

**Parks, Beaches & Recreation Commission  
Regular Meeting  
February 7, 2012 – 6pm**

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**1) CALL MEETING TO ORDER 6:01pm**

**2) ROLL CALL**

Present: Phil Lugar, Chair  
Kathy Hamilton, Vice Chair  
Tom Anderson  
Ron Cole  
Roy Englebrecht  
Marie Marston  
Jack Tingley

Staff: Laura Detweiler, Recreation & Senior Services Director  
Mark Harmon, Municipal Operations Director  
Teri Craig, Admin Assistant

**3) PRESENTATION TO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA MUNICIPAL FEDERATION - ORANGE COUNTY FLAG FOOTBALL CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH CHAMPIONS**

Recreation & Senior Services Director Detweiler commented on the success of the recent flag football program and thanked staff for their outstanding work. She specifically thanked Recreation Leader Ethan Machado, Assistant Recreation Coordinator Angie Ernst, Recreation Supervisor Scott Williamson and Recreation Manager Janet Cates.

Supervisor Williamson addressed the number of teams, number of participants, competing teams and finals.

Certificates were presented to the participants in recognition for winning the championship.

**4) NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC**

**5) CONSENT CALENDAR**

**A. Minutes of the January 3, 2012 regular meeting.**

*Recommendation: Waive reading of subject minutes, approve and order filed.*

**B. Parks & Operations Division Activity Report.**

*Recommendation: Receive/file monthly Activity Report for activities and upcoming projects.*

**C. Recreation & Seniors Services Activity Report.**

*Recommendation: Receive/file monthly Activity Report for activities and upcoming projects.*

**D. Item pulled by Director Harmon**

Jim Mosher commented on Item 5B relative to number of trees removed, replaced and planted. He referenced an image of a tree included in the report that recently fell and asked that it be identified and that an explanation be given as to how it fell.

Director Harmon stated that the tree fell due to wind damage.

**D. City Street Tree Designation – Quiet Cove**

Director Harmon asked that this item be tabled until a future meeting.

**Motion by Commissioner Englebrecht** to accept items 5A – 5C of the Consent Calendar and that item 5D be tabled. Motion carried unanimously.

**6) CURRENT BUSINESS**

**A. Request from Newport Harbor Baseball Association (NHBA) to reconfigure Two Bullpens to Batting Cages at Bob Henry Park.**

Report presented by Superintendent Levin noting that NHBA has requested to reconfigure bullpens the batting cages at Bob Henry Park noting that NHBA would be solely responsible for installation costs, obtaining necessary permits and any damage associated with the project. He went on to say that Recreation and Municipal Operations staff met on site to review the preliminary plans with NHBA and approve of the plan in concept. The use of the batting cages would be limited to the hours of 8am-dusk as Bob Henry Park is not a lit facility.

**Chair Lugar opened the Public Discussion; Hearing None the Public Discussion was Closed.**

**Motion by Commissioner Anderson** to approve the request from NHBA to reconfigure two bullpens to batting cages at Bob Henry Park. Motion carried by acclamation.

**B. Beach Fire Rings Discussion of Issues and Solutions**

Director Detweiler provided a PowerPoint presentation addressing the number of existing fire rings at various beaches, maintenance practices, concerns relative to health impacts to nearby residents and beachgoers, safety and direction by the City Council to the Commission. She addressed possible options for solutions.

Director Detweiler addressed results of research done of local area beaches and applicable city regulations, including camping areas and homes adjacent to the areas. Discussion ensued regarding distance between fire rings and residential areas. In addition she reported on the distribution of notices regarding the item and correspondence received in response.

Commissioner Englebrecht commended Director Detweiler and staff for the work performed on this item.

**Chair Lugar opened the Public Discussion**

Jaime Starr opined Balboa Pier and Corona del Mar should be considered separately. She noted that Balboa Pier is a commercial zone designed to handle large groups of people; while Corona del Mar is a residential neighborhood. She expressed concerns with child safety issues noting that the beach is usually not cleared until 10:30pm in summer. Ms. Starr stated that the police should start clearing the beach by 9:30pm. Ms. Starr recommended that State Beach be closed at dusk and added that 95% of the people using Big Corona are non-residents and that they do not bring income to Newport Beach. She offered other solutions such as reducing the number of fire rings to one row or possibly relocating them to Newport Pier or Crystal Cove.

Charles Farrell stated the black smoke from the fires can be seen from long distances, police activity occurs most every night, megaphones can be heard telling people to go home, and there is foul air and dirty soot. He opined the fire rings are an eye sore and that clean-up can be seen and heard early in the morning. He stated he could not live without his air purifier and believed it is not safe to breathe. Mr. Farrell requested that the fire rings be removed stating that the negatives outweigh the positives.

Karen James expressed concerns with toxic fumes and debris and requested removal of the fire rings.

Frank Peters thanked staff for the "balanced" report, noting that his teenagers do not want the fire rings removed, but expressed concerns with the air quality and that the cost is too high.

Barb Burkhart agreed with previous speakers and noted that her windows must be kept closed at night and complained that the black, greasy soot on her furniture is caused by the smoke from the fire rings.

Joan Coleman also complained of the greasy film on her windows and furniture, expressed concerns regarding the air quality and requested removal of the fire rings.

Barbara Peters noted that although many love the fire rings, breathing wood smoke is hazardous. She reported that many people have burned furniture, plastic, Christmas trees and pallets into the rings; some of which contain methyl bromide. She asked the Commission to protect the public from toxic air and make an ethical decision and remove all of the fire rings.

Jim Kaminsky reported living far enough from the fire rings that on most days he can't smell the fires. He commented that he is a retired police officer and at one time was the area commander for Corona del Mar and noted that there are many good people that use the fire rings but bad ones as well. He stated arrests have varied from narcotics, lewd conduct to having glass on the beach. Mr. Kaminsky noted that after 10pm, people remaining on the beach are in violation of the Municipal Code. And, although the police do a great job, priority calls can occur and that they may be unable to close the beach right away. In addition, he reported the City does a great job cleaning the beaches.

Jack Larson expressed concerns regarding health hazards and noted he has experienced burning embers on his patio, acknowledged getting people off the beach is quite difficult but asked the Commission to consider removing the fire rings.

Lisa Vallejo stated that she believes the rings are a health hazard, noting that Orange County has the highest cancer rate and spoke in support of removing the fire rings and suggested that the City consider hiring a lobbyist to support the issue or removal.

Dan Purcell stated he cannot open his windows, as they are inundated by smoke almost every day. He reported that he enjoys nature, but that the smoke makes it difficult and spoke against the temporary amusement of some ruining the lives of many.

Wes Hatfield spoke in support of removing the fire rings and reported many of his neighbors have been diagnosed with lung cancer.

John Zepfel reported a greasy film and debris at his home 365 days a year and people staying on the beach after 10pm. He urged the Commission remove the fire rings noting the City could possibly face a litigation problem in the future because of them.

Lauren Jans re-iterated the problems caused by the fire rings and noted the negatives far outweigh the positives. He urged the Commission to consider their removal.

Mary Pinnere reported that the prevailing wind blows towards the Cove and expressed concerns with plastics and other toxic chemicals emitted from the fire rings.

Justin Edson reported that his house is constantly covered in sand and ash and expressed concerns with health issues noting that he was recently diagnosed with cancer and although he has never smoked, his oncologist kept asking if he did.

Roger McKennon stated he agreed with all the comments made and asked the Commission to accept the fact that the fire rings are a hazard and that they should be removed.

Harold Parker agreed with all the comments made noting that when he was younger, smoking was not considered hazardous. He opined that the Commission has a responsibility to the public to keep it safe and remove the fire rings.

John Hamilton noted that after talking with the AQMD, if you can smell it, it is toxic. He stated he smells the smoke all year long and that no one has the right to subject people to that when it has been proven to be hazardous. He asked the Commission not to compromise and remove the fire rings.

**Chair Lugar closed the Public Discussion**

Commissioner Englebrecht commented on the financial impacts of removing the fire rings from Big Corona, the area being a beach community, building family memories and finding ways to find solutions. He stated that that the problems are not the rings, but the burning of wood and the related smoke. He recommended that the City consider making the fire rings all natural gas and allowed to be reserved by the public with a related fee.

In reply to an inquiry from the Commission, Assistant Fire Chief Rob Williams reported staff is there every day until an hour past sunset/dusk. He noted that they are not there for enforcement but are there for safety. He reported situations change daily relative to fights and disagreements dependent on the time of year noting that staff is there everyday until one hour past dusk and during the summer months until 9pm. He reported that there have been four incidents of burns with paramedics being called within the last two summers.

Police Sergeant Spencer Arnold noted it is difficult to capture data specifically to fire rings but noted that calls are driven by the time of year and time of evening. He expressed that there are challenges with getting people to leave the beach but cannot start initiating that people leave until 10pm. He referenced priorities of calls and reported there have been more than 10 arrests within the last couple of seasons.

Commissioner Englebrecht asked about the possibility of placing a unit at the beach to announce and enforce closure of the beach but noted that there is probably no budget at this time.

Sergeant Arnold reported that there is an assigned beat officer responsible for specific areas of the beach, but dependent the types of calls for service, that officer could be assigned somewhere else.

In reply to Commissioner Anderson discussion continued on how the beach is closed, closure of the gate to prevent others from entering and the time it takes for people to pack up and leave. Also regarding the number of years the fire rings have existed and the number of homes close to the area.

Commissioner Hamilton commented on the number of people that visited Big Corona last year; related revenues, night swimmers, number of burns and injuries related to the fire rings. She reported that over one weekend, last summer, the Grossman Burn Center had seven emergencies and five were related to fire rings.

Ensuing discussion pertained to health and safety issues and hazard enforcement issues, the need for change, health issues from burning wood, and the impracticality of installing natural gas.

**Motion by Commissioner Cole** that the PB&R Commission forward their recommendation to the City Council to eliminate all fire rings.

Motion carried by the following vote:

Ayes: Cole, Hamilton, Lugar, Tingley  
Noes: Anderson, Englebrecht, Marston

**7) AD HOC COMMITTEE REPORT**

- **Bench Donation Process**

Director Harmon reported that the Bench Committee met last week regarding Council Policy B17 and will have a full report to the Commission at a future meeting.

**8) PARKS, BEACHES & RECREATION COMMISSION ANNOUNCEMENTS, UPDATES OR MATTERS WHICH MEMBERS WOULD LIKE PLACED ON A FUTURE AGENDA FOR DISCUSSION, ACTION OR REPORT (NON-DISCUSSION ITEM)**

None.

**9) PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

Dan Purcell encouraged Commissioner Members to be a part of the Tidelands Management Committee noting they are underrepresented by beach advocates, as well as other committees and thanked them for their work.

**10) ADJOURNED AT 7:40PM.**

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Teri Craig, Admin Assistant