1. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Johnson. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Tom Evans.

2. ROLL CALL – Directors Abele, Freeman, Hostetler, Johnson and O’Brien were present. The following staff members were in attendance: Laura Ballantoni, Douglas Duran, Tom Evans, Doug Gale, Dannielle June, Wayne Nakaoka, Theresa Pennington, Larry Peterson, Brian Pierik and Brian Reed. Mayor Pro Tem Glen Becerra attended the meeting as well as approximately 60 guests. The guests that filled out a speaker card are noted below.

3. PUBLIC STATEMENTS - NONE

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

   a. Regular Meeting – February 1, 2018 at 6:30 pm – Director O’Brien moved to approve the amended minutes to reflect she did not attend the Simiopolis fundraiser as of the meeting date. Vice Chair Freeman seconded the motion. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

5. SCHEDULED ITEMS AND PUBLIC HEARINGS

   a. Presentation of the Full-Time Employee of the Month for January 2018 to Laura Ballantoni – Director of Administration Pennington presented the staff report and Chair Johnson congratulated Laura and gave her a plaque. Laura said the District tries to achieve successful programs and gives back to the community; she appreciates the award. Director of Recreation Gale thanked Laura for doing an awesome job. He stated she started out as a part-time employee and moved up through the ranks.

6. CONSENT AGENDA

   a. Approval of Check Registers: 1/31/18 (Accounts Payable); 1/19/18 (Payroll)
Staff responded to questions from the Board. Director Hostettler moved to approve the consent agenda. The motion was seconded by Director O’Brien. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

7. CONTINUED BUSINESS - NONE

8. NEW BUSINESS

Legal Counsel Brian Pierik thanked the guests for attending the meeting and stated the Board heard their comments two weeks ago; he welcomed the community to provide additional comments and if possible to keep them brief.

a. Review and Discussion and Possible Action Regarding the Relocation of the Sycamore Drive BMX Raceway – the staff report was presented by Director of Planning and Maintenance Nakaoka. Director O’Brien requested a second review of the Tierra Rejada location. Nakaoka explained that water and electricity would need to be installed and stated it is not a safe area due to the homeless population. In addition, there is neighbor opposition to a cell phone tower proposed near that location. Director Freeman asked about the access road. Nakaoka provided a response regarding the widening of the road and the length that it would have to be and the need to remove a portion of the hillside due to the location of the channel.

Michael Lapraik commended staff on the great staff report. He stated the recurring theme is utilities. He likes the Equestrian Center for the BMX track, it would be a compatible use. He said the new location could be smaller than the current one. He also presented the Board with a map of Santa Susana Park as a possible location stating it has existing utilities and is somewhat remote, it is in unincorporated Ventura County. He really wants the District to keep this site on the table and consider it. He mentioned the modern gates are much quieter than the old gates at Sycamore BMX.

Director Hostettler stated the Santa Susana Park fields are used by Sinaloa Baseball and the District would not tear up the park for the BMX track.

Michelle West – thanked the Board for having the BMX group at the meeting again. She stated she continues to hear about expenses but is not hearing the specific amounts and details. She said they are a large group and are resourceful. She is willing to pull together extra funds to help the relocation go faster.

Jacob Richter started riding BMX 2 years ago. He didn’t have a lot of friends at school. He started riding BMX and his friends helped him grow with his social skills and he built friendships. He wants to relocate the BMX track somewhere close by. The last race ends at 8:30 pm so the noise should not be a problem.

Hannah Sjoquist stated the track creates a family and it was his home for a decade. In regards to a location, she said the Equestrian Center would work, it is not an
issue with the equestrian group. They only use it one day a month and the events run from 8am to 2 pm. The BMX track would not interfere with equestrian activities.

Camie Gadbois thanked the Board and staff for all they have done so far. She stated as an athlete she had no idea of the training involved with BMX; they learn dedication and friendship. As a parent, she made lifelong friends at BMX, more so than any other sport. She said the big kids stop and pick up little kids that fall, they are becoming good people. As a consumer, she eats here, shops here and is supporting the community.

Chris Gadbois asked the audience to give a round of applause for staff and the Board. He commented on the details of the staff report and said he knocked on doors near the Equestrian Center, all neighbors with the exception of 2 were in favor of the BMX track at the Equestrian Center but he is not sure it is a great venue. He also stated the District should start moving dirt to the Tapo Canyon parcel for the longer term use of that location for BMX, and stated the adjacent landowner would likely allow access to the site and asked the District to try and negotiate a good deal for the 80 acre parcel up the street.

Russell Voorhees thanked staff and the Board for all the effort put forth for the BMX track. He stated he is at the track 5 days a week to help run it; families have spent time together since 1976. It means a lot to the community, he would appreciate the effort to relocate the track and said they are willing to work together. He spoke to Elaine Freeman and said she definitely supports the track. He thanked Ed Abele for visiting the track on Sunday evening.

Tirrell Lazada-Smith said thanks for the effort related to the BMX track. He asked if anyone has personal relationships with the developer. He said there is still room for discussion and the opportunity for the developer to show good will to the community. He is fearful that the BMX interests are secondary. He does not feel represented. The BMX community deserves the same fight as others in the community.

Craig Rungaitis thanked everyone on the Board for the work that has been done, and said there is much more to do. His son and granddaughter race. She is rated #1 nationally. The whole family comes out to the track and it is important to the community.

Director Abele stated he didn’t know much about BMX until he joined the Board over a year ago, he is impressed by the group. He said the kids are an impressive group, they went up to the podium on their own and spoke from the heart. He went to the BMX track on Sunday night and spoke with Russ and Tony. The turnout was double what he expected. There was a small spill and everyone came to his aid, they should be proud of that. He said budget cuts will be addressed and the District needs to be more careful than ever with money. In regards to the sites, there are
significant geological issues at Tapo Canyon; there are not enough funds in the budget to rectify. The purchase of the 80-acre parcel of land doesn’t include construction and installation of the track. There would be push back from the community if the District were to proceed with moving the track to the Equestrian Center. We can fight for that but don’t want the District to put in a lot of money when it is probably not a realistic location. We don’t want the District to spend a lot of money for something that won’t happen. He said he does not have a problem with BMX raising money for the project. He hopes the District and City of Simi Valley can make it work. BMX is an impressive group, he enjoyed speaking with Tony and Russ and going to the track.

Director Hostetler agrees with Abele about the facility. He suggested the City lease property to the District and BMX build it and collect money for running it. The City proposal is ideal. If the City can make that happen with us we have a good deal. Santa Susana will never happen, we won’t tear up the park. We would get too much push back from the Equestrian Center location. We appreciate you coming out, hang in there and don’t give up.

Director O’Brien stated she likes the idea of relocating the track to the City property. The Equestrian Center could be a backup plan but we have not spoken to the equestrian people. It would be great if the City is on board for this project.

Vice Chair Freeman thanked everyone for attending the meeting. She is committed to the program. She and City Council member Becerra texted and they found the City property. There are two willing agencies to make this work. She also spoke with Brian Gabler at the City of Simi Valley; the City is more than willing to work with the District. Out of all the options, this is the best way to go. She lived near the Equestrian Center, the park is very active and the equestrian people have limited options.

Chair Johnson said the District has been looking for a location for two years. There are issues with every site that was reviewed. The District won’t give up on BMX. The City property just came up a week ago, he likes the idea. He said Mayor Pro Tem Glen Becerra is present, he is a friend of the Park District and invited him to speak.

Mayor Pro Tem Becerra thanked the Chair for the opportunity to speak and for his comments. He thanked the BMX group for also attending the City Council meeting. He said Rancho Simi is a great Park District and is a great asset in Simi Valley. The Board does a phenomenal job; he appreciates the Board giving the City the opportunity to help. This will work. The City had to get behind it, he asked everyone to give them some time for this idea to be developed as we are going to work on this together.

Vice Chair Freeman stated there will be a hearing for the development project proposed at the Sycamore Drive location in May or June, it will take them a good
year to work through the process. As District Manager Peterson said, the District will likely be able to use the current BMX location on a month to month basis for a good portion of that time. She also thanked Chris for the time spent on the subject.

Director O’Brien encouraged the BMX group to start fundraising.

Vice Chair Freeman moved to proceed with the land lease option and work with the City regarding the relocation of the BMX track to the City owned property. Director Hostetler seconded the motion. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

The Chair called a recess at 8:03 p.m. and resumed the meeting at 8:11 p.m.

b. Approval of Contract with SCI Consulting Group for Professional Consulting, Engineer of Work and Levy Administration Services for the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Maintenance and Improvement District for Fiscal Years 2018-19 to 2020-21 – District Manager Peterson presented the staff report. Director Hostetler moved to approve the staff recommendation. Vice Chair Freeman seconded the motion. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

c. Approval of First Amendment and Second Amendment to Agreement for Purchase and Sale of Real Estate, an Approximate 213.43 Acre Parcel in the Simi Hills Referred to as the Joncich Parcel – Legal Counsel Pierik presented the staff report and provided the Board with an update on the Joncich property. Director Hostetler moved to approve the recommendation. Director O’Brien seconded the motion. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

d. Approval of Resolution Accepting an Access and Trail Easement Deed for Multipurpose Public Recreation Trail Purposes from The Joncich Family Trust and The Catarina Grace-Hardy Trust for Property Located in the Simi Hills South of Santa Susana Park – Legal Counsel Pierik presented the staff report. Director O’Brien moved to approve resolution 1947. Director Hostetler seconded the motion. The motion carried with the following role call vote:

Ayes: Directors Abele, Freeman, Hostetler, Johnson and O’Brien
Noes:
Absent:
Abstain:

e. Approval of Resolution Accepting a Grant Deed from W.G. Realty II L.L.C. Formerly Known as WG Realty L.L.C., the Joncich Family Trust and The Catarina Grace Hardy Trust Conveying to Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District a 213.43 Acre Parcel of Property Commonly Referred to as the Joncich Parcel Located in the Simi Hills South of Santa Susana Park – Legal Counsel Pierik presented the staff report. Director Freeman moved to approve resolution 1948. Director Hostetler seconded the motion. The motion carried with the following role call vote:
Ayes: Directors Abele, Freeman, Hostetler, Johnson and O’Brien
Noes:
Absent:
Abstain:

f. Consideration and Possible Approval of Expense Reductions in Response to Oak Park Unified School District’s Creation of a Before and After School Club Program on its Elementary and Middle School Campuses – District Manager Peterson presented the staff report and reported the District runs three Before and After School Club programs on school campuses in Oak Park; and stated that the school district has indicated it will not allow the Park District to stay on the campuses next school year and compete with their program. This is a loss to the Park District and will impact 60-70 positions and require some tough decisions to bring the budget in line in terms of operational expenses. He explained the revenues and expenses associated with the sites, and also explained the fact that a considerable amount of District resources are required to operate the programs beyond the specific site costs. Peterson reported the District got involved in maintaining the Simi Valley School District fields during a time that the School District’s financial resources were strained in order to elevate the field maintenance level for the user groups. The undertaking was not without obstacles and substantial costs, and although the field conditions were improved upon the District must now focus its limited resources on its own facilities.

Director Freeman inquired about the timing of the agreement with the school district and stated the Soccer Foundation needs to be notified.

Peterson responded that the agreement between the two agencies requires a 30-day notice be given before July 1 and that the Soccer Foundation will be notified at their next meeting.

Peterson stated the Senior Park Ranger is on medical leave and therefore the ranger staffing is currently at a lower level. At times, there are four rangers on duty, most are retired police officers with limited availability. When the rangers are seen in District parks they are helping to deter crime and increasing the feeling of park safety. Simi Valley Police Department is the primary law enforcement agency in Simi Valley but he recognized that the survey conducted in connection with the maintenance assessment showed the public places a high priority on safety in parks. Peterson stated that a reduction in park ranger funding would lead to a reduction in park ranger coverage but that a restructuring of the program could reduce the impact a bit. The District has been successfully using an outside security company to cover facility rentals and this direction will save the permit holder money.

Director Abele stated budget cuts are necessary and the method Larry used makes a lot of sense. He is largely in favor of the changes. The Oak Park School District may not have handled this in the best manner possible, and a lot of blame is being
unfairly thrown their way. He suggested the reason it happened was due to the need for revenue. The reason we got to this point is due to people being over taxed. Oak Park chose not to pass the school bond, so the school district did something about it; they are reacting. The over taxation, bonds and assessments is where the blame belongs. He commends the District Manager and staff but strongly opposes the reduction in ranger coverage. The number one concern in any public agency is safety. Regarding recommendation #18 and the Board meetings in Oak Park, Abele stated the Oak Park Committee Meetings are what make the members feel involved and rather than move towards the elimination of the committee and increase the number of board meetings, leave the board meetings at twice a year and the committee meetings at four times a year. He sees the passion of the community in these meetings. It is their opportunity for community involvement. In regards to item #3, in light of Larry’s decision, and within a month of losing a Director, Larry knows the personnel best, however, the new person coming in should have a say in who is working nearest to him in light of how close the departures are, the Director of Recreation should be chosen by the new District Manager. It is the fairest way to go. The issue at this point is who should be making that decision.

Director Hostetler stated the community voted for ranger coverage during the assessment. If we lose a part-time ranger, don’t fill the vacancy. The current District Manager should decide on the new Director of Recreation, he knows best, the new guy won’t be up and running until July or August. The people in charge know best and they should evaluate what is best for the District.

Director O’Brien concurs with putting off the reduction of the ranger program and inquired if the Mae Boyer building upgrade is on hold. Peterson stated the recommendation is that it be placed on hold.

Vice Chair Freeman does not see the connection with the Oak Park Committee and would not go along with the elimination of the committee. She is ok with four Board meetings in Oak Park per year.

Director Hostetler suggested the committee meetings could be reduced from four times to three times per year.

District Manager Peterson reported the MAC meets ten times per year and the Oak Park Committee meets four times per year.

Vice Chair Freeman suggested staff notify the City Manager, City Council and School District of the cut backs in maintaining the School District fields. She suggested more ranger coverage on the weekends and less coverage on weekdays.

Director Abele asked the District Manager and staff to make up the loss in other areas, rather than reduce ranger coverage.
Chair Johnson stated the current staff has very good leadership and can make the best decision for the Director of Recreation. They will wait to hear about the return of the Senior Park Ranger.

Director Hostetler moved to approve staff recommendation with the exception to the changes in the ranger program. Director Abele stated no cuts in the ranger program and to take out item #13. He also stated he does not see the need to increase the Board meetings in Oak Park from two to four per year. He also thinks it is a serious mistake to have the current District Manager fill the Director of Recreation position. Vice Chair Freeman stated that four Board Members want the current District Manager to fill the Director of Recreation position. Vice Chair Freeman seconded the motion. Director Abele indicated he would vote in favor of the motion, but with reservation about the recommendations as to item #13 regarding Oak Park meetings and item #3 regarding the manner in which the Director of Recreation position is filled. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

District Manager Peterson clarified the ranger coverage and asked if it is based on dollars paid or hours worked. Staff has discontent with the ranger program and it may be possible to increase the effectiveness of the program by bringing in a full-time employee however the cost of the program would increase and the number of coverage hours would decrease by going that direction. Director Abele clarified that there should not be a decrease in coverage hours.

g. Notice of District Manager’s Resignation from the District Effective May 31, 2018 – District Manager Peterson presented the staff report and responded to questions from the Board. Vice Chair Freeman asked if the District would be through the budget process by May 31. Peterson confirmed that most of it will be done during the budget workshop. He stated four or five years have passed since his first resignation and a lot has been accomplished since that time. He has memorialized the accomplishments of the District in the staff report. There is always a lot going on at the District, it is close to closing the Sycamore Drive sale and moving to its new offices. Carpet will be completed next week and furniture will be assembled and installed on March 9.

Vice Chair Freeman said she is happy for District Manager Peterson.

Peterson stated he will do what he can to facilitate the transition.

h. Approval of Process to Retain District Manager – District Manager Peterson presented the staff report. He said there is no reason to incur the expenditure of a recruiter. The Board can review the applications and interview candidates after HR posts the opportunity on the various websites.

Vice Chair Freeman stated she is more comfortable going outside for the recruitment.
Director Abele stated he is 100% in agreement.

Chair Johnson said the recruiter won’t look for what we want. He wants input from staff on the decision, they work with the District Manager and should have some input. The Board should review the top four candidates.

Director Abele stated it is a huge decision and an outside firm should be used. He could say things both ways regarding staff’s input. A qualified person who is enthusiastic about meeting the needs of the District is needed. The District won’t get the best candidates if the District conducts the recruitment.

Director Hostetler stated sometimes the recruiter doesn’t get everything. Staff can post the position on the internet and in newspapers. Guidelines will need to be given to the recruiter.

Chair Johnson requested input from Legal Counsel.

Legal Counsel Pierik stated most of the time a recruiter is used for this position, they do the first cut and narrow down for the Board’s review. It doesn’t make sense to interview twelve candidates, they should narrow it down to the top five.

District Manager Peterson stated he has not been impressed with the approach.

Director Abele moved to direct staff to locate a search firm to help choose the next District Manager and present a couple of options to the Board. Vice Chair Freeman seconded the motion. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

9. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS OF NOTE - NONE

10. REPORTS BY BOARD MEMBERS

Director O’Brien attended the Simiopolis fundraiser for Strathearn Historical Park which she said was cool. She also attended the VCSDA awards dinner; the food was fine and Sheriff Geoff Dean who is retiring was the guest speaker. She attended both the fundraiser and awards dinner with Vice Chair Freeman. She also attended the Community Action of Ventura County meeting.

Director Abele visited the BMX track. He also attended the Special Events Committee Meeting; the 4th of July event was discussed, as well as the Rotary beer festival event, the details are being worked out. A request from the Welcome Home Foundation was reviewed; they have since withdrawn their request.

Director Hostetler attended the Special Events Committee Meeting.
Vice Chair Freeman attended the Simiopolis fundraiser and VCSDA awards dinner. Simiopolis was a great success, there was a good band and people she hadn’t seen for a while in attendance. She also reported there is a faucet at Chumash that is not working.

Chair Johnson had no meetings to report.

11. REPORT BY DISTRICT MANAGER

Director of Recreation Gale notified the Board that opening day of girls’ softball is February 25. He will follow up with an e-mail to determine the Board’s availability. Golf Course Manager Reed notified the Board of the ribbon cutting ceremony at the new bar at the Simi Hills Club House on March 14, 2018 at 5:30 p.m. A formal invitation will be sent.

Director Freeman announced she will not be at the next Board Meeting.

Chair Johnson announced the Closed Session at 9:30 pm.

Chair Johnson announced the return to open session at 9:40 pm.

12. CLOSED SESSION

a. 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

b. 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

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

Negotiating Parties: Area Housing Authority/USA Properties

Under Negotiation: Price and Terms of Payment

c. Closed Session Pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.8

Conference with Real Property Negotiator

Re: Land Disposition: Property Located in Ventura County East and North East Adjacent to Sage Ranch

Assessor Parcel Numbers: 646-0-170-040 649-0-010-415

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

Negotiating Parties: Mark Joncich

Under Negotiation: Price and Terms of Payment

There was no reportable action as to closed session items a., b. and c.

13. ADJOURNMENT – Director Hosteler moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:41 pm. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

Larry Peterson, District Clerk