



# *CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT*

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MEETING DATE: MAY 1, 2012

ITEM NUMBER:

**SUBJECT: DEMOLITION OF PICNIC SHELTER AT LIONS PARK**

**DATE: APRIL 19, 2012**

**FROM: PUBLIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT/ENGINEERING DIVISION**

**PRESENTATION BY: ERNESTO MUNOZ, PUBLIC SERVICES DIRECTOR**

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: FARIBA FAZELI, INTERIM CITY ENGINEER,  
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## **RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve demolition of the picnic shelter at Lions Park in accordance with Goal 9a of the Homeless Task Force recommendations, and authorize \$60,000 from the City's Contingency Fund balance to execute the project.

## **BACKGROUND:**

Lions Park is located in the vicinity of Downtown Costa Mesa. Besides being located near a major transportation node and neighborhood shopping center, it is part of a large community center complex bounded on two sides by residential neighborhoods. The community centers are utilized by both adults and children, taking advantage of the wide array of classes and services offered. Additionally, it contains both passive and active recreational facilities and has the potential of being transformed into a more vital recreational area. Part of this revitalization will be the removal of the aging and outdated picnic shelter to be replaced by a more active and engaging open space use.

## **ANALYSIS:**

Since 2008, the Lions Park vicinity, including Lions Park, Fire Station #3, Neighborhood Community Center, Downtown Recreation Center, Historical Society and the Public Library have experienced an increase in complaints which required a significant increase in police responses. The incidents primarily involve the transient population which congregates in the Lions Park area. The Police Department responds to an inordinate number of calls for service in this area. The types of incidents reasonably attributed to the homeless population are vast including: drug use and sales, assault with a deadly weapon, battery, begging, burglary, drinking in public, fighting, indecent exposure, municipal ordinance violations, parking violations, parole violations, resisting police officers, robberies, stolen vehicles, thefts, trespassing, vagrancy, vandalism, warrant arrest, and others.

In January 2011, the City Council formed a Homeless Task Force in an effort to mitigate the homeless activities within the Lions Park vicinity. Below is a list of some of the Task Force accomplishments to date:

- Increased security by hiring two Park Rangers exclusively for Lions Park
- Streamlining the misdemeanor citation forms to cite offenders
- Placed 24 homeless in housing
- Reassigned a Community Service Sergeant to head up a Homeless Enforcement Team
- Created a Neighborhood Improvement Task Force which will specifically include targeting Lions Park offenders and following up with legal action, when possible
- Coordination between City staff and church volunteers regarding provision of services outside of Lions Park
- Outreach to other law enforcement agencies to ensure they don't drop off their chronic homeless/alcoholics at Costa Mesa facilities

One of the goals of the Homeless Task Force is to promote Lions Park as a local venue for special events by changing the facilities to promote more creative usage. With the new emphasis on special events promotion, it is suggested that the City explore utilization of Lions Park for more dynamic event programming. There is already a built-in audience comprised of residents utilizing services at the community centers and public library. This, combined with more proactive law enforcement and effective programming, could help attract even more people to this park and transform it into an exciting recreational venue. The removal of the picnic shelter is Goal 9a of the Homeless Task Force recommendations. The goals were reviewed and approved by the City Council at their meeting of March 20, 2012.

The Parks and Recreation Commission, at their regular meeting of January 27, 2010, approved a conceptual design (Attachment 1) for the beautification of Lions Park that includes the removal of the existing picnic shelter and the construction of a new playground with an aeronautical theme, family-size picnic shelters, safety lighting, landscape, hardscape, and a ¼-mile exercise loop with exercise stations. The total cost is estimated at \$1,200,000. Since funding is not currently available for the entire project, staff is proposing to phase this project and complete the phases as funding becomes available.

Thus, the demolition of the picnic shelter will help the City achieve two critical goals with respect to public safety as well as long-term park planning.

The only major event that has taken place in this area is the Newport Harbor Lions Club Fish Fry & Carnival Event. However, this year's event has been relocated to Fairview Park. The existing picnic shelter is oversized for families to utilize and requires substantial upkeep. The approved conceptual design calls for smaller shelters enabling utilization by more residents. Therefore, staff is proposing to demolish the existing shelter and landscape the area as open space.

**ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:**

Council may direct staff to maintain the existing picnic shelter until additional funding is available to construct the entire project instead of phasing it.

**FISCAL REVIEW:**

The cost to demolish the existing picnic shelter and landscape the area as an open space is estimated at \$60,000. The City Council could direct the use of \$60,000 in Contingency Fund monies towards the demolition of the picnic shelter.

**LEGAL REVIEW:**

There is no legal review required for this item.

**CONCLUSION:**

Lions Park is located in one of the City's major multi-use destinations, within walking distance of the City's two Recreation Centers, Public Library, City's Historical Society, Shopping Centers, transportation hub, and ball fields. Updating the facilities at Lions Park will complement the City's efforts to a revitalized downtown area. Staff requests City Council's direction on proceeding with the demolition of the picnic shelter at Lions Park and funding of \$60,000 towards the project from the Contingency Fund Balance.

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**ERNESTO MUNOZ**  
Public Services Director

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**FARIBA FAZELI,**  
Interim City Engineer

ATTACHMENT: "1" [Conceptual Design for Lions Park](#)

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