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**CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH
MINUTES OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION**

June 25, 2007
6:30 P.M.

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ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Gill, Harris, Lear, Murray, Nicholson, Fitzpatrick and Shambaugh

Absent: None

Others Present: Director of Parks and Recreation Richard Gill, Recreation Services Manager Idris J. Al-Oboudi, Jon Vogl, Community Dog Advisory Committee, Brent Malatesta, Parks Services Enforcement Officer, Recording Secretary Jane Grace and others (see attached list)

AGENDA CHANGES

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the April 23, 2007 Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting were approved as written.

CEREMONIAL

Commissioner Harris presented a City Council Certificate to outgoing Commissioner Alex Rachmiel. She reported that Alex has contributed a lot as the Mira Costa High School student representative. Commissioner Harris also thanked Ted Lamb for his service on the Commission. Outgoing Commissioner Ted Lamb was not present to accept The City Council Certificate but Commissioner Harris thanked him for his three years of service on the Commission.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

None

GENERAL BUSINESS

07/0625.1 – Selection of 2007/2008 Parks and Recreation Commission Officers

Mr. Gill reported that annually the Parks and Recreation Commission is required to select a Chair and Vice Chair for the Commission. In the past, officers have been selected on a seniority basis. Commissioner Harris would be next in line to serve as Chair, followed by Commissioner Gill. Mr. Gill reported that although this has been the practice in the past, it is not the rule. The Commission has the right to choose any member of the Commission they feel is most qualified.

A motion was made to select Commissioner Harris as Commission Chair. (MSC: Gill/Lear; Unanimous)

A motion was made to select Commissioner Gill as Vice Chair. (MSC: Nicholson/Lear; Unanimous)

07/0625.2 – Selection of Annual Manhattan Beach Recreation and Youth Services Award

Mr. Gill reported that since 1972, the Commission has annually presented the Manhattan Beach Recreation and Youth Services Award to a local citizen who has made significant contributions in promoting leisure services. Mr. Gill reported that there are two categories of eligibility: Lay Citizen – one who volunteers their energy to an organization, agency or project; Professional – one who is engaged in an occupation in the recreation and youth services field.

Mr. Gill reported that the 2005 award was presented to Bonnie Harkenrider at a City Council meeting on July 5, 2005 (no recipient was selected in 2006). The Youth Services Award is presented in July, which is recognized as “Parks and Recreation Month” statewide.

On April 18, staff sent a letter to all known youth agencies, soliciting nominations. During a discussion of nominations received by staff, the following points were made:

1. Commissioner Harris suggested that since both candidates are excellent and represent each of the two categories of eligibility, the Commission should award both candidates.
2. Commissioner Lear suggested that the Commission should not give out the award just because there is a nominee for each category but did agree that both candidates are well qualified and should both be given the award.

A motion was made to recommend both Lisa Popovich and Monica Wood for the 2007 Manhattan Beach Recreation and Youth Services Award. (MSC: Nicholson/Lear; Unanimous)

07/0625.3 – Consideration of Additional On-Leash Dog Access in Sand Dune, Polliwog and Bruce’s Beach Parks

Mr. Al-Oboudi thanked the entire community that participated in the Community Dog Advisory Committee meetings and introduced Mr. Jon Vogl, representing the Community Dog Advisory Committee.

Mr. Vogl thanked the Parks and Recreation and Police Departments for their support of the Community Dog Advisory Committee. The Committee is presenting three proposals to 1)

expand on-leash walk-through in Sand Dune Park; 2) create new walk-through in Polliwog Park; and 3) create on-leash grass access in Bruce's Beach Park.

Mr. Vogl reported the history of the Dog Advisory Committee:

- City Council requested formation of committee (3/04)
- Proposals presented for improving community(11/04)
- Two walk-throughs installed (11/04)
- Dorsey Field play area installed. Trial period begins (2/05)\
- Council supports walk-throughs/play area as permanent (8/05)
- Additional play area installed in Marine Park (4/06)

Mr. Vogl reported that in January of 2007, City Council requested the Parks and Recreation Commission to explore new additional access for dog owners. In February 2007, the Commission requested staff to expand the dog advisory committee. The committee met weekly, expanded and sent notices beginning in March 2007.

Mr. Vogl reported that the Committee made a presentation to the Parks and Recreation Commission on March 26, 2007 regarding next steps and approach to future projects. The Parks and Recreation Commission advised the staff/committee to focus on a limited number of projects and suggested that the expanded park-access areas would be the preferable place to start.

Extensive notification to the community was pursued:

- A Public Notice identifying initial proposals and sent May 9, 2007, to all residents surrounding the impacted parks
- The same notice was placed in the Beach Reporter as a half-page ad on May 10, 2007.
- A news article was published in The Daily Breeze on May 21, 2007.
- A Manhattan Life segment called "Running with Dogs" has been airing throughout June
- A second public notice, identifying specific recommendations that will be made to the Parks and Recreation Commission at their meeting of June 25, 2007 was mailed on Tuesday, June 19, 2007.

Mr. Vogl indicated that there have been citizen requests for more access to park areas for exercise and to improve their quality of life. He suggested that, based on the proven success of the existing walk-throughs, providing additional walk-throughs and avoiding high usage areas, during trial periods of three and six months, we could provide successful parkway access.

Mr. Vogl reported that the two new areas for consideration are Upper Sand Dune Park and the west corridor of Polliwog Park. He indicated that there were no concerns raised at the community outreach meetings regarding Sand Dune Park. The MBI principal discussed concerns regarding P.E. classes which could be handled with proper signage to yield to runners; staff received a few e-mails regarding potential for dog bites, interference with activities and contact with children. Mr. Vogl suggested that through our experience and data collected on existing walk-throughs, there has been no history of dog bites resulting from access to these walk-throughs.

Mr. Vogl reported the committee is responding to residents' requests for additional walk-throughs by utilizing natural thoroughfares, installing proper signage and mutt mitt dispensers and having trial periods, requesting public feedback. He reported that the total fiscal impact for the walk-through is \$1,120 for mutt mitt dispensers and signage.

Mr. Vogl suggested that the current locations have been extremely successful with minimal impact on park operations, emphasizing responsible dog ownership and cleanup and improving quality of life and safety for dog owners.

Commissioner Lear asked Parks Services Enforcement Officer Malatesta whether he has ever cited dog owners in the park and whether these proposals would rectify the violations. Mr. Malatesta indicated that he has had very few dog issues in the parks, suggesting that because of the way dog owners enter the park, they are directed to the walk-throughs by our park attendants. The two dog citations that Mr. Malatesta has written are for second-warning offences; i.e. not picking up after their dogs.

Mr. Vogl reported that the third proposal is for on-leash park access in Bruce's Beach Park. Dogs are currently limited to the concrete path. Mr. Vogl indicated that there have been community requests to locate open space for dog owners, suggesting that the grass area would be appropriate for on-leash access. The fiscal impact would be \$3,100 for signage and mutt mitt dispensers.

Mr. Vogl reported that community feedback for the proposed on-leash park access in Bruce's Beach Park has been mostly supportive. Neighborhood concerns for the proposal include waste not being picked up and residue from feces and urine remains. Mr. Vogl suggested that peer pressure and risk of losing access to the area would eliminate the problem. He indicated that reclaimed water is used for irrigation on a daily basis and landscape maintenance is performed weekly/monthly. Mr. Vogl reported other neighborhood concerns include:

- Non-enforcement/abuse of rules – Animal Control/Park Ranger will respond to complaints; patrols have increased due to meetings
- Many children use area; safety concern if dogs allowed – Water Tower and Sand Dune experience no problems; no reported incidents involving dog bites
- Overuse of area – history and experience proves otherwise
- Dog access will attract commuters to stop and use area – parking limitations prevent overuse
- Suggest keeping one area “dog free” for children's use – majority of respondents support “full park area access” by dog owners

Mr. Vogl reported the following options proposed to the committee:

- Full on-leash access to upper and lower sections
- Full on-leash access to one designated section only
- Limited “time-restricted” access to one or both sections
- Establish third terrace as “off-leash play area”
- No additional access: keep as walk-through only on path

Mr. Vogl reported that the Advisory Committee is recommending full on-leash access to upper and lower sections suggesting:

- Most neighbors support on-leash access
- Proven successful at Water Tower and Sand Dune Park
- Data and experience suggest minimal impact
- New signage, amenities and peer pressure will promote responsible park use
- Trial period provides opportunity to address concerns

Mr. Vogl reported that the total fiscal impact for Bruce's Beach Park would be \$4,500 for signage and mutt mitts.

Mr. Vogl reported that the recommendations of the Community Dog Advisory Committee are:

- Approval for expanded walk-through pathways at Sand Dune Park
- Approval for new walk-through pathway in Polliwog Park
- Approval for full on-leash park access at Bruce's Beach

The three proposals would have a trial period of six months with a progress report at three months.

During a discussion among the Commissioners the following points were made:

1. Commissioner Gill inquired whether it would be possible to use only one area at Bruce's Beach during the test period. Mr. Al-Oboudi indicated that it was discussed by the committee but decided that amenities in either level shouldn't be excluded.
2. Commissioner Lear inquired whether Hermosa Beach allows dogs in their parks and what issues they experience. Mr. Al-Oboudi indicated that Hermosa Beach allows dogs in some of their parks and has occasional issues regarding irresponsible dog owners, but not to any extreme.
3. Commissioner Fitzpatrick inquired about what type of circumstances happen at the water tower area. Mr. Vogle indicated that the area is not fenced off specifically for dog use but local neighbors walk through the area and social networks have started to develop. He suggested it is like a mini neighborhood-watch situation, promoting a safer environment.
4. Commissioner Fitzpatrick inquired about the process for the trial period. Mr. Al-Oboudi indicated that the following steps are made during the trial period:
 - Suggestion boxes placed at sites
 - E-mail addresses publicized to receive information
 - Increase the amount of visits to sites by Parks & Recreation staff, Park Ranger and Animal Control
 - Concentrated effort to obtain information from neighbors

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

John Harwell, a resident on 27th Street at Bruce's Beach Park for 28 years, has never seen dog excrement in the park and suggested that we have mostly responsible dog owners in Manhattan Beach. He would like to be given a chance to see if dog owners can be responsible and do their own policing in the park and be able to congregate in the park with their dogs.

Carrie Zehnpfennig lives near Polliwog Park and suggested that there is not any way to cross to the other side of Polliwog Park with a dog without going several blocks around the park. She would greatly appreciate a walk-through in Polliwog Park. While using the established dog runs in Manhattan Beach, she has not experienced any problems. She suggested that dogs need nature as well as their owners.

Harvey Kalan indicated that he walks his dog through Bruce's Beach daily and sees more of a trash problem than dog debris. He suggested that people who pick up their dog feces also pick up trash in the park. He suggested that the mutt mitt dispensers should be replaced because it is difficult to remove the mutt mitt.

Pat Baraz walks to the Strand with her dog and would like to be able to stop and enjoy the sunset in Bruce's Beach. She suggested that it would be a great opportunity for parents and kids to interface with dogs in a friendly setting; parents can teach kids the proper way to approach dogs.

Kathy Harbour, owner of three dogs, suggested that allowing dogs in Bruce's Beach would have a substantial impact on a sense of community, getting to know people. Ms. Harbour supports the proposal.

Bill Keller doesn't mind the current situation at Bruce's Beach because he and his dog Buddy circumnavigate the park to get their exercise. He is interested in seeing a three to six month trial period for on-leash access and, as long as his two year old grandson can use the park in a clean environment, he would support the on-leash access.

D.J. Macale, a dual-use park user with a child and a dog, is in support of the proposals. He indicated that the walk-through in Bruce's Beach is great but would love to be able to stop and visit with other park users while walking his dog. His experience shows that dog owners pick up their dog's feces as well as other dogs.

Marina Crockett asked how better to teach children compassion than to be surrounded by the spirit of canines. She suggested that equal access for all in Bruce's Beach would improve the quality of life for all.

Sue Vogl supports the proposals and thanked her husband Jon for the wonderful presentation.

Carol Walburg agreed with everything said so far and suggested that there is a socialization factor among children, adults and dogs; there is no competition among dog owners. She suggested that while walking their dog, people talk and get to know each other. She has found that parents approach her while she is walking her dog and request that their children meet and pet her dog. She suggested that it is wonderful to be by the water with grassy areas and children playing freely with their pets. Ms. Walburg supports the proposals.

Veronica Zelle owns two homes in Manhattan Beach and loves the community of Manhattan Beach. She thanked Jon Vogl for his dedication and commitment to helping us maintain a

lifestyle that some people pay dearly for. Ms. Zelle travels around the world and most places allow dogs to run off-leash. She suggested that Manhattan Beach has amazing responsible citizens who are not going to suggest something that would be harmful to children or the parks. Ms. Zelle is in support of the proposals.

Mark Greenberg has always looked at Bruce's Beach as a destination to walk to. He suggested that being able to walk with your dog in Bruce's Beach and stop to visit with other dog owners and neighbors would be safer than congregating on the Strand in a limited area which other people walking on the Strand complain about.

Sue Harrigan has raised a seeing-eye dog and is amazed at what dogs do for the handicapped as well as people in general; spending time with dogs enhances a person's quality of life. Ms. Harrigan suggested that, as a single woman, she would feel safer at night if she were able to walk her dog in Bruce's Beach. She suggested that in the spirit of Bruce's Beach "to all without exclusion."

Elizabeth Myers complimented the Commission and City Council for the huge transformation in the 27 years that she has lived in Manhattan Beach. She is grateful that they are allowing us to discuss these proposals and make it possible to catch people doing something good.

Joanne McLaughlin indicated that her biggest frustration is that she has no place to take her two older dogs. She would like an area that is legal, accessible and easy to get to. She hopes the Commission sees the merit of these proposals, suggesting dogs need a place to be. She suggested that most dog owners are responsible and she fully supports the proposals.

Brian Kelly's biggest concern is cleaning up after dogs and suggested that most of the residents of Manhattan Beach are helpful in cleaning up after their dogs as well as others.

Larry Grik indicated that he raised three children in Manhattan Beach and Bruce's Beach was their "backyard." He reported that many times his children would come home with dog dirt on their shoes. He understands that dogs need more space off hard surfaces but implored the Commission to bring a sense of reasoning to their decision. He suggested that there are more non dog owners in Manhattan Beach than dog owners; therefore, the parks should be kept clean, neat and safe for people first. Bruce's Beach is an area where infants, children and adults are in contact with the grass. He suggested that to separate these two interests, he proposed a "perimeter plan." This would involve opening an area, to the six foot range of a leash, into the grass area of all the parks in Manhattan Beach. This would open up the center of the parks for mothers and their children and they would not have to worry about children crawling or walking into soiled areas. He suggested that the park ranger and police department have indicated that they do not have the staff to fully patrol the parks; therefore, there will not be a good way to measure the proposals during the trial period.

Larry Veysada lives in Manhattan Village and reported that 40% of the village is designated as common area, opened to children and dogs. A dog committee was formed to apply peer pressure for enforcing the picking up of dog droppings and the dog droppings have decreased considerably. He reported no problems with kids and dog waste in the common areas.

Marty Friedman suggested that we should open up the parks with equal access for all with an assumption of reasonable risk.

Brinette Holdren feels that doing things for our community that involve animals helps make us a better community. She indicated that it's very enjoyable to go to a park with your dog (which she does in Valley Park, Hermosa Beach) and visit with your neighbors, allowing you and your dogs time to cool off. Ms. Holdren fully supports the proposal for full access to Bruce's Beach.

Helen Grik asked if there were restrictions for professional dog walkers. Mr. Malatesta indicated that there are not restrictions to the number of animals you have on leash but the premise is whether they are able to control the dogs. He suggested that if one is concerned about anyone not being able to control their dogs, they should call animal control or the parks service enforcement officer.

During a discussion among the commissioners, the following points were made:

1. Commissioner Lear thanked Mr. Grik for presenting "the other side" and suggested that the commission is wanting to create a dialog, hearing the pros and cons. He suggested that the City does not want the dog areas to become a destination and feels that these proposals will not create such. He sees no downside to establishing these areas on a trial basis and confident that the dog community will go overboard to make sure there are no issues. Commissioner Lear is in favor of all the proposals.
2. Commissioner Gill has taken his dog to Hermosa Valley Park for many years and has never seen or had any negative incidents and thinks it is a shame that he has to go to Hermosa Beach to walk his dog. He thinks it is time to allow dogs in our parks.
3. Commissioner Nicholson suggested that Mr. Grik's proposal is reasonable if we can't make the other proposals work. However, he supports the committee's proposals in their entirety.
4. Commissioner Murray thanked everyone for their presentations. He commended Mr. Grik for his letter, suggesting that it made her think about being a mother and grandmother; she also enjoyed Mr. Keller's comments regarding being a "father" to Buddy and a grandfather. She supports the committee's proposal in their entirety.
5. Commissioner Fitzpatrick thanked the committee for their presentation and the community for their thoughtful comments. She is in support of all the proposals.
6. Commissioner Shambaugh would enjoy walking her dog through Polliwog Park and supports all three proposals.
7. Commissioner Harris indicated that she is passionate about dogs and on the commission to represent equal access for dogs, suggesting that being responsible dog owners is expected. She thanked everyone for their presentations and is fully in support of the proposals.

A motion was made that the recommendation of proposals in the June 25, 2007 presentation "Park Access & Recreation Opportunities for Dog Owners", including 1) expansion of Sand Dune Park walk-through; 2) creation of new walk-through in Polliwog Park and 3) creation of on-leash grass access in Bruce's Beach Park, be adopted and recommended to City Council for a six month trial period, including a three month progress report. (MSC: Lear/Gill; Unanimous)

OTHER COMMISSION BUSINESS

Commissioner Harris welcomed new Commission members Marianne Fitzpatrick and Kelly Shambaugh.

Commission Attendance at City Events

Commissioner Lear reported that he attended the start of the Grand View Torch Run on May 5, reporting that it was a very small event with Grand View students running 25-30 yards each from the Pier to Grand View School for their Grand View Fiesta to raise funds for the Grand View PTA.

Commissioner Murray reported that she attended the Manhattan Beach Senior Health Fair at Joslyn Community Center on May 11. She reported that the event was well attended and very well organized; she thanked the suppliers who were outstanding and very helpful to the senior community. Health tests were offered either free or at a very minimal charge. She met Recreation Services Manager Eve Kelso and many of the seniors who indicated that they loved this event.

Commissioner Gill reported that he attended the Open House at the Police/Fire Facility. It was a well organized event and the Police and Fire staffs were very gracious and open to the community. He reported that he was talked into becoming a watch commander for Neighborhood Watch.

Commissioners agreed to attend the following events in July:

- Nicholson – Grand Prix Bike Race
- Murray – Shakespeare in the Park, Concert in the Park July 1

REPORTS

Mr. Gill reported that the elementary school Young at Art Program presented a Christo Project on the Veterans Parkway. The Commission enjoyed the project but suggested it was displayed for too short a time.

Mr. Gill reported that the Village Field artificial turf project is on schedule.

Mr. Gill reported that the Facility Strategic Plan final review of the proposed Polliwog Park facility was discussed at the last Steering Committee meeting and the proposed Live Oak facility will be discussed at the July 16 Steering Committee meeting. He reported that the final wrap-up Steering Committee Meeting will be held in August to determine what the next steps will be. Mr. Gill highly recommended that the Commission attend all future Steering Committee meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m. to the next regularly scheduled meeting on July 23, 2007.

Parks & Recreation Commission
June 25, 2007
Audience Participation

John Harwell
Harvey Kalan
Carrie Zehnpfennig
Pat Baraz
Kathy Harbour
Bill Keller
D. J. Macale
Marina Crockett
Sue Vogl
Carol Walburg
Veronica Zelle
Mark Greenberg
Elizabeth Myers
Joanne McLaughlin
Sue Harrigan
Brian Kelly
Larry Veysada
Larry Grik
Helene Grik
Marty Friedman
Brinette Holdren