



**TO:** Mayor and Councilmembers

**FROM:** Jaime A. Valdez, Neighborhood Services Director

**CONTACT:** JoAnne Plummer, Parks & Recreation Manager

**SUBJECT:** Consideration of a Reservation Process for Recreation Amenities in City Parks

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve the development of a Reservation Process for specific recreation amenities in City of Goleta Parks.

**BACKGROUND:**

The City of Goleta has sixteen parks with a wide array of recreation amenities including, but not limited to, playgrounds, picnic areas, athletic fields, disc golf course, tennis courts, etc. The only spaces currently available for reservation are the four group picnic areas at Stow Grove Park and the two group picnic areas with a shelter structure at Jonny D. Wallis Neighborhood Park. In response to public and user inquiries, staff believe the time is right for the City to consider establishing a reservation process for some of the available recreation amenities in designated public parks.

In January of 2023, the City of Goleta assumed the management of the Goleta Community Center in a status quo operation, which includes the rental of the multi-purpose field in the back of the campus, adjacent to the Boys and Girls Club. The historic use of this space has been for drop in use by the Boys and Girls Club, but the prior operator also allowed reservation-based rentals to the United States Youth Volleyball League, soccer groups (both youth and adult), football practices and large events including the La Patera Elementary School PTA Family Night event.

The concept of reserving spaces within parks was brought before the Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) in February of 2019, prior to the opening of Jonny D. Wallis Neighborhood Park. Upon consideration of the item, the Commission ultimately decided to not move forward with a reservation process for individuals or organized groups. As the demand for reserved space increases and the number of requests for use of the field at the Goleta Community Center continues to grow, staff returned to the Commission in May of 2023. The Commission deliberated on the topic, received public

comment and unanimously supported the recommendation to develop a reservation system.

## **DISCUSSION:**

The City's adopted Recreation Needs Assessment identified a lack of available athletic fields for use by organized youth sports. This item was formerly brought before the Commission prior to completing the development of the Jonny D. Wallis Neighborhood Park, along with the renovation of the multi-purpose field at the Goleta Community Center. As Council is aware, there are still two planned multi-use field improvements at Stow Grove Park and Evergreen Park. These two park facilities would be improved as part of their master planning process and improvements.

Providing the ability to reserve City recreation facilities at City parks creates an opportunity, not only for youth sports organizations to utilize these spaces for practices, games, etc., but the community at large. The availability of these newer and recently renovated facilities creates opportunities for other activities to include classes, clinics, commercial recreation, etc., based on customer demand.

As the Council evaluates the use of the athletic fields, it is appropriate to consider a reservation process for sports courts and other possible amenities. Again, these spaces could be used for practices, classes, clinics, commercial recreation, etc., based on customer demand. Currently there is no approved process for individuals, organizations or businesses to ensure available space for this type of service on City-owned recreation facilities. It has been reported in the past that individuals have accessed City-owned tennis courts to conduct business, holding private tennis lessons. In Title 12, Chapter 12.15.150 of the Goleta Municipal Code, it clearly states, "*No person shall offer, conduct or deliver lessons, services or amusements within any recreation area except by concession agreement or authorization.*" The development of individual concession agreements may include a competitive bid or request for proposal process, resulting in a contract. This process is one that is demanding on staff resources and does not allow the flexibility to offer services and opportunities to the community.

In 2019, when the multi-purpose field behind the Goleta Community Center was renovated, the management of that facility was provided by a non-profit organization, the Goleta Valley Community Center (GVCC). This management structure provided the GVCC the opportunity to rent the field space for a variety of uses. Such uses of that space include, but are not limited to, soccer practice, a youth grass volleyball program, a family night for La Patera Elementary School PTA, and the Foodbank's Picnic in the Park (otherwise known as the summer food service program). As the City of Goleta has assumed responsibility for the Goleta Community Center, the requests to reserve this space has remained strong.

The development of a reservation-with-fee system for group use at a recreation amenity in City parks is designed to assist the residents, not create a hindrance or an obstacle for use. In some areas, a group is seeking a guarantee that a space would be available for a practice or a program/event. In other cases, proposed uses could allow the City of

Goleta to enter into a contract with a proposed vendor to offer recreational clinics, workshops, programs or events that are not currently offered in our community. Proposed amenities for consideration would be multi-purpose fields, the skate park or disc golf course (on a limited basis), tennis and/or pickleball courts (for instruction and/or tournaments).

It is important to note that there is *no desire* to compete with programs or services that are currently held at a park, instead this approach could offer a reservable process for field space to organized groups residing near a City park so they would not have to travel to Girsh Park or another location for practices. In addition, *it is the intention* that a multi-purpose field reservation system would only be available at larger parks to include Jonny D. Wallis Neighborhood Park, Stow Grove Park, Evergreen Park and continue at the Goleta Community Center. This recommendation does not include a reservation system for the smaller, neighborhood parks. These parks would all remain as a first come, first serve basis.

While the proposed fee structure for this type of opportunity is discussed in the fiscal impacts section of this report, revenue is not the driving factor behind the recommendation. The City of Goleta has many people utilizing park spaces for practices and for commercial uses, without proper documentation. The development of an avenue for reservations allows the City to know who is using the parks and for what purposes. Organizations and commercial use would be required to complete necessary paperwork, pay applicable fees and provide insurance if necessary. Understanding who is in the parks allows our parks maintenance team to track use, appropriately schedule large maintenance projects and address concerns. Staff would have the opportunity to re-direct use to another facility if necessary due to conflicting demands and/or the need to allow the field to rest. Moreover, if a complaint is filed about a group at the park, there is no method to track down a responsible party. Lastly, understanding the number of individuals in the parks, and their purposes, provides the opportunity to track trends and develop data to confirm needs for future grant requests to restore or enhance current park facilities.

In an effort to streamline efficiencies and improve customer service, a Request for Proposals for Registration and Facility Booking Software was released earlier this year. This type of specialized software will provide a web based, online reservation system that can be used for current operations related to park picnic rentals, facilities and program reservations at the Goleta Library. In the future, this type of software can also be utilized to track volunteers, to take registrations for programs/clinics/workshops, for additional park reservations, for community garden plot rentals, as well as for room reservations at the Goleta Community Center. If Council approves the recommendation in this report, the new reservation system could also be used for booking the recreation amenities discussed in this report. The selection of a vendor to best meet the growing needs of the City of Goleta is still underway, and more information on this software will come before Council at a later date.

If the development of a reservation process is approved by Council, staff will develop the application process and develop the guidelines for implementation. Prior to the document

being released to the public, it will be reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Commission to allow an opportunity for public input on the process.

### GOLETA STRATEGIC PLAN:

**City-Wide Strategy:** 2. Support community vitality and enhanced recreational opportunities

**Strategic Goal:** 2.2.-Support programs that enhance quality of life in the Goleta community such as recreation, public safety, human services, and cultural arts.

### FISCAL IMPACTS:

Adding reservation opportunities for recreation amenities would provide an additional revenue stream to the City, which could in turn be designated to future park maintenance and/or park improvements or a future park ranger program. The status quo fee for use of the field at the Goleta Community Center is \$30/hr Monday through Friday and \$40/hr Saturday and Sunday. However, the last time the City of Goleta did a user fee study, the consultants were asked to consider a rate for field use and established a rate of \$25/hr, which is in the current Master Fee list. It is recommended that the fees remain consistent for all fields managed by the City of Goleta and a fee to be established for other recreation amenities. These fees would be included in the City of Goleta's Master Fee List and would be developed to be comparable to our neighbors and/or like agencies.

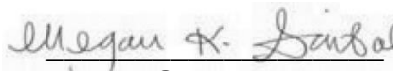
### ALTERNATIVES:

Council could direct staff not to move forward on the creation of a process to reserve recreation amenities in parks, remaining status quo to first come, first served. However, as the operations at the Community Center are currently status quo, staff would require direction on either maintaining that historical field rental status or aligning the process to other parks as first come, first served.

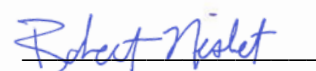
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