Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District Board of Directors Meeting

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

September 20, 2017, 6:30 p.m.
Multi-Purpose Room B, Sycamore Drive Community Center
1692 Sycamore Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065
(805) 584-4400; www.rsrpd.org

1. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair O’Brien. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Jeannie Liss.

2. ROLL CALL - Directors Abele, Freeman, Hostetler, Johnson and O’Brien were present. The following staff members were in attendance: Doug Gale, Elia Haz, Jeannie Liss, Wayne Nakaoka, Theresa Pennington, Larry Peterson and Brian Pierik. Approximately 80 members of the public attended, those that spoke are listed below.

3. PUBLIC STATEMENTS NOT ON THE AGENDA - None

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - None

5. SCHEDULED ITEMS AND PUBLIC HEARINGS - None

6. CONSENT AGENDA - None

7. CONTINUED BUSINESS - None

8. NEW BUSINESS

   a. Opportunity for Tennis Players to Address the Board of Directors – Legal Counsel Brian Pierik notified the guests that if they wish to speak on items A or B on the agenda, they may do so and have three minutes to speak. He instructed them there is to be no applauding or booing the speakers and wants everyone to feel comfortable speaking. He also asked the audience to refrain from talking while someone else is presenting. District Manager Peterson stated there is a strong community interest in tennis and pickleball which is a good thing. The District has seen pickleball grow. It started on basketball courts, moved to the gym, then the District constructed four dedicated lit courts at Rancho Tapo and then the School District constructed them on their middle school campuses. For the last 4-5 years many observations have been made about the lack of use of the tennis courts at Rancho Simi Community Park. An idea to convert 4 of the tennis courts at that location to 12 pickleball courts was presented to the Board to determine if it was worth further consideration. If so, staff suggested steps to receive public input and
survey actual use during the various seasons occur. The concept generated a strong reaction. The tennis community felt they were not given an opportunity to be heard and expressed its objections to the conversion at several meetings. Suggestions were also made of ways to improve the tennis courts to include; resurfacing, enlarging wind screens, improving lighting, installing separate entry gates and court separation fencing, resuming court washing, adding benches and shade canopies, improving bird dropping problem, improving the cleaning and lighting of bathrooms and increasing safety in the park. The District has taken steps to improve tennis courts, including; resurfacing the courts at Rancho Madera Community Park (RMCP), installing wire prongs on the lights at RSCP to prevent the presence of birds, resuming the court washing schedule, improving lighting around the pavilion, amphitheater and restrooms, and increasing ranger coverage. Peterson also stated that replacing the lighting at Rancho Simi Courts with LED technology is also budgeted for the current fiscal year in the amount of $140,000. The Board Chair then called for public testimony.

Mike Johnson stated he has lived in Simi Valley for 30 years and enjoys the parks. He said the tennis community needs 5 courts for USTA and can’t have other markings on the courts.

Michael Roblin thanked the District for the agenda packet and said the duck pond park is underutilized because the lighting is not good and the courts need resurfacing. He said the biggest reason is the park is unsafe. The courts will be underutilized if park is unsafe. He stated the relining of the courts should be a temporary solution. He would rather play at Royal High than at the duck pond park.

Janene Murray stated her problem is that tennis players are playing on multi-use courts. They are all fighting for courts, people are angry and tense and others don’t follow rules while people are waiting for courts, they can’t take a break. She said it is scary during the day and night. She asked why the schools can’t open more courts. She said it is a horrible situation at lemon. She stated the signs need to be put on each individual gate. Ms. Murray submitted a written statement which has been forwarded to the Board of Directors and the Executive Managers.

Kathy Kauffman stated she is a pickleball player ambassador for Simi Valley, she said they need courts, not just lit courts. On Mondays and Fridays, the courts are packed. There are 32 people playing and some waiting. She said east and west courts won’t work at Rancho Tapo Community Park (RTCP). The lights at Sinaloa have limited use, certain people have locks and the portable bathrooms are terrible. She would like 12 courts at the duck pond park. They are a group that wants to stay together. She would like lights at Royal High for tennis players. Residents don’t want courts near their homes.

Ken Miller stated he is a member of the Simi Valley Society of Tennis Players. He plays 2-3 times a week and still takes classes. He wants available resources here.
Larry Gee thanked the District for the agenda packet that was sent out. He said he loves the tennis courts and advocates that pickleball needs lighted courts; 12 at Sinaloa, he suggested spending money for lights saves money in the long run, keep courts at RSCP and add lights at Sinaloa Middle School.

Nicole stated she plays tennis and pickleball, she commends the recommendations and stated the options are very fair. She said 5 courts are needed for tennis in spring from April – June 5 and during the fall league 3 courts are needed. USTA has approved tennis courts with lines. She would choose 6 courts instead of 4. She stated it is a great idea to open courts at Royal High School. She suggested the board consider converting pickleball courts back to tennis courts.

Melanie is from the Southern California Tennis Association and said an 18 year old played here for 10 years and received a scholarship to Hamilton College and there are many like her in the community. Seventy percent of kids playing tennis are playing on public courts. There are 5,000 adults and 200 kids in USTA. Tennis helps keeps kids out of trouble. It is a good workout, keeps the heart healthy, and USTA stands behind community tennis courts.

Glen Sufferin stated popularity of pickleball is here to stay. He played at Sinaloa and said it was fun and challenging. He does not want to see tennis courts compromised, there is open space at Rancho Madera Community Park (RMCP) and Rancho Santa Susana Community Park (RSSCP), he said it would benefit the City if there are tournaments. RSCP courts should be preserved and permanent pickleball courts is the answer.

Libby Santos said her main contention with the pickleball community is they say tennis is underutilized, but the courts are not underutilized, many people are waiting during prime time for tennis. She is willing to reserve courts at RSCP, where courts are very utilized. She suggested building new courts.

Deb Singer requested 10 minutes to speak by combining her time with that of several others that could not be present. She was denied the additional time by legal counsel for consistency to all speakers. She thanked District Manager Peterson, staff and legal counsel. She said she has a better sense of safety at the park when she saw rangers locking gates. She stated there are 53 pickleball courts and 14 tennis courts and 12 of them are lit. The USTA league brings in $10,000 in revenue. She said low or no cost solutions are ideal and temporary courts should be set up. She submitted a written statement which was distributed to the Board of Directors and Executive Managers.

Welch has been in Simi Valley for over 30 years. There are not enough courts for a community this size. He stated 62 courts are needed to accommodate a community this size. He coordinated USTA league play, there is great utilization of courts and if RSCP courts were more presentable, more people would play on them. He supports pickleball getting more courts but the players must be patient.
Michael Warren is a tennis player, he said he loves all sports and acknowledged it is not an easy situation. There are other areas with walls for tennis players to practice on. RSCP has gotten better and more family friendly, there is a big push by USTA for the next generation to get involved. There is a way to enjoy both sports.

Ashley Roberts stated permanent courts would be ideal, but if we can’t get our own, we need to compromise. Pickleball has not asked for the nicest courts, they just want RSCP since it is underutilized. Pickleball has 4 permanent lit courts. She loves the sport and said the players will put up with the bad part of town; pickleball players want to stay together. Several courts in one location would be ideal. She suggested giving lemon courts back to tennis.

Chris Alece has lived in Simi Valley for 37 years and stated pickleball players need more courts. Every week people are coming to join from all age groups. They need more permanent pickleball courts. The Rancho and Royal courts are ideal and good for all pickleball players. He stated it is the fastest growing sport in America.

Nancy stated pickleball has been a blessing to her. The people are very inviting, she plays all mornings and there are always people waiting. She rarely sees tennis players waiting. She can’t access schools during the day and said there are more pickleball players than tennis.

Kay Scheurin said she was a tennis player and is now a pickleball player. She said the lines make it difficult and the courts are busy so she leaves town to play. She loves Simi but they need more courts. She said the lines are too faint.

Bill Clark said there are 18 pickleball classes. Only half of the tennis courts are used. Pickleball is a growing sport and good for the community. He mentioned utilizing the funds from the sale of the Sycamore Drive Community Center for additional courts.

Dave Tim said he has been playing pickleball for a couple of years. He stated there are 5 to 10 times more pickleball players than tennis players. He doesn’t suggest taking away tennis courts. It is one third of the cost to build new pickleball courts.

Nelson Poon stated there is so much land here to use compared to other countries and asked why both groups can’t just get along. He also suggested that the District take advantage of the space that it has and construct additional courts to meet the growing demand.

Hong has been in Simi Valley for 18 years. He doesn’t want tennis courts taken away; he wants new courts built for pickleball. Tennis is recognized worldwide, and said pickleball is not a formal sport. There are scholarship opportunities for tennis.
Director Abele stated there is passion on both sides. Pickleball is clearly a growing sport and there is a need for more sports. The tennis community felt caught off guard and it was good to hear from everyone tonight. He stated that he played tennis for many years and that he won’t make a decision tonight. He wants to make tennis as happy as can be; it is a traditional sport, but he also wants to look out for pickleball people. Pickleball is growing in the community and it is a group activity. He stated there is not an endless amount of money, funds are limited, revenue sources are declining and they have to look at the financial part. From a sense of pride standpoint, he would like to make the situation at RSCP better. He will make suggestions for improvements as to what is good for RSCP. It has been a special place for over 40 years and it would be nice if people would like to go to that park again. He thanked the tennis and pickleball players for their passion and comments.

Director Freeman thanked the residents for attending the meeting. She stated RSRPD put forth a lot of effort improving RSCP to include the girls softball complex, new restrooms, increased ranger patrol and encouraged more positive activity. She also stated there is a list of capital projects to include soccer, buildings and a skate park that have to be considered.

Vice Chair Johnson thanked the residents for coming out. He said the Board will take all ideas and thoughts into consideration. The main function is to meet needs and build the best facilities for the community. Some facilities take a while to build. The matter will go to the Advance Planning Committee for further discussion. They need to keep the District solvent and not overspend. They will try to work out the best possible solution. He stated all e-mails sent to Mr. Peterson are forwarded to the Board.

Director Hostetler suggested the residents go to the next school district meeting to request use of their courts. If the courts are built east to west the players will have to adapt to the courts and play during the day. The Park District does not get sales tax revenue, the City receives it. They will try to make everyone happy and hopefully build more courts. He suggested they can raise money for the project.

Chair O’Brien thanked the residents for attending the meeting. She learned a few things and reminded them there are limited resources and they are doing their best. She asked them to stop making nasty remarks about staff.

b. Presentation of Concepts to Receive Feedback Regarding Alternatives of How the District Might Meet the Demand for Lit Pickleball Courts – District Manager Peterson presented an overview of the report and stated every concept will take years and cost many thousands of dollars to complete. He reminded everyone that the concepts are just concepts, intended to facilitate thoughtfull analysis and discussion. Feasibility and desirability will need to be further researched if any concept warrants the effort in the Board’s opinion. Director of Planning and Maintenance Nakaoka then presented the various concepts.
Director Freeman acknowledged all of the work staff has done identifying what the challenges are so they have a better understanding of what we are up against.

Director Abele asked staff about the cost to convert 2 tennis courts to 6 pickleball courts at RSCP. Nakaoka stated it would be about half the cost and could be done fairly quickly given that the courts and lighting are already present at RSCP.

Director O’Brien asked if the parking lot could be used for courts. Nakaoka responded that the parking lots are needed for parking.

Director Abele asked about the timing to make the changes and improvements at RSCP. Nakaoka said it would take 18 to 24 months.

Libby Santos stated there are enough pools in Simi Valley and one is not needed at RMCP. She does not mind giving up two courts at RSCP.

Chris Sutherland said there is a parking issue near the baseball fields at Houghton and a big need for additional parking.

Larry Gee is a tennis player and said he likes the RMCP concept and in the short term, give up 2 courts for pickleball and leave 6 for tennis at RSCP.

Kathy Kaufman stated they need courts now. There are 32 people at a class this evening, and 16 on the waiting list.

Director Freeman asked if they use the RSSCC gym to play pickleball. Kaufman confirmed they do but there is a long wait for indoor use.

Deb Singer stated she doesn’t want to lose assets by converting them. She said in Bend Oregon there were pickleball courts built with funds raised, which should also be possible here. She said people should join together and raise funds.

Director Abele said he is not voting tonight, he will keep an open mind. When the first presentation was made regarding more pickleball courts, tennis felt left out. The RSCP tennis courts were not being used, tennis players made some good points, the reason the courts were not being used was due to the condition of the courts. They need resurfacing, new lighting and fencing and the location is possibly unsafe. We will do what we can for pickleball and tennis people but the District represents 150,000 people. The passion is great, but we are not just serving pickleball and tennis, we have to keep that in mind. There have been improvements at RSCP and we want to improve even more. Some things could take 3-5 years, we want to do something as soon as possible. He stated he is thinking of one concept that can give something to everyone: spruce up 6 tennis courts at RSCP and convert 2 to pickleball. This is the lowest cost option and something we should look at, it would give something to everyone sooner, rather than waiting 4-5 years. Meeting
the longer term demand could then be considered with some of the concepts presented.

Director Freeman said they need to consider short term and long-term planning. There is a great facility planned at RMCP. If pickleball courts were to be built there instead we would have to give up the building and the multiple types of interest it would serve in the community. She stated there is an investment at Royal High and we should pursue it since we have invested in it and it gives the community more courts as a short-term solution and maybe convert 2 tennis courts at RSCP to pickleball. She suggested getting together with the school district to light the courts and possibly add lights at the Sinaloa courts and look at long term changes to other plans possibly at Rancho Madera or Rancho Santa Susana Community Parks.

Vice Chair Johnson said there are a lot of concepts and we will meet needs the best we can, short term and long term for tennis and pickleball. The next step is to go to Advance Planning. Pickleball has 4 lit courts, he has never seen people wait that long, they rotate people in. He suggested that perhaps 2 or 3 tennis courts at Rancho Simi could be converted to pickleball courts which might then allow the multipurpose courts at Rancho Tapo to be converted back to tennis.

Director Hostetler stated they will do their best to help both sides but it will take time and money.

Chair O’Brien stated RSCP seems like a short term solution, there is no perfect long-term solution but they should pick one that is best for the greatest number of people.

The Chair called for a break at 8:46 pm.

The meeting reconvened at 8:59 pm

c. Discussion and Possible Approval of a Fourth Amendment to the Purchase and Sale Agreement between the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District, Housing Authority of the County of Ventura and USA Properties Fund, Inc. - District Manager Peterson advised that the Board was in agreement to extend the Sale and Purchase Agreement from December 2017 to April 2018. The proposed contract amendment was reviewed and approved by legal counsel. Vice Chair Johnson moved to approve the Fourth Amendment to the Purchase and Sale Agreement between the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District and the Housing Authority of the County of Ventura and USA Properties Fund, Inc; Director Freeman seconded the motion. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

d. Award of Contract for New Fencing at Alamos Canyon – the staff report was presented by Director of Planning and Maintenance Nakaoka. Director Freeman moved to approve the staff recommendation; Director Hostetler seconded the motion. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.
e. Authorization to Solicit Bids for Tree Pruning Services at Various District Parks – the staff report was presented by Director of Planning and Maintenance Nakaoka. Director Hostetler moved to approve the staff recommendation; Director Abele seconded the motion. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

9. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS OF NOTE - none

10. REPORTS BY BOARD MEMBERS

Vice Chair Johnson attended the Soccer Foundation meeting. He stated there were no major issues, they asked about the lights and the master plan.

Director Hostetler reported that he attended the Harassment Prevention training.

Director Abele attended the Soccer Foundation meeting and stated it was not eventful. He said Vice Chair Johnson is the star of the meetings. It was impressive to see, and the meeting was much better than the first time he attended; there is a great group of people and Johnson runs the room. He also attended the Youth Activities Committee meeting during which there was a discussion regarding a teen programming expansion at Berylwood. Richard Lemmo and Dave DeMaio presented impressive and creative ideas for programs for teens which are the hardest group to reach. They were given the go ahead to give it a shot; they are very enthusiastic about the program and hopefully they will be successful.

Director Freeman said she had no meetings; she had a great trip to Mt. Rushmore.

Chair O'Brien attended the Historical Society Meeting; the minutes have been distributed. There is a fundraiser in February. She also attended the Harassment Prevention training.

11. REPORT BY DISTRICT MANAGER – District Manager Peterson reminded the Board there is a closed session.

Chair O'Brien called the closed session at 9:10 pm.

12. CLOSED SESSION

a. Closed Session Pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.8

Conference with Real Property Negotiator

Re: Land Disposition: Property Located in Ventura County at 1692 Sycamore Drive, Simi Valley, Ca

Assessor Parcel Numbers: 642-0-231-285
642-0-231-295
642-0-280-075
642-0-280-085
642-0-280-095

Agency Negotiators:  District Manager, Director of Planning and Maintenance and Legal Counsel

Negotiating Parties:  Area Housing Authority/USA Properties

Under Negotiation:  Price and Terms of Payment

b. Closed Session Pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.9

Conference with Legal Counsel - Anticipated Litigation Significant Exposure to Litigation Pursuant to Subdivision (b) of Section 54956.9: One Case

c. Closed Session Pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.8

Conference with Real Property Negotiator

Re: Land Acquisition: Property Located in Ventura County Northeast of the Intersection of Tapo Canyon Road and Bennett Road in Simi Valley, Ca

Assessor Parcel Numbers: 620-0-320-095

Negotiating Parties:  District Manager, Director of Planning and Maintenance and Legal Counsel

Report and Instructions to Staff Regarding Price and Terms of Payment

The meeting reconvened at 10:01. There was no reportable action as to Closed Session items a. b. and c.

13. ADJOURNMENT – Vice Chair Johnson moved for adjournment at 10:01 pm; Director Hostetler seconded the motion. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

[Signature]

Larry Peterson, District Clerk