



Legislation Text

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TITLE:

PARKS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW AND SPECIAL PROJECT UPDATE

DEPARTMENT: PARKS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

PRESENTED BY: JASON MINTER, PARKS & COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR

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RECOMMENDATION:

Conduct a study session providing a general overview of the Parks and Community Services Department including its staffing levels, All Funds budget, programs and services, and the status of special projects, in anticipation of the upcoming 2023 City Council Strategic Planning Retreat and FY 2023-24 budget development process.

BACKGROUND:

The Parks and Community Services Department provides the residents of Costa Mesa with a multitude and variety of high quality recreation facilities, programs, and services. The Department is committed to enhancing the community through the delivery of innovative programs that promote social, physical, and emotional well-being with equal access across the City.

The Mission of the Parks and Community Services Department is as follows:

“The Parks and Community Services Department is committed to enhancing the community through the delivery of innovative recreational programs; quality parks and facilities; and services that promote social, physical, and emotional well-being.”

To help facilitate the analysis and prioritization of the City Council’s goals and priorities during the upcoming 2023 Strategic Planning Retreat and the development of the Fiscal Year 2023-24 Budget, this document will provide a comprehensive overview of the Department’s staffing levels, current All Funds budget, and its programs and services. In addition, the Department’s presentation will also provide an update on the status of its myriad special projects and Master Plans. This presentation will be the first in a series of departmental presentations that will be provided to the City Council in the coming weeks and months. It is anticipated the information provided herein will serve as a great reference tool for identifying the major roles and responsibilities of the department, as well as upcoming challenges and opportunities.

ANALYSIS:

The Parks and Community Services Department currently includes 18 full-time positions and 104 part-time staff. The full-time classifications include Recreation Coordinators (5), Assistant Recreation Supervisors (3), Recreation Supervisors (2), and a Recreation Manager (1). There are also key support staff that take registration, book permits, manage contracts, and handle the City's budget process. These positions include a Management Analyst (1), an Executive Assistant (1), and an Office Specialist (1). There are two (2) full-time employees dedicated to Fairview Park, the Fairview Park Administrator (1) and a Maintenance Worker (1).

The Department's overall budget in FY22-23 is \$8,228,325. A complete Department budget is included (Attachment 1, page 120) showing the breakdown by fund. The Parks and Community Services Department is currently funded through the General Fund (\$7,679,331), the Cultural Arts Master Plan, Measure Q (\$220,898), and the Park Development Fees Fund (\$328,096).

The current staff oversee and manage the following parks, facilities, programs, and responsibilities that help the Department achieve our mission:

Parks: The Department oversees the City's 30 Parks that range in size from 208 acres (Fairview Park) to 0.12 acres (Perez Park). The Costa Mesa parks include the following:

- | | | |
|-------------|------------------|-------------|
| • Balearic | • Ketchum-Libolt | • Shalimar |
| • Brentwood | • Lindbergh | • Shiffer |
| • Canyon | • Lions | • Smallwood |
| • Del Mesa | • Marina View | • Suburbia |
| • Estancia | • Mesa Verde | • Tanager |
| • Fairview | • Moon | • TeWinkle |
| • Gisler | • Neth | • Vista |
| • Harper | • Paularino | • Wakeham |
| • Heller | • Perez | • Wilson |
| • Jordan | • Pinkley | • Wimbledon |

Of these 30 parks, 21 are available for permit requests. Staff issue permits to members of the public for birthday parties, meetings, weddings, baby showers, and various special events.

Fairview Park: Fairview Park is a 208 acre park located on the west side of Costa Mesa. Fairview Park includes 13 acres of manicured park space and 195 acres of open space that includes two (2) Nationally Registered Cultural Resource Historic Sites and five (5) distinct habitat ecosystems which are home to many rare and endangered plant and animal species. The Park acts as a regional

gateway to the Santa Ana River Trail and the adjacent Orange County Talbert Regional Park, and offers users multiple passive recreational opportunities such as picnicking, wildlife observation, and environmental education, along with 7 miles of trails for biking, walking and running. Fairview Park is home to the Orange County Model Engineers, with which the City has an agreement for the long-term use of the east side of the park, providing thousands of train rides every year to the community. Fairview Park staff work with local stakeholder groups, including the Fairview Park Alliance and the Sea and Sage Audubon Society, with events that include Second Saturday Restoration days that allow the community to engage in the restoration efforts at the park.

Costa Mesa Skatepark: The Costa Mesa Skatepark is a 15,000 square foot Skatepark that is comprised of two (2) bowls and street elements like boxes, stairs and rails. The equipment serves skateboarders and in-line skaters for all levels of ability and ages. The Skatepark is open year-round, seven (7) days a week. Staff are currently developing a scope of services for the design of the Skatepark Expansion project. Additional amenities may include a pump track, additional bowls, and other street elements.

Costa Mesa Bark Park: The Costa Mesa Bark Park provides a social, off-leash, open-play environment for dogs. There are separate areas for small and large dogs. The Bark Park Program includes staffing for maintenance, dog-related special events, classes, workshops, and partnerships with community organizations.

Field Permits: The Department allocates and monitors athletic field use throughout the City, including the allocation of City owned fields as well as, fields located at Newport Mesa Unified School District facilities. Together the City and the District collaborate to ensure that youth sports organizations have access to quality fields. The City and the School District meet regularly to ensure that fields are available for youth sports groups, including baseball, flag football, soccer, softball, and more.

Field Ambassadors: A Field Ambassador is a liaison to permitted field group users. This position is a highly visible position that is responsible for visiting all field facilities reserved for any given day or night. Field Ambassadors monitor all designated sites throughout the day to ensure all permits are honored and that the Field Use and Allocation Policy is enforced. Other assignments include special event support, park checks, hotline updates, and education for the community regarding field and park requests.

Sports Facilities: The Department provides a variety of Sports Facilities to the community, including the following:

- Balearic Fields
- Fairview Development Center Field
- Jack Hammett Sports Complex
- Luke Davis Field
- TeWinkle Athletic Complex

These sports facilities serve as the home fields for non-profit youth sports organizations including

AYSO, Costa Mesa Little League, Newport Mesa Girls Softball, Pop Warner and Friday Night Lights.

Community Centers: There are three (3) community centers operated year-round by the Department:

- The Balearic Community Center
- The Downtown Recreation Center
- The Norma Hertzog Community Center

These facilities provide administrative office space as well as program space for a variety of different activities, classes, and programs.

Balearic Community Center: The Balearic Community Center is home to youth program administrative staff, L.E.A.P. Early Childhood Education Program, R.O.C.K.S after-school program, and contract instructional classes. It is also available for rental for non-profit organizations and community groups.

Downtown Recreation Center (DRC): The Downtown Recreation Center is home to a full-sized gymnasium, multipurpose room and teen center. The DRC gymnasium hosts the Department's adult basketball program, adult open gym volleyball, and the ever popular drop-in pickleball program. The multipurpose room has been used for a variety of classes and programs, including contract instructional classes, rentals, and meetings. The DRC has been used for special events, and can be rented to private and non-profit organizations for various activities, training sessions, and meetings. The DRC is also the home of Childs Pace, a state licensed child care program that offers subsidized child care to low income families.

Norma Hertzog Community Center: The newly renovated Norma Hertzog Community Center is available for a variety of uses, including City programs and community meetings, non-profit organization meetings and trainings, and private rentals. There is a large main meeting room, and a smaller meeting room. This facility is currently being marketed for weddings making use of the Lions Park Event Lawn, as well as cultural ceremonies, conferences, training sessions, and other community needs.

Costa Mesa Senior Center (CMSC): The Costa Mesa Senior Center is home to many programs and activities that serve our senior participants. Programs include personal enrichment classes like knitting, quilting, painting, and card making, social activities like the senior round table, support groups, and book club, social clubs such as bridge and poker, and exercise classes like Tai Chi and Chair Aerobics. The CMSC also offers essential programs like the congregate lunch program, Meals on Wheels home delivered meals, senior tax assistance, the senior taxi program, and social services assistance. The senior center hosts special events as well, with the Senior Thanksgiving Lunch and Breakfast with Santa as two of the more popular events at the Center.

Downtown Aquatics Center (DAC): The Downtown Aquatics Center offers a full service twenty-five (25) meter pool complete with Youth and Adult Swim Lessons, Water Aerobics, Recreational Lap Swimming, and a Junior Lifeguarding Prep program that helps prepare kids for beach Junior Lifeguard programs. The City also hosts Open Rec Swim and Aqua Camp in the summer for kids looking to stay cool. The Pool was recently re-plastered in the Spring of 2022, providing a much safer

facility for the public to enjoy. Water safety is a critical life skill that is promoted through the various programs at the DAC, especially for beach communities like Costa Mesa.

Costa Mesa Country Club (CMCC): The City of Costa Mesa is home to two (2) publicly owned 18 hole golf courses at the Costa Mesa Country Club. Both courses, Mesa Linda and Los Lagos, provide challenging layouts for all levels of play. CMCC includes a driving range with both mats and grass, as well as top quality chipping and putting facilities. In addition to the golf activities, CMCC has a snack bar, restaurant, and bar, as well as banquet rooms that are available to the public for rental. Currently the City manages a revenue sharing agreement with Mesa Verde Partners for the operation of the CMCC.

Costa Mesa Tennis Center (CMTC): The Costa Mesa Tennis Center, located at TeWinkle Park, consists of 12 tennis courts that are available for drop-in play, individual and group lessons, leagues, and tournaments. Currently the City manages an agreement with Top Seed Tennis Academy for the interim operation of the Tennis Center. Staff are currently completing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the operation of the center, which should be completed in spring 2023.

Community Gardens: There are two (2) community gardens available for residents, the Hamilton Gardens on the west side and the Del Mar Gardens on the east side. Between the two (2), there are currently 99 garden plots permitted to residents, with the wait lists for both gardens. Staff provide tools, mulch, and access to water. Community Garden permits are issued on an annual basis, with many of our permits issued to long-term gardeners.

Youth Programs: The Department is committed to youth and families in our community through programs including: L.E.A.P. Early Childhood Education Program, the R.O.C.K.S After School and Camp programs, the Happy Feet Running Club, and our youth sports programs which include volleyball, basketball, and cheerleading. In addition, S.M.A.R.T Camp program is a collaborative effort between the City and the School District that focuses on Sports, Music, and Arts.

Mobile Recreation: The Department has a Mobile Recreation Van that was purchased in conjunction with the Los Angeles Chargers. The Mobile Recreation Van is filled with activities, arts and crafts materials, games, and sports equipment, and has EZ Ups, tables and chairs, to allow staff to convert any street, court, or parking lot into an engaging play space.

Teen Programs: There are two (2) Teen Centers that the Department operates, one at the Downtown Recreation Center and one at TeWinkle Middle School. These teen programs are offered to both middle and high school students, and often include other activities like trips and gym nights that utilize other Department facilities.

Adult Sports: The City offers a variety of sports activities for adults, including basketball, volleyball, and softball. The adult basketball program is run at the Downtown Recreation Center with multiple leagues competing various nights during the week. These leagues are coordinated through staff, and operate year round. Adult volleyball is a drop-in program where participants of all levels and abilities can come together for competitive volleyball. The adult softball program is contracted through Major League Softball (MLS) and operates year-round with three (3) seasons of play.

Arts: The Department is responsible for the Arts Division which oversees the City's premiere annual art event, ARTventure, an Arts Grant Program, Exhibit Spaces, and Utility Box Art Program. Additionally, coming this spring, two (2) new art experiences include an art crawl and free park

performances. This division also oversees the Arts Commission. The general objectives of the Arts Commission is to ensure that the City of Costa Mesa is a place where creativity can flourish; a place where imagination, inspiration and innovation are held in high regard; a place where Arts Education is essential to all; and a place where Arts and Culture can promote civic pride and enrich the daily lives of the Costa Mesa community. Staff are currently working with a consultant, Arts OC, on the creation of an Art in Public Places Policy.

Animal Services: The Animal Services program includes the oversight of contracts for animal sheltering and adoption services (Newport Center Animal Hospital) and collaborates with the Police Department's Animal Control Officers in the transport and documentation of City impounded animals to the contracted animal shelter facility. Animal Care Services also promotes adoptions to local residents and communicates with the contracted adoption agency (Priceless Pet Rescue) and rescue organizations to find placement for animals. With the assistance of the Animal Services Committee, staff explore and provide the best practices to improve animal care services within the City. Animal Care Services also provides two (2) pet-related events in the fall and spring to promote pet adoptions, educational pet care, and interactive demonstrations. Staff also oversee the dog licensing program for residents, which can be processed in person at City Hall, via mail, or online through Pet-Track.

Special Events: Special Events are often the largest and most visible community events. They are typically free to the public and provide families throughout the City an opportunity to come together to celebrate. These events include the following:

- ArtVenture
- Barktoberfest
- Concerts in the Park
- Independence Day Celebration
- Movies in the Park
- ScarecrowFest (rebranded in 2021)
- Snoopy House
- Spring Bark Bash
- Spring Fest! (new in 2021)
- Wedding Expo (new in 2023)

These events continue to bring the community together in a way that only Costa Mesa can, by honoring the City's history while adding vibrant new features to engage the entire community.

Contract Instructional Classes: The Department works with many community partners, non-profit organizations, and private businesses to provide many different instructional class opportunities to the community. During the pandemic many of the classes were canceled. However, staff continue their efforts to recruit new instructors to provide additional class offerings to return to pre-pandemic class numbers. These enrichment classes are expected to generate approximately \$300,000 in

revenue on an annual basis. Current classes include the following:

- Babysitting
- Basic Self-Defense
- CPR/AED classes
- Dance
- Dog Agility
- Fencing
- Guitar
- Gymnastics
- Japanese Karate
- Sports classes, i.e. basketball, soccer
- Ukulele
- Sailing
- Yoga

Master Plans: The Department is responsible for Master Plans that guide facility use and/or policy decisions. There are currently three (3) Master Plan updates that are either underway or that have been recently updated. They are as follows:

- **Arts and Culture Master Plan:** This Plan was approved by City Council in 2021, and is currently in year two (2) of implementation. The new Master Plan includes the creation of an Arts Specialist Position, as well as increases to the Utility Box Art program, grant program, and other public art projects.
- **Fairview Park Master Plan:** This Plan was originally approved in 1998, with subsequent updates in 2001, 2002, and 2008. The RFP process was recently completed, with City Council approving a consultant to update the now 15 year old Master Plan. The Master Plan Update process will include multiple community meetings, as well as engagement with a Tribal Advisory Committee, to ensure protection of sensitive cultural resources located at the park.
- **Recreation and Open Space Master Plan:** The process of updating this plan began in 2017-18, however it was never completed or approved by City Council. Staff are currently working to complete the update, with study sessions planned for both the Parks and Community Services Commission and the City Council in the spring.

Completed Capital Projects: The Department is responsible for a variety of Capital Improvement Projects. Some of the recently completed projects include the following:

- Completion of the Tanager Park pickleball courts, in which a vacant basketball court was widened for the installation of two (2) pickleball courts. This project was completed in Summer 2022.
- Renovation of the Jack Hammett Sports Complex, including improvements to ADA accessibility, security lighting, a storage building, and additional parking stalls. This project was completed in Summer 2022.
- Completion of the Downtown Aquatics Center Pool Re-plastering Project in Spring 2022.

Current/New Capital Projects: The City's Capital Improvement Program includes park specific projects to provide updates to the City's parks and facilities. These projects, and their estimated values, include the following:

- Construction of a Café at Lions Park; \$900,000
- Expansion of the Costa Mesa Skatepark; \$1,670,000
- Expansion and Enhancement of Shalimar Park; \$2,547,520
- Installation of LED Lighting at Sports Facilities; \$5,850,000
- Improvements to Fairview Park, including Bluff Stabilization, Pump Station Improvements and Water Recirculation System, Restoration of the Mesa, and Fencing and Signage Improvements; \$9,548,000
- Renovation and Expansion of Ketchum-Libolt Park and the Victoria Corridor \$2,547,520

Commissions: Department staff serve as liaisons to both the Parks and Community Services Commission and the newly appointed Arts Commission (2022). Staff support includes the creation of and posting of the agendas, as well as the creation of staff reports, presentations, and the coordination of different activities and events for the respective Commissions. Commissions meet monthly, and serve as advisory bodies to the City Council in their respective areas.

Committees: In addition to the Commissions, staff serve as the liaisons to three (3) Committees: the Animal Services Committee, the Fairview Park Steering Committee, and the Historical Preservation Committee. Staff support includes the creation of and posting of the agendas, as well as the creation of staff reports, presentations, and the coordination of different activities for the respective Committees. Committees meet monthly or bi-monthly, and serve as advisory bodies to the City Council in their respective areas.

Collaborative Agreements & Partnerships: The Department manages numerous agreements and contracts to assist in facilitating recreational programming and services and operational needs. Staff consistently monitor and evaluate agreements to ensure community needs are met, such as:

- Age Well Senior Services of Orange County
- Boys & Girls Club
- Childs Pace

- Costa Mesa Community Foundation
- Costa Mesa Historical Society
- Joint Use Agreement with NMUSD
- License Agreement with the Costa Mesa Newport Harbor Lions Club
- Memorandum of Understanding with Save Our Youth (SOY) Center
- Orange County Fairgrounds partnership agreements
- Various entertainment agreements
- Agreements for Contract Instructional Classes
 - Between 20-40 agreements annually
- Agreements for contract services
 - ActiveNet - Recreation software
 - CA Yellow Cab - Senior Transportation
 - Glen Lukos and Associates - Vernal Pool Restoration
 - Lions Park Security
 - Major League Softball
 - OC Vector Control
 - RJM - Open Space Master Plan
 - United Site Services - portable restrooms, event fencing, etc.
 - Over 150 contracts annually

Grant Agreements: The Department receives grants for a variety of projects and programs including the following:

- Community Development Block Grant for Senior Social Services
- Habitat Conservation Fund - Fairview Park Vernal Pool Restoration
- HOAG Grant for Senior Transportation Services
- OCTA M2 Grant - Senior Mobility Program

Special Event Permits: The Department oversees the Special Event Permit Process. This permit process requires non-profit organizations, businesses, and private parties to apply for a special event permit to hold large and/or complex events that take place within City parks, private property, or interfere with the public right-of-way. All City Departments review applications and collaborate to finalize a permit that aids and enforces event organizers in upholding all municipal codes and

guidelines to ensure all City events are carried out in a safe and cohesive manner for the best interest of the community.

In March of 2020, the difficult decision was made to lay off a majority of the part-time staff in the Parks and Community Services Department. While this decision helped ease the City budget issues during those unprecedented times, it also created challenges that continue to plague the Department, especially when combined with other legislative, economic and logistical factors.

The primary legislative factor was the State mandated minimum wage increase which was concurrent with the pandemic. The previous salary structure for all part-time classifications had to be redone. Those changes were brought before City Council and approved in 2021. Unfortunately, even with the part-time salary increases, the market for entry level positions had already quickly risen above the approved salary schedule. Private sector companies were offering starting wages \$3.00 to \$4.00 above the City's starting rates.

Over the last two years, Department Supervisors have worked with our Human Resources staff to improve recruiting to our entry level positions. This has included recruitment events held at our Community Centers that were specific to our part-time classifications. Unfortunately, these hiring events produced very little return.

Due to the previously mentioned factors, the Department experiences a high turnover rate, and continues to be significantly understaffed. While staff strive to offer as many programs and services as possible, many continue to operate in a limited capacity. Ideally, a minimum of 150 part-time positions are required to operate and manage the classes, facilities, events, and programs at a level comparable to pre-pandemic offerings.

Staff are currently evaluating opportunities to increase employee retention, including the possibility of converting select part-time positions into full-time positions, specifically for the Recreation Specialist classification that was previously full-time. These Recreation Specialists are critical to the Department's youth and respective programs.

ALTERNATIVES:

This report is informational only and there are no alternatives to be considered.

FISCAL REVIEW:

There are no fiscal impacts for this Department overview.

LEGAL REVIEW:

There is no legal review required with this item.

CITY COUNCIL GOALS AND PRIORITIES:

This item supports the following City Council Goals:

- Strengthen the public's safety and improve the quality of life
- Recruit and retain high quality staff
- Advance environmental sustainability and climate resiliency

CONCLUSION:

Staff have provided a comprehensive overview of the parks, facilities, programs, and responsibilities that fall under the purview of the Parks and Community Services Department.

Conduct a study session providing a general overview of the Parks and Community Services Department including its staffing levels, All Funds budget, programs and services, and the status of special projects, in anticipation of the upcoming 2023 City Council Strategic Planning Retreat and FY 2023-24 Budget development process.