



City of Palo Alto

City Council Staff Report

(ID # 5894)

Report Type: Consent Calendar

Meeting Date: 8/17/2015

Summary Title: Park Improvement Ordinance for Pilot Batting Cages Project

Title: Adoption of a Park Improvement Ordinance for the Pilot Batting Cages Project at Former PASCO Site at the Baylands Athletic Center

From: City Manager

Lead Department: Community Services

Recommendation

Staff and the Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) recommend that Council adopt a Park Improvement Ordinance (Attachment A), authorizing the addition of two batting cages and converting one standard parking stall to a handicapped accessible parking stall (Attachment B) at the former Palo Alto Sanitation Company (PASCO) site located adjacent to the Baylands Athletic Center.

Background

The former PASCO site is approximately one-acre of parkland located adjacent to the Baylands Athletic Center. In 1958, the City entered into a contract with the Palo Alto Sanitation Company (PASCO) for garbage collection. The City leased approximately one acre of land at Geng Road to PASCO to be used as a service yard. In 1983, the City and PASCO expanded the lease area to approximately two acres. The additional one-acre parcel that was added to the PASCO lease was dedicated parkland, and Council required that parcel revert to parkland upon the termination of the PASCO contract. The City's current contractor for recycling and garbage collection is Green Waste, and it holds the lease of the non-parkland adjacent to Geng Road. The one-acre parcel of parkland has been vacant and unused for numerous years. Staff explored options of putting soccer fields on the site, but determined that due to the size and configuration of the parcel that it was not possible to fit playing fields on the site.

Council previously approved batting cages at the Baylands Athletic Center

On September 20, 2004, a Council staff report recommended that Council adopt a Park Improvement Ordinance for a Capital Improvement Project for the Baylands Athletic Center that included adding a batting cage to the existing Baylands Athletic Center site. The staff report states:

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.

On October 4, 2004, Council unanimously adopted the Park Improvement Ordinance, which includes an 84'x26'x12' batting cage located along the first baseline. Due to limited budget for the project, the batting cage was never built.

Discussion

In May 2014, Palo Alto Babe Ruth Baseball League (Babe Ruth) approached Parks staff with the concept of adding batting cages to the Baylands Athletic Center. Staff informed Babe Ruth that the City is currently working on a Parks Master Plan (scheduled to be completed in early 2016) which will provide guidance on priorities and best locations for amenities like batting cages. Babe Ruth proposed a pilot batting cage project at the former PASCO site. It would provide a much-needed batting facility for the Baylands Park Athletic Center and also provide helpful information about how many batting cages are needed, how much use they would receive, guidance on preferred design with regards to durability and security, and guidance on how a more substantial long-term batting cage facility could be integrated into the Parks Master Plan.

The existing site is fenced and secure, and has gates and a pathway to allow access. Bordering the site is an office park to the south (8' high chain-link fence with slats), the Green Waste facility to the east (6' high chain-link fence), and Baylands Athletic Center field to the north (10' high chain-link fence with slats).

PG&E Easements on the Site

There are three PG&E easements on this parcel. There are two power line easements and a gas line easement. All of the easements prohibit building any structures within the easement. The layout of the batting cages is configured to avoid conflict with the easements. Staff met with PG&E and confirmed its approval of the plans.

Project Description

Two batting cages would be constructed on a synthetic turf surface on the former PASCO site. One existing parking stall in the Baylands Athletic Center Parking Lot (located closest to the existing entry gate to the former PASCO site) would be converted to a handicapped accessible parking stall. Entry to the site will be through an existing locked gate to the north. There is an existing base rock pathway that connects the parking stall to the existing gate. Each batting cage will measure approximately 18'W x 16'H x 80'L. No electrical or water connections are

necessary for this project. This will be an unlit facility. No trees or vegetation will be removed as part of this project.

As this is a pilot project, it is designed so that the entire area can be easily returned to its original condition with minimal disassembly and removal effort. The current design is a simple, sturdy cage that will stand on its own without any foundation or footings. The artificial turf will be applied directly onto the existing base rock surface at the site, and the batting cage will be assembled directly on top of the artificial turf. This simple design not only keeps costs low, it is easy to assemble and disassemble to move it elsewhere if desired. City Recreation staff will document the use of the facility to help track how often it is used and by whom.

Maintenance of the site

Apart from the periodic clearing of leaves, the cages are expected to require little maintenance. The City will perform this leaf clearing as part of their maintenance of the existing Baylands baseball field. If the pilot is continued, the long-term maintenance of the facility would be funded by Babe Ruth.

Management of the batting cages

Palo Alto Babe Ruth Baseball will fund the construction of the batting cages. For the first two to three months of the pilot project, only Palo Alto Babe Ruth Baseball and the City of Palo Alto Parks will have access to the site. This limited time period will allow staff to work out the details around access, safety, theft, vandalism, over-utilization by one group, and any other unforeseen issues. Once the operational details are resolved, the batting cages will become part of the Baylands Athletic Center facility. The City will oversee the batting cages and use and rent them to sports groups just as the City does with the with the Baylands Athletic Center fields. While no fees are recommended in FY 2016, user fees will be considered for the FY 2017 Municipal fee Schedule for Council consideration.

Parks Master Plan and the duration of the pilot project

Once the Parks Master Plan completes the analysis on the additional 10 acres of future park recreational space between the golf course and the Baylands Athletic Center, as well as their overall park and recreation system analysis, the City will have additional guidance on the best use of the PASCO site. At that time we can reevaluate if the pilot batting cages should remain at this site or be removed or relocated. If the batting cage pilot is successful (success will be defined as the facility is safe, vandalism kept to a minimum, and park users are satisfied), the pilot will continue until the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is complete and alternative recommendations for the site are considered for Council approval.

Planning Review

Palo Alto Planning Department has reviewed and approved the project.

Parks and Recreation Commission

On February 24, 2015, the Commission reviewed the pilot batting cage project. The Commission supported the project and thought it was a good use for the former PASCO site. One Commissioner suggested a public meeting to ensure that there is an opportunity for a public discussion.

On March 23, 2015, a public meeting was held at the Baylands Athletic Center to discuss the project. Six members of the public, two Commissioners, and four staff attended the meeting. The public participants all supported the batting cage project. There was a request to include a gate at the west end of the former PASCO site to allow more efficient access to the batting cages from the softball field. There is an existing pedestrian gate that will provide this access.

On April 28, 2015, the Commission unanimously voted to recommend that Council adopt and approve the Park Improvement Ordinance authorizing the batting cage project (Attachment C).

Timeline

The batting cages will be installed 31 days after the second Council reading of the Park Improvement Ordinance.

Resource Impact

No staffing increases are proposed as a result of this project. The cost of the batting cages will be funded by Palo Alto Babe Ruth Baseball. City Recreation staff will manage the use of the batting cages. City Parks staff will provide periodic maintenance to blow the site free of leaves. The maintenance is expected to be minimal.

Policy Implications

The batting cages will be installed 31 days after the second Council reading of the Park Improvement Ordinance.

Environmental Review

This project is not subject to environmental review under provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Attachments:

- Attachment A 00710593 ORDN Baylands Athletic Center Batting Cages (PDF)
- Attachment B PIO Batting Cage Exhibit A (PDF)

NOT YET APPROVED

ORDINANCE NO. _____
 ORDINANCE OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PALO ALTO
 APPROVING AND ADOPTING A PLAN OF IMPROVEMENT FOR
 TWO BATTING CAGES LOCATED AT THE FORMER PASCO SITE
 AT THE BAYLANDS ATHLETIC CENTER

The Council of the City of Palo Alto does ORDAIN as follows:

SECTION 1. Findings. The City Council finds and declares that:

(a) Article VIII of the Charter of the City of Palo Alto and Section 22.08.005 of the Palo Alto Municipal Code require that, before any substantial building, construction, reconstruction or development is commenced or approved, upon or with respect to any land held by the City for park purposes, the Council shall first cause to be prepared and by ordinance approve and adopt a plan therefor.

(b) The former PASCO site at the Baylands is dedicated to park purposes.

(c) The City intends to authorize construction of certain park improvements within the former PASCO site at the Baylands Athletic Center, as shown at Exhibit "A". The improvements include, without limitation, the following:

- (1) Construction two batting cages.
- (2) Converting one standard parking stall to a handicapped parking stall.

(d) The improvements do not require removing any vegetation or trees.

(e) The improvements described above and as more specifically described at Exhibit "A" are consistent with park and conservation purposes.

(f) The Council desires to approve the projects described above and as more specifically described at Exhibit "A".

SECTION 2. The Council hereby approves the Plan for construction of improvements within the former PASCO site at the Baylands Athletic Center and hereby adopts the Plans, attached hereto at Exhibit "A" as part of the official plan for the construction of improvements within the former PASCO site at the Baylands Athletic Center.

SECTION 3. The Council finds that the construction of the new batting cage facilities at the former PASCO site at the Baylands Athletic Center is exempt from environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines section 15303.

NOT YET APPROVED

SECTION 4. This ordinance shall be effective on the thirty-first day after the date of its adoption.

INTRODUCED:

PASSED:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTENTIONS:

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

APPROVED:

Senior Asst. City Attorney

City Manager

Director of Community Services

Director of Administrative Services

Exhibit A

-Install two batting cages on a synthetic turf surface. Each batting cage will measure approximately 18'W x 16'H x 80'L. There are no foundations or footings for the cages. The artificial turf will be applied directly onto the existing base rock surface at the site, and then assemble the cage on top of it.

-Convert one existing parking stall in the Baylands Athletic Center Parking Lot (located closest to the existing entry gate to the former PASCO site) to a handicapped accessible parking stall.

-Entry to the site will be through an existing locked gate to the north. There is an existing base rock pathway that connects the parking stall to the existing gate.

