



PARKS AND RECREATION
COMMISSION

CITY OF SACRAMENTO
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June 7, 2011

Honorable Mayor Kevin Johnson
Members of the Sacramento City Council
915 I Street, 5th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: 6/7/10 City Council Item 13 - Budget Hearing: FY2011/12 Proposed Budget for the Convention, Culture, and Leisure Department Related to Golf Maintenance and Additional Funding for Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission [SMAC] Arts Re-granting Program; Parks and Recreation Department Related to Community Centers; and Police and Fire Departments

Mayor Johnson and Members of the City Council,

As the Chair of the Commission, I am tasked with forwarding the Parks and Recreation Commission's recommendations to the City Council regarding difficult issues such as these. However rather than simply state a bureaucratic action of one of the City's appointed bodies; I would like to focus on the theme of this year's budget process – choices. Next year's budget will reflect your choices about what Sacramento will be, what services will be provided and what we feel is important in sustaining what makes Sacramento one of the best places to live in California.

My perspective is and continues to be that part of the formula that makes Sacramento outstanding is its park system and investment in creating, maintaining and growing a sense of community. For that reason, while realizing that reductions were necessary, the Parks and Recreation Commission never advocated for no reductions – that would have been irresponsible. In advocating for minimal access to community centers and swimming pools, we were not representing a union, special interest or political perspective, but every single person in the City of Sacramento. Our park system and recreational services touch so many people in such a wide and important way, that the impact of every dollar is so much greater than that number could ever truly reflect. I learned the value of that simple dollar more than a decade ago.

During that time, I had the pleasure of working on the front line in one of the City's summer camp programs at McKinley Park. In that year, the cost of the program for the entire summer was just \$10. In that year I came to know the names of more than one hundred different children, their families, their issues, their struggles. I remember so many stories and was so moved and touched. You knew which families were sending their kids simply to make sure they were safe and had a good meal. You felt for those kids you knew were safer at the park than at home. Those things you can't ignore.

That summer one of the participants in my program reported to me that they were being abused by a family friend. I followed my training and reported the incident, and then went on to testify in court. It was a grueling and emotional experience, but I am glad I did it. I am glad for \$10 we provided a free lunch for those who needed it, gave time for single parents to earn a living, and provided a safe place for a child to tell someone they were being hurt. That is as much public safety as anything else that is the investment not everyone gets to see.



Optimize the Experience of Living!

This year's budget process has without a doubt has been one of the most difficult for the City Council, however I personally appreciate the efforts of the Mayor and City Council, the City Manager and the staff of the Department of Parks and Recreation to mitigate the impacts to the public during these difficult financial times. For that reason, I encourage the City Council to support the recommendation of staff to restore funding to our Community Centers.

The proposal by staff recommends largely restoring funding, working in partnership with the public and looking at alternate reductions to keep the Community Centers open in the neighborhoods that need them most. I think this make the most sense; in that much of the revenue that is raised from cell towers is generated from cell towers that are in parks. From my perspective, and that of my colleagues this is a wise investment and will have impacts beyond just keeping some doors open.

This year's budget again is about choices. The choice to continue and support parks and recreation in the City of Sacramento is so much more than grass and sports – it's about creating and sustaining who we are as a City.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Rewers, Chair
Parks and Recreation Commission

Cc: Sacramento City Council
Parks and Recreation Commission
Bill Edgar, Interim City Manager
Betty Masuoka, Interim Deputy City Manager
Cassandra Jennings, Assistant City Manager
Jim Combs, Director of Parks and Recreation