

Legislation Text

File #: 24-243, Version: 1

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DATE OF MEETING: 07/01/2024

SUBJECT:

CONSIDER ADOPTING RESOLUTION APPROVING THE FACILITY NAME FOR THE CITY'S NEW NEIGHBORHOOD POCKET PARK LOCATED AT 1701 BUSH AVENUE

CEQA: This proposed action is not a project as defined by CEQA.

CITY MANAGER RECOMMENDATION

Adopt Resolution

WORKPLAN COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

Major Policy Goal: Build a Healthy Community - 105 Expand Safe, Family-Friendly Park Space and 109 Develop Public Facilities for Active Living is an adopted policy item contained in the FY 2023-25 Adopted City Council Priority Workplan, updated May 1, 2023.

BACKGROUND

The City Council previously established a formal process and criteria for the consideration of requests by business owners, organizations, property owners, residents, and City staff for the naming of City Facilities and for acceptance of donations.

Facility Naming Policy

On September 18, 2017, upon recommendations made by the City Council Ad-Hoc Sub-Committee, the San Pablo City Council adopted a "Policy for the Naming, Dedication and Sponsorship of City Facilities and Acceptance of Donations" pursuant to City Council Resolution 2017-188.

Community Services Standing Committee/City Council Review

Under the policy requirements, the City's Community Services Standing Committee (CSSC) is designated as the entity that reviews/recommends these types of formal requests to the City Council. However, due to an existing conflict of interest for one (1) Councilmember on the CSSC, City staff are foregoing the CSSC review and bringing this item directly to the City Council for formal review and consideration. Per policy requirements, the City Council is designated as the entity exercising final action and approval on all such requests for facility naming/renaming and acceptance of donations.

Policy Procedure (Section I & II): Facility Naming (City Facilities & Parks)

The City Manager has outlined the following procedure for the naming of City facilities and parks as contained in the current adopted policy which includes:

- (1) Create a "Facility Naming List" of appropriate names solicited by public or other sources;
- and

- (2) All names are reviewed by the CSSC, and then at least three (3) names are presented to the City Council as a recommendation; and
- (3) The City Council approves a name for new City facility by majority vote (via Resolution)

New Facility Naming: 1707 Bush Avenue (Bush Ave. Neighborhood Pocket Park)

Under Sections I & II of the adopted policy requirements, priorities considered in the official naming of all City facilities, including parks and recreation facilities, include in order of importance, the following policy criteria, as follows:

Category I: Historic Names

Category II: Places and Feature Name

Category III: Individuals, Groups or Organizations

To create the Facility Naming List for this project site which is located in the Old Town neighborhood, City staff sought community input from the San Pablo Neighborhood Champions, E.M. Downer Elementary School Community, residents in Old Town, and the San Pablo Historical Society. On April 13, 2024, one of the Neighborhood Champions, Maria Alvarado, held a community cleanup event adjacent to the project site. The volunteers in attendance were all San Pablo residents and a majority live in the Old Town neighborhood. Volunteers were asked to submit ideas for the name of the park at the event. Later that month, City staff collaborated with Neighborhood Champion, Genoveva Calloway, and Downer's Bilingual School Community Outreach Worker, Lorena Rodriguez, to seek input from students, staff, and parents at E.M. Downer Elementary School. City staff received 134 submissions from the Downer School community.

Upon review and deliberation by City staff, the following names are recommended for City Council formal consideration and approval:

Category I: Historic Names - Martina Castro Park

The historic family name of Maria Martina Castro (1814-1875) holds significant importance in the history of San Pablo. She was recognized as the "First Lady of Rancho San Pablo." Martina Castro initially left San Pablo to marry the Mexican Governor of California, Juan B. Alvarado, before returning to become the most prominent woman in San Pablo during the early American era.

This name was submitted by a member of the San Pablo Historical Society, as well as by students at E.M. Downer Elementary School.

Category II: Places and Feature Names - Old Town Park

The location selected for the development of the new pocket park is situated within the Old Town neighborhood. Interestingly, it has been observed that a significant portion of the residents living in close proximity to the area are not familiar with the neighborhood being referred to as "Old Town". Therefore, it is believed that naming the park "Old Town Park" would not only contribute to fostering a distinct sense of community but also serve to acknowledge and reinforce the identity of the

neighborhood. It is worth noting that this particular name was suggested by a resident who is a part of the Old Town neighborhood.

Category III: Individuals, Groups, or Organizations - Happy Friday Park in honor of Jorge Rueda

The most popular idea submitted by Downer students and staff was the proposal for "Jorge Rueda 'Happy Friday' Family Park." However, due to its long name, City staff is recommending shortening it to "Happy Friday Park" and adding a second line "In honor of Jorge Rueda." This name would fall under Category III: Individuals, Groups, or Organizations.

Jorge Rueda, also known as the "Happy Friday Guy," has been an integral part of the E.M. Downer community since 1997. A resident of Richmond, just outside the San Pablo border, since the 1970s, Mr. Rueda has been a witness to the educational journeys of multiple generations of students at Downer Elementary School. His commendable contributions stem from his volunteer work and dedication to social activism. Notably, he was involved in the March 4 Education in 2004, which garnered national attention. Mr. Rueda organized a parent group and was instrumental in leading the 70-mile march from San Pablo to the State Capitol in Sacramento to highlight the financial challenges and inequities faced by the West Contra Costa Unified School District. In 2014, Jorge Rueda was honored by the City of San Pablo with a Certificate of Special Recognition for his kindness and compassion towards San Pablo families, providing Thanksgiving dinners during the holiday seasons, and offering cooking and baking classes to parents and community members. Additionally, Mr. Rueda initiated the Running Club at Downer Elementary in the early 2000s to promote active and healthy lifestyles, providing school supplies to all the participating students. To this day, he remains dedicated to bridging the school with the broader community, actively engaging parents, and advocating for social activism on behalf of both parents and students.

Following the Facility Naming Policy concerning Living Persons, a comprehensive study was conducted to assess the candidate's background and qualifications. City staff consulted the school administration, teachers, and community members to gain insights into Mr. Rueda's contributions to the community. On June 11, 2024, Mr. Rueda voluntarily completed a LiveScan at the San Pablo Police Department, and the results of his background check confirmed no known criminal history noted for Mr. Rueda.

City Council Review

City staff recommends the following proposed facility names, in the following rank-order, for City Council formal consideration and approval via adopted Resolution, as follows:

1. Category III: Individuals, Groups, or Organizations - **Happy Friday Park in Honor of Jorge Rueda**
2. Category II: Places and Feature Names - **Old Town Park**
3. Category I: Historic Names - **Martina Castro Park**

FISCAL IMPACT

There are no fiscal impacts associated with this action.

ATTACHMENT

Att A - Resolution

Att B - Facility Naming Policy (Adopted via Resolution No. 2017-188)
Att C - Presentation