold user groups accountable (including their own users).

There are several “clean-up” and minor revisions, but the other main change in the proposed agreement calls for the School District to take back on-going field maintenance. Under the existing contract, the City mows permitted fields once per week (weather permitting), aerates and fertilizes once or twice per year. Measure A construction has interfered with the City’s ability to conduct these latter responsibilities. By taking back the maintenance responsibilities, the School District has indicated that they will be better able to manage irrigation problems and resolve field problems than if the City’s contractor were doing the tasks.

As the City paid the cost for the maintenance contractor, and City in-house staff did the aerating and fertilizing, the value of the City’s participation in the existing agreement is estimated at approximately \$183,000. The City’s position in the proposed agreement is to participate in annual field renovations to bring fields up to the standard levels identified and for the School District to provide on-going maintenance. The City has tendered this concept to the School District; however, as of the date of this report, the School District has not responded.

The City of Newport Beach has a more traditional agreement with the Newport Mesa Unified School District, in part because the City has athletic fields of its own and has no need to act as the community’s agent to use school fields. While it would ostensibly save the City money to go back to this model agreement, staff believes that the Costa Mesa community’s best interests would not be served.

Under the existing and proposed agreements, the use of the District’s Costa Mesa schools is regulated by the City’s Field Use and Allocation Policy. This policy provides for priority to be given to resident youth leagues and City-run programs. The policy also allows for certain youth groups, our Group 1 user organizations, to have field rental fees waived. The policy gives the City the ability to monitor use, hold groups accountable, to take disciplinary action, even to issue citations. In the absence of such an agreement, or one that simply calls for the City to be able to use School District facilities in exchange for the School District to use City facilities, the School District may refuse to issue permits – due to the negative impact to their facilities – but un-permitted use would likely occur in the absence of some enforcement/monitoring presence.

So while the proposed, or even the existing Joint Use Agreements are not perfect, they guarantee that fields will be available for the community's use and that the use will be monitored for appropriate behaviors.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Group 5 and 6 organizations use of fields

- 1) No longer allow Group 5 and 6 organizations to reserve and use fields in Costa Mesa
- 2) Designate specific time periods (i.e., January to June) when Group 5 and 6 organizations are not allowed use of City facilities

Adult Soccer organizations' use of elementary schools

- 1) Make no changes to current permitting procedures
- 2) Direct Recreation Division staff to implement City-run adult soccer leagues

Year-round use

- 1) Schedule no use periods "across the board" (i.e., months of January and February, months of July and August)
- 2) Schedule non-primary season requests after all other primary requests have been issued (i.e., in the Fall, schedule Group 1-6 soccer first, then Group 1-6 baseball)

Allocation of lit fields

- 1) Modify the allocation formula methodology

Joint Use Agreement

- 1) Do not support proposed revisions
- 2) Revert to an agreement similar to the City of Newport Beach's agreement with NMUSD

CONCLUSION

Recommend that the City Council take the following actions on field use issues as referred to Commission:

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Attachments: 1. Field Rating Criteria and Evaluation of District Fields (November, 2004)