



**NOVATO RECREATION, CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
COMMISSION**

MINUTES

**THE CITY OF
NOVATO
CALIFORNIA**

Thursday, November 13, 2008
7:00 p.m.

Margaret Todd Senior Center*
Meeting Room 3
1560 Hill Road

75 Rowland Way #200
Novato, CA 94945-3232
415/899-8900
FAX 415/899-8213
www.ci.novato.ca.us

Mayor
Jim Leland
Mayor Pro Tem
Jeanne MacLeamy
Councilmembers
Carole Dillon-Knutson
Pat Eklund
Madeline Kellner

Interim City Manager
Patricia Thompson

A. ROLL CALL

Chair Reuscher called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Commissioners present: Weber, Porter, Parker, Stratigos, Lucan

Commissioners absent: None.

Also present: Director Pam Shinault, Deputy Director Kathy Kormos, Recreation Division Manager Kevin Conklin, Recording Secretary Lori Simpkins

B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

There were no changes to the agenda.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. October 9, 2008. There were two grammatical changes on pages 4 and 5.

**MOTION/SECOND, COMMISSIONERS STRATIGOS/
PARKER, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS AMENDED.**

MOTION CARRIED 6-0.

D. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no Public Comment.

E. READER BOARD INFORMATION - *Reader Board is available.*

1. Various PRCS Fliers.

F. CITIZENS PRESENTATION

There were no Citizens Presentations.

G. STAFF PRESENTATION

1. History Museum – Samantha Kimpel. Ms. Kimpel handed out a 2008 highlight packet. She said their biggest program is the 3rd grade tours from the schools. They take them on a walking tour and a tour of the museum. They also get scouts asking for tours. In the summer they have a float in the 4th of July parade featuring pioneer Novatoans. This past year staff and eight volunteers have been working on a history book about Hamilton Field. It is now on sale at the Museum, Costco, and Barnes & Noble. They have an intern, Jim McKay, a student from Sonoma State University, who has been inventorying objects, taking photos and uploading them onto a computer for a future website. They have a collection of about 21,000 objects. It is now easier to locate an object now that they are archived. They have approximately 450 Guild members, and over 50 volunteers that have put in 3,000 hours to help maintain the museum. They get around 800 walk-ins, some asking about relatives, some are developers looking for information about certain properties. She is thinking of revamping the museum exhibit to show the general town history with a small rotating exhibit of city hall, local doctors, etc. There is a current exhibit of Hamilton Field at the So. Novato Library. Ms. Kimpel works three quarter time with the museum, and one quarter time working on Cultural Arts program, such as Dance and Theater. She also worked on the past summer's Celebrate Family series.

Commissioner Stratigos complimented Ms. Kimpel on the Hamilton Field history book event at the Art Center at Hamilton.

Commissioner Parker asked how many kids were enrolled in the Dance program.

Ms. Kimpel said they have 84 enrolled, and expect the enrollment to grow in January. They offer ballet, jazz, tap and hip hop.

Commissioner Stratigos asked what ages do they offer the program to.

Ms. Kimpel said 3 years to adults.

Chair Reuscher asked how the museum got the book published.

Ms. Kimpel said the publishing company publishes a lot of these types of books. They have a tight format they had to follow. They send out a representative who contacts local businesses about selling the book. She sent them a list of local media outlets and places where the book could be placed.

Ms. Shinault asked if she knew how many books have been sold.

Ms. Kimpel did not know yet. They have sold 230 at the museum, and 90 at the Hamilton event. She should hear after the holidays. They will be selling them at the Crafts Faire at Margaret Todd Senior Center.

H. OLD BUSINESS

There were no Old Business items.

I. NEW BUSINESS

1. Budget Workshop. Ms. Shinault handed out an outline of her PowerPoint presentation. She then went through her presentation. The PRCS Department budget reduction strategy was presented and included reducing expenses, increasing revenues, new fees, and minimizing reductions for part-time and full-time staff. Programs that generate no revenue or have low capacity to generate revenue will be targeted first. Most full-time staff in PRCS are tied to revenue so the net reduction must be considered.

Chair Reuscher agreed about raising fees, but was concerned that the raised fees may price out some participants, thus not bringing in the anticipated revenue.

Ms. Shinault said they compared last summer's registration numbers to this year's in which some fees were raised, and they did generate more revenues. There were some participants that did not come back, possibly due to the raised fees.

Chair Reuscher said that it would be nice to have a good Financial Assistance Program working to help offset the raised fees for low income families.

Ms. Shinault said that the Labor Day at the Lake event was the Financial Assistance Program's main contributor. The City had allocated \$20,000, but because of the budget deficit, Council has supported eliminating the \$20,000. The program would only receiving funding from donations from participants when they register, which is optional. The City receives approximately \$3,000 a year in participant donations. This past year, there were 128 families in the program. In the past, the City was able to offer funds to 190 families at \$150 each.

Chair Reuscher doesn't want to see anyone denied a service that is provided by taxes.

Ms. Shinault said that Council will be discussing the budget on December 9th. She encouraged the Commissioners to attend.

Commissioner Stratigos asked how often the facilities are rented. The downtown museum brings in zero rental revenue. The Firehouse Museum will be a premiere facility for the Hamilton area.

Ms. Shinault said they are two different situations. There are no plans to rent out the Firehouse Museum. Any pool rental revenues go to the YMCA. The IVC pool is expensive to rent. They do rent the Novato High pool during the summer. She briefly explained the City and the YMCA's partnership. She met with the YMCA to see if they could share some of the revenue with the City, but they are unable to do so.

Commissioner Stratigos asked about special event rentals at the pool.

Ms. Shinault said they expect rentals at the pool to increase after the renovation. Commissioner Parker said if there are more events it would generate more revenue.

Ms. Shinault said that with more events and people, there are more staff costs.

Commissioner Weber asked what the YMCA makes from the pool.

Ms. Shinault said they spend \$100,000 a year, and recover around \$70,000.

Commissioner Lucan asked if the City could run it better.

Ms. Shinault said when they did run it, they had to pay city staff year round and had the pool opened longer with more programs. The City subsidized the aquatics program at \$200,000 a year plus maintenance costs. This included the Hamilton pool, IVC pool and NHS pool. By allowing the YMCA to manage the pool, the City no longer is subsidizing the \$200,000.

Commissioner Stratigos asked about Margaret Todd Senior Center rentals. When he called the Center about renting, the fee schedule was so complicated.

Ms. Shinault said annually, the Center is not rented to its maximum.

Commissioner Stratigos thought there was a lack of marketing to rent the facilities. The City should look into having someone market its facilities.

Ms. Shinault said they had marketing funding in their budget to print small brochures targeted to specific needs, but they don't have the money to have staff aggressively market the facilities.

Ms. Kormos said they would love to be able to do that. They use the City's website, the activity guide. The Margaret Todd Senior Center is used on Sundays by the Senior Club. During the week there are senior programs going on which restricts rentals. The Margaret Todd Senior Center fees were changed last year to make it less complicated. They also have volunteers that answer the phones who are not as knowledgeable regarding the fees. The Margaret Todd Senior Center rental revenue is split 50/50 with the Building Maintenance budget.

Commissioner Weber asked if the 50/50 split happens with all facilities.

Ms. Shinault said no, only with the Margaret Todd Senior Center. They are the only facility that has custodian staff assigned to it full time.

Commissioner Stratigos asked if Margaret Todd Senior Center was the only indoor rental.

Ms. Shinault said the Hamilton Community Center will evolve into a rental facility soon. The Margaret Todd Senior Center is the bigger facility.

Commissioner Stratigos asked about the Arts Center.

Ms. Shinault said the City leases the building.
Commissioner Lucan commended staff for doing a good job on the department's budget.

Ms. Shinault said it was difficult but they had to spread the budget reduction pain over different areas.

Commissioner Weber said she was disappointed with the Financial Assistance being affected.

Ms. Shinault said that program went from \$20,000 to \$3,000.

Commissioner Stratigos said they should make a less passive approach. There are grant programs the City could pursue. Staff could make presentations to schools and churches to let them know about the programs to help generate enrollment.

Ms. Shinault agreed with doing a less passive approach. It would be nice to have a staff person to market the department's programs, but it is not a reality.

Commissioner Stratigos suggested for a year, staff go to where the kids are and make a presentation, and see if there is a difference.

Ms. Kormos said they do send out a Fun Times newsletter quarterly to participants and schools. They do direct mailing of program announcements to past and current participants. They also have a booth at the Farmer's Market to market summer programs.

Commissioner Stratigos said that during hard times, staff should try harder and do more. He thought it would be valuable to the department's programs if staff went out to the kids then sending out a pamphlet.

2. Facility Fees. Ms. Kormos said in 2005-06, the City hired a consultant to do a fee study. It was determined that the City's facility fees had fallen behind other cities. It had been seven years since fees were increased. Last year the City did a modest fee increase. It was also determined that the City needed to do cost comparisons on an annual basis. After doing cost comparisons for this year, it was determined that some fees needed to be increased. (Staff is also looking at new ways to increase rentals such as putting in synthetic turf, renting out the west wing of the Hamilton Community Center.) There are other rooms at the HCC that could be rented out. The largest change in the fees will be the athletic fields. The NUSD and the City had been charging youth athletic groups a per player fee each year. This has been difficult to manage facilities for the City and the youth athletic groups were on an "honor" system when it came to informing the City about the number of participants. The NUSD recently changed their fees to per hour. There was no incentive for the youth athletic groups to manage their rental of City fields, so they reserve fields for more than the time they use it. Staff continues to hear that there aren't enough fields to use. Changing the per player fee to per hour will help the City manage its field usage better so more can rent them. Other Sonoma and Marin County cities charge hourly rates. The City needs to be consistent with NUSD's fees for fields and gyms. NUSD is offering a 10% discount after 500 hours of rental. The City is recommending a 5% discount across the board. Some facilities, such as the Tennis

Courts, did not have a significant increase, so there will be no fee increase this year. Next year, it may go up a \$1.00. Their recommendation also includes increasing park fees and adding a jump house use fee. Jump houses impact the turf areas in parks. They are also requiring that when using a jump house in a park, they need to reserve a barbecue area. The Hill Community Room has been free to community non-profit groups. Staff is now recommending charging half of the regular rate.

Chair Reuscher said that if the fees for fields go to an hourly rate, it would be a significant increase. Is staff assuming that groups will use the same number of hours or would they pear back.

Ms. Kormos said that is the unknown. She has been contacted by The Heat, a gym user, and Babe Ruth baseball with their concerns. They are assuming reserved time will go down, where groups will be more conservative when renting fields.

Chair Reuscher said that athletic youth groups are trying to manage their schedule with coaches and managers' schedules.

Ms. Kormos said they mailed out notices to all athletic youth groups regarding the fee increases and tonight's meeting.

Chair Reuscher said that if staff can manage reserving the fields better, would it bring in additional revenue.

Ms. Kormos thought it would. NUSD moved to change their fees first. If the City wants to better manage its field rentals, they need to be consistent with NUSD's fees. Otherwise, the City fields would be more heavily used while the maintenance costs would increase.

Commissioner Lucan asked how staff reconciled the cost savings on page 9 of the staff report.

Ms. Kormos said they were conservative in the calculations.

Commissioner Lucan said under the new fee increase, he did the math and cannot see how the athletic youth groups could survive.

Ms. Kormos said staff estimated the cost increase for each player would be \$80 each.

Commissioner Lucan said it would eliminate programs altogether.

Ms. Kormos agreed. Staff has struggled with this issue. Once NUSD made their fee changes, the City had no choice in changing theirs too. If the City didn't change the fees, their fields would be more impacted. Staff is looking for suggestions.

Commissioner Lucan said NUSD will adopt their new fees in March 2009.

Commissioner Weber asked if staff did any surveys.

Ms. Kormos said they did.

Commissioner Lucan said he was fine with the facility rental increases, but the fields rental fee increase is a tough one. He didn't think the fee increase for fields was worth it. He suggested looking at the field rentals on a case by case basis, or gradually increase the fees.

Ms. Kormos said they could look at phasing the fee increase.

Chair Reuscher asked what the reaction has been from the groups.

Ms. Kormos said before NUSD adopted their fees last month, they offered workshops for the youth groups to attend. Only two people attended. The City mailed out notices for tonight's meeting. NUSD will start implementing their fee increases in March, 2009. Staff understands the significant impacts of going from a per player fee to an hourly rate. She re-emphasized that this will help staff manage the facilities more efficiently.

Chair Reuscher understood that without the fee increase, the City's fields would become impacted, but couldn't staff restrict use.

Kevin Conklin, Recreation Division Manager, said they don't want to restrict groups from using the fields if there is a need for fields. They are trying to match the NUSD's fees to be competitive. Little League fields are on both the NUSD property and City property. It would be difficult to not have the same fees.

Chair Reuscher asked if this will affect soccer players.

Mr. Conklin said it would, and also CYO players.

Chair Reuscher opened the meeting for public comment.

Craig Hill, represented Novato Youth Soccer Association, Novato Lacrosse, CYO Basketball, and a volleyball club. He said that the current fee of \$15 per player equals to about \$250 a team. They do try to manage their usage of the reserved facilities. This increase has a significant impact on these groups. It will cost an additional \$150 per kid that they will need to add to their budget. This would also be a significant increase in revenue for the City. Little League representatives have recently met with the NUSD regarding their fee increase. He believes that the youth athletic groups will put pressure on the NUSD to reconsider how they will implement the fee increase. He suggested that the City wait to see what happens on how NUSD will implement their fee increase in March. He agreed a transition of the fee increase was a good idea, possibly implementing a \$40 fee over four years. This would give everyone time to see how the increases affect the programs. They are going to recommend to NUSD to give discounts each year of 75%, 50%, and 25%.

Joe Rudorfer, City of Hope representative, said their group meets at the Hill Community Room about every other month. They pay a \$6 application fee, and get the use of the room free. Most of the group are volunteers that work on getting donations for the City of Hope hospital. The fee increase would make them pay \$15 an hour. They use the

room for three hours, so they would have to pay \$45 for every meeting. This would be difficult to pay and would be a burden on the group.

Chair Reuscher closed the meeting for public comment.

Chair Reuscher asked if NUSD raised the fees because they needed more revenues.

Ms. Kormos said increasing revenues probably was an issue, but they may also want to manage their fields more efficiently too.

Chair Reuscher asked if the City could meet with NUSD to discuss working out facility fees issue.

Ms. Kormos said they could, but their board has already approved the fees. The City is only mirroring the NUSD fee schedule.

Ms. Shinault agreed with Mr. Hill. NUSD started the ball rolling with their fee increase. If groups start to mobilize and put pressure on NUSD, the City could wait until they react. There could be other ways to implement the fee increase. She agreed they need to work together to be equitable. She was not sure how NUSD could quickly react to groups.

Chair Reuscher agreed that they should delay the City's fee increase until NUSD figures out how they are going to implement theirs. Phasing is a good idea.

Commissioner Lucan agreed the City should delay their decision. He asked that when the Commission revisits this issue, he would like to see the numbers side by side.

Ms. Shinault said that is difficult to do. Teams may not reserve the same amount of time if they have to pay the hourly rate vs. \$15 per player fee.

Commissioner Lucan said a list of the sports groups affected would be nice to see.

Mr. Hill said he has done a spreadsheet projecting the costs for each group. He offered to forward it to Commissioner Lucan.

Ms. Shinault asked if the spreadsheet would show how much teams use facilities for practices and games.

Mr. Hill said it does.

Ms. Kormos said that Girls Softball should be included.

Mr. Hill said he will contact Mr. Jeff Farber, Novato Girls Softball representatives.

Commissioner Lucan said he liked the per player per season. He would like to see what NUSD will do.

Commissioner Stratigos agreed with the hourly rate, it is important to be able to see when the facilities are being used. This will tighten groups' usage and the facilities will be

used more by more teams. He thought teams that compete with City programs should pay more.

Ms. Kormos said staff has tried hard to balance use with what we have available. The Commission should not look at it as being competitive. The City offers activities to the community.

Commissioner Stratigos said that programs that are the same that the City is offering, such as soccer camps, should have a different fee.

Ms. Kormos said all fees are structured with community service group fees. Soccer camps not run by the City are charged the commercial rate.

Commissioner Parker agreed with Mr. Hill in waiting to see what NUSD will do. He also agreed that the City needs to change to an hourly rate, but would like to see it phased in. His daughter plays Lacrosse and it costs \$350 per player to play. This is too much of a hit at one time. Both NUSD and the City's fees need to be equitable. It would be good to have an idea of what is being used.

Commissioner Stratigos referred to the Babe Ruth letter stating that they have put money into the fields they use. Groups would see the fee increase as being penalizing for helping.

Chair Reuscher said that all youth groups have helped in some way with the facilities they use.

Commissioner Stratigos asked if custodian fees are included for indoor facilities.

Ms. Kormos said they were.

Commissioner Stratigos asked about the Senior Core Group use at Margaret Todd Senior Center.

Ms. Kormos said that the Senior Core Group rate is Monday-Friday during the day; this has not changed since Margaret Todd Senior Center opened. On week nights and weekends the standard fees apply.

MOTION/SECOND, COMMISSIONER STRATIGOS/PORTER, TO RECOMMEND THE FEE SCHEDULE INCREASES WITH THE EXCEPTION OF FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF SPORTS PLAYING FIELDS AND GYMNASIUMS FEES.

Ms. Kormos said they haven't discussed the gymnasium fee increase, which is also significant.

Commissioner Parker asked if racquetball court users would be affected.

Ms. Kormos said yes they would.

Commissioner Weber asked if the dog park would be affected.

Ms. Kormos said that they will be adding an annual fee for use of the dog park, like a membership. They would be issued an access key card in order to get in.

MOTION CARRIED 6-0.

J. STAFF REPORTS

1. Parks, Recreation and Community Services Weekly Reports to City Manager.

- September 11 – November 6, 2008.

2. Projects and Programs and Issues Report - verbal

- Summer Program Participant/Rentals Revenues
- SF Bay Trail Feasibility Study. Ms. Shinault has met with the Bel Marin Keys residents who are opposed to the proposed trail segments. There are four ranked alignments. There is a workshop scheduled for November 20th. This should go to Council late winter.
- Hamilton Pool. Ms. Shinault said next Tuesday the construction bids close. They had 25 contractors show up for the walk through. They are expecting a good response. Council should award the bid December 9th.
- Hamilton Firehouse. Ms. Shinault said getting a dedicated phone line delayed the project. Council should approve the notice of completion at their December 9^h meeting. Staff will meet with the Historical Guild regarding help with improvements and occupancy.
- Downtown Art. Ms. Shinault said the dedication ceremony is scheduled for December 6th, at 3pm. They are creating a walking brochure with a map if people want to walk Grant Avenue to see all of the art pieces.

Commissioner Weber asked if the walking map will be a permanent map.

Ms. Shinault said this map will be only for the dedication.

Commissioner Weber asked if the City will be honoring Sharyn Moss in some way. She explained to the rest of the Commission that Ms. Moss served on the Civic Arts Commission. She brought up the idea of benches.

Ms. Shinault said they have not figured out yet what to do, but will do something. A rock with a plaque purchased by an individual or group could be considered.

Commissioner Stratigos asked if there will be an art piece at the 901 Sherman Avenue building.

Ms. Shinault said it is not a component of the current project. There could be a plaque placed there. There will probably be historic photos inside. The Commission can identify other sites for art. There is also the fountain to consider.

- Scottsdale Art. Ms. Shinault said things are not going smoothly. Staff had to ask Council for more money or they would have to downsize the art piece for a second time. The artist needed a structural engineer report. She hopes the art will be installed in the spring.

3. City Council Action Updates – verbal

- FY 08/09 Budget Reductions
- FY 09/10 Budget Reductions
- OJJPP Grant Award. Ms. Shinault said they have declined the award.
- General Plan Steering Committee. Ms. Shinault said Council has adopted the committee recommendations.

Chair Reuscher said nothing has happened yet, but a meeting is coming up.

Ms. Shinault said Council realized there were no representatives from Hamilton or Bahia so they added two more, which makes a committee of 17.

4. Upcoming City Council Items.

12/9 – Notice of Completion – Hamilton Fire House Conversion CIP #03-019 (Consent)

12/9 – Facility Use Fees Increase (General Business)

12/9 – Construction Contract – Hamilton Pool CIP 06-003 (Consent)

12/9 – Award Construction Contract – Solar Panels at Hamilton Community Center, Margaret Todd Senior Center, Novato Gymnastics Center (Consent)

5. Media Articles - Comments from the Director/Commission

There were no Media Articles.

K. COMMISSION REPORTS/COMMENTS.

1. Commission Comments/Reports.

- a. Commission Reorganization. Ms. Shinault said that Council has been concentrating on recruiting a City Manager and has not appointed a new Commission member. They expect to hire a new City Manager in February or March if they stay on schedule.

**COMMISSIONER REUSCHER NOMINATED COMMISSIONER
WEBER FOR CHAIR.**

COMMISSIONER STRATIGOS SECOND THE MOTION.

MOTION CARRIED 6-0.

**COMMISSIONER PARKER NOMINATED COMMISSIONER LUCAN
FOR VICE CHAIR.**

COMMISSIONER STRATIGOS SECOND THE MOTION.

MOTION CARRIED 6-0.

2. Request Agenda Items.

L. SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING

December 11, 2008.

M. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:33 p.m.