



CITY OF COSTA MESA

77 Fair Drive
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Agenda Report

File #: 23-1335

Meeting Date: 9/5/2023

TITLE:

AUTHORIZATION OF AN ADDITIONAL PARK RANGER FOR HARPER PARK SCHOOL FIELD ACCESS AND UPDATE REGARDING ENHANCED SECURITY AT FOUR NEWPORT MESA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT FIELDS ON THE WESTSIDE

DEPARTMENT: PARKS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

PRESENTED BY: ALMA REYES, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER

CONTACT INFORMATION: ALMA REYES, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER, (714) 754-5090

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the City Council:

1. Authorize an increase to the City's Table of Organization by one full-time Park Ranger position in the Police Department and increase the Fiscal Year 2023-24 Adopted Budget accordingly.
2. Receive and file an update on upcoming amendments to the existing Lyons Security Services agreement to increase access to open space at up to four elementary school sites on the Westside (Rea, Wilson, Whittier, and potentially Pomona) for open space during off-school hours, as previously approved by the City Council.

BACKGROUND:

Developing strategies to increase park access, especially for those living in areas lacking open space has been a primary objective of the City Council and staff. In efforts to address the need for open space for recreational purposes, staff has been meeting with Newport Mesa Unified School District (NMUSD) staff to discuss public access to school fields, playgrounds, and basketball courts at specific school sites when fields are not utilized by permitted user groups.

Currently, the Parks and Community Services Department staff coordinates and manages all sports user groups and field allocation for all City of Costa Mesa and NMUSD fields as per the Joint Use Agreement (JUA). During the City's use of the school site fields, the fields are only opened when a reservation by a permitted user group has been made. When fields are not reserved, or field use is canceled by a permitted user group, the fields remain closed.

Both City and NMUSD staff have discussed the opening of school sites including Rea, Wilson, and Whittier Elementary (and potentially Pomona if needed), and Harper Park for open space and recreational use when not permitted to user groups. Opening these school sites would provide recreational opportunities, especially for the youth and adults living on the Westside and Eastside of Costa Mesa where open space is scarce.

In efforts to meet the current demand for open space, staff is recommending the enhanced use of school fields off-hours. To facilitate the use of open space while also ensuring public safety staff is requesting one additional Park Ranger position to monitor the school field adjacent to Harper Park during school hours. This additional Park Ranger position will monitor the school field during school hours to ensure students are safe and are able to recreate on fields that are clean and free of pet feces or dogs off-leash.

For school sites on the Westside, the City Council has already provided the City Manager authority to amend the City's private security contract to ensure the safety of residents and the security of school facilities. This update is for transparency purposes only.

ANALYSIS:

The opening of school sites for open space and recreational public use will require additional resources to ensure the safety and security of school sites for the enjoyment of the community which is in alignment with the City Council Strategic Plan goals to Strengthen the Public's Safety and Improve the Quality of Life.

Staff is requesting the addition of one full-time Park Ranger position that will help enhance patrol and monitoring of parks and school sites open to the public for recreational opportunities, in particular, the school field adjacent to Harper Park, which was recently fenced due to safety and cleanliness concerns expressed to the District by students, parents, and teachers. It is anticipated that the addition of a Park Ranger position at the school field adjacent to Harper Park as a pilot project for the next six months will help ensure public safety and cleanliness in a manner that would allow the District to remove the existing fence and assure students, parents, and teachers that current challenges with responsible pet ownership are being addressed. After the initial six-month period, the Park Ranger position can function in a roving capacity along with the City's other Park Rangers to monitor all City parks and fields.

Additionally, security guard services are necessary to provide safety and security at other school sites. Currently, NMUSD provides security services at Rea Elementary, as it is an active campus with various after-school programs onsite Monday through Friday. However, the City would need to provide security guard services on the weekends at Rea Elementary. Further, security guard services at Wilson and Whittier Elementary Schools would be needed during weekdays and weekends, and potentially at Pomona as well. Security services would be on a roving basis and could be further enhanced in the future if needed and can be absorbed within the existing adopted budget through salary savings in the Parks and Community Services Budget.

Currently, the City contracts with Lyons Security Services to provide unarmed security guard services at the Costa Mesa Senior Center and Lions Park Campus. Staff recommends that the City Council receive and file staff's intent to negotiate an amendment to the existing contract for unarmed security guard services at the additional school sites. Staff is currently negotiating the final details of such an amendment and it is anticipated the cost would fall below the City Manager's authorization of \$100,000.

ALTERNATIVES:

City Council may choose to reject the addition of a full-time Park Ranger position; however, this option is not recommended as providing access to safe and enjoyable open spaces for recreational opportunities to City residents would enhance the Council's strategic plan goals to Strengthen the Public's Safety and Improve Quality of Life.

FISCAL REVIEW:

The FY 2023-24 Parks and Community Services Department General Fund adopted budget includes the unarmed security services contract with Lyons Security Services for \$300,000, with a \$30,000 contingency. City staff will initiate negotiations with Lyons Security Services to add four school sites in the Westside during off school hours so those sites can be utilized as open space areas for public use.

Additionally, City staff is requesting City Council approval to add one full-time Park Ranger position for the fully burdened cost of \$126,170. The FY 2023-24 Parks and Community Services Department adopted General Fund budget of \$8.6 million can absorb this additional expense, as the impact will be prorated based on the hire date.

LEGAL REVIEW:

The City's Attorney's Office has reviewed this report and approved as to form.

CITY COUNCIL GOALS AND PRIORITIES:

This item supports the following City Council Goal:

- Strengthen the Public's Safety and Improve Quality of Life

CONCLUSION:

Staff recommends the City Council:

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