

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE
TORRANCE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance Parks and Recreation Commission convened in a regular session at 7:02 p.m. on Wednesday, June 10, 2009, in the West Annex meeting room at Torrance City Hall.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Cook, Gilbert, Hazell, Robbins, Ning*,
Taniguchi, and Chairperson Orpe.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Community Services Director Jones,
Recreation Services Manager Brunette, and
Senior Business Manager Minter.

*Commissioner Ning arrived at 7:06 p.m.

3. FLAG SALUTE

Senior Business Manager Minter led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. AFFIDAVIT OF POSTING

MOTION: Commissioner Gilbert moved to accept and file the report of the City Clerk on the posting of the agenda for this meeting. Commissioner Taniguchi seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

5A. MINUTES OF MAY 13, 2009

MOTION: Commissioner Robbins moved for approval of the May 13, 2009 Commission meeting minutes as submitted. Commissioner Taniguchi seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

6. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #1

Christine Wolf, West 191st Street, presented a proposal for dog courts in City parks and requested that an item be placed on next month's meeting agenda. She stated that a dog court is an alternative to a dog park and would provide a recreational outlet as well as health and safety benefits. She noted that a dog court is similar in size to a basketball court, with a chain link fence, bark or sand surface, for no more than two dogs at a time for a game of ball, and with a 15 minute time limit if someone is waiting.

In response to Commissioner Robbins' inquiry, she stated that there are currently no official dog courts in the South Bay; however, Entradero Park is used after-hours in an unofficial capacity.

Commissioners indicated unanimous consensus to bring the item forward to the August 12, 2009 Commission meeting.

Senior Business Manager Minter introduced summer intern Justin and his friend Bri.

7. OLD BUSINESS

7A. STATUS OF WILSON PARK POND RESTORATION PROJECT

Community Services Director Jones reported that City Council approved contracts for improvements to Wilson Park Pond on June 2, 2009. He stated that the three-day process to remove the remaining sludge, rocks, and debris should begin on June 17, 2009 and that he remains hopeful that the restoration project will be complete by July 4th. He noted that the chemical used to clean the pond will not be healthy for wildlife and that installation of appropriate signage is planned.

7B. WILSON SKATE PARK UPDATE

Recreation Services Manager Brunette reported that all Wilson Park skate elements and ramps have been demolished and removed. He stated that staff has been researching options for public and private partnerships as well as funding opportunities and has concluded that the option of partnering with a company to build, operate, and manage the Skate Park at their expense is most likely not a viable option. He recommended continuing to work with the Skate Park Committee and to move forward with a Request for Proposal to design and identify potential costs for a new Skate Park.

Responding to Commissioner Gilbert's inquiries, he stated that the old Skate Park was 20,000 square feet and that an estimate for a new Skate Park is not included in the 2009-2011 budget.

7C. BUDGET UPDATE

Senior Business Manager Minter summarized the June 9, 2009 Budget Workshop and noted that a Budget Message with explanations as to the types of adjustments and revisions are included in Attachment A. He reported that the Department was asked to look for ways to increase fees and that recommended fee adjustments and new fees are listed in Attachment B for presentation to the Finance Director on June 11, 2009.

In response to Commissioner Hazell's inquiry, staff stated that approximately 8,000 out of 30,000 participants last year were non-residents. When he suggested considering an annual membership fee for non-residents, staff explained the many benefits that non-residents provide, adding that many non-residents work in the City and are contributing members of the community.

Commissioner Robbins stated that there needs to be a full thought-out process of how fees are charged and that three weeks is not enough time to do a fee analysis.

Senior Business Manager Minter pointed out that Parks and Recreation is not 100% cost recovery and that subsidies are currently being reviewed.

Commissioner Ning related his observation that Parks and Recreation programs are price-competitive compared to private programs. He stated that Torrance is a fairly affluent City and questioned how price-sensitive the audience is.

Senior Business Manager Minter stated that programs are reasonable and, although the City is affluent, there are some residents who cannot afford them and fee increases would be problematic, adding that increasing the scholarship program is a consideration.

Recreation Services Manager Brunette asserted that fees could be raised for some programs but not for others based on income of participants. He stated that fees for beginner classes generally cost less than more advanced classes and discussed how the "pay to play" concept has evolved over the years.

Commissioner Ning maintained that there is a perception that private classes are higher quality than City-sponsored classes and in actuality this is not the case. He stated that it is possible to change that perception by raising fees. Using the analogy of Toyota and Lexus, he suggested offering programs for the general public and premium programs for more affluent residents and challenged staff to explore the idea.

Community Services Director Jones stressed the importance of taking a slow approach to conducting a careful analysis. He stated that over the years the City has supported subsidizing youth classes 60% and senior programs 40% and that staff is looking at similar municipalities and trying to evaluate what subsidies should be. He noted that their goal is to service the entire community and wants to commit to a market survey on a three-year cycle to determine if fees can be increased regardless of the economic climate.

Commissioner Taniguchi commended Councilmembers for offering to give back part of their travel allowance.

Responding to Chairperson Orpe's inquiry, he stated that the City has a 70/30 split with contractors in a City facility and that staff is exploring making it a different allowance if it is in their facility.

When Commissioner Hazell inquired if City facilities are being used to capacity, Community Services Director Jones explained the turf management plan to define maintenance practices and to determine what levels are given to different types of entities. He added that most park facilities are used by non-profit Torrance-based organizations.

Community Services Director Jones encouraged Commissioners to attend the June 23, 2009 Budget Hearing.

8. NEW BUSINESS

8A. JULY IS PARKS AND RECREATION MONTH PROCLAMATION

MOTION: Commissioner Robbins moved to recommend that City Council adopt the 2009 Proclamation to celebrate July as Parks and Recreation Month. Commissioner Taniguchi seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

9. STANDING COMMITTEE UPDATES

9A. FACILITIES COMMITTEE

Has not met.

9B. GRANTS COMMITTEE – GRANT PROGRAM

Commissioner Gilbert reported that Committee members have started monitoring the 20 organizations that received grants in February 2009. She provided an update on plans for the July 15, 2009 Awards Banquet “Take Me Out to the Ball Game.”

9C. OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

Has not met.

9D. PROGRAMS COMMITTEE

Has not met.

10. MONTHLY DEPARTMENT ACTIVITY

10A. ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DIVISION

Senior Business Manager Minter noted that the Administrative Services Division Report for May 2009 was included in agenda packets. He noted that the decrease in summer registrations this year as compared to the same period last year, adding that each area had deficiencies.

Community Services Director Jones related his observation that in this economic downturn people are saving their money and staying home, adding that free programs have been extremely well attended.

10B. PARK SERVICES DIVISION

Community Services Director Jones stated that Acting Park Services Manager Centofanti was unable to be here this evening but that the Park Services Division Report for May 2009 was included in supplemental materials.

10C. RECREATION SERVICES DIVISION

Recreation Services Manager Brunette noted that the Recreation Services Division Report for May 2009 was included in agenda packets. He reported that the June 7, 2009 City of Torrance Day at Dodger Stadium was very successful and announced the Environmental Fair at Madrona Marsh Preserve on June 13, 2009.

11. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC #2

11A. Commissioner Ning cautioned people to be wary of financial scams.

11B. Commissioner Hazell announced that the new parking structure at El Camino College is opening next week.

11C. Commissioner Gilbert stated that she enjoyed the Armed Forces Day parade, the soccer exhibition game, and Mike Wilson's retirement party. She announced Torrance Historical Society's Rock Around the Block on July 16, 2009.

11D. Commissioner Robbins stated that he attended the Armed Forces Day parade, the soccer exhibition game, Mike Wilson's retirement party, the City Yard Open House, and the Budget Workshop. He announced a Torrance Restaurant Group downtown street fair on August 30, 2009.

11E. Chairperson Orpe stated that he enjoyed the soccer event and Mike Wilson's retirement celebration and wished everyone a happy Fourth of July.

12. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At 8:17 p.m., Commissioner Hazell moved to adjourn the meeting to August 12, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. in the West Annex meeting room. Commissioner Ning seconded the motion and, hearing no objection, Chairperson Orpe so ordered.

Approved as Submitted August 12, 2009 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
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