

**County of San Mateo
Environmental Services Agency**

Date: December 9, 1997

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: Patrick Sanchez, Director, Parks and Recreation
via Paul M. Koenig, Director, Environmental Services Agency *PK*

Subject: LOCAL RECREATION SERVICES

RECOMMENDATION

1. Provide local recreation services in the unincorporated North Fair Oaks areas subject to certain criteria.

2. Defer action on providing local recreation to the Midcoast area until the completion and subsequent community discussion of the unincorporation/annexation feasibility study currently being prepared by County Planning and subsequent preparation of a recreation needs assessment study for the area.

DISCUSSION

During the 1997/98 budget hearing your Board directed the County Parks and Recreation Commission to review and provide recommendations as to whether the County should provide local recreation services and if so what would be the best way for the County to do so.

The Commission considered the matter at two separate meetings and reached the conclusion that due to a number of changes in State tax law (Proposition 13) and due to the unlikelihood that certain urbanized unincorporated pockets would annex or incorporate in the foreseeable future, the County should, on a limited basis, provide local recreation services. The Commission recommended that these services be provided under the following criteria:

1. That wherever and whenever possible local park services be provided through a contract with an adjacent city or school district.

2. That funding for contracts for local park services not come from the existing park budget or from funds intended for the existing County Parks system.

3. That consideration be given to arranging for the transport of children in unincorporated areas to existing park facilities located in adjacent cities.

4. That the County considers a ballot measure for future park and recreation funding.

The Commission is aware that for more than 25 years, the County niche in recreation has been the provision of regional type recreation facilities. This is consistent with the idea that urban type services, e.g., local parks and recreation programs, should be provided by cities. The Commission also recognizes that there are several large unincorporated urban communities (North Fair Oaks and the Midcoast) which are not likely to annex or incorporate in the near future and that these communities are currently underserved in terms of local recreation. Additionally, the Commission is aware, that since the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978 residents of the unincorporated area pay the same proportional tax rate as residents of cities and as such may have an expectation of comparable services. The Commission also believes that since cities specialize in urban recreation type services and the County does not, it makes better sense to, whenever feasible, contract with an adjacent city or a school district which already provides some form of the desired service. This would likely be more efficient and cost effective than the County starting up a local park services unit.

The Commission believes that before the County undertakes the provision of recreation services in an area, there should be a needs assessment done so that the services are provided in accordance with the needs expressed by the community. This study has been done in North Fair Oaks so it makes sense to begin the provision of local service in that community first.

With respect to the Midcoast, the Commission is aware that there is strong community interest in incorporation or annexation and that County Planning has just begun a feasibility study for the community. The Commission believes that any decision on providing recreation services should await the completion and subsequent community discussion of that study. If a decision is made to go forward on incorporation or annexation then the decision on recreation should be deferred until the outcome of those efforts is completed. If a decision is made to not go forward, then the Board should fund a needs assessment (estimated at \$15,000) before going forward.

Lastly, the Commission would like to emphasize their strong belief that parks and recreation services in the County need more funds. Accordingly, their recommendations also include the criterion that funding for local park services should be new funds and not be taken from the existing or projected County Parks budget. The Commission also recommends that consideration be given to some type of ballot measure to raise funds to meet existing and future park and recreation needs.