



Minutes

Lakewood City Council

Special Meeting held
June 22, 2004

MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER at 6:30 p.m. by Mayor Rogers in the Executive Board Room at the Civic Center, 5000 Clark Avenue, Lakewood, California.

ROLL CALL: PRESENT: Mayor Todd Rogers
Vice Mayor Wayne Piercy
Council Member Joseph Esquivel
Council Member Larry Van Nostran
Council Member Robert Wagner

PARK POLICIES FOR SUMMER PROGRAMS:

Joan Biegel, Director of Recreation and Community Services, reported that park staff had noted that certain City parks were playing host to an increasing number of very large picnic groups, from church picnics to family reunions, many from outside the local area, and these large groups were discouraging park use by the small, family groups for which those neighborhood parks were designed. She stated that staff had several ideas to present for City Council consideration to alleviate the potential problems caused by the large groups. She advised that with the exception of Palms and San Martin parks, all park basketball court areas were completely fenced and could be closed and locked when the park shut down for the night. Another possible action would be to limit or ban the use of barbecues and smokers on the park.

Responding to a question from Council Member Van Nostran, Ms. Biegel stated that there was currently no restrictions on barbecues of any size and that each park provided a number of picnic pads with a table and small barbecue, as well as picnic shelters with tables, barbecues and sinks for use by reservation.

City Manager Howard Chambers noted that in many cases, someone was sent to the park very early in the morning to put up tape to reserve a large area and the group brings in its own barbecues and shade.

Ms. Biegel noted that taping or roping off areas of the parks was not allowed and that when observed by staff, was required to be taken down.

Responding to a question from Council Member Esquivel, Lieutenant Mark Weldon stated that from the citations issued for parking and traffic violations around the parks, it was evident that many of the park patrons were from out of the area.

The City Manager stated that although there was no way to restrict any park areas for the exclusive use of Lakewood residents, the City Council could establish policies that could help prevent the parks from being taken over by large groups, at the expense of local families.

PARK POLICIES FOR SUMMER PROGRAMS - Continued

Ms. Biegel noted that some area cities required any group of 25 or more to have a permit, but that such a policy would be difficult for park staff to enforce.

Council Member Van Nostran suggested sponsoring events similar to the successful Lakewood residents family swim nights at the community pools.

Ms. Biegel confirmed for Mayor Rogers that the picnic shelter areas were usually booked well in advance.

Vice Mayor Piercy inquired about the magnitude of the problem. Ms. Biegel stated that at this time it was a major issue at two of the City's parks. Deputy City Manager Sandi Ruyle stated that it became a law enforcement concern for the reason that overcrowding at the parks had the potential to cause conflicts over space.

Council Member Wagner expressed concern about losing the community-based nature of the parks to large, outside groups and suggested confining large groups to the picnic shelter areas.

Mayor Rogers inquired about requiring a security deposit for large groups or limiting barbecues allowed on the parks. Ms. Biegel responded by stating that there were cities that charged a per-hour fee for security and clean up, but that each city contacted addressed the problem in different ways.

Vice Mayor Piercy questioned whether there was any merit in establishing individualized rules for specific parks with problems. Lieutenant Weldon expressed the concern that by customized rules for individual parks you may alleviate the problem at one park at the expense of others in the City.

The Recreation and Community Services Director stated that flyers are distributed at all City parks listing the rules and regulations for use of park areas. Council Member Van Nostran suggested the flyer be modified to make the language stronger.

The Deputy City Manager stated that the major problems with large groups were the parking and traffic problems around the parks and the hazards caused by moving large barbecues, often with hot coals, on and off the park grounds.

Council Member Van Nostran stated he would be in favor of banning barbecues of all sizes from City parks and that signage could be posted advising of this new policy.

The City Manager stated it would be advisable to provide a grace period for notification before any such policy was enforced.

The Recreation and Community Services Director advised that when contacted about their procedures, the City of Carson had advised that they changed their park policies and had experienced no more major problems after a three-year phase-in period.

PARK POLICIES FOR SUMMER PROGRAMS - Continued

Mayor Rogers noted that limiting or banning barbecues would automatically control the size of many groups.

Council Member Van Nostran suggested a program for residents to reserve picnic pads as well as the picnic shelters and establish resident and non-resident fees for the use.

VICE MAYOR PIERCY MOVED AND COUNCIL MEMBER VAN NOSTRAN SECONDED TO RECOMMEND THE RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMISSION CONSIDER DOING AWAY WITH ALL OUTSIDE BARBECUES ON THE PARKS IN LAKEWOOD

City Attorney John S. Todd advised that if the City Council wished to restrict the use of barbecues and post a sign stating such, that an ordinance should be prepared. He also noted that tent and canopies could be added to the ordinance at the Council's discretion.

Vice Mayor Piercy and Council Member Van Nostran withdrew the motion and second.

Mayor Rogers suggested the City Council proceed with an ordinance to ban outside barbecues and recommend the Recreation and Community Services Commission study other mitigation measures and bring recommendations back to the City Council.

The Deputy City Manager noted that some cities have portable barbecues at the parks which can be issued.

Vice Mayor Piercy stated he would rather add more picnic pads to meet the demand for barbecues.

Mayor Rogers stated he had reservations about adding tents and canopies to the proposed urgency ordinance at this time.

MAYOR ROGERS MOVED AND VICE MAYOR PIERCY SECONDED TO DIRECT THE CITY ATTORNEY TO PREPARE AN ORDINANCE TO PROHIBIT THE USE OF OUTSIDE BARBECUES ON CITY PARKS AND TO REFER THE MATTER OF OTHER MITIGATIONS TO THE RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMISSION FOR STUDY AND RECOMMENDATION. UPON ROLL CALL VOTE, THE MOTION WAS APPROVED:

AYES: COUNCIL MEMBERS: Wagner, Esquivel, Piercy, Van Nostran and Rogers

NAYS: COUNCIL MEMBERS: None

The City Manager advised that in the interim, before an urgency ordinance could be prepared and adopted, the City Council could elect to add a provision about barbecues to the park rules as a matter of policy. This would give staff the opportunity begin providing notice to groups using the parks of the upcoming policy change and to post signs regarding the change.

PARK POLICIES FOR SUMMER PROGRAMS - Continued

COUNCIL MEMBER WAGNER MOVED AND COUNCIL MEMBER VAN NOSTRAN SECONDED TO ESTABLISH AS A POLICY OF THE CITY COUNCIL THAT NO OUTSIDE BARBECUES SHALL BE ALLOWED ON CITY PARKS, EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY. THERE BEING NO OBJECTION, IT WAS SO ORDERED.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to be brought before the City Council, Mayor Rogers adjourned the meeting at 7:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise R. Hayward, CMC
City Clerk