

**CITY OF COSTA MESA**  
**REGULAR MEETING OF THE**  
**FAIRVIEW PARK CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**August 6, 2014**

**These meeting minutes represent an “action minute” format. A copy of the meeting audio tape can be obtained at the Public Services Department’s front counter located on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of Costa Mesa City Hall. The Fairview Park Citizens Advisory Committee (FPCAC) of the City of Costa Mesa, California met in regular session at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, August 6, 2014, in the Neighborhood Community Center’s Victoria Room at 1845 Park Avenue, Costa Mesa, California.**

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Pledge of Allegiance**
- 3. Mission Statement**
- 4. Roll Call**

Voting Members Present: Chairman Richard Mehren  
Vice Chairman Steve Smith  
Member Ron Amburgey  
Member Terry Cummings  
Member Frank Davern  
Member Brett Eckles  
Member Dennis Popp  
Member Anna Vrska

Voting Members Absent: Member Lee Ramos

Officials Present: Mayor Pro Tem Stephen Mensinger, City Council Liaison  
Commissioner Robert Graham, Parks and Recreation  
Commission Liaison

Staff Present: Ernesto Munoz, Public Services Director  
Yolanda M. Summerhill, City Attorney  
Bart Mejia, Parks Project Manager  
Michael Koziel, Management Analyst  
Denneen Chambers, Administrative Secretary

## 5. Presentations/Update:

- a. Anna Vrska, FPCAC Member, presented a report regarding the Sports Fields Data, and distributed correspondence (copy attached) that she provided to the Parks and Recreation Commission, to the FPCAC members and attendees.

**The minutes of the following presentation by Mr. Mel Hitchcock have been transcribed verbatim:**

*Hitchcock: Thank you very much. Mel Hitchcock, I am approximately a 40 year resident of the fine City of Costa Mesa, and I am interested in the model railroad. I thank the committee for asking me to speak a little bit of my experiences from another club that I happen to belong to. They have happen to have some specific experiences that you might want to know about if you want to continue to consider the mixed use of the railroad and a sports athletic club field complex. One of the things we learned at Riverside, before two years ago, was when we had no areas defined or any kind of boundaries between the fields the railroads right away. There was open access from the parking areas. We have a lot of loose public travel back and forth across the railroad lighting. This is number one, we found very bad combination. Model trains do not mix well with uncontrolled traffic crossing the railroads. The other thing we learned is that the public in general is usually not very knowledgeable about the operational use of model trains. They are in fact model trains, but they work just like full size ones. They have stopping distance that can be two, three, and four times the length of a normal train. (Inaudible) And especially children walking in front of a train without understanding that it's not a good idea and there is nothing you can do about avoiding a collision. So for this reason, I would propose my own standpoint because I don't know if it is a good idea to mix these types of fields with uncontrolled access from the public. Now having said that, I have to share with you the good sides. Because in Riverside, we do in fact share our park, and our railroad, with the public and with multiple use athletic fields. One of the things we have that helps us out is an extensive separation between the parking locations for the cars are driving into the park, this includes speed fencing all around so that you are limited to just a few pedestrian access points around the perimeter of the parking space. This is good, because it allows us to carefully control those specific points with the arriving and meeting of the trains. Club members, we find that it is necessary to have a person at these crossings to ensure safety. When you have unlimited access, that's not possible to do the considerable spacing we have. At one, earlier the fields were right up adjacent to the right-of-way. It was impossible to separate the trains from the activity on the athletic fields. As inevitably, they were involved in a game and running. That was not a good idea. The new plan that Riverside worked extensively, Riverside City Parks Committee worked extensively with the Riverside Railroad Club involved separations of at least 50 feet and in many cases most of the fields were even farther than that from the railroad right-away. It also includes the use of a lot of fencing. Short fencing that delineation right-of-way of the railroad, delineating the unlimited access of the public wondering around field areas. This can also be flower beds and*

shrubs. Anything that helps delineating other than just an open grass field. I'm familiar with the OCME Railroad Club layout and the main loop by their station. There is no delineations, no protections. In our experience that would be a disaster of people started walking across anywhere along the railroad. I guess the last thing I'd like to mention is the room. I am familiar with the dimensions and layout of the Orange County Club. If the idea were to put multiple soccer fields and baseball diamonds within that opening loop, I believe you'll find there's not room for this kind of spacing. I'm talking about for safety. Again I would be on the side of caution. I'm jumping in I would hope that there are other places in close proximity to accommodate the uses that you have needs for athletic fields, and not the one place we have to accommodate the unique needs and usage of the model trains. In Riverside they are lucky to have our whole park named after us. It's a model railroad park. The City invites our stewardship and care of the maintenance of the facilities, and in return we get the use of property. I would hope Costa Mesa would see the same advantage and work closely with the OCME Club for the same purpose. Because these clubs, these railroads are far and few in between. We have to go to L.A. and Riverside to see another one. Again, we are quite lucky to have one right here in Orange County. The only one in Orange County. Right here in Costa Mesa. So really that's all I have. I came here to explain, and wanted to share the experiences I had with the Riverside Club before. The modification to the new park they put in two years ago. And the things we did to help them work together to get to their decision, but my main decision would be, that you are better off in a small area that is available to separate the fields as much as possible. Having said that, if there are any questions I can answer.

Chairman: Thank you Mr. Hitchcock. Steve would you like to speak?

Steve Smith: The answer to this question could take you thirty minutes or maybe all day. Can you summarize maybe the top three things that you would do differently or start all over, what would they be?

Hitchcock: Start all over?

Steve Smith: Yes, straight from scratch again to make a smoother process. What would you do?

Hitchcock: I'm confused at your question. At Riverside?

Steve Smith: Yes, yes.

Hitchcock: Well at Riverside we did all the things I spoke about which solved all the problems. We originally had, believe it or not, a car crossing at the railroad. We had a full standard railroad crossing it was energized and came on whenever a train came from either direction. And, we noticed immediately that people thought miniature trains did not count, and they would ride right through the red blink flag. They would pay no attention to it. One of the things you cannot have is access to the inner circle of the OCME railroad with personal cars. That was a fiasco and very nearly caused some serious accidents. We never had accidents. We have been accident free. So I don't want to scare people and speak doom but, it is dangerous. And we had to be very careful. And the other thing is. The second point is, Unlimited Access. That

didn't work. People would park all along the perimeter of the park originally, and walk in anywhere. And so we have hundreds of crossing of the railroads. Or we would have signs indicating the maximum speed of five miles per hour. That is a fast walk. You don't walk fast across. But even so, with unlimited crossings at any time, it was impossible to prepare for it at any time. And then the third point I would make again is spacing. You can't have field activity right next to the railroad. Loose balls, people running for whatever reason just don't pay attention to the dangers of the railroads.

Steve Smith: So, do you have a recommendation for a buffer in that case?

Hitchcock: Like I said, we have a minimum of 50 feet or hundreds of feet in some cases. We have an assorted field system. Basketball, there's soccer, there are baseball diamonds in some cases. So the different fields are laid out differently. Some are quit a distance from the railroad for that reason. Ten feet of clearance would be my point. When you are laying things out to see if things fit, it is more than the size of the field it also has to be public access, any stands you might have for seating. All of this must be considered. You don't want them that close to the railroad for safety issues.

Chairman: Thank you. Any other questions?

Smith: Thank you Mr. Chairman. The question in Riverside. What is your membership in Riverside and what are your hours and days of operation? How many people are using this in a given week?

Hitchcock: We have a very similar club size to the OCME Group. We have approximately 180-200 members at any given time. That varies of course. We have a very active railroad. We probably have 10 to 12 live steam locomotives in operation, on our run days, at any given time. Which makes a fairly active spacing in between trains. It's very active. We operate two weekends every month. The second and fourth, if you want to come out and visit. Where we give free rides as Orange County does for the public. the rides are from ten in the morning to three in the afternoon. And during those rides we average three to four, to seven hundred riders. That's a little less than Orange County averages. I think they have a larger ridership than we do. But we're in the desert. There is no breeze were we are at. I think that's the three points you asked.

Smith: One last question. You had said some of your recommendations that worked out in Riverside. Buffer zones, delineation, things of that nature. Since that has been accomplished, has the coexistence, so-to-speak, been good?

Hitchcock: Yes I, I can report that we have a great relationship with the park commission in the City, and the people who use the park at Riverside. It was rather antagonistic in years before, with loose and unattended young kids, and fields next to the railroad. It was not uncommon for them to have caused a lot of damaged and derailed trains. It seemed like fun thing to do for kids. [Inaudible Comment]. Those things have greatly reduced since the rebuild of the park, and the attention being paid to the ball parks instead of playing with the trains. I can report that we have a great relationship both with the City and the public. We have a modern train station [Inaudible Comment]

*Chairman: Thank you. Any questions? Yes, Mr. Cummings.*

*Cummings: First of all, thank you for coming.*

*Hitchcock: You're welcome.*

*Cummings: How would you compare the size of the OCME to Riverside?*

*Hitchcock: Of course that is a little difficult to do, since these are round tracks. The basic figure eight that we have, and the large loop of it is probably five times the size loop of your main line. So I'm just estimating that. Four to five times more room for two ball fields, two soccer fields, and a large cement pad for basketball courts. And that is all in that four to five times larger area. My understanding of your master plan that I have looked at from time to time, is as many as two soccer fields in the inside loop at Orange County. That would be much crowded than our situation.*

*Chairman: Don't panic folks. We are trying to provide a little more room. [Partition being unfolded] If we can get some additional chairs in here. So people can sit over here on this other side. I'm sorry, I should have given you some warning beforehand.*

*Audience: {Chuckles}*

*Chairman: The place is not coming apart. Don't worry. But ah, we're impressed that so many people have turned out. We didn't expect this many and we'll try to accommodate you all, and keep the meeting running at the same time. Are there any more questions Mr. Cummings?*

*Cummings: It occurred to me that since a lot of us have not been there that next meeting we can have a field trip to Riverside. I'm guessing that the since the public is there on the second and fourth weekend? The second or fourth Sunday*

*Hitchcock: I would be glad to host you and take you around and show you the railroad on one of those Sundays.*

*Chairman: That's a very good idea Terry. Maybe we can do that. Are there any other questions? Well Mr. Hitchcock, thank you very much.*

Vice Chairman Smith commented on reaching a justifiable decision on the athletic fields; conducting a proper due diligence by reviewing Riverside's successes and failures; and reporting back the findings.

***Vice Chairman Smith made a motion to table item numbers 2, 5 and 6; Member Eckles seconded; Members in favor: Mehren, Cummings, Vrska, Eckles, Amburgey, Smith, Popp, Davern; Motion passed unanimously.***

***Member Cummings made a motion to table item number 10; Member Vrska seconded; Members in favor: Eckles, Amburgey; Davern; Popp, Mehren, Smith; Motion passed unanimously.***

***Chairman Mehren made a motion to move up item numbers 3, 9, 11 and 16; Member Cummings seconded; Members in favor: Davern, Popp, Mehren, Amburgey, Eckles, Vrska, Cummings; Members opposed: Smith; Motion passed 7:1.***

## 6. Public Comment

1. Harold Weitzberg was opposed to fields on this quadrant.
2. Robin Leffler favored restoring Fairview Park.
3. Jay Humphrey favored restoring Fairview Park only.
4. Kim Hendricks was opposed to fields in Fairview Park.
5. Sara Mooney was opposed to any further development in Fairview Park.
6. Brett Woods favored putting fields in Fairview Park, believes there are not enough alternative fields for children to play.
7. Steve Pope was opposed to fields in Fairview Park.
8. Phil Chipman was opposed to fields in Fairview Park, favors minimal impact.
9. Heather Lewis-Sebring preferred keeping the park as it is so the children can have real nature.
10. Margaret Mooney favored leaving the park as it is.
11. Amy Tindan mentioned that the park is being used by animals; opposed to building in Fairview Park.
12. Patricia Martz, CCRPA, supported passive ideas for Fairview Park, opposed to changes.
13. Sylvere Valentin, mentioned that having fields in Fairview Park is not such a good idea.
14. Adelia Sandoval, representing The Juaneno Band of Mission Indians, The Acjachemen Nation, the indigenous people of Orange County, acknowledged the FPCAC and spoke on the area of the sacred sites in Fairview Park. Ms. Sandoval also spoke on the educational value that Fairview Park holds and requested we protect it.
15. Steven James, Department of Anthropology with California State University at Fullerton, CCRPA, favored preserving the archeological sites of Fairview Park; opposed to any building on the sites.
16. Jill Larrabee, spoke on being happy with the community coming forward, opposed to any building in Fairview Park.
17. John Rubright favored building a field in Fairview Park; spoke about not having enough fields.
18. Michael Hogan favored preserving Fairview Park as is.
19. Cindy Black requested the tabled items be verified by Attorney Summerhill and favored keeping Fairview Park natural.

Attorney Summerhill affirmed items 2, 5, 6 and 10 were tabled.

20. Terry Welch referred to Banning Ranch and trying to preserve the habitat; and favored restoring the habitat of Fairview Park.
21. Resident enjoys the natural aspects of the field; opposed to changes to Fairview Park.
22. Mark Arblaster mentioned there was a shortage of fields in Costa Mesa; favored building fields. Mr. Arblaster also mentioned that in order to have a fair consensus, the Hispanic community must have representation at the meetings.
23. Jim Jones mentioned a letter from Fish and Wildlife Service and supports protecting the park.
24. Anthony Steinmetz, resident of Anaheim, member of Orange County Model Engineers, mentioned that the concept will destroy eagle projects; favored leaving the park as it is.

25. Myla Moore stated that visitors enjoy Fairview Park as it is; favors leaving it alone.

***Member Eckles made a motion for a short intermission at 7:30 p.m.; Member Smith seconded; Members in favor: Davern, Popp, Mehren, Smith, Amburgey, Eckles, Vrska, Cummings; Motion passed unanimously.***

**Chairman Mehren called the meeting back into order at 7:37 p.m.**

### **Public Comment**

26. Matthew Teutimez, representing the aboriginal tribe of LA, spoke on the land of Fairview Park still providing for the community with all the natural resources; opposed to any demolition of Fairview Park; and does not want any of the sacred sites within the park destroyed.
27. Dr. Gary Stickel, Ph.D. at University of California at Los Angeles, commented on the inadequacies of the previous archeological surveys and favored preserving the remaining artifacts. Dr. Stickel favored keeping the park as it is so the People's culture can be preserved.
28. Jerry Koken spoke on the fields in the City being locked and closed to people who want to use them. Mr. Koken favored keeping the fields available to the residents.
29. Roger Turk thanked Committee Member Vrska and supports building fields. Mr. Turk favored keeping the City progressive and building a place for kids to play. Mr. Turk mentioned that people have good intentions and they do not want to destroy the burial sites. He also inquired about the security of the sacred areas.
30. Mike Burgess, Soccer Coach, favored building lighted fields in Fairview Park.
31. Marc Todd favored building fields in Fairview Park; creating a balance.
32. Colin Browne was opposed to building near the trains in Fairview Park.
33. Gil Simmons was opposed to building in Fairview Park.
34. Larry Amor mentioned that he favors leaving Fairview Park as it is.
35. Heather Lewis-Sebring mentioned that the Hispanic population is not represented but enjoys Fairview Park just as it is.
36. Lorraine King was opposed to any changes made to Fairview Park.
37. Resident favored leaving Fairview Park as it is.
38. Resident referenced page 8 of the Fish and Wildlife Service letter and is opposed to any changes in Fairview Park.
39. Chuck Perry favored building a field where kids can play.
40. Cindy Black requested more time to speak.

### **7. Approval of Minutes:**

***Vice Chairman Smith made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of July 2, 2014; Member Eckles seconded; Members in favor: Davern, Popp, Mehren, Smith, Amburgey, Eckles, Vrska, Cummings; Motion passed unanimously.***

### **8. Old Business:**

None

### **9. New Business:**

- a. Consideration to add an item to the list of proposed changes: Community Garden in the Southeast Quadrant.

#### **Public Comment**

1. Sandy Johnson was opposed to the concept; mentioned a community garden is not for Fairview Park.
2. Resident was opposed to having a garden in Fairview Park; deemed not appropriate.
3. Resident was opposed to a garden in Fairview Park and suggested a garden will attract wildlife that may not belong in the park.

***Member Amburgey made a motion to add the community garden to the Southeast Quadrant; no second; Motion failed by lack of a second.***

- b. Consideration to add an item to the list of proposed changes: A Native Plant Nursery.

#### **Public Comment**

1. Cindy Black mentioned that to restore the habitat in Fairview Park, a plant nursery is needed.

***Member Eckles made a motion to add the native plant nursery; Amburgey seconded; Members in favor: Mehren, Smith, Amburgey, Eckles, Vrska, Cummings; Members opposed: Davern, Popp; Motion passed 6:2.***

Item No. 3: Recreate Heritage/Native American Village:

#### **Committee Discussion**

Member Cummings mentioned that the Native American input is appreciated and suggested it will be a learning center. Member Cummings spoke on it bringing recognition to the tribes and provides education about the tribes to the community.

#### **Public Comment**

1. Cindy Black envisioned it being an educational aspect for the community; favored the concept.
2. Adelia Sandoval noted that such a recreation is invasive, but if it moves forward, the Committee should consult with the local tribes first.
3. Resident was opposed to the concept, noting it is too artificial and discussed keeping Fairview Park as it is.
4. Resident was opposed to any development in Fairview Park.
5. Kim Hendricks referenced page 51 of the Fairview Master Park Plan and was opposed to the concept.
6. Jim Jones suggested that the committee focus on the Adobe in Estancia Park as a model.
7. Sandy Johnson was opposed to the concept.

***Member Cummings made a motion to advance the Native American Village concept to the next level; Amburgey Seconded; Members in favor: Amburgey, Cummings; Members opposed: Eckles, Vrska, Smith, Popp, Davern, Mehren; Motion failed 2:6.***

Member Eckles requested to move on to Committee Member Reports.

## 10. Committee Member Reports

Member Cummings stated he had nothing to report.

Member Vrska stated she had nothing to report.

### **The minutes of the following comments by Member Brett Eckles have been transcribed verbatim:**

*Eckles: Ok I'm sorry, um. I just, a few things just hearing from the public tonight and first and foremost I would like to thank the young lady and the couple of young men that had the guts to come before the committee and share their opinion is just phenomenal. They did a great job. I love to see you all get involved in civic engagement. I really appreciate them and their parents for bringing them over here. Uh, a couple things I heard tonight, first Ms. Hendricks mentioned specifically about AOS97. About a specific number decrees of Costa Mesa residents. Don't know where that came from, from 35 to 30 percent. That is just not at all accurate. Costa Mesa residents, historically, over the past ten (10) years has ranged anywhere from 48 to 52 percent of our number populous and that just hasn't changed. So, I wanted to clarify that. Ah, also um, shortage of. The member of the public made a comment about the shortage of open space. Probably true. And here's an opportunity to uh, have open space and portion out some of that for to solve the problem of shortage of fields. Someone else mentioned Lions Park being locked up and it has nothing to do with trying to keep kids locked in and all that it's just safety concerns and um since our region has used Lions Parks has had issues of drug paraphernalia among others things when children are present. So that's why the fences would be there. Uh, which lead to more free play. Free play, our region AOS 97 tried to institute a free play program. Loved it. We pushed it hard as heck to get it done this summer. No field to do it on. 'Cause we had several hundred kids who wanted it. No coaches. No referees. Free play like I did when I was a kid. No field to do it on in the summer. Now I love the promo for soccer and the marketing for soccer which is great. But, Coach Todd made a point that there are other sports for kids who do multiple sports. There is lacrosse, there is girl's field hockey, there is football there's a multitude of sports. And I made a presentation a number of months ago showing that just with soccer we are at ninety (90) percent capacity of the fields that we have in this community. Including District fields which are P.E. fields. Ninety (90) percent just soccer. So to hear that we don't have a shortage of fields, I guess if there is no other sport than maybe you are correct. Uh Fairview Development Center has been brought up a lot. That's great! It's a wonderful facility. It's already being used. It's permitted out already. And again, the City does not manage, own this facility. It's run by the State. The State could sell it and guess what? The State hurts for money. We all know that problem. They are going to sell it to the highest bidder. Do you think it's going to be the City of Costa Mesa's one day? I don't know but, fields are already being used there. They could actually be taken away. Another speaker already made that point. Furthering the problem. Love to hear about turf and lights. Mr. Rubright brought up earlier that he's been doing it for ten (10) years and I've been doing it a little shorter time of seven (7) years. Every single year, and before my time, fifteen (15) years ago we fought for lights, for better facilities. All of*

*those school district fields we have they are P. E. fields. They are not properly maintained. We have injuries every single year because of potholes and everything else. I'll finish up. For all those people who argue, let's put lights here, please join me when I go before Parks and Recs. Commission and argue for lights on the east side of Costa Mesa. I would love to see you out there. Many of you who say that, have spoken against my application for lights. You can't have it both ways. Thank you for the extra time.*

Member Amburgey commented on the available acreage within Fairview Park and the difference between other parks, and noted that TeWinkle Park supports many uses.

Vice Chairman Smith thanked everyone for their patience and civility.

Member Popp echoed Vice Chairman Smith's comments and thanked the young people for coming to the meeting.

Member Davern read a letter from a resident of Costa Mesa, Chris Pena, in which Mr. Pena was concerned about the lack of sports fields and favored adding a sports field in Fairview Park. Member Davern agreed with Mr. Pena's opinion.

Mr. Munoz stated he has nothing to report.

Attorney Summerhill stated she has nothing to report.

**13. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

**14. Next regular meeting: September 3, 2014, 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. at the Neighborhood Community Center (NCC).**

**Submitted by:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ernesto Munoz**

**Public Services Director**