



CITY OF RICHMOND
Recreation & Parks Commission
MINUTES

Wednesday, September 5, 2023, 6:00 PM
403 Civic Center Plaza (Bermuda Room)

This meeting is held in a building that is accessible to people with disabilities.

Board Members: Joey Smith, Chair; Aaron Rowden, Vice Chair; Allison Blakeley, Secretary; Vacant, Treasurer
Commissioners: Maryn Hurlbut, Catalin Kaser, Dani Lanis, Samantha Torres

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Meeting called to order by Chair Joey Smith at 6:06 pm

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Joey Smith, Allison Blakeley, Dani Lanis, Aaron Rowden, and Samantha Torres

ABSENT: Maryn Hurlbut (Excused), Catalin Kaser (Excused)

Chair Smith provided a brief overview of the meeting procedures and the Mission of the Recreation & Parks Commission.

AGENDA REVIEW

Motion by Commissioner Torres to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Vice Chair Rowden, and carried unanimously by a voice vote.

OPEN FORUM

Email from Cordell Hindler was introduced inviting all to the Council of Industries Shoreline Tour on October 6th at 1:00 pm at the Harbormaster's Building with RSVP by September 12th. Mr. Hindler again suggested having youth on the commission.

In addition, there were 67 emails received in support of pickleball that were sent to the commissioners prior to the meeting and placed on the City of Richmond website.

Darlene Rios Drapkin of Richmond and founder of the East Bay Pickleball Association (EBPA) shared the history of her organization and hoped to clarify their desire to simply have a place to play pickleball in Richmond; In addition, she shared they received a grant and was directed by the City to focus on pickleball at BTA to revitalize the area with pickleball after a fire. Despite the courts being in disrepair, they resurfaced the courts, added permanent nets and more through grants and donations and continued to expand the youth programs at schools and community centers. She stated they are proud that BTA courts are the first dedicated pickleball courts in West County. Further, Ms. Rios Drapkin is disappointed as this was supposed to be a sense of pride for the City of Richmond and not a point of conflict even though only a handful of people play tennis at BTA.

Carlos Leños from Richmond shared his passion for pickleball that started this Summer, and he has

recruited many friends and family to play at BTA, as this is the only place to play pickleball and he enjoys exploring the neighborhood and community building through pickleball.

Wilmer Tejada from Richmond expressed his excitement, along with his daughter, seeing the activity of pickleball at BTA park and as a resident in the area it is nice to be bringing families together and he hopes to keep it going.

Shoshana Grammer of Richmond and member of the EBPA, finds that the City of Richmond needs more activities for elderly people and pickleball allows all ages to play together, creating a community. She stated she would like to have permanent pickleball courts at BTA. She also heard there is a recommendation to alternate schedules for tennis and pickleball and she hopes there would be an alternate location offered where pickleball players can play, just as tennis players have the option at other locations. Lastly, she stated the pickleball community visits Richmond restaurants, as it is discovering more of the Richmond community.

Ruth Goldenberg from Richmond shared her enjoyment of pickleball and how it unifies the community; she hopes that BTA would become a dedicated pickleball court as carrying portable nets is often difficult to transport for everyone and this sport offers all ages to play together. She stated it would be nice if Richmond could be the center for pickleball.

Michele McGeoy of Richmond enjoys both tennis and pickleball but was very proud of Richmond to lead the way for dedicated pickleball courts but now that they are temporary, it cuts into the need and she hopes they will become permanent in the future.

Sanford Chan from Richmond shared that while having physical limitations, pickleball is a great sport that is not as demanding physically as tennis, and while speaking to the tennis players, having pickleball at BTA has changed the vibe as there is less "riffraff" on the courts. In addition, he has spoken to Gary Hurlbut of the Richmond Tennis Association, who stated he is behind adding pickleball courts beyond BTA.

Marcel Castanchoa of San Pablo has been using Richmond parks for many years and since pickleball came to BTA there are many positives to the area; he further stated that pickleball embraces Richmond's Pride and Purpose emblem when watching the pickleball community play and interact together.

Jennifer Walden of Richmond learned to play pickleball in other cities and was excited to have a court in Richmond. She expressed concerns of sharing the courts with tennis, as drop-in pickleball usually takes 6 courts and allows 24 people to play at a time, and sharing the court space and is like giving basketball half a court; she empathized that there are still 23 dedicated tennis courts in Richmond.

David Wolden from Richmond shared that pickleball has created a community building experience especially for those who have limited physical movement; he has introduced the sport to many from age 6 to 70+ and will continue to welcome people to Richmond to enjoy the game, especially when it comes to keeping seniors active.

Cindy Li from Oakland stated she specifically comes to Richmond to play pickleball; she is sad that the permanent pickleball courts have been removed and hopes the City of Richmond can support the pickleball community at BTA.

Gary Gremaux of Richmond has been playing pickleball at BTA for about a year and enjoyed the permanent nets which makes it easier to play as they do not have to set up/take down the nets; he enjoys playing at BTA as there are usually so many people and he shares the views of previous pickleball speakers.

Nancy Cosentino from Berkeley reiterated the comments of previous speakers of pickleball and added that tennis has many options for play but pickleball has very few and is a community building sport for all ages and it encourages all to frequent local businesses; she thanked Richmond for the permanent pickleball lines and hopes to have BTA revert back to being permanently pickleball.

Debra Bernhardt from Albany pointed out that she attended a grand opening at BTA for the pickleball courts and does not understand why they went away. The pickleball courts at BTA created a social community and while she has played tennis, pickleball is for all. She stated that her family and friends all play pickleball and have enjoyed the beautiful BTA park and hopes to bring pickleball back to BTA. She reiterated there are still 22 permanent tennis courts in Richmond.

Patrick Shannon of El Cerrito stated Richmond has the best pickleball courts in the area at BTA and it is an asset to the community and because of that, it could raise funds for the City of Richmond, much like other cities do by having tournament or pop-ups.

Nora Lee from Richmond shared that pickleball is a sport that she can play despite knee ailments, and she donated to make these courts resurfaced and beautiful; she further expressed these courts often have many others in line waiting, so we should be proud of the success instead of trying to take them down.

Andrew Hecht of Richmond grew up playing tennis and knows it is supported well in Richmond, however there are more pickleball players at BTA on one Saturday morning than all tennis players in all the Richmond courts combined. He further explained the ease of playing pickleball with open play and the courts at BTA are spectacular and Richmond has the opportunity to be a pickleball center.

Mimi Wichitsripornkul of Albany comes to Richmond strictly for pickleball and playing on the beautiful courts at BTA has improved her health, as she enjoys meeting so many new people.

Kym Sterner of Richmond shared her experiences, as a former resident of Albany, and the negative issues of pickleball within that community. She enjoys the open play of pickleball in Richmond and the opportunity to play any time at BTA. In addition, there is tons of community within pickleball which is an asset that is enriching the neighborhood.

Mary Hanglely from El Cerrito shared that the pickleball revitalization project was a plan that was approved by the city, funded by a grant from the city and by the EBPBA and since the project is incomplete, she asked if the East Bay Pickleball Association will receive a refund for their part in the project or will the grant have to be repaid.

Don Lau from Richmond began playing pickleball before there were permanent lines in place and has enjoyed the improvements the pickleball group has made. He further shared that as pickleball has different skill levels, they need multiple courts based on experience levels. He hopes the community can get together to talk about how to make something happen that all can agree on, as we currently have the best pickleball courts in the bay area.

Laurel Gillespie of El Cerrito shared how pickleball players have taught kids in the community how to play and sharing their equipment to enrich the neighborhood; she reiterated how Richmond can capitalize on pickleball by offering competitions. She shared how she is unable to carry the portable nets, so the permanent nets are needed. She hopes that pickleball can improve Richmond's reputation by showing how lovely the neighborhood truly is.

JC Farr from Richmond and President of the Eastshore Community Neighborhood Council, wished to clarify

the agreement of the BTA courts to share the courts and voiced disappointment that pickleball hosted a grand opening without inviting the neighborhood. In addition, there have been signs posted for playing pickleball for a fee, and at one point the courts were locked so no one could play on the courts. He plans on having an open forum meeting so everyone can understand how the neighborhood feels.

Chair Smith thanked everyone for being respectful and for expressing themselves in a wonderful manner.

ANNOUNCEMENTS THROUGH THE CHAIR

- a.) Chair Smith advised the Next Commission meeting will be held October 4, 2023
- b.) The balance of the Commission Trust Account is \$413.08
- c.) No membership changes

CONSENT CALENDAR

Vice Chair Rowden motioned to approve the minutes of August 2, 2023, seconded by Secretary Blakeley, carried with an agreed voice vote.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS FOR INFORMATION

Councilmember Robinson provided an update on 2 legal issues in which she conferred with the City Attorney's office – 1) the pickleball concern was already addressed making BTA courts a multi-functional site for both tennis and pickleball. She has spoken with the East Bay Pickleball Association to ensure they have access to the on-site storage container and has reached out to staff to revise the pickleball signage and their location for sign posting. 2) Ms. Robinson confirmed Richmond residents have a legal right to have access to the West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD) grounds for recreation services and the City Attorney's office is currently working with WCCUSD staff.

Parks & Landscaping Division

Greg Hardesty, Superintendent of Parks and Landscaping, shared a verbal and visual report of the Parks and Landscaping updates. In addition, Mr. Hardesty provided a Parks Master Plan summary update to some items that have been completed.

Community Services Division with – Recreation & Neighborhood Services

Ranjana Maharaj, Deputy Director of Community Service-Recreation provided a detailed oral and visual report on upcoming and recent Recreation activities. Ms. Maharaj further updated on the Maintenance and Recreation Assessment District (MRAD) report for the usage of school facilities, and she shared that staff conferred with legal and the school district agreeing on general public use but sports activities require more discussion and negotiation.

Tetteh Kisseh, Recreation Supervisor, updated on the BTA courts stating the neighborhood council and the East Bay Pickleball Association have agreed upon a schedule for court usage and he confirmed that a storage container has been provided that will be divided for pickleball equipment, as well as other sports programs.

Chair Smith inquired about what the policy is for enforcing the agreed upon tennis/pickleball schedule and Mr. Kisseh advised that the phone number to the Recreation-Registration Office will be provided to advise of any issues. Ms. Smith asked to be kept informed of any conflicts or incidents to the schedule so the commission can be aware.

Commissioner Torres asked for clarification on the wait time policy when there are tennis players waiting to have court time and Mr. Kisseh stated he would research what the current policies specifically are. Ms. Torres suggested having signage posted, in English and Spanish, for all fields and/or court policies.

Mr. Kisseh continued to provide a visual and verbal presentation of the many Summer Camp Programs that were a huge success offered during the Summer.

PRESENTATIONS

a.) Receive a presentation regarding the parks needs assessment, especially the soccer fields

Robert Stevens, on behalf of Marcia Vallier, provided a detailed verbal and visual presentation on the Richmond Field Assessment showing the parks in each district and their potential for providing soccer fields.

AD HOC COMMITTEE REPORTS

a.) Sustainability and Climate Responsiveness Committee (Catalin / Maryn / Allison / Samantha)

No reports due to time

b.) Youth & Associate Commissioners Initiative (Joey / Maryn)

No reports due to time

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEM:

a. Receive and APPROVE memorial decorative refuse bins in honor of Richard “Pedie” Perez III

Councilmember Bana offered a visual and verbal presentation in memory of Richard “Pedie” Perez III to request the commission to approve two (2) memorial refuse bins in his honor on the sidewalk at 3322 Cutting Blvd.

Chair Smith inquired if the request was approved by the City of Richmond’s legal department and Councilmember Bana advised that all has been approved and the project only needs the approvals from the Recreation & Parks Commission and Arts & Culture Commission (presentation set for 9/14/23).

Vice Chair Rowden presented a motion to approve and sign the letter after item is approved by the Arts & Culture Commission; seconded by Commissioner Lanis and carried with a unanimous voice vote.

COMMISSIONER LIAISON REPORTS

Secretary Blakely asked Mr. Hardesty to address the public’s concerns on removing the poppies on the Carlson Blvd. median while completing weed abatement. Mr. Hardesty shared that some poppies were intertwined with other weeds but only some were removed.

Commissioner Lanis thanked Mr. Hardesty for the weed abatement efforts on the San Francisco Bay Trail at the Parkway near Garrard Blvd.

Commissioner Torres voiced concern over the Nicholl Park central lawn situation that has many fall sports teams on the fields at once and is creating overcrowding. In addition, Ms. Torres thanked Public Works for making Shields Reid a good field for soccer; the MLK scoreboard is getting repaired or replaced; she presented to the school board on soccer fields usage, and she is collaborating with residents on the MRAD issue and is disappointed that sports fields were not part of the open access.

Chair Smith shared she has been in communication with Guadalupe Morales as to the youth commissioner project and there will be a table at the El Sobrante Stroll as well as a flyer to share.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Christine George
Executive Secretary