

Open Letter
Sept 11, 2013

Two short weeks ago, our community experienced a shock when we found that the beloved Moss Beach children's park had been sold to a developer. People came forward with help in a way that hasn't occurred since the community came together to build the Park in the first place. In the last week:

The community came together and spoke. Too late for the issue to be placed on the agenda, the Midcoast Community Council invited concerned people to speak during public comment at the upcoming meeting. People were passionate and articulate in their support for the park. The Midcoast Community Council was an appropriate and useful conduit for advising the Board of Supervisors. Watch it on PacTV or MontaraFog.com. Thank you MCC, and thank you to the members of our community for coming out to get something done.

Our District 3 Supervisor, Don Horsley, who was out of town at a meeting, cut his trip short to come back to work on the problem. Once back, he outlined a plan of action. He let us know that because the park was of benefit to the community, the sale could be cancelled within a sixty day grace period (as long as the back taxes were paid). He pledged to work through county government to change a long standing policy against owning community parks, and get the park accepted into county ownership. But he let the community know that we had to act fast, there were only two weeks left to cancel the sale. Thank you for your support Supervisor Horsley.

The generous owners of Sam's Chowder House, Paul and Julie Shenkman, stepped forward with an offer to pay over \$8,000 in back taxes, which allowed the tax collector to cancel the sale. We are lucky to have community members who are willing to go the extra mile for the benefit of others. Thank you Paul and Julie.

The Moss Beach Park Board (CP&R) was not in condition to accept money. So the Boys and Girls Club of the Coastside held a meeting and voted to accept the payment as a non-profit donation, and send the money into the tax collector. By Tuesday afternoon, the taxes will have been paid. Thank you Boys and Girls Club for helping save a park in crisis.

As the years go by, it's often the case that our community divides over one issue or another, putting friendships and alliances to the test, creating lasting scars. This last week was the opposite of that. In this crisis, everyone jumped in to help -- fast and without controversy. It reinforces something I have long suspected about the people of the Coast. Although we can (and often do) fight like cats & dogs, we have been drawn to this place by common values, and deep down we care about much the same thing. Whatever happens in the future, let's not forget this moment, and the people who helped out.

Neil Merrilees
Friends of Moss Beach Park