



CITY OF NOVATO
PARKS & RECREATION

Recreation, Cultural and Community Services Advisory Commission

REGULAR MEETING

Minutes

Thursday, January 9, 2025

A. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by Chair Weber at 6:01 PM.

Commissioners Present: Dennis Bentley, Suzanne Crow, Erin Lacey, Emily Larsen, Mavi Pilloton, Zachary Schmechel, Beverly Winsor, Nancy Weber

Commissioners Absent: Betsy Ricketts

Staff Present: Director of Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Katie Gauntlett; Community Services Division Manager, Drew Bendickson, and Recreation Division Manager Alexandra Kambur.

B. APPROVAL OF FINAL AGENDA

Commission Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Lacey and seconded by Commissioner Pilloton, the Commission voted **8-0-0-1** to approve the final agenda.

Ayes: Bentley, Crow, Lacey, Larsen, Pilloton, Schmechel, Winsor, Weber

Noes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Ricketts

Motion Carried

C. PUBLIC COMMENT

- Sylvia Barry

D. CONSENT ITEMS

D.1. Approval of the Special Meeting Minutes from November 21, 2024

Commission Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Crow and seconded by Commissioner Bentley, the Commission voted **8-0-0-1** to approve the consent calendar.

Ayes: Bentley, Crow, Lacey, Larsen, Pilloton, Schmechel, Winsor, Weber

Noes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Ricketts

Motion Carried

E. UNFINISHED AND OTHER BUSINESS

None

F. GENERAL BUSINESS

F.1. Elections of Chair and Vice Chair

Recreation Division Manager, Alexandra Kambur, introduced the item and began by expressing gratitude to Chair Weber and Vice Chair Larsen for their time, contributions, and leadership throughout the 2024 calendar year. Kambur then provided an overview of the Resolution for the Recreation, Cultural, and Community Services Advisory Commission. The Resolution outlines that the Commission is responsible for selecting both a Chair and a Vice Chair, each of whom will serve a one-year term. Additionally, the Resolution specifies that no individual shall be eligible to serve consecutive terms as an officer or within three years following the completion of their last term.

Public Comment:

- None

Commission Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Crow and seconded by Commissioner Lacey, the Commission voted **8-0-0-1** to elect Vice Chair Larsen to serve in the position of Chair.

Ayes: Bentley, Crow, Lacey, Larsen, Pilloton, Schmechel, Winsor, Weber

Noes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Ricketts

Motion Carried

Commission Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Winsor and seconded by Commissioner Pilloton, the Commission voted **8-0-0-1** to elect Commissioner Schmechel to serve in the position of Vice Chair.

Ayes: Bentley, Crow, Lacey, Larsen, Pilloton, Schmechel, Winsor, Weber

Noes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Ricketts

Motion Carried

F.2. Receive a presentation from Parks, Recreation and Community Services Supervisors Tiffany Haley and Teresa Ehteshami on the Summer and Fall 2024 Hamilton Pool Season, along with highlights of adult and senior programming and services available at the Margaret Todd Senior Center

Recreation Supervisor, Teresa Ehteshami, began her presentation by sharing key statistical data regarding Novato's aging population. She highlighted that 27.9% of Novato's residents are over the age of 55, making it the city with the highest senior population in Marin County, with approximately 16,000 households. Additionally, Ehteshami noted that Marin County has the highest median age in the Bay Area at 44.5 years.

Ehteshami explained that the Margaret Todd Senior Center (MTSC), which was established in 1993, is named after Margaret Todd, a Novato resident who championed the effort to build a Senior Center in the 1980s. The Center spans 13,000 square feet and includes five classrooms and an auditorium. MTSC offers a diverse range of programs, including social, recreational, fitness, and enrichment activities. Adult classes are fee-based and taught by qualified instructors. Popular classes include Balance & Strength, Ballroom Dance, Eccentrics, Gentle Yoga, Sewing Support Sessions, Tai Chi, and more. Each year, approximately 8,000 adults participate in classes.

In addition to classes, an annual MTSC Membership includes access to a monthly newsletter and participation in 16 different activity groups, such as Mah Jongg,

Poker, Bridge, Bocce Ball, Watercolor, and Pedro. The Center also provides valuable resources for seniors, including safe driving classes, and a puzzle and book lending library. MTSC hosts several seasonal events that foster community connections, such as the annual Fall Trash to Treasures Flea Market, the Holiday Crafts Fair, the Lunar New Year Lunch, and the Irish Lunch. A new Murder Mystery event is being offered at MTSC on February 26, 2025.

Currently, MTSC staff are collaborating with Age and Disability Friendly Novato to organize meetings and training sessions. This included two Ageism and Ableism training events scheduled during the Fall of 2024.

Recreation Supervisor, Tiffany Haley, provided an overview of the Summer and Fall 2024 activities and programs at the Hamilton Community Pool. She began by noting that this is the second year the City of Novato Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Department has managed operations of the Hamilton Pool. The Summer 2024 season ran from Memorial Day to Labor Day, while the Fall 2024 season ran from September 3 to October 12. During these seasons, the pool welcomed over 20,000 visitors, with an average daily attendance of 168 individuals.

In Summer 2024, 124 summer pool passes were sold. Across both the Summer and Fall 2024 seasons, a total of 156 punch passes were sold, along with 18,090 daily admissions for lap and recreational swim. Additionally, 54 permits were issued for the Hamilton Pool's picnic areas.

Aquatics programming is divided into several categories, including group lessons, private lessons, water aerobics, and lifeguard training. Group lessons are the largest category, with nearly 800 participants across the Summer and Fall 2024 seasons. Private lessons had 104 participants, water aerobics had 13, and 21 individuals enrolled in lifeguard training courses.

Over the 2024 Seasons, the Hamilton Pool was staffed by a team of 9 cashiers, 28 swim instructors, and 44 lifeguards, with 14 individuals holding dual positions.

Social media outreach remains a key tool for promoting the Hamilton Pool. Posts encourage visits during heatwaves, highlight "Inflatable Fun Fridays" featuring the inflatable obstacle course, and showcase vendors like Tommy's Salsa, Hopmonk, and others when they are on-site selling food.

In October 2024, the City hosted its 2nd Annual Floating Pumpkin Patch, which sold out with 172 guests. Attendees swam to collect floating pumpkins, enjoyed a pumpkin decorating station, played cornhole, posed for photos at the photo backdrop, and participated in the inflatable obstacle course. Tommy's Salsa was on-site selling food during the event.

Commissioner Bentley inquired about the cost recovery of the Aquatics Division. Recreation Supervisor Haley explained that part-time employee costs are covered by the registration fees collected for programs. Commissioner Crow remarked that the Hamilton Pool serves as a community benefit, similar to other public amenities like parks.

Commissioner Weber thanked the Aquatics Division for their efforts in training lifeguards in-house.

Commissioner Winsor asked about potential changes or growth opportunities for Summer 2025. Recreation Supervisor Haley noted that she is interested in expanding class offerings, explaining that there is increasing demand for private lessons and that she is working to increase opportunities for private lessons in 2025.

Commissioner Pilloton expressed interest in a family punch pass, or similar pass that would not be limited to one specific individual. Haley replied that Staff are currently exploring options for a family or couples punch pass that could be used by a small group.

Commissioner Lacey inquired about the experience with food vendors at the Hamilton Pool, both from the Staff and community perspective. Haley shared that the feedback has been positive, and the arrangement was well-received. Plans are to continue offering food vendors next summer.

Commissioner Winsor asked about transportation options from the Smart Train to MTSC. Ehteshami responded that there is no direct route connecting the station in Downtown to the Senior Center. Currently, the main transportation option is Paratransit. Residents can call Marin Access to arrange for door-to-door service. Ehteshami also mentioned that MTSC staff actively work to educate the community about available transportation resources and that Paratransit hosts informational sessions at the Senior Center.

Public Comment:

- Sylvia Barry

F.3. Review and provide recommendations to City Council on proposed fencing style for Miwok Park, 2200 Novato Blvd., as part of the Parks Master Plan Accessibility Project – Phase 1, CIP #25-003

Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Director Katie Gauntlett introduced the item, providing an overview of Miwok Park, located at 2200 Novato Blvd. Gauntlett highlighted that Miwok Park is a popular community park in Novato, featuring walking paths and trails, benches, playgrounds, picnic tables, six

reservable BBQ areas, bocce and horseshoe courts, and the Museum of the American Indian. Gauntlett explained that over 600 ADA barriers were identified in the Parks Master Plan, with the barrier at Miwok Park being designated as a short-term priority, slated for completion within the first 0-5 years.

Facilities Maintenance Supervisor, Nick Reposa, presented a map of Miwok Park, explaining that the area closest to the main BBQ area and playground - approximately 328 feet in length along the creek - has been prioritized for fencing as part of Phase 1. Reposa explained that there are significant safety and liability concerns due to the steep drop-off from the park to the creek at the main BBQ and playground area, which is why this area was prioritized. The remaining section, 974 feet, would be addressed as part of a future phase of the project.

Gauntlett outlined the funding for the Capital Improvement Project, noting an allocation of \$57,537 from Parks Measure A Funding.

Reposa described the existing fence, a mix of deer fence and a deteriorating split-rail fence, and introduced three different fence options for Miwok Park. He emphasized that any work at the park requires proper notification and coordination with the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria due to cultural resources on-site.

The first fencing option is a Hog Wire Fence, which would consist of 4x8-foot sections of hog-type fencing with pressure-treated posts. Installation would use helical ground screws, which would eliminate the need for excavation, making it a minimally invasive solution. The priority section of 328 feet is estimated to cost \$49,200, with the remaining 974 feet estimated to cost \$145,800. Reposa indicated that this was Staff's recommended fencing option. Benefits of this option include minimal disruption to the soil, an aesthetically pleasing design that complements the park's natural features, a lifespan of 30-40 years, and reduced maintenance costs. Reposa indicated that this type of fence is preferred by the Public Works Staff because it can be repaired in sections, as needed.

The second option is a new split-rail fence, made up of 4x8-foot sections with split rail posts and a toe kick for ADA compliance. This fence would require installation using concrete piers, resulting in soil disruption. The estimated cost for the priority section of 328 feet is \$67,371, with the remaining 972 feet estimated to cost \$199,648.

The third option is a black chain-link fence, which would consist of 4x8-foot sections of chain-link fencing with metal posts. Like the split-rail fence, this option would require concrete piers, resulting in soil disruption. The cost for the priority section of 328 feet is estimated at \$65,193, and the remaining 972 feet at \$193,194. Reposa expressed concerns that while chain-link fences are highly durable, it may not align with the park's aesthetic, and the installation would require more disruption to the soil.

Commissioner Crow expressed her support for the Staff's recommendation of the Hog Wire fence option, agreeing that taking steps to enhance safety at the park is a priority.

Vice Chair Schmechel expressed his agreement with Staff's recommendation, noting the Hog Wire fence is cost-effective, aesthetically appealing, and minimally invasive to the soil.

Commissioner Lacey asked for clarification on the fence's durability and its ability to withstand strong winds, as well as what the repair process would entail. Reposa explained that the 4x8-foot sections of hog wire fence can be easily repaired and replaced in small sections, making it a cost-effective option for the City. He added that the galvanized anchors are highly durable, and the wire design allows wind to pass through, so he does not anticipate any issues with wind resistance.

Commissioner Winsor thanked staff for prioritizing the section closest to the playground and BBQ Area, noting the steep drop-off into the creek.

Chair Larsen asked how the old fence material would be disposed. Reposa indicated that it would be recycled as feasible.

Public Comment:

- None

Commission Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Weber and seconded by Vice Chair Schmechel, the Commission voted **8-0-0-1** to recommend the hog wire style fencing option for Miwok Park to the Novato City Council.

Ayes: Bentley, Crow, Lacey, Larsen, Pilloton, Schmechel, Winsor, Weber

Noes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Ricketts

Motion Carried

G. COMMITTEE AND LIAISON REPORTS

G.1. Staff Updates

Recreation Division Manager, Alexandra Kambur, announced that registration for Winter and Spring 2025 programs and activities is open. She explained that

registration can be done online at novato.org/regforfun, or in person at two customer service counters: the Margaret Todd Senior Center (open Monday through Friday from 9 AM to 5 PM) and the Novato Gymnastics Center (open Monday through Thursday from 9:30 AM to 5 PM).

Kambur provided an overview of the programs by age group. For toddlers and preschoolers, there are a variety of options including dance, soccer, and gymnastics. For school-age children, Parks and Recreation (PRCS) offers a wide range of activities, including STEM programs, sports such as basketball, soccer, taekwondo, and gymnastics, and performing arts classes. Kambur highlighted that PRCS continues to expand and enhance programming for tweens and teens. This Winter-Spring season, programming includes dance classes, a tumbling class, musical theater productions, CPR and First Aid courses, babysitter safety trainings, a Counselor in Training program, and a Junior Swim Instructor program.

Kambur highlighted that Novato PRCS offers a wide range of opportunities for adults and seniors to stay active, engaged, and socially connected. These include recreational leagues, game groups, fitness classes, and special interest activities. Kambur noted that 24 adult basketball teams and 34 adult volleyball teams are currently participating in the Winter league, and that pickleball continues to grow in popularity with new indoor options available at the Hill Gymnasium. Additionally, several fitness and special interest classes are held weekly at MTSC.

Kambur asked Commissioners to add several upcoming special events to their calendars, including the Spring Magic Show on February 22, the Novato Classic Gymnastics Meet the weekend of March 14-15, the Trash to Treasures Flea Market on March 29, the Novato Spectrum Safety Event on April 26, and Fishing in the City on May 3.

Kambur shared that playground equipment for the Josef Hoog Community Park Playground was delivered to the Corporation Yard and that construction at the park was expected to begin later in January.

Kambur announced the City's utility box art project aimed at beautifying downtown Novato was approved by Novato City Council and that the official call for artists was open with applications available online at novato.org/utilityartbox. She encouraged Commissioners to share this opportunity with local artists and anyone interested in participating.

Gauntlett added that the Summer Activity Guide will launch on February 27 and registration for summer camps, programs and classes will open on March 4.

Commissioner Weber inquired about the City's use of contract instructors. Kambur explained that the City partners with third-party contract instructor, such as Katia and Company and Splitz Dance Academy, to offer a wide range of recreational programs. The City provides the facility space, offers marketing support, and

typically handles program registration, while the contractors are responsible for the content, curriculum, and instruction. Kambur clarified that revenue is shared between the City and the contract instructors at an established percentage split.

Commissioner Weber asked if the City owns sewing machines, to which Recreation Supervisor Ehteshami confirmed that the City owns six sewing machines, all of which are housed at MTSC.

Commissioner Weber sought clarification about indoor pickleball opportunities. Kambur explained that indoor pickleball lessons for beginner and intermediate players, along with a new cardio-inspired pickleball fitness class, will be offered in the Hill Gymnasium which is next to MTSC at 1560 Hill Road.

G.2. Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Bentley shared that North Bay Science Discovery Day is being held in Santa Rosa at the Sonoma County Fair Grounds on March 8, 2025. Admission and parking is free.

Commissioner Crow thanked Staff for re-configuring the setup in the MTSC Auditorium during Photos with Santa and the Holiday Crafts Fair to make additional room. She shared that it was a really wonderful event.

Commissioner Weber reminded the Commissioners about Age and Disability Friendly Novato's community survey.

Commissioner Winsor mentioned that Vivalon is hosting a fall prevention class at the Library.

Commission Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Winsor and seconded by Commissioner Bentley, the Commission voted **8-0-01** to agendaize discussion for public art in recognition of the Hamilton Transit Center.

Ayes: Bentley, Crow, Lacey, Larsen, Pilloton, Schmechel, Winsor, Weber

Noes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Ricketts

Motion Carried

H. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:02 PM by Chair Larsen.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing minutes were duly adopted at the RCCS Commission meeting of March 13, 2025.

/ Alexandra Kambur /
Alexandra Kambur, Recreation Division Manager