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**MINUTES
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
June 27, 2023
In-Person & Virtual Conference
Palo Alto, California**

Commissioners Present: Vice Chair Brown; Commissioners Anne Cribbs, Nellis Freeman, Shani Kleinhaus, Joy Oche, and Bing Wei

Commissioners Absent: Chair Greenfield

Others Present:

Staff Present: Daren Anderson, Javod Ghods

CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Vice Chair Brown called the meeting to order and asked for a roll call.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

AGENDA CHANGES, REQUESTS, DELETIONS

None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval of Draft Minutes from the May 12, 2023, Parks and Recreation Special Meeting

Commissioner Cribbs stated there were things listed in the minutes that she was not sure they had including the Action Plan that was going to be distributed to Commissioners and the binders they were looking for from the master plan.

Vice Chair Brown requested to make a note of this for Staff. She then asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner Cribbs moved to approve the minutes seconded

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by Commissioner Freeman. The motion passed by a 6-0 by a roll call vote.

2. Approval of Draft Minutes from the May 24, 2023, Parks and Recreation Commission Regular Meeting

Vice Chair Brown asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner Freeman moved to approve the minutes seconded by Commissioner Cribbs. The motion passed by a 6-0 by a roll call vote.

CITY OFFICIAL REPORTS

3. Department Report

Daren Anderson, Assistant Director of Community Services, provided a PowerPoint presentation addressing recruitment, recreation programs and events, project updates, updates about aggressive coyote behavior at the Pearson-Arastradero Preserve and capital improvement projects. He provided an update on the Baylands Boardwalk Piling Repair Project along with graphic photos showing details.

Commissioner Cribbs wondered how the passing of the budget would affect Park and Recreation Community Services.

Mr. Anderson answered the budget was enormous and it would be hard to summarize other than to say it would be very positive for the department. Funding was received for an additional park ranger a year ago but was limited to only two years. This funding process secured that for the ongoing future. The capital projects were approved. He stated it was a rewarding process seeing services restored that were once in peril from the budget deficit resulting from the pandemic.

Commissioner Cribbs asked if there was any idea how long the skate park and traffic study would take once it had been scoped.

Mr. Anderson thought it would be relatively quick and explained the process.

Commissioner Cribbs asked if Sam Kaplinsky was having to wait to be able to raise money until the traffic study came back.

Mr. Anderson stated he could move forward but he thought it was wise to wait.

Commissioner Oche asked if there was a reason the vacant positions were not getting filled.

Mr. Anderson answered there were not many applicants the first go around for division manager. Another reason was they had an impacted Human Resources department with

1 not enough staff and too many recruitments ongoing, so they have been slow to move
2 forward.

3 Commissioner Oche asked what the report of “It is going well” meant for the summer
4 programs.

5 Mr. Anderson stated when he asked Rec Staff how summer camps were going, he just
6 got a basic thumbs up that the classes being led were being appreciated by the
7 participants. He believed Commissioner Oche’s conversation with Cayla Koga and the
8 Recreation Team would be the best way to delve into that.

9 Commissioner Oche was curious to know where the old removal for the infill would go.

10 Mr. Anderson answered it would be discarded in the trash and 95% was already removed
11 and they were just at the 5% that keeps working its way up to the top.

12 Commissioner Freeman asked if both fields were experiencing the same issue.

13 Mr. Anderson answered there were two fields at Mayfield, and both were experiencing
14 the issue. The El Camino field had the same problem a couple years earlier. They had
15 removed as much as they could of the old infill, put in the new and the same process
16 happened. It eventually resolved.

17 Commissioner Freeman asked if the coyote attacks were happening in the same location
18 and if they felt it was the same animal.

19 Mr. Anderson answered it was just aggressive behavior as opposed to an attack. The
20 Staff felt it was one coyote when it was localized to one trail but given multiple sites, it
21 was possible it could be more than one.

22 Commissioner Kleinhaus asked for an update on the issue of the golf course mitigation
23 and reporting.

24 Mr. Anderson stated he believed Lam Do sent Commissioner Freeman a brief update on
25 that. It would come with the Ad-Hoc report.

26 Commissioner Kleinhaus asked if the coyotes were only at Arastradero and not at
27 Foothills.

28 Mr. Anderson confirmed that was correct.

29 Commissioner Wei expressed curiosity about how they could help address recruitment
30 issues.

1 Mr. Anderson stated the link is on the HR webpage and he would be glad to email it out
2 to the Commission.

3 **BUSINESS**

4 **4. Palo Alto Recreation Foundation / Friends of Palo Alto Parks Updates – Vice**
5 **Chair Brown – Discussion**

6 Jack Morton, Co-President of Palo Alto Recreation Foundation, expressed concerns
7 about the ability of the Recreation Foundation to raise money for programs in the future
8 and would be looking to the City for that. He stated the Recreation Foundation would
9 help Staff meet unexpected things as long as the money was there.

10 Commissioner Freeman asked why Mr. Morton believed that the funding opportunities
11 had changed.

12 Mr. Morton stated that he thought the Community did not recreate the way it used to. He
13 felt that what was significant dollars at one time was currently a fraction of what the
14 budget for the City was. He did not see that the Community would be supportive the as it
15 once was.

16 Vice Chair Brown stated there was a need for Community fundraising and gave some
17 suggestions on how to continue fundraising and how the Community could help.

18 Commissioner Wei spoke about an idea someone had for an event for the 50th
19 anniversary of the creation of the internet. She offered to introduce them in order to
20 discuss that.

21 Mr. Morton stated he would like to discuss that. He felt there were people that would
22 contribute to major projects for major upgrades.

23 Commissioner Cribbs summarized that she felt the Community needs a vehicle to
24 fundraise for small and big projects and she felt the Recreation Foundation did provide
25 that as did the Friends of the Parks. She believed there continued to be a future for the
26 Recreation Foundation.

27 Richard Hackmann, Director of Friends of the Palo Alto Parks, gave a brief explanation
28 of Friends of the Palo Alto Parks and their functions which included providing the
29 nonprofit community with a place to receive funds for specific projects.

30 Commissioner Kleinhaus asked who covers the insurance when there is a project with
31 volunteers involved.

32 Mr. Hackmann answered that it varies project by project and what is involved.

Commissioner Freeman asked if they were more like a sponsor and at what point in time there was a handoff as a project developed.

Mr. Hackmann answered they were more like a partner who could help by receiving the donation payments, provide insights and recommendations and use their networking contacts. He gave an example of a project they had been able to contribute to. He stated he had placed the URL to their website in the Zoom chat in case anyone wanted more information about them.

Commissioner Wei stated she and Commissioner Oche were looking to expand classes for the Enjoy! Catalog for children in the parks and asked if there was a process needed in order to work with them on that.

Mr. Hackmann stated any programs, activities, set schedules or use of parks during set times was normally handled by Staff through their process. They tend to be selective in picking capital efforts to be involved in.

5. Safe Routes to Schools Update – Jose Palma – Discussion

Jose Palma, Safe Routes to School Coordinator, provided slides sharing an overview of the last completed school year of 2021/2022 discussing their post-pandemic response to parents, PAUSD restrictions related to the pandemic, education adjustments due to the pandemic, information about the new Community outreach tool and an overview of outcomes and data trends.

Commissioner Kleinhaus wondered if part of the education of the M.I.K.E. event included explanation about the areas in Palo Alto where E-bikes are encouraged and where they are not permitted.

Mr. Palma explained the M.I.K.E. project was conducted before changes were done for where E-bikes could be ridden. He had focused on providing maps on how to get to specific schools. He stated there was currently information on their website with information on what parents should know about electric bikes and provided a link to that.

Commissioner Kleinhaus stated it would be helpful in future events to have a map showing where they should not be riding electric bikes. She also stated that from a sustainability point of view, it was discouraging to see more people driving and she wondered if that had created more safety issues.

Mr. Palma stated that there had been conversation nationally about the increase of driving, especially during the pandemic. He assumed PAPD would have that information and he would check with them.

Commissioner Kleinhaus stated studies showed more severe accidents occurred with electric bikes and wondered if that had been seen in Palo Alto.

Mr. Palma stated their team were connecting to the school community to educate on E-bike usage, but they do not have the numbers on how many accidents there had been.

Commissioner Oche was curious to know how they track the trends and metrics and if they had any upcoming classes for the upcoming school year for the residents to encourage them to consider biking classes. She hoped he could share lessons learned from the past year and feedback from the Community for future ideas and tips. She asked if there were any partnerships with companies that want to rent or give bikes or repair bikes and how they would create that awareness.

Mr. Palma stated as a reminder that the maps were suggested routes for families to consider taking. He gave an outline of classes that would be held in the summer. He gave details on methods for tracking. He stated they were working with the Silicon Valley Bicycle Exchange organization in Palo Alto to provide used bikes to those who do not have a bike. He stated they gathered information through surveys and iterated lessons they had learned through this about the impact the pandemic had on bike safety.

Commissioner Wei asked what the plan was to increase bike riding that had been reduced after the pandemic and if the Safe Routes map could be distributed to every classroom in every school.

Mr. Palma stated the map was provided on school websites, but he felt that in-person interaction was more effective. He stated the City would be conducting a needs and capacity assessment for secondary schools to determine what kind of program was needed at the high school, what kind of support the PTA could provide and how much additional City resources would be required.

Commissioner Wei asked if there were physical Safe Routes maps for every school.

Mr. Palma stated they have been asked to print out large maps for the schools and they had been installed at the front of the school. There has been concerns expressed that those physical maps are not environmentally friendly, but maps can be recycled, and it does not run on batteries so will not die and it can be stored on person and used compared to a phone which might die. They will provide a map and deliver it by bike if needed.

Commissioner Freeman asked where they get their data and if they incorporate the other transportation means currently used by kids.

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1 Mr. Palma stated they were noticing the emergence of more micro mobility being used.
2 The data is collected in partnership with the school district and by the parents. He stated
3 they were looking into collecting further information. He felt like he was seeing more
4 bikes.

5 Commissioner Oche asked what the parent volunteers do and how they were engaged.

6 Mr. Palma stated the parents keep the partnership together between the PTA, PAUSD
7 and the school. He stated there was more information about their partnership on the
8 website. They have the City's School Transportation Safety Committee which includes
9 Transportation Safety Representatives which are parent volunteers from all schools who
10 meet with them during school months to discuss transportation safety-related issues in
11 their school and surrounding area. Parent volunteers are used during the bike rodeo
12 season.

13 Commissioner Cribbs asked how many volunteers were involved in the program.

14 Mr. Palma answered there were over 100 parent volunteers.

15 Commissioner Cribbs asked if the number of bike accidents were tracked every year at
16 the schools.

17 Mr. Palma stated he did not track that, but that PAPD does and gives him the information
18 when he is running a report.

19 Commissioner Cribbs asked what plans they had to reduce the number of car trips for all
20 schools.

21 Mr. Palma answered they recently purchased a bike blender to use as an incentive for
22 parents/PTA to bring to different events at middle and high schools to have students
23 come over and discuss education. They provide helmets to students that need them and
24 show them how to wear them. He stated they are scoped for elementary schools, so the
25 middle and high school are harder for them to do without volunteers.

26 Commissioner Cribbs asked how the Commission could help them.

27 Mr. Palma stated getting the word out, sharing their website and information about their
28 website, and encouraging others to model behavior about riding a bike, walking, and
29 wearing a helmet would be helpful.

30 Vice Chair Brown asked what the process would be for the next five-year plan and who
31 was involved in the creation of that plan.

Mr. Palma noted his counterpart Rose Mesterhazy, Kathy Durham, Penny Ellson and the parent volunteers were involved. The five-year plan was developed in part with the parents for the Transportation Safety Representatives and the City with involvement of PAUSD. There was conversation about if they wanted another five-year plan or something different for 2023/2024.

6. Foothills Nature Preserve General Status Update – Daren Anderson – Discussion

Mr. Anderson, Community Services Department, shared updates with PowerPoint slides on the 2022 visitation to the preserve with information on entry passes, ranger calls for service, enforcement issues, information about the various capital projects that would be happening in the preserve, updates on restoration and volunteer partner organizations, Grassroots Ecology, Environmental Volunteers, and the Friends of Foothills. He talked about the Buckeye Creek Hydrology Study and the Buckeye Creek Cleanout with photos.

Mike Warner, Foothills Nature Preserve Supervising Ranger, presented slides giving updates on calls for ranger service in 2022 and to date in 2023. He will present data about compliance with the daily entry fee at a later date.

Tyler Feld, Project Lead for Grassroots Ecology, gave updates of the Grassroots Ecology projects and community engagement highlights for the past year.

Commissioner Kleinhaus asked if they monitored any other special status species other than Dirca.

Alex Von Feldt, Co-Executive Director of Grassroots Ecology, answered that they did not monitor any other special status species. When they plan a workday, they are aware of the species that are there and keep volunteers away from them. They do other vegetation monitoring.

Commissioner Kleinhaus stated she found *Monolopia gracilens*, a special status species at the back side of Los Trancos. She thought that would be a good place to do some vegetation cleaning. Regarding the cleanup of Buckeye Creek and the 7.7 acres, the picture Mr. Anderson had shown was natural to how creeks function and it is important to let them function that way, so she did not understand why they wanted to do the sediment cleanup.

Mr. Anderson stated the sediment cleanout had been done for 30 to 40 years because of the longstanding channelization of Buckeye Creek that led to excessive sediment that has resulted in problems downstream in the past.

1 Mr. Feld added that continuing toward the preserve boundary, there is a culvert that goes
2 underneath private property and homes just outside the preserve. The culvert cannot
3 handle the sediment flow and gets clogged.

4 Commissioner Kleinhaus asked if the City is still applying for grants to try and
5 implement the larger project.

6 Mr. Anderson answered they had not applied for grants for that one.

7 Commissioner Oche asked for more information about the impacts the capital
8 improvement projects would have.

9 Mr. Anderson provided details on the length and impact of each project starting from the
10 least impactful to the most: Sunfish Island Bridge, Boronda Lake Dock Replacement and
11 Pedestrian Bridge at Los Trancos Valley. He did not yet know how impactful the
12 Buckeye Creek Grade Control Structures project would be. The restrooms project were
13 staggered in order to decrease the impact and he explained steps that would be taken
14 during that time. He did not feel that the pedestrian trail work or split rail fence would
15 have much impact on the Community. He felt the parking could be phased in a way to
16 minimize impacts. The crosswalks and speed bumps would be minor and would be
17 staged to minimize the amount of impact.

18 Commissioner Oche stated that based on the violation data that had been shared, she
19 wondered if it was due to lack of awareness. She was amazed to see 866 people turned
20 back with their dogs. She felt it was due to ineffective communication and more
21 awareness needed to be created. In the case of emergency situations where people went
22 missing, she asked what safety plan was in place.

23 Mr. Anderson explained that the 866 dog turn-aways were in 2021 and were
24 predominantly new people coming out of COVID wanting to go to parks that did not
25 have a lot of experience. He did not believe it was a shortage of communication or
26 education on the City's behalf but lack of awareness. It has significantly dropped in the
27 last year. When people were turned away, they were rerouted to a nearby preserve.

28 Mr. Warner added when people were not sure about the dog regulations on the
29 weekends, it was usually because they got information from third-party websites and not
30 the City's website. He stated he had been working with one of the rangers to overhaul
31 the signage at Foothills to better communicate the regulations. He stated the goal of
32 enforcement was to educate and have people follow the rules voluntarily. The 290
33 written warnings were educational contacts and only 2 of the 290 were repeats. He
34 described the criteria that was used when writing citations as opposed to written
35 warnings. As far as safety measures, he stated cell phone and City-provided radio
36 coverage in the Foothills region is very sparse so has an impact on people using their cell

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1 phone for directions or access to transportation. They have just installed 13 markers on
2 the Los Trancos loop trail to improve wayfinding for park visitors. That will expand over
3 the next year upgrading the rest of the trail markers within the preserve and Arastradero
4 Open Space to combat some of the issues with lost hikers. He stated there were two
5 instances where the people were just off trail and became very lost and that is harder to
6 mitigate. He described a texting tool they have to help people that are lost if they have
7 cell service. He stated he wanted to see Staff out on the trails available if people have
8 questions, to address violations and to be there is people need help.

9 Commissioner Oche asked if contact information for the Friends of Foothills could be
10 shared.

11 Mr. Anderson answered it was on the website.

12 Commissioner Freeman questioned if they had enough people to help and assist with
13 issues with the rising number of visitors.

14 Mr. Warner answered they could use more support on the staffing side. Their biggest
15 goal is getting the assistant ranger positions filled which would give some breathing
16 room.

17 Commissioner Freeman suggested increasing signage to alert people to the fact that the
18 cell phone coverage is poor in the Foothills.

19 Mr. Warner agreed and felt they might reposition the signage, so people see it as they
20 approach the park instead after they are inside.

21 Commissioner Freeman asked what caused the dip in 2022 on slide 3.

22 Mr. Anderson stated there was internal discussion about whether it was the entrance fee
23 or the newness factor wearing off.

24 Mr. Warner added they started advertising around September they would be going to a
25 daily use fee and the signage was posted three to four months beforehand and that is
26 when the monthly trend started to go down.

27 Commissioner Cribbs asked what happened to the Stakeholders Committee that came
28 out of the City Manager's office.

29 Mr. Anderson stated he along with Commissioner Kleinhaus, Chair Greenfield and their
30 partners at the agency were still meeting.

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1 Commissioner Cribbs questioned if there had been a discussion about the proposed
2 docent situation with a local community college or following on what Stanford was
3 doing.

4 Mr. Anderson answered it had not had a lot of movement other than the recent thing he
5 mentioned. The teen docent program had just been mentioned at the last meeting a
6 couple of weeks ago. It is new and he did not have a lot of detail on that yet.

7 Commissioner Cribbs asked for that to be put on the list, so it is not lost. She stated many
8 years ago there was a lot of conversation about the fee at Foothills Park. She wondered if
9 there was an opportunity to revisit taking the fee away on the weekdays and if they had
10 the information to know if it cost more money to collect the fee on the weekdays than it
11 does to use the fee.

12 Mr. Anderson stated it is now Council Directive with recommendation from the PRC to
13 implement the fees. The weekday fee is relatively new. He did not feel they were losing
14 money collecting the fees. He felt they could revisit it on next year's workplan to
15 determine the necessity.

16 Commissioner Cribbs wondered if they had data about kids coming up to see the
17 preserve.

18 Mr. Warner answered they had been getting a few more summer camps coming up. Part
19 of his goal for the next year was trying to bring that position back to Open Space to do
20 more Community outreach and public programming. They got an email from the City
21 Manager about a week before about certain grants that had been put out there and one
22 that sparked their interest was from the state parks to fund outreach to low income and
23 underserved communities. It was pointed out that because of their limited staffing, it
24 might be difficult to coordinate bringing someone to the preserve but possibly they could
25 partner with the City Naturalist Position or the Environmental Volunteers and go outside
26 the preserve and bring the preserve to them.

27 Ms. Von Feldt added they had a volunteer outreach coordinator, and a big part of her job
28 was to reach audiences they had not worked with in the past.

29 Commissioner Kleinhaus asked for clarification that it is only on the weekend dogs are
30 not allowed.

31 Mr. Warner clarified dogs are allowed on leash during the week but not on weekends or
32 holidays.

1 Commissioner Kleinhaus remembered in the general plan there was a potential program
2 to have a shuttle going from the Senior Center and back once a day and wondered if
3 there were potential plans to implement that.

4 Mr. Anderson answered he had not heard any plans for that.

5 Mr. Warner stated he would be interested in following up on that.

6 Commissioner Kleinhaus stated if they were going to let people know there is no internet
7 before going into the park, the kiosk would have to be moved in to avoid traffic jams.

8 Mr. Warner stated the entry would have to be reworked because when it gets overloaded
9 it causes safety concerns. He stated it would be investigated down the road.

10 Commissioner Kleinhaus stated the biggest problem she had seen was hikers coming in
11 without enough water.

12 Mr. Warner stated they could address that by putting temporary signs out during the
13 summer.

14 Mr. Anderson commented that could be mentioned to the Environmental Volunteers to
15 have on their table and the Trail Ambassadors.

16 **7. Ad Hoc Committees and Liaison Updates – Vice Chair Brown – Discussion**

17 Commissioner Cribbs stated the ad-hoc has had two meetings for the Wellness Center.
18 They are putting a timeline together but are waiting for information from the City Staff
19 now that the budget is complete, and they have time to work on the Council Directive
20 questions. She stated they had an excellent meeting with City Staff and the ad-hoc
21 committee about the playing fields, vendors, questions and gathering information. They
22 have another meeting coming up on July 5 and they have good information from partners
23 and people at Stanford and the city and county of San Francisco and people who look
24 forward to collaborating with the committee.

25 Commissioner Freeman stated they were working on a Google project, and he would
26 send information about it.

27 Mr. Anderson said the next step for Staff was to develop the questions they talked about,
28 and it was partially done.

29 Commissioner Cribbs stated they were waiting for the Staff to be finished with the
30 budget with regard to grant opportunities. She mentioned they had received a letter
31 complimenting the Aquatics Staff, the pool and Tim Sheeper on the culture and the swim
32 program and opportunities.

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Commissioner Freeman stated the work on gym A and B at Cubberley had not started yet. Invitations for bids would be going out soon. Cubberley has been closed down since February 2022. There is a closed City Council session tentatively scheduled in August to discuss the terms of payment and transfer a portion of Cubberley lands from the Palo Alto Unified School District for the City. They would have more information about that after the session starts. He stated two weeks ago there was an article in the Post about golfers entering out-of-bound areas. He sent an email to Lam to get an update on that who said steps were being taken reminding golfers of the Wetlands and out-of-bound areas when they start to go on the course. They will be adding signage and fencing and roping off areas. They have course marshals patrolling the course. They will be following up at the next meeting hoping this has been resolved. Staff is working with the ecology consultant getting into compliance with the state water board. The good golfing weather for the latter half of spring was reflected in higher utilization of the course and they expect additional increases with the coming warm weather.

Vice Chair Brown added the dog park discussions continue with the stakeholders in North Palo Alto as well as Barron Park and there are upcoming meetings on the Master Plan ad-hoc but nothing to report at this time.

Commissioner Kleinhaus stated she and Commissioner Freeman were ad-hoc for the bicycle continuation from last year. They met with Staff to look at signage and expressed an interest in more signage with symbols than a lot of words if possible. They started looking at trailhead bike racks at City Council's direction. They narrowed down the possibilities and planned to go visit some of those areas. They asked Staff about how people responded to the directions on where they can ride electric bicycles and other mobility devices and it seemed like most people respected the direction from the City.

Commissioner Wei stated she and Commissioner Oche reached out to the Youth Council to start a conversation for a plan for the recreation program for the Enjoy! Catalog.

Commissioner Oche stated for the recreation program, they had reached out to Cayla Koga for CSD programs and hoped to arrange a meeting to discuss further. Regarding the Age Friendly liaison, she had a meeting with Minka and Adam Howard regarding making the City more age friendly. She believed the next steps would depend on what the City wanted them to do and wanted to confirm the direction she needed to move in to promote the age-friendly subject.

Mr. Anderson inquired if they provided any feedback on what they were capable of.

Commissioner Oche stated based on the feedback she got, Minka did not think they had enough resources in the next three months. She also stated she saw potential opportunity to close the gap between seniors who have experience, skills, knowledge that they could pour into the youth. For sustainability, she had a meeting with the CSD coordinator for

1 Open Space, Parks and Golf. They discussed the opportunity to pick a project and
2 leverage on the fact they could publicize the great work they were doing in the City.
3 They did a brief review using the Institute of Sustainability Infrastructure. They offered
4 to train City Staff for free and to make a presentation to talk about what they do.

5 **COMMISSIONER/BOARD MEMBER QUESTIONS, COMMENTS,**
6 **ANNOUNCEMENTS, OR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

7
8 Mr. Anderson suggested the Foothills improvements would be ready for the next month.
9 He saw a rough draft from Public Works Engineering. He, Mr. Warner, and the team
10 were providing feedback to get it into condition to share with the ad-hoc, which would
11 be the next step. Pending that conversation, it could possibly be ready for the next
12 month. The Tree Ordinance discussion went to Council recently. He was not sure where
13 that was at but would potentially be on the list.

14
15 Vice Chair Brown stated she would check on that. She stated the dog park was on the list
16 of upcoming meetings, but she was not sure if it would be ready by then and she would
17 check on that.

18
19 **ADJOURNMENT**

20
21 Meeting adjourned at 10:14 P.M.