

3. Consent Agenda

- 3.1** Approval of Minutes of November 2, 2015 regular meeting, and the January 14, 2016 special meeting.

The motion to approve Minutes of November 2, 2015 and January 14, 2016 meetings was made by Commissioner Hawkins and seconded by Commissioner De La Cruz. Motion passed 5-0.

4. Staff Announcements – Information Only

- 4.1** Michael Hodges announced that the 700 forms need to be submitted and filed by April 1, 2016.

5. Commission Announcements, Introductions and Presentations – Information Only

- 5.1** Commissioner Paul St. John will replace Commissioner Bob Picha for the San Juan Bautista VFW. It was determined that no official announcement needs to be made; it is merely a representation change within their organization. There were no further announcements.

6. Discussion Items.

6.1 Locked Fencing around User Fields and Common Areas.

Mike Hodges introduced this item and described that it was initially requested during the November 2015 meeting. All the fields at the Veterans Park are currently locked when not in use by the user groups. The issue at hand is this goes against the spirit of an ordinance passed in 1950 that stated the Veterans Memorial Park land is a living memorial to our veterans, and the park should be developed and maintained as a public park and playground area under the supervision of the Veterans Memorial Park Commission. Currently, the Hollister Babe Ruth, Hollister Little League, and Hollister Heat teams lock these fields when not in use, as per the terms of the user group contract agreements. This results in making the park lands unavailable to the general public residents of San Benito County for use during non-scheduled events. At issue are the pros and cons of opening up this land for use to all San Benito County residents, rather than reserving the land exclusively for the use of contracted user organizations. Staff, however, does recommend that the gates be opened to the citizens of San Benito County.

Mr. Carlton Pace, President of Hollister Little League, introduced himself to speak on this issue. Mr. Pace contends that his organization's use of this park does serve the needs of the community at large. His organization alone serves approximately 600 children in our community, ranging in age from 4-12. This also includes the disabled children of our community. Mr. Pace further contends opening the park to the unsupervised general public will raise safety concerns, as well as increase the cost to maintain the park. Furthermore, Mr. Pace feels that without the fencing, increased public usage of the park will require further and more extensive upkeep of the park by the Hollister Little League, which will then result in increased registration costs for new and existing Little League participants. Mr. Pace feels his organization is a big part of the carrying out of the overall mission of the use of this park. He is against opening the park for general use to all the residents of San Benito County.

A second Little League speaker stated he concurs with the cost concerns raised by Mr. Pace. He wants to know if Public Works has the funds and resources to fix things that might be discovered to be broken mere minutes before a Little League game is scheduled to start.

Mr. Pace further stated that the Hollister Little League has an annually renewable contract with the Veterans Commission regarding the use of this park. This contract has been in place for decades. Mr.

Pace requests Public Works honor that contract as it stands, which includes not opening the park to the general residents of San Benito County.

Ms. Wendy Abercrombie, Player Agent for the Challenger Division of the Hollister Little League, introduced herself to speak on this topic. This division is for children and adults with physical and/or developmental disabilities. She states that right now the use of this park is really the only safe, clean, and controlled option for the Challenger League to engage in a sports program. Ms. Abercrombie asks that the gates remain locked.

Mr. George Ramirez, President of Hollister Heat, introduced himself to speak on this topic. He states his organization has made substantial capital contributions to the maintenance and improvement of the park, most recently the batting cage they have voted to install at a cost of approximately \$20,000.00, at no cost to the county. Mr. Ramirez states his organization has shown flexibility in letting other teams, such as the Hollister BlackJacks and the Baylers, use the fields when Hollister Heat is not using the fields. He further contends that Hollister Heat volunteers are conscientious in responding to any safety and/or theft concerns in the interest of keeping the park safe and clean. Mr. Ramirez stated opening the gates would make it harder for Hollister Heat volunteers to continue the proper maintenance of the park. Mr. Ramirez requests the gates remain locked.

Mr. Paul Benedetti, Vice-President of San Benito Babe Ruth, introduced himself to speak on this matter. He states his organization does open the park for use to the high school, as well as to private baseball teams, and these teams are scheduled around the San Benito Babe Ruth games. Mr. Benedetti addressed the same safety concerns and fiscal concerns as Mr. Ramirez, Ms. Abercrombie, and Mr. Pace. He also outlined the cost of their contributions for the cosmetic maintenance of the park, as well as the electricity costs to light the field. He expressed doubts about the county's ability to properly fund normal park maintenance items such as electricity, the bathrooms, the dumpsters, the lawn, and vandalism. He also addressed potential scheduling conflicts that will result from sharing the field with all the residents of San Benito County. Mr. Benedetti requests the gates remain locked.

Ms. Erin Livingston, Player Agent for Senior Babe Ruth, introduced herself to address this issue. Ms. Livingston echoed the concerns of the previous speakers. She also agreed with the prior speakers' contentions that the overall community is being addressed in a public way, as her organization also opens the field for other organization's uses. Ms. Livingston stated there is no attitude of exclusivity on the part of her organization. Ms. Livingston requests the gates remain locked.

Mr. Benjamin introduced himself as a coach of Hollister Little League. He states he has prior experience with the maintenance of these fields. He states it will be too costly to maintain the fields if the park is open to general San Benito County residents. He states a lot of the vandalism and drug use, and problems with the homeless, occur in the dugouts away from public view. He states the gates of the park should remain locked.

Ms. Tara introduced herself and addressed her safety concerns as a parent. She concurred with Mr. Benjamin about the vandalism concerns and concerns with drug use and the homeless population. She requests the gates remain locked.

Discussion ensued amongst the board members as to the viability of unlocking the gates and opening the park to the general citizens of San Benito County. Commissioner De La Cruz states he thinks the board should rethink their position on the unlocking of the gates of this park. Commissioner Muenzer stated that this park should be open to public use; the public should not be denied access to their

community park system. Commissioner Muenzer stated he feels these organizations' contracts should be amended to allow for locking of the fields, while also allowing other organizations, and individual residents, access to the park. Commissioner Gallagher stated he feels that if the public does want access to the park, the public should join one of the leagues currently using the field. Also, he feels that if residents feel strongly the park fields should be unlocked, they should have attended tonight's meeting to assert their position. Commissioner Hawkins and Commissioner St. John agree with Commissioner Gallagher's position. There was a consensus amongst the board members that the existing contract needs to be amended to allow for public access to the fields; however, a procedure should be established to include a provision that allows San Benito County citizens access to this park.

Commissioner De La Cruz asked all the representatives of Hollister Little League, Hollister Heat, and San Benito Babe Ruth who spoke tonight if they can agree to allow the public to gain access to the fields. They agreed it is reasonable to amend the contract to include language that allows the public access to these fields. They also agreed there needs to be a system wherein they have knowledge of who has used the fields. This ensures there is a type of follow-up procedure in place if it is discovered the park and/or the fields have been misused.

Mr. George Ramirez stated he has no problem with allowing public access to the fields; however, the language in the contract needs to state that Hollister Heat has priority access. Hollister Heat built these fields, and they have had the majority of the responsibility to maintain these fields.

It was agreed that it is incumbent upon all organizations currently using these fields on a regular basis to work in partnership with this commission, and San Benito County residents, to ensure proper oversight of safety and access to these fields.

As there were no other speakers on this matter, Commissioner De La Cruz stated the board will work to confer with these clubs to draft a contract that includes language for the continued safety of these fields, while also enabling public access to these fields. Once drafted, this matter will then be brought back to this board for board approval.

6.2 Park Operations Update.

Michael Hodges gave an update on the decreased rentals this past quarter on Saturday and Sunday of the two barbecue shelters at the park due to heavy rain. Bertha Briggs building rentals, however, continued to be fairly high; the exception to this are the holiday weekends during this quarter where the county was closed and the building was unavailable for rental. It continues to be a priority to seek ways to conserve water at these facilities. Due to the water line break, the water remains turned off until a solution is reached that enables water from the well to be delivered without breaking the lines. During the holidays, the Boy Scout's tree drive was successful. There was no vandalism or graffiti during this quarter. In addition, this past quarter they have been concentrating on capital projects and upkeep of the lawns. They have had no user complaints. Jake Hubbell spoke about the new tractor that has been purchased for the upkeep of the parks. It will be used for the Veterans Park and the Historical Park. It also has a backhoe for assistance with water line breaks, if the need arises. Michael Hodges spoke about the dual people on staff at the park, and this increase in staff has been working out well. Mr. Hodges also gave an update about the large field that the City of Hollister uses on a regular basis. The city is working on upkeep and maintenance of this field, though there is still much work for them to do. He estimates the city will be done with this work by April of this year.

6.3 Park Water Supply Update.

Michael Hodges and Jake Hubbell addressed the issue of the water line break, and the fact that the water is still turned off. Mr. Hubbell stated that the city has requested water for their fields; however, he noticed they have a lot of puddles in their fields. If worse comes to worse, we can hook back into city water and give the city any water they need. This is one of the CIP projects on deck. Mr. Hubbell is awaiting confirmation from the city that if they use this water for their field, they won't charge us for watering their field. Mr. Hodges stated they're committed to getting the well distribution system fixed, but the back-up plan is working in partnership with the city.

Mr. Hodges discussed the second quarter financials and the fact that revenues are down a bit. This is due to decreased rentals. Salaries are at 80%, which may be inaccurate. This will be investigated and resolved. Services and supplies are at 61%. Cost plan remains at expectation. Total expenses are at approximately 63%.

6.4 Park CIP Projects Update.

The money for all of these projects comes from park impact fees. Michael Hodges and Jake Hubbell discussed the solar-powered motion sensor lights for the parking lot. He has received bids for 50 poles and 66 lights. The quote for the poles is approximately \$23,000.00, and the quote for the lights is approximately \$55,500.00. They are soliciting bids for the installation. The budget for the project is approximately \$200,000.00.

The second project is the main water line for the meters. Bids are being solicited for this project. This project consists of a new water line coming out of the well, running to the small Heat field, the larger Heat field, and the soccer field. The goal is for each field to have its own meter. Little League has three fields, so they will have three meters. The plan is to charge each user for their respective water usage.

The third project is a new restroom. Mr. Hubbell is currently scoping out the most appropriate type of restroom that is not easily destructible. He is shopping the best price. There is a \$150,000.00 budget for this project. It is thought it will be located between the city small field and the playground.

The fourth project is to hook up the new restroom with the current restroom - located behind the city big field - to the city sewer system. Mr. Hubbell has contacted the city for a total layout so he can determine the scope of the project and request bids. There is an approximately \$150,000.00 budget for this project.

The last project is improvement of the barbecue pits at Veterans Parks. The current pits will be knocked out and replaced with two pits for each shelter. Each pit will be of equal size. New sinks will also be constructed. The budget for this project is approximately \$20,000.00. They would also like to improve the barbecue pit at Bertha Briggs.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Veterans Memorial Park Commission, Commissioner Muenzer made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Hawkins. Motion passed 5-0.

The next regular meeting of the Veterans Memorial Park Commission will be held on Monday, May 2, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Mike Hodges, Staff Analyst
San Benito County Veterans Memorial Park Commission