Rancho Simi Recreation & Park District
Oak Park – Park & Recreation Planning Committee
Joint Meeting
MINUTES
October 3, 2019 6:30 p.m.
Oak Park Community Center & Gardens
1000 North Kanan Road, Oak Park, CA 91377 • (818) 865-9304 • www.rsrpd.org

1. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Chair Freeman called the
meeting to order at 6:32pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by James Ebert.

2. ROLL CALL

   a. Board of Directors (BOD) – Director Dennert, Johnson, O’Brien, Vice Chair Abele,
   and Chair Freeman were in attendance.

   b. Oak Park – Park & Recreation Planning Committee (OPPC) – Member Cass-
   Barton, Ebert, Medved, Smets [MAC Appointee], Ross [OPUSD], and Chair Watts
   were in Attendance. Vice-Chair Wentworth arrived at 6:45pm.

   Staff in Attendance included: Sandee Covone, Tracy Engel, Legal Counsel Greg
   Murphy, Wayne Nakaoka, Dan Paranick, Theresa Pennington, Gina Viecco, and
   Lisa Weagley.

   Guests in attendance included Ron Stark, Linda Niebergall, Erik Cass, Michelle
   and Tristan Cass, Janet Wall, Amy, Kevin, and Derek Kobayashi, Debbie Sharpton,
   Trevor Julian, Rachel Gannam, and Arthur Alday. Guests who completed Speaker
   Cards are listed under the appropriate item below.

3. AGENDA REVIEW – District Manager Paranick stated there is a supplemental letter for
item 9.c which was received after the Agenda had been finalized. Item 9.g is a Board of
Directors item and should have (BOD) listed after the topic.

4. PUBLIC STATEMENTS (ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA) – Oak Park resident Ron
Stark would like to know what the Board is doing about adding a representative from Oak
Park to the RSRPD Board of Directors.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

   a. Special Meeting September 18, 2019 (BOD) – Chair Freeman noted under the
   Reports from Board Members, Vice Chair Abele reported on the meeting with
   County Supervisor Parks. Chair Freeman made comments about the meeting after
   Abele had reported it.

   Motion: Vice Chair Abele moved to approve the Minutes as amended. Director
   O’Brien seconded the motion. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.
b. Committee Meeting July 11, 2019 (OPPC) – Member Ross moved to approve the Minutes as written. Member Cass-Barton seconded the motion. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

6. SCHEDULED ITEMS AND PUBLIC HEARINGS - NONE

7. CONSENT AGENDA (Matters listed under the Consent Agenda are considered routine and shall be acted upon without discussion by one motion approving the Consent Agenda. If discussion is desired the item may be removed from the Consent Agenda upon a Director’s request.)

   a. 9/15/19 Accounts Payable Check Register, 9/13/19 Payroll Check Register (BOD) – There were no questions from the Board.

   b. Approval of Notice of Completion and Final Acceptance for Eagle View Park Play Area Equipment Replacement Project (BOD) – There were no questions from the Board.

Motion: Director Johnson moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Vice Chair Abele seconded the motion. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

8. CONTINUED BUSINESS – NONE

9. NEW BUSINESS


Director Dennert asked how much of the Trails in Simi Valley does the Trailblazers Organization maintain and if there is a similar group in Oak Park. Nakaoka responded approximately 50% in Simi Valley and there currently is not a similar group in Oak Park. Dennert offered to connect interested Oak Park residents with the Trailblazers. Oak Park Committee Members Medved and Ross would be happy to work with Dennert and suggested posting in the Acorn for volunteers. District Manager Paranick added the District has a volunteer coordinator to assist as well.

Dennert also inquired how open space areas are fenced. Nakaoka responded currently with fencing using older telephone poles and cable. The items are no longer available, in the future he suggests replacing with a plastic or concrete type fencing. Member Medved would like this to be agenized for a future meeting, as he feels the current fencing is considered somewhat historic in Oak Park.

Oak Park Committee Member Medved thanked Nakaoka and the Oak Park Maintenance Crew for the assistant with repairs, especially the jagged poles in the trail areas.

c. Discussion Regarding Oak Canyon Community Park Lagoon Rehabilitation Project and Scheduling of Oak Park Committee Special Meeting (OPPC) – Report was provided by Wayne Nakaoka, Director of Planning and Maintenance. The District received a letter from the Conejo Oak Tree Advocates requesting the preservation of a heritage Valley Oak adjacent to the Lagoon. Nakaoka presented three possible strategies available for this project: Online Pond Concept which was the original design of the Lagoon, Bypass Pond which would separate the Lagoon and the Creek, or Wetlands Conversion. By removing the Lagoon's infrastructure this would allow it to gradually change into a wetland habitat. Nakaoka is not recommending any of the options, that will be up to the Oak Park Committee to recommend to the Board. There are several protected species in this area including: animals, birds and plants. Any work performed will require a Biological Resource Study and a Protected Tree Report. Staff recommends referring this topic to a special meeting with the Oak Park Committee to allow additional input from the community and to select a concept to recommend to the Board of Directors.

Oak Park resident Debbie Sharpton thanked the Board and appreciates Paranick’s approach with this project. She feels the assessments need to be done for all three options. This way if the environmental issues with one option are too great, another option can be easily selected.

Vice Chair Abele asked if Staff will be able to provide this information before the decision on which of the three options is made. Paranick stated it seems that a bigger visionary decision needs to be made before getting into the specifics and costs of the project. Nakaoka added the Biological Assessment should be the first step and can be done for all three options. Abele asked when proposals are being made, if there are any possible pitfalls that could be translated to the Committee at the upcoming meeting. Nakaoka responded yes, that can be done.

Oak Park resident Ron Stark suggested money should be put into a solution that would prevent this from happening again in the future.

Janet Wall from Conejo Oak Tree Advocates just visited the Oak Canyon Park for the first time this week. It appears the fire undermined the roots of a Heritage Oak adjacent to the Lagoon and they would like this tree preserved. She added this is a very special park, the community is lucky to have it.

Oak Park resident Jana Orkney is glad to see things moving along. She added her support to Nakaoka’s comments that a biological study is needed before moving ahead. She also supported the preservation of the Heritage Oak Tree. Medea Creek is all silted up, she is wanting to know what happens if there are heavy rains, would that cause the park flooding. She also feels it would be a shame to remove the entire waterfall system from the Lagoon. She suggested a possible fourth option: allow the Lagoon to transition to a wetland but keep the waterfall.
Oak Park Board Member Smets submitted written comments to the Board and her fellow Committee Members. Member Medved requested that Smets please not read an entire script, please summarize and assume everyone has already read this.

Paranick asked if Smets is speaking as a Member of the Committee or as a Community member. Legal Counsel stated the proper time for Smets to provide these comments would be during the Committee Member Comments section of the meeting.

Motion: Oak Park Committee Member Ross moved for a Special Meeting to be held on Nov. 14, 2019. Member Medved seconded the motion. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

d. Report on the Oak Park Recreation Programs (OPPC) — the staff report was presented by Lisa Weagley, Oak Park Recreation Supervisor. District Manager Dan Paranick introduced Weagley, she will be taking over for Renee Peace. He also announced that Dave Demaio will be moving to the Simi Valley location and Jeannie Liss will be taking over Demaio. Paranick added Lisa and Jeannie will serve the Oak Park Community well.

Weagley reported there has been an increase in Pre-School registrations and staff is looking at increasing the activity offerings in Oak Park. The annual Halloween Carnival is this Month, staff is planning on expanding on the Carnival this year. Weagley also met with Dr. Knight, Superintendent from the Oak Park School District and they are currently looking at opportunities to work together. Director Dennert suggested the option of using the Middle School Courts for Pickleball. Paranick and Weagley will follow up on this suggestion.

Paranick added the District is currently looking for new tables and chairs for the Mae Boyar building, this will provide additional meeting space in Oak Park.

At this time Legal Counsel reminded everyone of the speaking order during the meeting. First present the Staff Report, then allow public comments, the Board should not make any comments until all the public comments have been heard.

e. Items Requested by Committee Members to be Added to the Agenda: Review of Use of Bicycles at Indian Springs Park - Oral Report (OPPC) – Report by Carolyn Cass-Barton, member of the Oak Park Committee. Cass-Barton never realized there was an issue with bike riding in the parks. She is advocating allowing bike riding only at Indian Springs Park. She would like to see the “No Bike Riding” rule removed for the park signs. There was a toddler injured by a bike at this park, she is wondering how well the child who was injured was being supervised.

Oak Park resident Tristan Cass gets to school by riding his bike through Indian Springs Park, he feels this is the perfect place to ride bikes. He was approached by a Park Ranger who showed him the sign with the no bike riding rule.

Derek Kobayashi attends 4th grade in Oak Park. His friend was stopped by a Park Ranger and told not to ride his bike. He feels the safest way to get to school is riding his bike.
Oak Park resident Avery Julian feels bikes are fun and the park is the best place to ride them.

Oak Park resident Kevin Kobayashi stated it is not safe for children to ride bikes on the streets. He has seen too many accidents involving cars and bike riders. He feels both bike riding and skateboarding should be allowed in the park. He added parents should be responsible for safety of their children.

Oak Park residents Michelle Cass and Amy Kobayashi prepared a PowerPoint presentation. As a resident, parent, and teacher in Oak Park, Cass would like to have bike riding allowed at Indian Springs Park. She lives by this park and her 4 children learned to ride bikes there. There is also a path that leads to Red Oak Elementary, making it convenient for children to get to school. There are many positives, including exercise and children wanting to go outside. She would like the rules changed to allow bike riding and add a rule at the tot-lot to require parent supervision. She wonders how well the toddler that was injured was being supervised.

Trevor Julian, a longtime Oak Park resident has always taken his children to this park to ride bikes. He is sympathetic to the toddler that was hurt, but feels parents should be vigilant about supervising their children. There are not too many places for children to go outside. He feels there will be no issues with skateboarding either.

Tim and Riley Hennessy completed Speaker Cards but they were not present when their names were called.

Cass-Barton agrees parks are the best place for the children to be. She doesn’t feel the District should be over reacting to one incident of an injury, to her knowledge there have not been other issues. She suggested possibly putting fencing near the tot-lot.

Oak Park Committee member Ross added he also taught his children to ride bikes at this park. As a School District they were not aware the no bike riding rule existed and had encouraged children to ride their bikes to school.

Paranick stated generally bike riding and skateboarding are difficult issue in parks. The District is not actively telling people not to ride bikes; it has been more of a reactive rule up to this point. He suggested this item be brought back in January at the next Oak Park Committee Meeting.

Oak Park Committee Member Smets would like to have bike riding but is concerned about allowing skateboarders.

Dennert and Abele both feel the fair decision would be to evaluate allowing bike and skateboard use.

Cass-Barton stated the request is for bike riding only, they are not requesting skateboarding be allowed in the park.
Paranick responded this issue still needs to be evaluated including checking with the District insurance carrier.

Johnson recounted how a group of 15 or more teenagers tore up this park on bikes after a rain storm in 2014, causing around $30K in damages. The Oak Park community was in an uproar about this and demanded the no bike riding rule.

Medved suggested if bike riding is allowed, then add some additional verbiage regarding activities that could cause damages.

Ross requested the Park Rangers not approach any children riding bikes in the park until a decision has been made.

Motion: Member Medved moved to bring this item back to the Committee and Board to re-evaluate the option of allowing bike riding at Indian Springs; allowing time for staff to check safety and insurance concerns. This would include skateboarding as well as bike riding, as requested by Vice Chair Abele. Member Ross seconded the motion. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

f. Authorization to Solicit Bids for The Oak Canyon Community Park Tot Lot Replacement and Playground Resurfacing Project (BOD) — Staff report was presented by Wayne Nakaoka, Director of Planning and Maintenance. This project had previously been delayed due to the Woolsey Fire recovery efforts. This lot will be adjacent to the Splash Pad.

Oak Park Committee Vice Chair Wentworth asked if the funds for the Tot Lot were already set aside and if this would affect staff resources. Nakaoka responded this project does not take funds from any other project and District Staff will not be involved in the building of the lot.

Dennert asked if the color of the equipment changes the cost and if there is a grass area between the play areas. Nakaoka responded no to both items.

Director Johnson asked what type of swings are being used. Nakaoka responded it is a play area for toddlers, therefore, bucket swings.

Oak Park Committee Member Cass-Barton is very concerned about the situation at Mae Boyar park with the tree and playground. She would like to see the District consider using this funding at Mae Boyar instead.

Motion: Vice Chair Abele moved to approve the authorization to solicit bids for the Tot Lot at Oak Canyon Community Park. Director O’Brien seconded the motion. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

g. Discussion and Direction Regarding Policy Manual Chapter 12 - Facility Use, Fees and Conditions; Prohibited Rentals, To Include Political Activity on District Property (BOD) — Staff report was presented by Dan Paranick, District Manager. There have been several requests made recently involving signature gathering and political rally type events, Paranick would like the Board to discuss the policy.
Legal Counsel stated parks are considered public gathering places, there are very few limitations to what events can be limited in outside areas. Signature gathering and political gatherings should be treated as any other event and would need to follow the park rules and District permitting process. Signature gatherers can be excluded from being in the area of an event that has been reserved.

Paranick added that the policy allows the District Manager discretion for events.

Abele asked what type of activity has been requested and where. Paranick responded at Rancho Santa Susanna Community Center for signature gathering and a political rally. Abele asked if there is any difference between these events. Legal Counsel responded signature gathering can be done without permitting if they are walking around and approaching people. If they want to setup a table, it would have to be approved by the District Manager. A rally will have to comply with all park rules, fees and permits.

Director Abele suggests a statement be posted in the parks to make it clear that the District does not endorse these types of events. He appreciates how Paranick has handled this issue by bringing it to the attention of the Board. Abele added he feels this policy is antiquated, outdated, and the wording is questionable. He is requesting this policy be reviewed and updated sooner rather than later. Abele requested input from Legal Counsel regarding the wording of this policy. Counsel was not part of drafting this policy but has seen similar policies. He does agree it could use rewording. Abele would like this item to be added to an Agenda in the future to re-evaluate and update.

Chair Freeman feels allowing the District Manager to make a final decision allows the Board to remain neutral and not bring in any personal opinions.

Legal Counsel agreed a permanent sign for non-endorsement of any event or signature gathering in park locations would be a good decision.

Paranick suggested signage be placed in a few key locations to start, allowing District staff to draft the verbiage so signs can be placed sooner rather than later.

Motion: Vice Chair Abele moved to have signage placed in community parks stating the District does not endorse statements made by different groups using the park grounds. Wording and placement will be at the discretion of the District Manager. Director O'Brien seconded the motion. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

10. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS OF NOTE

a. Board of Directors – Paranick reported the District has received 3 or 4 emails from residents with concerns about the proposed Cell Tower at Churchwood.

b. Oak Park – Park & Recreation Planning Committee – None

11. REPORTS BY MEMBERS / COMMITTEE
a. Board of Directors - Comments

Director Dennert attended Junk in Trunk, it was a great event and great job by the District, he suggested having a section just for children at the next one. He attended a High School Band event. He invited anyone who would like to speak at the Schools to contact him, Vice Chair Abele will be speaking soon. He added Park Rangers are happy to provide ranger stickers to children at the parks and suggested the District could look at possible events with Rangers and the community.

Director Johnson had the Santa Monica Conservancy, he reported Jerry Daniels will sadly be leaving due to a medical issue.

Director O'Brien attended the CSDA Conference with Chair Freeman. It was great and she attended several breakout sessions including fire suppression and funding options, ethics training, communication, and a round table brain storming event. The Barn Dance at Strathearn was great fun. She reported a local model airplane group is looking for a place to fly their planes in the Park District. Paranick responded he will be happy to explore this with staff. O'Brien stated it appears several recent bids for projects have come back high. Paranick responded there could be several reasons this, Staff will investigate how to make better estimates. O'Brien added at the last meeting in Oak Park there was discussion about fundraising efforts, she was wondering if any progress had been made. Oak Park Committee Member Smets responded she met with Paranick because she sees so many good marketing opportunities in Oak Park, but she feels the Lagoon will need to be fixed before they can make any money.

Vice Chair Abele stated that he attended the Barn Dance at Strathearn Park with Chair Freeman and Director O'Brien honoring the 50th anniversary of the City of Simi Valley. He attended the Simi Valley Community Senior Games Opening Ceremony; he feels this is such a great event for the community.

Chair Freeman attended the CSDA Conference including several breakout sessions. She enjoyed the Barn Dance, adding she knew every County Supervisor and City Council person in attendance. The Senior Games is such a great event, the senior community is very active in Simi Valley. She also attended VCSDA with Director O'Brien, they visited the Calleguas Water District's pump station in Moorpark. This is a huge facility and they have generators capable of pumping water to the area if the power is off. She reported on the numerous State Legislative Bills the Special Districts followed over the last year.

b. Oak Park - Park & Recreation Planning Committee - Comments

Member Cass-Barton is concerned about removal of trees at Mae Boyer Park playground. She feels one tree in question, a 50-year-old Shamel Ash, is iconic and needs to be preserved. She feels the rubberized playground padding is contributing to the problem with the tree roots. She is requesting more time to look at other options before removing the tree and have an arborist evaluate the tree. Paranick responded an arborist has already evaluated the tree. Due to the hazards, the only options are to remove or redesign the playground or remove the tree. Cass-Barton questioned if the playground can be reconfigured. Paranick responded removing
play structures is costly, there are 4 structures, so moving even 3 structures of the playground will be very expensive. The playground will have to be shut down for a long period of time if the tree is not removed. Legal Counsel stated if the Committee would like this topic brought to the Board for further evaluation then they need to vote to have this item agendized.

Motion: Member Cass-Barton moved to have the situation at Mae Boyar Park with the Shamel Ash tree and playground be placed on an upcoming Committee Meeting Agenda for further evaluation. Member Smets seconded the motion. The motion carried with 4 yes votes from Cass-Barton, Ebert, Smets, and Ross. Medved, Watts, and Wentworth abstained from the vote.

Member Smets provided written notes and comments to the Board and Committee members, she felt there were too many details for her to summarize. Paranick commented on key items from her notes as follows: The District has joined the lawsuit against SCE with Baron & Budd Law Firm, the case has been filed with the Courts. This lawsuit has no relation to thoughts of Oak Park joining the Conejo District, these two items are not related. Smets added this lawsuit is transferable if Oak Park moves to the Conejo District. Paranick stated the Special Meeting on September 18, 2019 was not a joint meeting, it was a regular Board of Directors Meeting, all members of the Oak Park Committee are always welcome to attend regular Board meetings. Paranick, Freeman, and Abele attended a meeting with Supervisor Parks during which she shared her idea of the possibility of Oak Park joining the Conejo District, there is no plan to move forward at this time. Freeman added the meeting with Parks was to look at the pros and cons of her idea, there is no plan to take any action at this time. Legal Counsel stated it is not appropriate to continue the discussion at this time until there is a proposal to consider from Supervisor Parks.

Smets reported MAC is looking into adopting the Thousand Oaks Landscaping Forestry plan. She would like to see Oak Park join the Forestry plan being used by Thousand Oaks. Paranick responded the District cares about all trees both in Simi Valley and Oak Park. All ordinances and laws are followed, the District actively works towards the preservation of the trees and open space.

Director Dennert requested more information regarding the Forestry Plan. Paranick will have District staff send the information to the Board.

Member Ebert had no further items to report.

Member Medved had no further items to report.

Vice Chair Wentworth had no further items to report.

Chair Watts had no further items to report.

Freeman added the planned story regarding an update on the fire recovery that was supposed to run in The Acorn has been delayed due the fact the reporter is no longer with the Acorn. The District is working to get the information to the Oak Park residents.
Member Ross offered to have the Oak Park School District provide information to their families. He has been on the committee for over a decade now. The community is very concerned with the preservation of the trees in the area. Oak Park hired a company to survey all the trees in the area. He thanked the District for working with the Community especially with the tree preservation efforts.

12. REPORT BY DISTRICT MANAGER – Comments were provided by Dan Paranick. He attended the monthly Veterans Group meeting with Christy Smith. The Grant for Arroyo Simi Phase 4 has been written and will be submitted October 11th. The organizer of the recent Glow Event is interested in working more regularly with the District. Senior Games Opening Ceremonies were awesome, it is a great event, thanks to staff for all the hard work. There have been several meetings with the Baron & Budd Law firm and District Legal Counsel. Paranick attended the MAC meeting with several District staff members. He met with the Mayor and a new group that is interested in taking on the 4th of July Event in 2020. Leadership Day is tomorrow, Paranick will be speaking in the morning if anyone is interested in attending. Paranick will be meeting with Jim Friedl, General Manager of the Conejo District to discuss Supervisor Parks idea regarding the Oak Park area. There is an upcoming Tri-Agency Liaison meeting with the District, City of Simi Valley and the Simi Valley Unified School District.

Upcoming Events: Busy Hands Gardening Event Wed. October 9th at 10am, Youth Triathlon on October 13th at Rancho Simi Pool, and two big Halloween Events for Simi Valley and Oak Park on October 31st.

Future Agenda items: Next Board of Directors meeting will be on October 17th. Some topics include adopting the Budget, Fees regarding Volleyball, and the Strathearn Caretaker agreement.

Committee Activity: there are currently no requested committee meetings and the next Historical Society Meeting has been cancelled.

13. CLOSED SESSION – NONE

14. ADJOURNMENT

a. Board of Directors – Director Johnson moved to adjourn the meeting. Director O’Brien seconded the motion. Chair Freeman adjourned the Board of Directors Meeting at 10:08pm.

b. Oak Park – Park & Recreation Planning Committee – Member Ross moved to adjourn the meeting. Vice Chair Wentworth seconded the motion. Chair Watts adjourned the Oak Park Planning Committee Meeting at 10:09pm.

Dan Paranick, District Clerk