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**From:** Jennifer Tanaka <jletanaka@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 14, 2023 12:00 PM  
**To:** PACS Comments  
**Cc:** CITY CLERK  
**Subject:** Comment re: PACS Commission Meeting on 9/14/23

Dear Parks Commissioners:

First, I want to thank you for your support regarding the situation at Harper Park. As you are likely aware, the City Council voted at its last meeting to fund an additional park ranger to be stationed at Harper Park, and to fund additional security guards to be posted at several Westside school field sites. These funding decisions were driven by a desire to satisfy NMUSD's conditions for removing the controversial temporary fence at Harper Park and opening the Westside sites for use by the general public.

While I am encouraged by this step, there are several issues that were raised by the discussion at City Council regarding this program that I want to raise to you, as these programs now falls back under the purview of the Parks and Community Services Commission (or should):

1. The City Manager and Police Chief indicated that it could take 3-4 months to hire an additional park ranger to patrol Harper Park, and that the fence at Harper Park would stay in place until the hiring and training of this park ranger has occurred. It was not made clear at the City Council whether a park ranger could be reassigned temporarily to Harper Park to address NMUSD's conditions while the hiring process took place. If Harper Park must wait until a park ranger is hired and trained, ***it is my hope that the Staff will provide PACS with frequent updates on this process to ensure that it stays on track.*** PACS should be aware that the maintenance of the fence is actively degrading the quality and value of Harper Park, such that this situation should be remedied sooner rather than later.
2. Is it further my understanding that NMUSD intends to pursue an "infrastructure solution" at Harper Park in the long term, regardless of the outcome of the "pilot program" with the park ranger described in the agenda report. ***I would hope that the PACS Commission would strongly encourage NMUSD to keep it apprised of any such plans and to make those plans reviewable by the public. You are our officials appointed by the elected City Council to represent the residents' interests when it comes to parks.***
3. With respect to the Westside sites, it should be clarified whether the PACS Commission will have jurisdiction to review and opine on the policies applied to these sites, or if these sites will be entirely under the jurisdiction of the City Manager and the Parks Department staff given its joint-use nature with NMUSD. ***As a resident I would expect policies set with respect to any public open space would come through the PACS Commission as again, you are the residents' best advocates when it comes to park usage and availability.***
4. Similarly, no time frame was provided regarding the hiring of additional security guards to police the Westside joint use sites listed in the agenda report (Rea, Wilson, Whittier, and potentially Pomona). ***It would be helpful for PACS to request monthly updates on the progress of hiring these guards and the likely timeline of opening these facilities for joint use.***
5. At Council there was no discussion of how the opening of the Westside joint use sites would actually occur. As has been evident in the Harper Park episode, lack of communication and clear expectation setting can result in stakeholders becoming dissatisfied with the results and the public confused about what is allowed and when. ***I would expect that a public relations roll out would occur both to the public and to the families that attend these schools explaining the reasoning behind the joint use program as well as the operating conditions.***

Thank you and will continue to watch the issues at Harper Park and the Westside sites with great interest.

Finally on a separate note, I saw that the PACS Commission agenda omitted the Park Ranger report for this month. It would be great if we could append those to the agenda for each meeting, as they provide the residents' a good snapshot of the policing activities that are occurring in our parks.

Best,  
Jenn Tanaka  
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