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**OFFICIAL MINUTES  
CITY OF COSTA MESA  
MEETING OF THE FAIRVIEW PARK STEERING COMMITTEE  
APRIL 14, 2021  
5:00PM**

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**VOTING MEMBERS:**

Andy Campbell, Chair  
Evan Rothman, Vice Chair  
Emily McClain  
Shannon Levin  
Dave Erickson  
Terri Fuqua  
Erik Roberts

**ALTERNATES**

Cara Raffe  
Jeffrey Butcher

**LIAISONS:**

Council Member Arlis Reynolds  
Council Member Jeffrey Harlan, Alternate  
Council Member Manual Chavez, Alternate  
Commissioner Andrade Vallarta, District  
*Parks, Arts and Community Services Commission*  
Hank Castignetti,  
*Orange County Model Engineers (OCME)*

**STAFF:**

Cynthia D'Agosta, Fairview Park Administrator  
Jason Minter, Parks & Comm. Services Director

**MEETING AGENDA:**

1. **CALL TO ORDER** Chair Campbell at 5:03pm
2. **ROLL CALL**
  - a) **Members Present:** Chair Campbell, Vice Chair Rothman, Committee Member McClain, Committee Member Levin, and Committee Member Roberts, Alt. Raffe, Alternate Butcher
  - b) **Members Absent:** Committee Member Fuqua, Committee Member Erickson (half of the meeting)
  - c) **Liaisons Present:** Council Member Reynolds, Council Member Chavez, Commissioner Andrade Vallarta and Hank Castignetti, OCME
  - d) **Liaisons Absent:** Council Member Harlan
3. **APPROVAL OF THE MARCH 10, 2021 MINUTES**
  - a) Committee Member Levin moved to approve, and Seconded by Committee Member Rothman. Motion passed unanimously; 5-2. Committee Member Fuqua and Erickson absent.
4. **PUBLIC COMMENTS** No public comments
5. **COMMITTEE MEMBER and LIAISON COMMENTS**

**Chair Campbell:** Thanked the Planning Commission for its vote on the LED signs at Triangle Square. Mentioned the construction of Estancia High School's Theater complex that has potential impact to the parks nature, and would want to see if the Committee can give comment on that project.

**Vice Chair Rothman:** No comment.

**Committee Member McClain:** No comment.

**Committee Member Levin:** No comment.

**Committee Member Erickson:** No comment.

**Committee Member Fuqua:** No comment.

**Committee Member Roberts:** Raised concerns about making a motion when the public comments received within the past 24 hours were so many, that he has not had a chance to look over them completely. Committee Member Erickson seconded his comment.

Staff informed the Committee that information will always be sent out no later than 72 hours before a meeting and the public has the opportunity to provide comment until 11 a.m. the day of the meeting. It is up to the Member's discretion on how he wants to move forward with the information provided.

**Alternate Raffle:** No comment.

**Alternate Butcher:** No comment.

**Council Member Reynolds:** Invited everyone to the 1<sup>st</sup> bike ride of this year, on Sunday, April 25<sup>th</sup> at 2pm at Marina View Park.

**Hank Castignetti, OCME Liaison:** With amusement parks opening to a small capacity, OCME has inquired about holding birthday parties, OCME has been receiving 10-15 requests a week.

## 6. OLD BUSINESS

### A. FLY FIELD SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ms. D'Agosta provided a summary of the Fly Field Review and Approval Process.

Chair Campbell gave background about the subcommittee and expressed that all three Members had three varied opinion, concluding in two different recommendations.

#### i. PUBLIC COMMENT

**Mike Costello (HSS):** Presented a slide show with HSS history and what the organization is about along with discussion of the HSS proposal.

**Jason Komala:** presented a PowerPoint on behalf of Fairview Park Alliance and their concerns for the wildlife if the fly field continues at Fairview Park.

**Committee Member Roberts** asked about the bird survey data collected within the last year or two?

**Ms. D'Agosta** responded we have not had a baseline for bird counts until the last 9 months.

**Chair Campbell:** Asked if any fields within the half an hour drive to an alternate location have vernal pools or sensitive habitats?

**Ms. D'Agosta** mentioned that Fairview Park is the only complex of vernal pools north of San Diego on the coast. Once you go north here there are a few in Torrance and Riverside, but once you go more north they become inland locations.

**Debby Koken:** stated that she agreed with everything Jason Komala stated.

**Kim Hendricks:** The burrowing owls are incompatible with flying. FPA does not feel like a move to east side is necessary, since there are no funds to make a move that serves a small portion of the community. Nature is a commodity to all residents and, the fly fields is will be taking away open space. Fairview Park is for the whole community. The hobby of model aircraft is not compatible with the Fairview Park Master Plan. Since 2014, the City is responsible for protecting these endangered species, and FPA would like to help the City achieve those goals for the whole community.

**Committee Member Roberts:** asked how the flight path came to be? Who authorized it? Who built it? When?

**Mrs. D'Agosta** responded that it started at the bluffs and primarily was gliders because of the updrafts and the way the wind circulates. 2002 OC Parks planted trees at Talbert Park near the restrooms which are now very mature trees used for nesting; the trees changed the pattern and the field was moved

inland. In 2007 the field was enlarged in a cooperative effort between HSS and the City. Permits were issued to people not in HSS beginning in 2007, and the hobby started having more electric flyers and drones, changing the circumstances.

**Wendy Leece:** President of FPA thanked Committee for this opportunity and reminded all that FPA worked to pass measure AA to preserve the park. More than 70% of the community voted for AA. We really appreciate the cooperation to work together on mutually beneficial projects. The Westside of Costa Mesa is dense and residents really enjoy Fairview Park. Most flyers that lack of cooperation and are not following the rules, are not Costa Mesa residents. To pursue any kind of alternative location requires money we don't have.

**Scott Thomas:** Sea and Sage Audubon Society, I work as a wildlife biologist specializing with raptors, birds and breeding behaviors, and disturbance. We have been taking surveys since July and really need to get to a year worth of surveys before seeing how flying can impact birds. This is a huge topic. Disturbance is well established and well recognized when it comes to endangered species. The question becomes what level of disturbance is acceptable. Anything that goes on in a park is a disturbance. How will this be managed is the question and at Sea and Sage, we would really like to help get this evaluated.

**Bettina Eastman:** Sea and Sage Audubon Society, during our 9-month of bird surveys, we have observed over 900 bird species both on the west and east side combined. We did see a burrowing owl on the westside that was behind the vernal pool, adjacent to the fly field, which is a previously unknown location. We have had some rare bird and migratory birds, shore birds, and sea birds some have been behind the fly field. We have birds that come from as far as South America and a lot of different species that are not raptors that can be effect because they are small. Those are the kinds of things that we would like to understand better, regarding the effect of the activities. We see mating is occurring in restoration areas and areas of grassland and mustard and feel that adjustments should be made to not affect those birds.

**Committee Member Roberts:** Sounds like if we continue with the fly field there will be less diversity of bird species.

**Scott Thomas:** Their certainly a likelihood that more bird species will take the opportunity if the closure continued. The smaller birds would most likely leave if fly fields continue to be open.

**Bettina Eastman:** 70-80 swallows were observed above the vernal pool teaching their fledglings how to scavenge.

**Larry Tuohino:** 34+ year resident of Costa Mesa and has long history with being a founding Member of the Fairview Park Advisory Committee, and became a Member of HSS at 14 years old. With this hobby, he's learned various skills. Over time the models of airplanes have changed, but there are models that are non-threatening and not loud. The space that is being utilized is a small space when compared to all the land at Fairview Park is.

**Kevin K:** Costa Mesa resident and homeowner for over 30 years. I would like to see the west side field open up at Fairview Park. I think it is good for the senior citizens and thinks is good for the young people.

**Don Wittenberg:** I'm a retired aerospace engineer and I welcome the recommendation to keep the airfield open while evaluating the compatibility. As the Audubon representative said, we need a review and some definitive answers as to whether or not we really pose a danger to the environment and the bird population. If there are 100 species in the park, perhaps that suggests the airfield has not damaged the wildlife. There was a slide that showed a model airplane in the same airspace as a bird and the bird was extremely out of focus, which tells me, that they were nowhere near each other. We certainly

need to know what the degree of disturbances of the hikers and the walkers in the park are. If we really have disturbed the vernal pool of the fairy shrimp, they survived and, the ponds are fenced off. So I don't see that we are really having any effect on the fairy shrimp.

**Jon Rittenhouse:** Long time resident of Costa Mesa and a Member of the HSS. Provided his thoughts regarding the proposal. Unfortunately, we have been at speaking at this meeting going on for over an hour and a half, and there is no way I can respond to all the assertions that have been made. Some of them are valid and many of them are not. A lot of information is stated incorrect.

**Henry Smith:** Former president of HSS and current HSS Member, refuted Fairview Park Alliance suggestions of the surrounding fly field locations being within reach for the younger fliers. Those other fields are not close by, and they are totally out of reach for young people. There are many other activities that influence the wildlife, such as humans and dogs, so how does that get separated from flying?

## ii. COMMITTEE COMMENTS

**Committee Member Erickson:** This sport field or this hobby is super attractive to all different ages, which I think really needs to be taken into account, because senior citizens can do it and so can kids who can't drive anywhere, but can ride their bike to the fly field. Where that's not an option if they go to another fly field location. It's really important to take into account. Having the fly field available opens opportunity for non-city Members to spend money, buy food, buy gas and enjoy our parks as well.

**Alternate Butcher:** Commented that Costa Mesa is unique with various small group of different activities that are available to be a part of. Even though this may affect a small group, it affects what Costa Mesa offers. If the City is completing the permit process, it should be the City's responsibility for monitoring, not HSS.

**Committee Member Levin:** I want to say the subcommittee did a lot of work coming up with the two recommendations and we met with all of the groups, we had Sea & Sage Audubon, OCME, and HSS involved and we all put our heads together. Concluding that in the long run, potentially moving over to the east side, might be a really good plan, because I think what we all have in mind want the best use for Fairview Park, and all of our users. So we want to make sure that we're considering everybody, bikers, dog walkers, model airplane users, model train users, bird watchers, we've got so many different people, and it's our job to represent all of them. So keeping that in mind, I want to say that no plan is perfect. But considering the information that we heard tonight, I think we have enough information to move forward with either option on the table.

**Liaison Hank Castignetti:** Expressed concerns regarding HSS corporate status and City's affiliation with a 501 C 7 rather than a 501 c 3.

**Committee Member Roberts:** Requested clarification on if an east side fly field is approved, who would pay for the feasibility study for that, and who would build it, implement it, and maintain it. The City, HSS, or the parent organization, AMA?

**Ms. D'Agosta:** The idea being put forth tonight, examining the feasibility of building a runway on the east side, would become part of the Master Plan updating process that you all are about to undertake. That is a two to three year process getting through all of the master plan and the environmental documentation that needs to be done. It would be done within the context of that larger project, so in that sense, the City would be paying for the feasibility study. It is yet to be determined who would build and maintain; those part of the details would be

included in an agreement between the City and whatever club it is, whether it's HSS or any other club, that would open a fly field on the east side.

**Committee Member Roberts:** Commented that he has mixed feelings with a removal of the fly field activity, but also sees the overall environmental concerns of the park. Conflicted with providing a decision to move forward tonight and doesn't think a decision should be made tonight.

**Chair Campbell:** Agreed with Committee Member Roberts with feeling torn between flying and impact because the field is within the sensitive environment of the park. The City has an obligation to preserve the watershed and unfortunately, the fly field is in the watershed. He feels that HSS needs to take more ownership if the City moves forward as a partner. The location of the fly field is a concern with the impact it may have on wildlife at the park. Expressed he is for option #2, since it really protects the mesa and allows opportunity to have a place for flying. Asked if other committee Members want to make another motion or comment before entertaining a motion.

**Ms. D'Agosta:** Can I just make a statement, Mike Costello said that he has had his hand raised but is not been able to get through. HSS was in the process of converting to a 501(c)3, but that attorney disappeared. They are starting the process again from scratch currently.

**Alternate Butcher:** The issue with item number one, Cynthia had mentioned that it takes time. So even if you were to say keep the fly field location open, they're not going to start flying there tomorrow, it's going to be four months or more before the modifications can be negotiated. And those modifications seem pretty open ended in terms of what can be asked of HSS, and it could even include being a 501 C3. So I mean, I think that that gives you the flexibility and you can still study, you know, and evaluate the east end location. I don't think flying really starts anytime within the within probably six months.

**Ms. D'Agosta:** Clarified that the committee is not making a decision, but a recommendation that will go forward to one more body before it goes to decision with City Council. If a decision is made to keep the west side open, and allow flying again while we investigate the east side, which is option number one - the City Parks Department has to review and rewrite several documents in cooperation with the HSS. The HSS agreement with the City has to be rewritten; the City has to make determination of the modifications for the fly field, the fly field rules have to be rewritten, safety procedures, permit instruction and issue process, all need to be revised. As well as, potentially ordinance revision. All of that will take time and probably will not be able to open the fly field for at least three to four months from when City Council reviews it.

**Committee Member Roberts:** Voiced he was leaning towards option #2 if a recommendation needs to be made tonight.

**Chair Campbell:** Feels we have to make a recommendation about the viability of the other side of the park. There is a demonstrated decrease of flyers and feels conflicted about making a major commitment with a hobby that has been decreasing.

**Committee Member McClain:** If we are really looking at the Master Plan, and we are looking at Measure AA implications, I'm leaning toward option #2. The reason Fairview Park is so special, it is the one place that residents can go and interact in nature. Obviously, there were some threats that it could one day again turn into a soccer field. I need someone to reassure me that that is not happening. So I just wanted to get clarity. I think I am just also trying to get a better vision of what we are really looking to do in Fairview Park in the long-term. I know a lot of us have to amend our behavior that have used the park for a long time, including

myself, as I've learned more about it, and the archaeological sites and all the different things going on. So if someone could just provide like a quick, bit of that long-term vision.

**Mr. Minter:** The Master Plan process is substantial. It involves not just the Committee or PACs Commission or the City Council, but the community. It is about reaching out to the community through surveys, meetings, and trying to get as much input as possible for the for the park Master Plan. So that the community is involved to share their thoughts, concerns, wants, hopes, and dreams for Fairview Park.

**Committee Member Fuqua:** Thinks the City's involvement and HSS needs to be reviewed for who manages the field and has a variety of questions before she can confidently vote on recommendations.

**Chair Campbell:** With option #2 there's going to be an evaluation, which includes all the things that we would have concerns over such as cost.

**MOTION/SECOND:** Chair Campbell moved to recommend option #2 with adding addressing the environmental compatibility on the east side. Seconded by Committee Member Fuqua.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

**Ayes:** Chair Campbell, Committee Member McClain, Committee Member Fuqua, Committee Member, Committee Member Roberts

**Nays:** Committee Member Levin

**Absent:** Vice Chair Rothman, Committee Member Erickson (left meeting before voting)

**Motion Carried:** 4-1

## 7. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. D'Agosta asked the Committee if they want to do a special meeting in May. We have the master plan process and request for proposal information that needs to review by the committee.

## 8. STAFF COMMENTS

Ms. D'Agosta encouraged people to participate next Thursday's Earth Day Webinar. The webinar will introduce the Costa Mesa City Nature Challenge using the Inaturalist app. About 40 nations are participating across the world.

## 9. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Campbell adjourned the meeting at 7:46pm