

***These meeting minutes are not official until approved by the
Parks, Recreation and Community Services Commission.***

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
CULVER CITY PARKS, RECREATION
AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMISSION
CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA

July 22, 2024
7:00 P.M.

Call to Order & Roll Call

Chair Leonard called the special meeting of the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Commission to order at 7:02 P.M. in the Mike Balkman Council Chambers and via Webex.

Present: Jane Leonard, Chair
 Crystal Alexander, Vice Chair
 Marci Baun, Commissioner
 Palvi Mohammed, Commissioner
 Maggie Peters, Commissioner

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Pledge of Allegiance

Howie Jacobowitz led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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Public Comment - Items NOT on the Agenda

Chair Leonard invited public comment.

Adam Ferguson, Senior Management Analyst, indicated that no requests to speak had been received for Items Not on the Agenda.

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Receipt of Correspondence

Adam Ferguson, Senior Management Analyst, reported that two e-comments and one e-mail comment had been received and distributed to Commissioners.

MOVED BY VICE CHAIR ALEXANDER, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER BAUN AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE PARKS, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMISSION RECEIVE AND FILE CORRESPONDENCE.

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Consent Calendar

None.

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Order of the Agenda

No changes were made.

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Action Items

Item A-1

(1) Consideration of Various Complaints the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Commission has Received Regarding Racket Sports Courts in Culver City; (2) Approval of Recommendations to City Staff or City Council in Response to the Complaints; (3) Consideration of Forming a PRCS Commission "Racket Sports Ad Hoc Subcommittee" to Complete a Specific Task; and, (4) If Desired, Appoint two PRCS Commission Members to the Newly Formed Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Chair Leonard introduced the item.

Ted Stevens, Parks, Recreation and Community Services Director, provided a summary of the material of record.

Adam Ferguson, Senior Management Analyst, discussed procedures for making public comment and for ceding time.

Chair Leonard invited public comment.

The following members of the public addressed the Commission:

Patti Mitsunaga ceded her time to Howie Jacobowitz.

Howie Jacobowitz provided background on himself; discussed his previous comments to the Commission on how to best address use of court space; undue burden on neighbors; a draft he submitted to the Commission; he expressed appreciation for the staff report; proposed dual striping two tennis courts at Veterans Park to create eight pickleball courts as a short-term solution; discussed returning the courts at Culver and Elenda to paddle tennis usage; addressing sound issues; increasing court supply; impact to the tennis community; the ability for tennis players to use the High School during non-school hours; the Joint Use Agreement; increased distance from the courts at Vets to residents; usage of the basketball courts at Vets; mid-term solutions to address the disparity of available space for pickleball players vs. tennis players; changing other dual use paddle tennis courts close to homes back to paddle tennis only while looking to dual striping more tennis courts; number of courts available in other cities; and for the long-term, he suggested making Fox Hills a pickleball center.

John Wahlert provided background on himself; discussed efforts to address issues; growth of pickleball during COVID; noise issues; requests that signage be posted and security be added to the area; lack of facilities or supervision in the area; simple requests to post hours and rules that have not been addressed; harassment of City employees; vandalization of the courts; rules prohibiting excessive noise or offensive behavior; signage against drinks with Red Dye 40 that were posted rather than the requested signage; and he noted that the issues had arisen quickly and should be addressed quickly.

Diana Wahlert was called to speak but was not present.

Barry Goldstein discussed collaboration and conciliation; noted that everyone was looking to share the pleasure of the courts without penalty; discussed decibels; the sympathetic nervous system; the quality of the sound; the difficulty of dealing with the nature of the pickleball sound; triggers for stress-inducing hormones; average decibel levels; adjacency of neighbors to the courts; legal cases with courts that are hundreds of feet away; and the nature of the surfaces used that amplifies the sound.

Yael Wyte echoed calls for collaboration; discussed shortening the hours of play; music played on the courts; ensuring that hours are observed; and she did not want to have to be the person enforcing the rules.

Tom Wilson reported living directly behind the Elenda courts; discussed the growth of the sport; the number of people vs. courts; people who come to play at 6:30 a.m.; yelling that goes along with the noise from the balls; balls that go into their yard; objection to the location of the games; concern with moving the issue to bother other neighbors near Veterans Park; and he wanted to ensure that the neighbors were considered when moving the games.

Paula Wilson noted that last time she addressed the Commission, she played a video with the noise created by the game; she expressed appreciation for people being able to get physical activity; discussed the feeling that usage of the courts at Elenda has grown exponentially; people who do not understand the relentlessness of the noise from the ball and from the players yelling; the difficulty of hearing people screaming and playing ball so loud it feels like they are in the house; noise volume of pickleball vs. paddle tennis; she indicated that she felt like moving to get away from the noise; questioned whether soundproof barriers would dampen the noise enough; and she cited a Los Angeles Times article indicating that the only thing that works is moving play away from neighbors.

Steve Roe ceded his time to Meg Sullivan.

Meg Sullivan asked the City to investigate an unused spot in the Arts District where there is room for up to three pickleball courts; presented slides of the proposed areas; discussed distance to the nearest housing; the recommended buffer; the growing trend to take advantage of land under shady overpasses; Metro land under Culver City control; softening the look of chain link fences; low cost solutions; accessibility to the site; sound studies conducted in 2012-2013; locking of the site to ensure that hours are enforced; and she expressed appreciation for consideration of the concept.

Steve Mitsunaga discussed his experience playing all racket sports; efforts to address issues; problems caused by the

inaction of the Commission; he asked the Commission to show their intent as to whether pickleball is adopted in Culver City; noted that people were leaving the community to play; expressed support for the proposal by Meg Sullivan; discussed removal of pickleball from Elenda; the proposal to build pickleball courts at Bill Botts; and getting into a pay to play situation.

Eric Horacek ceded his time to David Van Slyke.

David Van Slyke provided background on himself; echoed support for the aspirational plan to put pickleball at Bill Botts; discussed work with Culver City to get signs to provide the right to play pickleball at Culver City courts; soundproofing; sound directionality; the need for proper sound mitigation for whatever court is chosen for pickleball; the need for neighbors to do better sound mitigation; sound measurements; coming up with an interim solution until courts can be built at Bill Botts; due diligence; amount of time the courts are not being used; the sound of paddle tennis vs. the sound of traffic; and he noted the value of providing two walls between where the sound starts.

Jay Coury acknowledged the plight of the neighbors noting that he had not previously had compassion for them, but after listening to comments, he now understood the issue; he apologized for the noise on behalf of pickleball players; observed that pickleball is booming; and discussed the need for leadership and for decisions to be made to solve the issue.

Tyler Park provided background on himself; expressed support for the courts noting the wide range of people being served; acknowledged neighbor concerns and the need to address issues; asserted that tennis had never been very popular at public parks; discussed the need to explore other options; and bringing in more people from all over Culver City to play.

Andrea Edwards was called to speak but did not respond.

Kay Yamamoto provided background on herself; discussed lawsuits about the sound made by pickleball; new technologies; felted paddles and quieter balls; the growth of pickleball; and the range of people that play pickleball.

Don Seymour provided background on himself; discussed playing at Elenda and Culver; conflict between paddle tennis and

pickleball players; moving pickleball to Bill Botts; making use of volunteers to help build new courts; the thriving tennis population; and the feeling that courts should not be taken away from the tennis players and that pickleball and paddle tennis should have their own courts.

Josh Osswald provided background on himself; discussed complex issues; various solutions to consider; many municipalities experiencing similar issues; the health benefits of racket sports; and he expressed support for multi-lining courts until new facilities were built.

Joseph Feinberg discussed people leaving Culver City to go to other areas to pay to play; noted the need to find a solution; discussed the community built around the free open play environment; friends made at the courts in Culver City; the bleachers at Elenda; the importance of community-building; the low barrier sport; those who do not behave well; the culture around pickleball; and the importance of providing access for mental and physical health.

Steve Gumplo provided background on himself; discussed efforts to address the issue over several years; new signage; the fact that pickleball has never been officially approved; those who play both paddle ball and pickleball; signs posted with ridiculous rules that do not make sense; the need for staff to engage the community before moving forward; shouting of pickleball players; number of players; sound mitigation; people who do not want to play with the specialized paddles; the fact that pickleball can be played anywhere; he noted that pickleball could be played at gymnasiums and schools; and he proposed allowing pickleball only at certain times.

Michael Monagan provided background on himself; expressed support for exercise; acknowledged the noise from pickleball play; noted that there was much conflict; urged the Commission to address issues; discussed increased usage of the courts; indoor Pickle Pop on the Third Street Promenade; and he suggested indoor pickleball play.

Ted Salter reported running a Tennis for Kids program at Fox Hills Park; applauded PRCS for their support; discussed demand for tennis courts; kids who have gotten tennis scholarships; support for ideas about how to solve the problem; he asked that Culver City not forget youth; and he noted that there were more kids that wanted to play tennis.

Paula Villafano was called to speak but was not present online or in Council Chambers.

Denise Neal asked whether community input would be taken as decisions are made for the parks; requested an update on Botts Field and Veterans Park upgrade feasibility; discussed ongoing community meetings; proposed usage; performance venues; small business and vendor permits; Olympic training venues; and the multi-plex at Botts.

Adam Ferguson, Senior Management Analyst, noted that he would call Ms. Neal back up to speak under Public Comment - Items Not on the Agenda.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding appreciation for the public input; potential solutions to suggest to staff for execution in a short timeframe; the need to address sound issues with pickleball; support for putting pickleball inside; the need for gymnasiums in Culver City; use of the basketball court at Vets; understanding the different communities; lack of sufficient space; providing input into the Parks Master Plan; examination of short, mid and long-term solutions; a suggestion to have people register to play on the courts; limiting hours for pickleball on the Elenda courts; creation of a registration system; mitigating the tension; people who claim the courts; the Expo Line solution; sound-proofing at Elenda; moving courts to Vets; and length of time the Commission has been receiving feedback about pickleball.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding pickleball players addressing the Commission since 2018; comment as to whether pickleball was allowed in Culver City; accommodation of the growing sport for years; the need for short, medium, and long-term solutions to accommodate all racket sports in Culver City; background on previous Commission consideration of the item; the vocal tennis community; recent eyewitness testimony of the neighbors; addressing competing interests; potential solutions; making use of capital funding to soundproof as soon as possible; findings on the proposed materials; signage; addressing issues that interested parties are engaged in; revision to the municipal code; requiring the use of sound dampening equipment; enforcement; changing court hours; use of the courts at Vets; the multi-purpose location; support for using the Metro space; CCUSD (Culver City United School District) courts; converting the little-used asphalt

court; dual usage; after-hours usage; putting pickleball courts on top of municipal parking structures; creation of new pickleball courts in underutilized, or more traditionally utilized park spaces; the feasibility study; creation of a pickleball complex; and funding.

Further discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding finding solutions that do not tread upon the tennis or the paddle tennis community; different types of racket sports; using creation of the Dog Park as a model; support for the suggestion by Meg Sullivan; using a court surface on a temporary basis to evaluate the space before committing to the location with the expense; difficulty for tennis players to play on multi-lined surfaces; support for keeping play separate and for use of funding for soundproofing; the ability of the City to limit construction hours; and the authority of the Director to reduce hours of play until other spaces are created.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding appreciation to staff for the information provided; the nationwide issue; ways other cities have worked to mitigate issues; available resources to reference to come up with solutions; the constant search for pickleball space; research and quotes for noise mitigation; sound mitigation used in other areas; behavioral issues; installation of sound proofing measures; staffing; increased efforts to get the courts locked every day; making use of electronic locking measures; registration; enforcement; the Feasibility Study; controlled access; picnic reservations; additional staffing needed to regulate hourly use; posting a list of those who have signed up; using registration fees to offset staffing costs; contracted out registration in West Hollywood; timelines for installation of sound proofing; staff resources; financial resources; agreement by staff to provide a report back; notification and specific associated signage with implementation of time restrictions; ensuring that pickleball and paddle ball are not using the courts at the same time; reported behavior issues; the experience of Long Beach; prohibiting pickleball during certain hours due to noise issues; removal of restrictions when soundproofing is installed; industrial soundproofing; freeway walls; dampening noise vs. bouncing noise; and the intent to lower noise volume.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding allocation of space to different groups on different

days; survey results; consistency; agreement to reduce hours of play from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily; rules that prohibit the playing of amplified music; length of time to address changes to signage; creation of an ad hoc subcommittee; ensuring that the community is heard on what should be included on the signage; work of the ad hoc subcommittee on signs last year; lack of control over people who do not follow the rules; personal responsibility for adhering to the rules and regulations; information missing from the current signage; adding a reference to the prohibition of amplified music and inappropriate language; the fact that people do not read the signs; use of signs for enforcement; lack of input from the nearby neighbors on the previous signage; the updated municipal code; funding for new signage; supplemental signage; use of images on signage; adding references to the municipal code; number of park patrol officers; and code enforcement vehicles.

Commissioner Mohammed moved to recommend that Parks staff implement the installation of soundproofing material on the Elenda courts and post new signage indicating the hours of designated playtime at the Elenda courts to be from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily. Vice Chair Alexander seconded the motion.

Commissioner Peters proposed an amendment to add the language prohibiting amplified sound to the signage.

Commissioner Mohammed and Vice Chair Alexander accepted the proposed amendment.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER MOHAMMED, SECONDED BY VICE CHAIR ALEXANDER AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE PARKS, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMISSION RECOMMEND THAT PARKS STAFF INSTALL SOUNDPROOFING AT THE ELENDA COURTS AND POST NEW SIGNAGE INDICATING THAT THE DESIGNATED TIME FOR COURT USE IS FROM 9 A.M. TO 8 P.M. DAILY AND NO AMPLIFIED SOUND ALLOWED.

Further discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding hybrid court lines; identification of tennis courts considered for dual striping; lack of usage data without a formal reservation system; dual striping in parks where pickleball noise would not impact surrounding communities; logistics of dual usage; ensuring that the paddle tennis community does not shoulder the entire burden of accommodating pickleball; random staff monitoring of court usage to gather information; use of counters; the importance of data; survey results; considering the geographic view of where the parks

are; costs to multi-stripe courts; multi-striped courts as a sub-optimal solution; subcommittee consideration of issues; repurposing tennis courts; creation of an ad hoc subcommittee to identify no more than two tennis court(s) in the City that could be potentially dual striped based on research by staff and other data for a decision within one month; a reminder that ad hoc subcommittees make recommendations, not decisions; and acknowledgement of the possibility that the ad hoc subcommittee could determine that there are no courts appropriate for dual striping.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER PETERS AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER MOHAMMED THAT THE PARKS, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMISSION APPROVE THE FORMATION OF AN AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE TO IDENTIFY AND RECOMMEND ONE TO TWO TENNIS COURTS IN CULVER CITY FOR DUAL STRIPED USE.

THE MOTION CARRIED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: LEONARD, MOHAMMED, PETERS
NOES: ALEXANDER, BAUN

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding Commissioner willingness to serve.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER MOHAMMED, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER PETERS AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE PARKS, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMISSION APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF COMMISSIONERS BAUN AND PETERS TO SERVE ON THE DUAL STRIPED TENNIS COURTS AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE.

Further discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding suggestions for a registration system and pay to play; providing support for staff exploration of monitoring and registration; looking into expanded use of CCUSD facilities through the Joint Use Agreement; working with Metro to create pickleball courts under the Metro Line; looking at purchasing counters to obtain more data; creating a deadline for staff to bring back information; and work done as part of the Parks Master Plan.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER MOHAMMED, SECONDED BY VICE CHAIR ALEXANDER AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE PARKS, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMISSION RECOMMEND THAT STAFF CONTINUE TO EXPLORE MONITORING COURTS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A REGISTRATION SYSTEM, CONTINUE DISCUSSION WITH CCUSD TO MAKE

COURT SPACE AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC, CONTINUE TO WORK WITH METRO TO EXPLORE INSTALLATION OF PICKLEBALL COURTS UNDER THE EXPO LINE, AND LOOK INTO THE PURCHASE OF COUNTERS FOR DATA COLLECTION.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding appreciation for the input and for the patience of the community and staff; short, medium, and long-term solutions; the process; difficulty of the item; exploration of space during the community gardens process; and space at West Los Angeles College.

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Public Comment - Items NOT on the Agenda (Continued)

Chair Leonard invited public comment.

The following member of the public addressed the Commission:

Denise Neal asked for an update on the Vets and Bill Botts Parks Plan; asked about ongoing community meetings regarding proposed usage of space; discussed the proposed performance venues; vendor space at the parks; licensing; micro-business vendors; restoration of Olympic training sites; levelling out at Botts; monetizing use of a temporary soccer field; the upcoming fiscal deficit; monetizing upcoming sporting events in the area; the creative and culinary community; the global strategist willing to help with economic development; providing music for the Beer and Wine Garden at Fiesta La Ballona; bringing a better soccer venue and good water to Fox Hills Park; adding a bus stop to the Vets cul-de-sac near the play area; and she proposed adding walkable butterfly gardens and edible gardens at the parks.

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Items from Commissioners/Staff

Commissioner Baun discussed staffing at The Plunge; closure of The Plunge on July 27 and other closures throughout the summer due to staffing issues; concern with the facility being closed during the peak season; the importance of water safety and teaching children how to swim; accidental death rates in the United States; and changes after a particular manager came on board.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding strategies to address issues; consideration of the practices of other cities; new and upcoming hires; the complicated recruitment process; specific abilities required; the nation-wide shortage of lifeguards; and the ability to go more in-depth in November.

Commissioner Peters complimented staff noting that camp was going well with many fun excursions.

Vice Chair Alexander discussed opening the basketball courts at Blair Hills.

Chair Leonard discussed activities for Parks Make Life Better! Month noting that additional information was available on the PRCS website and on Instagram.

Ted Stevens, Parks, Recreation and Community Services Director, discussed the successful first Sensory Saturday event at Culver West Alexander Park.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding Park Plan pop-ups and other outreach for the Parks Master Plan.

Adjournment

There being no further business, at 10:15 P.M., the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Commission adjourned to a regular meeting to be held on Tuesday, August 6, 2024.

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Adam Ferguson
SECRETARY of the Parks, Recreation and
Community Services Commission

APPROVED _____

Jane Leonard
CHAIR of the PARKS, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
COMMISSION
Culver City, California

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that, on the date below written, these minutes were filed in the Office of the City Clerk, Culver City, California and constitute the Official Minutes of said meeting.

Jeremy Bocchino
CITY CLERK

Date