

The monthly meeting of the Inglewood Parks and Recreation Commission was held on Thursday, June 5, 2003 at the City of Inglewood Council Chambers, located on the 9th floor of Inglewood City Hall. Chairperson Ralph Franklin presiding called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present:

Commissioner Willie Agee – District I Commissioner Norma Smith – District II Chairperson Ralph Franklin – District IV Commissioner Frank Wilson – At Large

Absent:

Commissioner Leticia Victorino

Also Present:

Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department:

Sandra Green, Administrative Secretary Kevin Hawkins, Director Rita Gardner, Deputy City Administrator James Henry, Senior Recreation Supervisor Mike McLaughlan, Park Maintenance Superintendent

MINUTES

Motion for approval of minutes made by Commissioner Agee and seconded by Commissioner Smith. Motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Paul Russell suggested renaming Vincent Park back to its original name. He asked that the Commission take this recommendation to the City Council. He also recommended the Commission Meeting Report should be available to the public at all times.

Diane Sambrano stated Center Park should be open to everyone not just a select few.

Joel Valesco Inglewood Resident (Resides on 110th Street; District 4) stated that for many years the safety of the children during recess and breaks at Center Park has been a major concern. While in school the students use the park during their recess and break times while its open to the public. Safety issues have been reported to the school police. Strangers are accessing the park during school hours and while children play. Almost every school day the children witness many incidents regarding drugs and sexual activity, due to the lack of staff the school police is limited to their ability in stopping strangers from using the park. On several occasions there have been many concerns brought to the City representatives and school staff but this issue has not been resolved. In the past three months we have joined a neighborhood group, we have created a parent volunteer committee for the safety of our children and had a survey routed in the area around Center Park. Since March of 2003 the committee dedicated themselves in motorizing from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. the survey stated that there were 142 residents using the park. A survey was taken asking if they thought Center Park belonged to Worthington School and 202 people and yes, they think it belongs to the school and 91 answered no they do not know. Out of 202 interviews, 137 answered that they use the park facility little or not at all; 120 residents rated the security from poor to unacceptable and 198 residents agreed that the safety of the children is very important. About 200 residents support the proposal of closing Center Park during the hours of 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. They agree that this proposal is very valuable to the safety of the children. There is a concern that there are 36 registered child molesters living in Inglewood, 21 convicted, 4 out of 36, which have molested children under the age of 14. Therefore, it is our plan to present this petition with signatures to the school and City Officials with the intent of closing Center Park to ensure safety of the children between the hours of 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Maria Zandio stated that there have been people that smoke and write on the walls which is not appropriate for the children to see.

Cynthia Lahbil, Teacher at Worthington Elementary School stated that during Physical Education there have been young adults involved in inappropriate behavior and they have asked them to leave, the children should not be a witness to this. There shouldn't be any pressure when teachers are out there.

Maria Galvan, Volunteer at Worthington stated many things have been seen at the park for example, a couple had gone into the Ladies restroom, as a mother I worry so I entered the restroom to see if there were any children in there, as I walked in the man saw me and said to me "I am here helping her, I will put her pants up because she can not do it herself and we would leave in a minute", also the high school students go to the restrooms to use drugs and that worries me, so I ask if the park could be closed during the school hours for the safety of the children.

Joel Graham has been in the Community for several years since the park was renovated. He stated the parents are not asking for the park to be closed all day but during the school hours for the safety of the children. The parents ask for the public to go through the school office if they feel the need to use the park. The school is just trying to keep the undesirables out of the park, for protection of the children.

Sondra Roberts, Inglewood Resident for the past 30 years, there has been a hard struggle in getting Center Park to its present state there is little supervision at the school. As a citizen I am expected to use the park at any hour and enter the park from the outside not through the school.

Christopher Thomas, Vice Principal at Worthington Elementary states unless people are visually drinking alcohol or using marijuana and other can see it, that is when we can call the police, and the employees at Worthington do not have the right to ask them to leave because it is a public park. As vice principal they could be asked to leave but cannot be forced to leave. These people sit in the park and as we bring the children out to play they still sit at the park and we look at them but its not until they actually do something that is when we call the police, and the police has been called before, the frustration point in all this is to wait. I do not have the authority to ask these people to leave.

Marlene Felix, Principal at Worthington Elementary School, clarified the situation regarding the parents going to the school and asking for help but the school cannot help because it is a public park. Inglewood Police have been out to the site on several occasions, the school police have helped a bit but they can only do this to a certain point. We cannot ask these people to leave. The staff does supervise but it is not enough.

Jo Evelyn Paine, Inglewood Resident, closing the park will not help the problem, the parent volunteer group should have distributed the survey around many areas not only around the school. It is a public park and the public should use the park when they please.

Maria Cisneros and Maria Sambulio, Parents at Worthington Elementary School, represent the parent volunteer group. They presented the Commission with copies of the survey's that were passed around throughout the community. The security of the children comes first; the parent volunteer group does not want the city to close the park completely but to close it during school hours for the safety of the children.

Yesenia Velasco, Teacher at Worthington Elementary School, the school is working very hard to build these children in the community who are also going to give back to the community. There is great importance in these children who are the future of Inglewood, who will give back to the community. If they grow up in a positive community they'll give back to the community. These are children that one day they will grow up and attend Morningside High School, then on to a University then hopefully they'll give back to the Community, to bring them up with high standards, to give them the knowledge that they need to be balanced individuals, so the School is hoping that the Commission and City could see that this is for the children that one day will give back to the community.

Councilwoman Judy Dunlap thanked the parents for being at the meeting and presenting to the commission the problem in which the parents are having. Thank you for letting us know your concerns.

Ms. De La Housie Bonds offered suggestions to both sides, those who would like to keep the park open and those that would like the park closed, do keep in mind the only school that is connected is not the only provider that attends the park. Unfortunately the school is not closed during the summer time, those that will not be able to go to that park because it is closed would be in District 4 was forced to find different ways to have more activities for our children, District 4 children are being neglected. We need more parks not less, and there has to be a way where the School Board and the City could come together for a solution. Just closing it will not be the solution, safety would not be attained during those hours, and people could sneak in. There has to be a balance.

Victoria Galindo, Parent of Worthington Elementary, this country which is the land of opportunity for the Hispanics, and the country that has more rights for our children that offers and provides the children with safe place for them to eat and live...the right that the children have is to have a safe place to go at. As a part of the community of Worthington, the commission should think about the children's right to be safe.

Teresa Watts, Teacher at Worthington I see people jogging in the morning and children playing at the park during the evening but there have been occasions that in which people go to the park and smoke marijuana during school hours, we're not saying we should close the park to the community but close it during the school hours.

Councilwoman Lorraine Johnson District IV thanked the parents for attending the meeting and being willing to come to the table and move this issue forward along with the school district.

Alice Grigsby, School District Board of Education stated it is critical that the School District and the City sit down together to make this work and also provide security for the children throughout the school day. As an elected school board member the school district pledges to work with the City to see if a solution could be found that could resolve this issue, that has been long standing regarding to Center Park.

Esperanza Gomez, parent of a child that attends Worthington Elementary stated the commission needs to understand how bad she feels leaving the children at a unsafe location to play.

Juan Manuel Simbolio, Parent of three (3) children that attend Worthington Elementary School. I wish to have the best for my children, I struggle very hard and from what I hear that during school hours these are people that do drugs at that location and that's something I wouldn't like my children to see and go through. I'm not sure if the ladies who opposed the situation have children at this school because I think they have no idea of what we as parents go through with these issues!

Jorge Guzman suggested that the staff at Worthington Elementary School should be given the right to ask patrons to leave when illegal actions take place.

Edith Gomez, "I am a worried mother that asks to close the park during school hours. What if a delinquent goes to the school and does something to my children, will the police come on time. I doubt the police would show up to the site on time and that is my concern."

Ms. Mendoza Parent Worthington Elementary, we are all here for the safety of our children not to take away the privileges of the residents. Safety does come first the children have seen things that they're not suppose to see at this age, children must stay away from the park even if the teacher tells them to go.

Teresa Miranda sometimes volunteers at the park and it's a shame to see the children happy during the recess as they walk to the park but no one ever knows what will be in hand for them, the school is not asking to close the park all day but during the school hours. If the Commission could only see the faces of these innocent children. We'll do whatever it takes to care for these children and with having the park closed for those hours it could help keep our children safe.

Mr. Hawkins stated the issues that have not been easy to address. The issue is not to close the park but to have a safer environment for the children. Last year this commission asked the staff to take a look at this park with the same issue, what's unique about it is that the park is adjacent to the school. City of Inglewood does not have /there is a competition of park facilities / the city administrator / take a close look at this issue unfortunately our legal representative is not here today, but the understanding of that space and that park cannot be taken out of that area, we suggest there be greater participation/recommendation to growing petition and concern to the community that there is a high level of sexual registered offenders that there are elements that the children shouldn't be near, to address the issue with the police, according to the Police Department did a search which was reduced to 11 registered offenders, as a Department we do not have the power to shut down and limit access to the park. As a solution we'll take our recommendation to Council. The School District representatives and parent group representatives should bring a resolution or find a suitable solution to this problem.

Commissioner Franklin stated the issue of alcohol abuse, drug use, inappropriate behavior and registered sexual molesters is an issue that needs to be solved as soon as possible. Commissioner Agee stated that the Police Department does not have any call records from the elementary school.

Commissioner Franklin stated there is a joint venture that needs to be worked on to solidify. There should be an open dialogue between the school and the City. For the safety and security of the children. Try to work on a cohesive plan.

Commissioner Wilson stated that the children's welfare should be taken into consideration and this should be resolved as soon as possible.

Commissioner Franklin asked for the president of the parent volunteer group to stay in contact with the Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department.

Commissioner Agee congratulated the parents for coming out and representing the children.

Commissioner Smith agreed with Commissioner Agee, they are thinking about the children but there has to be collaboration with both the educational system and with the city. Until they manage to have that collaboration this will not be solved but don't think that the commission is not sympathetic to the community's needs.

Commissioner Wilson asked Mr. Thomas how long did it take for the police to arrive at the scene.

Mr. Thomas stated the police arrived within 10 minutes. There is a problem between the School District and Inglewood Police Department. A criminal report is not always taken, when the police have been out.

Commissioner Wilson asked if the school police is not able to act upon that site?

Mr. Thomas said he is not sure who has that jurisdiction.

Commissioner Franklin said that during a meeting with the parents, the school board and with Mr. Butler it was clearly acknowledged that if the students were going to be in the park that it is up to the campus police to safe guard these children.

Commissioner Wilson asked if the survey was made in both English and Spanish?

Mr. Thomas responded the survey is in English and Spanish.

Mr. Hawkins said the parents' issues are also the department's issues, the Commission may not agree in terms of closing the parks but there is an agreement that there should be more resource to this matter.

Commissioner Franklin asked if the Commission could give a recommendation?

Commissioner Smith asked if everyone was aware that the park cannot be closed. A recommendation was made for the staff of Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department and the Inglewood Unified School District along with the community to have a meeting to figure out a solution to this problem.

Commissioner Franklin asked for a motion of the recommendation, Commissioner Wilson seconded the motion. Commissioner Wilson, Smith and Franklin are all in favor. Commissioner Agee was not in favor. Motion passed.

COMMUNICATIONS

None.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Hawkins presented the consultants from West Coast Arborists.

Andy Trotter stated that the West Coast Arborists Company has been working with the City of Inglewood for the past year to create a Tree Master Plan. The company also created a pallet of different tree species such as the required size, height, growing process, etc. The Company also did a tree inventory system. The spreadsheets for the plans give a primary existing species on that particular site. A master tree plan book has been completed, need Commission and further council approval. The City has about 25,000 tree sites or opportunities to have trees in the city, 7,000 sites are currently vacant, which is a great opportunity to have more trees in the community. There are also some trees that are recommended for removal due to overgrowth and branches that tangle with the cable wires.

Commissioner Wilson asked if there was tree root research made for the plumbing problems the citizens are having?

Mr. Trotter stated that the sewer lines are not included in the inventory system.

Commissioner Wilson said that roots get under the homes and destroy plumbing.

Mr. Trotter said that is why there is pallet with different species of trees that do not have basic roots and do not have the history of being problematic. The top ten trees mostly found throughout the communities are in the book.

Commissioner Agee asked what was the time limit on this project?

Mr. Trotter answered there really isn't a time limit.

Commissioner Franklin asked that the trees are very spacious and there is complication with the tree roots at various homes, but will something be done?

Mr. Trotter said that with the master plan they were able to detect many unhealthy trees, and it will be up to the staff to take action.

Mr. Hawkins stated at this point there is an issue regarding the skate park,

Mr. McLaughlan mentioned that on Tuesday, June 2, 2003 there was a meeting in the Library lecture hall regarding Skate Parks, there were four different skate park designs that were presented at the meeting, a few had different railings, a distribution was made of the design that was liked the most and it was recommended to be built at Darby Park.

Commissioner Agee asked what type of material is going to be used for this project?

Mr. McLaughlan responded that the actual framework is made out of coated metal/powder and the actual board where people would skate is made out of a plastic and wood composite.

Commissioner Agee asked if it is removable?

Mr. McLaughlan responded it will be placed on/and will be removable. The metal is the framework of the components.

Commissioner Smith asked in order to accept this the Commission needs to know a cost.

Mr. McLaughlan said there is a budget of \$350, 000 for all three parks.

Commissioner Franklin asked if there would be some sort of barrier such as fencing to prohibit immediate access to the skate park?

Mr. McLaughlan responded there will be a fence that will open and closed during scheduled times.

Commissioner Agee asked what would be the height of the fence?

Mr. McLaughlan said that couldn't be determined at this time.

Commissioner Franklin asked if the people who use the park could be able to sign an at risk waiver?

Mr. Hawkins responded there are two proposals on the table for example a waiver or signs posted but there has to be a recommendation made.

Commissioner Agee asked when would this be available?

Mr. McLaughlan responded they will go out to bid at the end of the month and thereafter the skate park should be finished within 2 to 3 months.

Commissioner Smith asked how would this change the insurance on the City?

Mr. Hawkins responded those terms would be looked into.

Commissioner Agee said that this City is one of the lasts ones to get a skate park and recommends that waivers be forced.

Commissioner Franklin asked what is the expectancy of the material?

Mr. McLaughlan responded the actual components of the metal material are a lifetime guarantee but the board itself is a five-year guarantee.

Commissioner Franklin asked for a motion.

Commissioner Agee recommended a waiver for the use of the skate parks for the Council's approval, Commissioner Wilson second the motion. Amendment was made for the waiver; recommend accepting the project as submitted without the waiver (access use of it), all in favor, motion has been approved for the project.

Mr. Hawkins thanked the parents for attending the Commission meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Agee is glad that the skate park is underway.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

COMMISSION SUGGESTIONS, REPORTS AND QUESTIONS

None.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:13 p.m. Motion for Adjournment was made by Commissioner Wilson and seconded by Commissioner Agee. Motion passed.

The next Commission Meeting will be held July 3, 2003 at the 9th Floor Council Chambers.