TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL
FROM: CITY MANAGER DEPARTMENT: City Manager’s Office
DATE: April 8, 2002 CMR: 185:02

SUBJECT: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING PROPOSAL BY INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL FOR CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP TO CONSTRUCT PATHWAY AND PLAYFIELDS

BACKGROUND
On February 5, the Policy and Services Committee considered a proposal for a public-private partnership between the City of Palo Alto and the International School to: 1) construct a path to provide pedestrian and bicycle access to the School from the Baylands Athletic Center parking lot, located off Geng Road; and 2) to improve a currently unimproved portion of the Baylands Center with play fields and other amenities for public use. The Committee unanimously recommended to the City Council that staff be directed to proceed with the public/private partnership and look at alternatives to: 1) work through the Joint Powers Authority for San Francisquito Creek with the Santa Clara Valley Water District (District) to locate the path on the levee; and 2) to explore alternatives for playing fields that would not intrude into the 100 foot setback or the riparian corridor.

DISCUSSION
At the February 5 meeting, Councilmembers made several requests of staff for additional information or follow-up prior to the item returning to the Council. The purpose of this report is to address those requests:

Comprehensive Plan Adherence

The Committee asked that staff provide the Council with all Comprehensive Plan policies and programs which were applicable to the proposal, both supporting the proposal and contrary. That analysis is attached to this report (Attachment 1). In sum: the Comprehensive Plan encourages “actively work(ing) with private, nonprofit and community service organizations to coordinate delivery of . . . recreation services (Policy C-7).” There are no plans or policies which conflict with the pathway. However, there is
a policy/program which conflicts with the original proposal for the playing fields. Policy N-11 and Program N-7 establish a 100-foot setback along natural creeks and prohibit outdoor activity areas among other uses. Adherence to the Baylands Master Plan is also addressed in the analysis.

San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority/Santa Clara Valley Water District

Staff was asked to work through the JPA with the SCVWD to explore the alternative of locating the path on the levee instead of along the Creek.

Staff contacted the Executive Director of the JPA regarding the pathway/playing field proposal. She confirmed that she reviewed the School’s proposal prior to the Policy and Services Committee discussion and had no objections to the plan. She did not believe the proposal would have any detrimental impact on the creek, especially since the playing field site is not a critical riparian area due to existing development. She believed the playing fields would be an improvement over current conditions. She also indicated that she did not believe the pathway should be moved to the levee, and would be concerned if this change was incorporated into the proposal.

Subsequent to the Policy and Services Committee meeting, staff learned of environmental mitigation efforts being planned along San Francisquito Creek by the District. The District was asked to verify that the path proposed by the International School is an integral part of that mitigation plan, and not an unrelated project that will later be discovered to work at cross-purposes to the mitigation plan. Bill Springer, the Santa Clara Valley Water District reviewing engineer for projects by others in the Lower Peninsula Watershed, assured staff that the District has been working closely with the International School to develop a pathway plan that is compatible with use of District lands in this area. The District’s West Watershed Manager, Jennie Micko, has approved the location of the pathway. The District's Matadero Creek project team has discussed the pathway with respect to the District's proposed mitigation adjacent to San Francisquito Creek, and is satisfied that the path will cause no difficulty with the District’s mitigation. The School has worked with its landscape architect, Brent Cottong, and the District representatives to design a path that is environmentally sensitive, and complementary to the environmental mitigation efforts that the SCVWD is implementing along the Creek. The two groups have taken great care to design a project that, among other things, deals with water run-off issues in an environmentally sensitive manner, and that reintroduces native vegetation grown from seeds collected in the immediate vicinity. When final plans for the pathway are developed, the District will review and issue a permit for the path, ensuring that the path will be constructed in the appropriate manner.
Public/Private Partnerships

Staff was asked to provide the Council, at the time this item came back from the Policy and Services Committee, with a summary of the pros and cons of public/private partnership. Attached to this staff report (Attachment 2) is the Council-adopted policy on public/private partnerships. A public/private partnership is defined as “cooperation between the public and private or nonprofit sectors in order to achieve mutually shared objectives.” The policy’s intent is “to promote the active participation of the City in the formation of such partnerships.”

Each public/private partnership will have its own unique mixture of advantages and disadvantages. In this case the primary advantages are the provision of badly needed playing fields at no cost to the General Fund (except for a pro-rated share of maintenance); and amelioration of a traffic problem on Laura Lane. Council direction to respect the 100 foot setback from the Creek eliminates one disadvantage of the proposal. The other disadvantage could be the fact that the City is encumbering public park land through the partnership, and will have to share use with the School.

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Attachment 1: Memo from Clare Campbell, Planning Division to Emily Harrison and Lisa Grote re International School Proposed Project Site

Attachment 2: CMR:598:93, “Adoption of City Policies Regarding Public/Private Partnerships and Fee Waivers”