

Bradford, Delana

From: Susan Kirks <susankirks@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Wednesday, May 17, 2023 3:59 PM
To: ParksRec
Subject: Public Comment - Parks & Rec Commission Meeting - May 17 - Agenda Item 3 - Lucchesi Turf Replacement

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Dear Commissioners,

As you consider the Lucchesi field replacement issue this evening, I hope you will keep in mind that this agenda item illuminates the heightened interest in long-term health of athletes as well as the reality of the climate crisis in which we all find ourselves.

We sometimes tend to want to have things be the same way they always were and I know you'll find this theme in calls for replacing the Lucchesi field with artificial turf.

We really do need to consider NOT replacing with artificial turf and how a natural grass field replacement would be achieved and how the field will be maintained.

The Parks and Recreation Department was basically eliminated in approximately 2008 - and moved into the Public Works Department. While the Parks and Recreation Department is being re-formed, we have a long way to go in Petaluma in terms of a Department that is fully staffed, able to be responsive, and also build environmental depth.

There has never been adequate environmental depth or experience within the Parks and Recreation Department for as long as I have lived in Petaluma, except for in the mid 2000s when Ron DeNicola was the Parks and Landscape Manager and also a certified arborist with support for environmental components of parks and open spaces. I collaborated with Ron for a few years on the Paula Lane open space land - which PLAN completely oversaw in terms of project, Conservation Easement terms compliance, and grant agreement terms. Ron stayed with the City of Petaluma for a year after he had planned to retire, as our community needs were significant, and finding a replacement was very challenging.

I share this because, even though we are hearing a lot about ReLeaf and the tree planting activities in Petaluma are positive, the needs in our Parks and Recreation Department for the interface between environmental support, health and well being, and active and passive recreational areas are significant.

I'd like to see your Commission form an ad hoc to explore the existing structure of Parks and Recreation, and, using what I'm observing your synergy (new for us, so thank you) and experience, make recommendations for expanded Parks and Recreation Departmental presence - to support more depth in environmental experience and staffing - so, if you recommend moving to natural grass fields, which I support, we will have the staff and budget to make health, well being and active recreation a reality for our Petaluma community.

I also would like to see an exploration and enhanced understanding on the part of your Commission about open space as part of the Parks and Recreation function. We have no policy and have never

had protocols or funding priorities. The politics of open space are real and can be very negative. I can personally attest to this. Part of my Mayoral campaign in November 2022 included open space policy, protocols and funding priorities to become part of Petaluma's planning and achievement processes - for the environment and for our residents, human and non-human.

For tonight, you are considering the best and cost effective approach to the Lucchesi field replacement - and I am certain that our current Parks and Rec Department staffing issues and experience in maintenance and long-term success will need focus and support. I hope you can provide that and make the best decision for the health and well being of our athletes in Petaluma.

Susan Kirks, Petaluma