



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: PARKS

File #: 20-614

Board Meeting Date: 8/4/2020

Special Notice: None

Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: Nicholas J. Calderon, Parks Director

Subject: Elimination of the Vehicle Entrance Fee at Flood County Park

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a resolution authorizing an amendment to the San Mateo County Parks Department fee schedule to eliminate the vehicle entrance fee at Flood County Park.

BACKGROUND:

The San Mateo County Parks Department ("Department") is evaluating the feasibility of eliminating vehicle entrance fees at County parks. Vehicle entrance fees can serve as a barrier to access, which implicates larger equity issues. To assist in its evaluation, the Department contracted with CHM Government Services to prepare a Vehicle Entrance Fee Analysis. The analysis will inform the Department on how to assess the financial impact of eliminating vehicle entrance fees and how to recuperate lost revenue by adjusting other user fees. While this analysis is still underway, the Department recommends eliminating the vehicle entrance fee at Flood County Park ("Flood Park") to expand access to greenspace and parks for the residents of southern San Mateo County.

Flood Park is a 21-acre municipal County-owned and operated park that is located in the City of Menlo Park. Due to its location, it primarily serves residents from Menlo Park, North Fair Oaks, East Palo Alto, and Redwood City. Flood Park is popular for its playgrounds, picnic sites, reservation sites, sports fields and courts, and open grassy area. Since the San Francisco Public Utility Commission's Hetch Hetchy waterline replacement project, however, the Flood Park baseball field has been unusable. Additionally, and pending the County's anticipated overhaul of the entire park, minimal improvements have been made to park facilities in recent years. Flood Park is the only municipal park in southern San Mateo County that charges for vehicle access.

In FY 2018-19, Flood Park served approximately 114,200 visitors and generated \$160,918 in revenue from charges for services, of which \$79,918 (50 percent) came from vehicle entrance fees (with the remainder coming from reservation fees, programming fees, and facility rental fees).

DISCUSSION

The Department recommends eliminating the vehicle entrance fee at Flood Park to make the park more accessible to all members of the public. With the COVID-19 pandemic and economic downturn occurring simultaneously, expanding access to greenspace and parks can assist in improving the mental, physical, and emotional health of residents in southern San Mateo County.

Pursuant to Section 2.63.020 of the County Ordinance Code, the Parks Commission “shall adopt, and forward to the Board of Supervisors, recommendations regarding fees to be charged for the use” of County parks. At its June 2020 meeting, the Parks Commission voted unanimously to recommend to the Board of Supervisors that the vehicle entrance fee be eliminated at Flood Park.

County Counsel has reviewed and approved the resolution as to form and content.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Department estimates that it would experience a \$90,000 a year reduction in revenue due to the elimination of the vehicle entrance fee at Flood Park. In developing the Department’s FY 2020-21 Preliminary Recommended Budget, Department staff assumed that Flood Park would be closed all of FY 2020-21 due to construction. The revenue loss associated with this closure was offset by reductions in the Department’s operating budget. No changes were made to these previous assumptions during the FY 2019-21 budget cycle, therefore no additional adjustments would be needed in FY 2020-21 if the park entrance fee at Flood Park was eliminated.

In FY 2021-22, Flood Park will likely be closed for construction of the Reimagine Flood Park project, and no revenue would be generated from entrance fees during this time. When the park is reopened, revenue is expected to increase significantly due to the Department’s ability to once again charge reservation fees, programming fees, and facility rental fees.