



Published November 22nd, 2023

## Parks, Trails and Recreation Commission provides annual update to city council

By Lou Fancher

A panel of Parks, Trails and Recreation Commissioners brought a department update to the council at the Nov. 13 meeting. Following the introduction of the commissioners by PTR Commission Chair Alison Hill, Parks Subcommittee chair Grace Dixon highlighted the strengths that could be applied to all city committees and subcommittees. "Lafayette is a sought-after city that thrives due to our small and mighty and knowledgeable staff, and its strong partnerships with our dedicated volunteers."

The PTR department includes the Trail, Park, Community Center, and Hamlin Nature Park subcommittees. Dixon emphasized that the committee's partnerships with local organizations are vital and lead to memorable events. Among the partners mentioned were the Youth Commission, Senior Services Commission, Community Foundation of Lafayette, Chamber of Commerce, Lafayette School District, East Bay Regional Park District and the East Bay Municipal Utility District, neighboring cities and others. Green hills, great schools, and good teamwork is the result of the collective energy and contributions, according to Dixon.

Hamlin Nature Park Subcommittee member Justine Parmelee spoke on three initiatives as examples of the work performed by the subcommittee. Lafayette Community Center Playground's renovation when opened in 2024 will offer a larger footprint, improved accessibility for tiny tots and others. The Leigh Creekside and Gazebo Conceptual Design has moved forward with funding support, and the safety and experience on the area's recreational trails has been improved with new signage and trail markers enhanced by QR codes. Key accomplishments featured in the presentation ranged from the Brook Street Play Area Renovation to the Parkland Acquisition, a Rain Garden Partnership with the Creeks Committee, the Expanded Childcare and School Bus Service, and more.

Challenges facing the committee continue to be funding for land acquisition, repairs or replacement of aging facilities, and the environmental impacts on parks and trails as the Lafayette community continues to grow. Maintaining the current system is requiring all of the resources and the PTR continues to fall short of their goals. One bright light was a report that the recreation program is self-sustaining and this year broke the past records by generating \$2 million in revenue.

Council questions from Mayor Carl Anduri began with what the demands for community playing fields will be as the population grows and where those fields might be located. With limited flat spaces, the shortage is an ongoing challenge the department continues to address. Efforts to expand the hours and bolster the durability of the current fields through measures such as additional lighting, artificial turf and other means have an impact, but it is limited. Ideally, adding more land to the system would result in the largest improvements.

Mayor Anduri commended the department's efforts during the pandemic to increase the childcare support programs and safe activities for youths. He read a proclamation thanking the many volunteers who keep the trails safe and maintain them year-round, especially the Save Mount Diablo Trail Dogs, whose work has resulted in January 30, 2024, being declared by the city as "Trail Dogs Day."

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