

Palos Verdes Estates adopts parklands policy for first time in its history



Flowers abloom behind PVE city hall are a part of the Palos Verdes Estates parklands. April 9, 2014. (Brad Graverson / Staff Photographer)

By [Nick Green](#), *Daily Breeze*

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Fishermen prepare to hike down the bluffs in an area of the Palos Verdes Estates parklands. April 9, 2014. (Brad Graverson / Staff Photographer)

For the first time in its 75-year history, Palos Verdes Estates has a parklands use policy that's intended to provide a broad statement for the maintenance and future development of treasured open space in the semi-rural bedroom community.

More than a year in the making, the six-page policy includes provisions for charging unspecified fees for "private party-initiated changes to the parklands" such as new or rerouted paths. There's also language for tapping volunteer "park rangers" to help maintain the expansive parklands.

The City Council unanimously approved the policy at its Tuesday night meeting and it goes into effect Oct. 1.

But its creation was contentious and the finished product hasn't pleased everyone, officials concede.

“Everybody said it doesn’t do everything they wanted on both sides of the equation,” City Manager Tony Dahlerbruch said. “It’s intended to be a balanced approach. It’s a policy to provide guidance, it provides a framework, a process for making decisions on how we approach the use” of the parklands.

The policy-making balancing act was to address the concerns of residents who see use of the parklands and its trails as potentially infringing upon their privacy and security — reasons many moved to the affluent enclave in the first place — and those who want improved paths and parkland amenities.

Indeed, the maintenance and development of trails within the city was identified at public meetings as the highest priority of residents by the Parklands Committee and the reason officials decided a use policy was needed in the first place.

Residents like Ried Schott believe the end product does not meet its intended goal.

“The proposed policy fails to establish proper guidelines for the use, development and maintenance of the city’s parklands,” he wrote in a letter to the City Council. “Instead, it’s evident that the purpose of this policy is to help protect the privacy of residents adjacent to the parklands.”

Others were more diplomatic in making the same point.

“We have noticed that the more our trails are used the safer the area becomes,” resident Kathi Baptist said in a letter to the City Council. “Trails keep our community both healthy and safe.”

The policy does not address encroachments on public right of way — mainly utility easements — that will be the subject of a separate policy.

And the policy does not address potential swaps of public parkland, which has already spawned an ongoing [lawsuit](#) in the community.

Perceived deficiencies like that provoked frustration among those who had closely watched the issue progress.

Renata Harbison, who along with her husband filed the lawsuit, said she felt the language in the policy was too vague, even though it is meant to be a “living document” that can be revised as needed.

“It makes it a little tricky to find out what the intent (of the policy) is,” she said. “What’s frustrating is they create these policies and then don’t do anything to enforce the policies.”

The policy will not go into effect until the fall, by which time a fee structure will be designed, Dahlerbruch said.

That’s intended to offset the cost of paying staff to study requested public changes to the parklands.

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