TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: CITY MANAGER 

DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC WORKS

DATE: SEPTEMBER 20, 2004

CMR:426:04

SUBJECT: APPROVAL AND ADOPTION OF A PARK IMPROVEMENT ORDINANCE ASSOCIATED WITH IMPROVEMENTS TO THE BAYLANDS ATHLETIC CENTER INCLUDING AN UPGRADE TO THE ELECTRICAL AND FIELD LIGHTING SYSTEM, RENOVATION OF THE IRRIGATION SYSTEM AND INSTALLATION OF A BATTING PRACTICE CAGE – CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM PROJECT PG-00010

RECOMMENDATION
Staff recommends that Council approve and adopt the attached Park Improvement Ordinance (Attachment A) for several improvement projects for the Baylands Athletic Center, located within dedicated parkland known as the John Fletcher Byxbee Recreation area, including: construct electrical service upgrades, and replace field lighting poles and fixtures; renovation of the irrigation system, replace park fencing; and installation of a batting practice cage.

BACKGROUND
Palo Alto Municipal Code 22.08.005 requires that prior to approving or commencing “any substantial building, construction, reconstruction or development” in any dedicated parkland, the City Council approve and adopt by ordinance a plan showing the improvements. The plan must show, “as applicable, the nature, function, size, extent and general appearance of the proposed project.” Several projects to improve the Baylands Athletic Center complex located within dedicated parkland are planned to be constructed within the next two fiscal years.

DISCUSSION
The Baylands Athletic Center complex is one of very few in the bay region devoted exclusively to baseball and softball. Each field receives heavy use for both league and tournament play during the spring and summer months. The center’s electrical service and field lighting system are thirty-five years old and in significant need of an upgrade. The existing electrical service enclosure is corroding and the light fixtures are less efficient than current state of the art equipment in terms of energy efficiency and illumination. The wood
poles supporting the light fixtures have also been subject to structural deterioration over the years and are in need of replacement. The park irrigation system and perimeter fencing also date from 1968 and need similar upgrades. Complete renovation is required in order to substantially extend the life of the facility. Staff is also proposing to install a batting practice cage adjacent to the baseball field that would offer increased opportunities for skill development to a wider range of field users. The cost of the proposed batting cage would be shared with the Palo Alto Babe Ruth league, a primary user of the facility each season.

**Electrical Renovation & Field Lighting Replacement**
The proposed project would replace the existing electrical service enclosure and concrete support pad. The existing 26 wood light poles ranging in height between 60 and 90 feet would also be removed and replaced with 11 metal poles of the same height supported by underground concrete footings 4 feet in diameter and 25 feet deep installed around the field perimeters. The lighting casements will be specifically designed and shielded to minimize spillage of light and glare beyond the immediate site. Existing security lighting in the parking lot would also be replaced with flood lights controlled with a photocell and programmable time clock on the poles adjacent to the left field line of the baseball field. Both the proposed field light fixtures and the security lights would represent significant improvements over those currently in use at the facility in terms of energy efficiency, efficacy of field illumination, and glare and offsite spill factors.

**Irrigation System Replacement**
The existing original irrigation system consists of galvanized steel pipe and variety of older automatic control valves and sprinkler heads. The metal pipe is subject to corrosion and the valves and heads are less efficient and dependable than current state of the art materials. The proposed project would install all new main and lateral pipelines made of PVC and redesign the layout of the new valves and heads with greater capacity for surface coverage and water conservation in mind.

**Fencing Replacement**
The existing chain link fence at the facility has not been replaced since it was originally dedicated. The galvanized mesh screen is torn and rusted in some places and significantly disfigured in general. Several of the galvanized steel poles are bent or otherwise off center. Most of the fence throughout the park is either 6 or 12 feet high, but in certain locations such as the backstop areas it can reach a height of 20 or 30 feet. The proposed project would replace most of the poles and the virtually all of the existing chain link mesh screen with new material of similar constitution.

**Batting Practice Cage**
Most baseball and softball facilities of the same size and caliber as the Baylands Athletic Center have a dedicated space where batting practice can take place within a confined space in case the regular field is either occupied or otherwise unusable. The batting practice cage proposed for the Baylands would be a rectangular enclosure made of galvanized chain link mesh supported by galvanized steel poles. Its dimensions would be 84 feet long, 26 feet wide and 12 feet high with a mesh roof and a mesh divider lengthwise down the center to create two separate practice areas accessible by lockable gates.
RESOURCES IMPACT
Funds for these projects are included in Park Facilities Improvements Capital Improvement Program Project – PG-00010 (formerly project #10010).

PROJECT REVIEW
1. An initial funding amount of $220,000 for this project was included in the FY 2002-2003 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) project budget. The balance of the funding is included in FY 2004-2005 CIP project budget and includes funds contributed by the Palo Alto Babe Ruth League.
2. These projects were reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Commission on June 22, 2004.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS
The proposed projects are consistent with existing City policy, including N-1: Manage existing public open space areas and encourage the management of private open space areas in a manner that meets habitat protection goals, public safety concerns, and low impact recreation needs; N-11: Preserve the integrity of riparian corridors; N-47: Optimize energy conservation and efficiency in new and existing residences, businesses and industries in Palo Alto; N-50: Implement public safety improvements, such as access roads and other infrastructure, in a manner that is sensitive to the environment; C-17: Continue to support provisions, funding, and promotion of programs for children and youth; C-24: Reinvest in aging facilities to improve their usefulness and appearance, and avoid deferred maintenance of City infrastructure; C-25: Make infrastructure improvements on public open space only when these improvements are consistent with the goals of protecting and conserving the natural environment; C-26: Maintain and enhance existing park facilities.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW
The projects for replacement/reconstruction of the Baylands Athletic Center irrigation system and perimeter fencing and the project to install a new batting cage are exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as improvements to existing facilities and as new construction or conversion of small structures (CEQA Guidelines Sections 15302, 15303 and 15323). A Mitigated Negative Declaration has been prepared for the electrical upgrade and field lighting project which was adopted by the Director of Planning and Community Environment on September 15, 2004 (03-D-12, 04-EIA-07, 04-ARB-94) in connection with minor site and design approval.

ATTACHMENTS
Attachment A: Ordinance

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