

## 8/6 Special Mtg - Letters - FW: From a constituent in D10

CMOAgendaServices <cmoagendaservices@sanjoseca.gov>

Wed 7/31/2024 4:35 PM

To:Agendadesk <Agendadesk@sanjoseca.gov>

Cc:CMOAgendaServices <cmoagendaservices@sanjoseca.gov>

 1 attachments (32 KB)

PRC10 Ken Brennan - Recomendations 7\_23 KB.docx;

Rachelle Blattman  
CMO Agenda Services

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**From:** Opsal, Matthew <Matthew.Opsal@sanjoseca.gov>

**Sent:** Wednesday, July 31, 2024 2:33 PM

**To:** CMOAgendaServices <cmoagendaservices@sanjoseca.gov>

**Cc:** Beckel, Dolan <dolan.beckel@sanjoseca.gov>; Zarate, Sarah <Sarah.Zarate@sanjoseca.gov>; Camarena, Carolina <Carolina.Camarena@sanjoseca.gov>; Machado, Demetria <Demetria.Machado@sanjoseca.gov>

**Subject:** FW: From a constituent in D10

Hi CMO Agenda Services,

Please find public comment attached for the upcoming City Council Special Session.

Including Dolan, Sarah, Carolina, and Demetria for awareness.

Thank you,  
-matt

**Matt Opsal**

Senior Executive Analyst

City Manager's Office of Communications

City of San José

200 East Santa Clara Street, San José, CA 95113

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**From:** Kelsey Colson [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Wednesday, July 31, 2024 10:23 AM

**To:** Flores Shelton, Andrea <Andrea.FloresShelton@sanjoseca.gov>; Hertzberg, Keith <Keith.Hertzberg@sanjoseca.gov>; Mahan, Matt <Matt.Mahan@sanjoseca.gov>; Quevedo, Matthew <Matthew.Quevedo@sanjoseca.gov>; Webmaster Manager <webmaster.manager@sanjoseca.gov>; city.auditor <city.auditor@sanjoseca.gov>

**Cc:** George Casey [REDACTED]

**Subject:** From a constituent in D10

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Hi,

I am sharing a very thoughtful document that Ken Brennan has written regarding efficiency and effectiveness in 9 areas within the City.

If there is someone else you think would benefit from Ken's summary, please share with them.

:) Kelsey

--

Kelsey Colson  
Campaign Manager  
George Casey for San Jose City Council D10



Website: [Casey For Change](#)

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To the Mayor, City Council, Neighborhood Leaders and residents of San Jose,

There has been discussion and polling about securing new tax funding for Parks Maintenance (bonds, parcel tax, etc.). Unfortunately, there has been very little discussion about rationalizing current spending areas and improving operational and managerial processes within PRNS so they can be more effective with the resources they already have.

PRNS should not be given any new resources for maintenance until all existing program spending is rationalized on a cost per outcome basis and maintenance operations have been fully rationalized and optimized to improve productivity and reduce wasteful spending.

A new comprehensive PRNS audit should be conducted to understand whether improvements have been realized from the implementation of past audit recommendations and to identify new and current issues that are preventing the effective allocation and use of existing resources.

Adding new maintenance resources without ensuring current resources are being used effectively will just amplify the underlying inefficiencies and not be a responsible use of resident's tax dollars.

In addition to calling for new comprehensive audit, please see the following concerns with associated recommendations:

## **1. Compliance with August 2020 City Audit recommendations on operational efficiency**

In August of 2020, the City Auditor conducted an audit (report 20-04) titled Park Maintenance: Improved data collection and analysis would enhance park maintenance operations. The audit made 4 general findings with 13 recommendations. In one key example, the audit concluded that maintenance staff only spent 60% of their time working in the parks and 40% doing administrative tasks and that this needed to be fixed to structure things a way that allowed more staff time in the field. It is not clear that this organizational and structural inefficiency issue was ever addressed.

### **Recommendation:**

- The City auditor should conduct a new comprehensive audit of PRNS to determine the impact from the implementation of past audit recommendations and to identify new and current operational issues that are preventing the effective allocation and use of resources.
- PRNS Staff should start reporting out regularly on the productivity of their maintenance staff using standard productivity metrics.
- Establish a formal subcommittee derived from the 11 PRC Commissioners to work with PRNS staff to define what this should look like.

## **2. Family Camp Report**

The city has subsidized Family Camp for millions of dollars over the years and has never been able to operate the camp at anywhere near breakeven despite stating that as the goal for "at least" the past 10 years. PRNS does not report the fully burdened cost for running family camp and therefore we don't know what the full subsidy is to run the camp. Some estimates put this subsidy at \$1.5M annually.

PRNS also does not report what demographic they are reaching with the Family Camp Program, so we don't know the impact of the program.

Over the last 10 years, Family Camp could have easily cost the city between \$10-\$15M in subsidy without a clear understanding of the demographic that the program reached.

There is currently an additional \$2M of capital improvements planned that will be another sunk cost for the city. Who advocated for this \$2M in new capital investment into such an inefficient program and who approved it and why? These capital funds should be spent on parks maintenance right here in San Jose not a multiyear loss making and ineffective program up in the Sierra's.

According to the Family camp report, 25% of campers are not San Jose residents! Additionally, many of the campers are better off San Jose residents and not from our underserved communities. Is this who we want to subsidize while we starve our parks of maintenance?

PRNS does not know how much deferred maintenance there is. Quotes from leadership put it in the \$5-10M range. Regardless, the city is digging itself into a deeper financial hole each year that it can't afford proper maintenance.

This subsidized and inefficient program has consumed decades of subsidies that have starved our parks of maintenance resources, distracted our PRNS leadership, and not reached the targeted resident demographics we desire. This program is not an effective use of scarce city resources.

### **Recommendation:**

- The camp financials need to be formally audited and correctly reported to show "fully burdened" expenses of operating, total subsidy and detailed information about the demographics of the campers we are subsidizing.
- Cease all capital expenditures immediately on Family Camp until the program can be rationalized by City Council.
- The city should immediately turn operations over to an experienced private camp mgmt. organizations like the Y or Wolf Camp to continue the valuable tradition.
- Move fast on all recommendations to stem the financial bleeding.
- All subsidy dollars and planned capital expenditures should be folded back into park maintenance.

## **3. PCA- Parks Condition Assessment and Parks Maintenance Standards**

Residents of San Jose expect the condition of their parks to be measured accurately, frequently and without conflict or bias and against a maintenance standard of excellence not mediocrity. The PCA is a misleading representation of the condition of our parks. There are several issues with the PCA process:

- The PCA is done by peer park managers effectively measuring themselves. This presents a conflict of interest and introduces bias into the measurements.
- The PCA assessment excludes any information on deferred maintenance for a given park. How can you assess the condition of a park if you don't know how much dollars of deferred maintenance the park has?
- Very important aesthetic and functional issues are not being measured. Example: is decomposed granite areas groomed and free of weeds. Are all original elements of park design in place, like trees replaced in empty tree rings. Are water features operational?
- Poor performing parks are removed from assessment resulting in better scores overall (Columbus).
- A PCA once a year is not a meaningful representation of how parks are being maintained and is not frequent enough to drive short term mitigation actions.
- The PCA measures conditions against a parks maintenance standard that codifies mediocre standards. The results look better because the standard is low. For example, if turf has less than 20% weeds it gets the highest score. Why wouldn't 0% weeds be the highest score?
- Mediocre standards will get mediocre results and demoralize employees who really want to do a great job on the parks.

### **Recommendation:**

The PCA process and Parks maintenance standards need to be completely revamped. Specifically, the following should be implemented asap:

- Establish a formal subcommittee derived from the 11 PRC Commissioners to work with PRNS staff to revamp this PCA process.
- Develop a completely independent team(un-conflicted) of 2 that is solely responsible for driving "monthly" condition assessments and communicating prioritization and remediation plans with Park District managers. Include commissioners and take completely out of Park District Manager hands.
- If a park is closed for any reason (Columbus) that means it is failing and it should be assessed that way not simply excluded from the score. Call it like it is.
- Immediately, increase every 80% standard in the Parks Maintenance standards document to 100%. Set the standard for excellence so everyone is clear on the vision and is always working towards it. There can be a secondary level of "actual performance" committed based on budget commitments.
- PCA assessment should include an estimate of total deferred maintenance dollars for each park.
- PCA assessment should add categories for water features operational, decomposed granite condition, structures in disrepair, etc.

## **4. Water Usage/Conservation**

### **Water Features**

The water features in our parks were turned off two droughts ago. This has degraded our parks and removed a great feature of our parks that the city spent millions of dollars putting into our parks in the first place. Just shutting down these features and letting them sit there unused is a shame. With all the efforts and resources being put into "activating" our parks it is hard to understand why we would not just simply turn on the originally designed features of our parks. These features will do a tremendous amount to activate our parks and get people to visit. In summer months, these features serve an important cooling option for neighborhood children especially in underserved neighborhoods where they might not have access to a pool. Lastly, these features do not use a lot of water. They are button activated and can be set up to use low flow valves. The water usage is a miniscule fraction of the water used to irrigate 534 Acres (Per PRNS GIS) of Turf in our parks. It is not consistent or logical that we leave these features off to

save water but support the operation of a for profit water park at Raging Waters which would use way more water than all the water features in our parks combined and is not as accessible physically and financially as a local park water feature.

### **Turf Irrigation**

534 acres of irrigated turf in our parks, 15% is recycled water, 85% is potable, ~6-7M a year spent by PRNS on water. Interestingly, most of our turf is full of weeds and ridden by gopher and squirrel holes, not fertilized, doesn't receive broadleaf weed killing application or aerating (ballparks are the exception). We spend millions of dollars on watering turf that is poorly maintained and unusable. Yet, we turn off the water features to save water.

### **Recommendation:**

- Immediately start turning on all water features in our parks one at a time to assess if they are functional. This is a tiny fraction of water usage compared to watering unmaintained turf and generates immensely more value to park users.
- Implement plan to reduce PRNS water costs by 25% annually by reducing acreage of turf, especially where we don't take care of the turf anyway.
- Negotiate City specific water rate from all water company vendors to lower our bill to cost. Ask Mayor to call the CEOs of the water companies.
- Use turf reduction efforts to negotiate water savings **rebates** from San Jose Water, SJ Municipal and Great Oaks to further offset our cost of transition from turf to other low water landscaping.
- Use water cost savings to build out recycled water systems at largest water using parks first.
- Use ~\$2M water cost savings to fund increased gopher control, weed/ feed and aeration of remaining turf such that what turf remains is meticulously maintained and desirable for the public to use.

## **5. 7-day Parks Hotline**

PRNS funds a 7 day a week hotline for residents to call in issues they see in the parks. The basic logic behind needing residents to call in issues to this hotline is not clear. PRNS maintenance employees and supervisors make hundreds of visits a year to each park and should be aware of any issues. Why would these employees not be logging the issues proactively instead of relying on residents to call them in? We are spending ~250k a year for the residents to report to PRNS what the maintenance staff should already know. @ 1,875 complaints a year that is only ~5 complaints a day for the staff to handle. Many of these are duplicates for same related issues. Additionally, PRNS still funds this independent hotline infrastructure when the City in has adopted 311 as the call center infrastructure for resident issues.

### **Recommendation:**

PRNS should immediately dissolve the Parks hotline, integrate the resident complaint process into the City's 311 process and put a 311 sign with QR code in each park entrance for resident and **Park maintenance staff** to regularly report maintenance issues thru the 311 processes. The saved resources from the hotline should immediately be returned into proactive park maintenance to avoid turf maintenance issues which drives most of the calls in the first place.

## **6. Empty Tree Rings**

Nearly every park in the system has multiple empty tree rings where the trees have either died or been vandalized or otherwise are missing and never been replaced. This looks bad aesthetically and reduces the benefit of shaded areas for park users to enjoy. Many missing trees are around benches and tables that are baked by the sun in the summer and can really use shade. It also means that our parks are not being maintained up to how they were originally intended/designed. "Missing" trees are not measured specifically in the PCA but it is an indicator of the condition of our parks. While the DOT is planting thousands of trees across the city there seems to be very slow to no progress taking inventory of the missing trees in our parks and putting new trees in their place. In one case, DOT has planted 20 trees immediately adjacent to a park that has had 15 missing trees for many years.

**Recommendation:**

- Immediately have existing maintenance crews inventory all empty tree rings in all parks, assess if irrigation is present and feed that to the City Arborist who will determine the correct replacement tree.
- PRNS should partner directly with DOT to prioritize replaced trees in our parks before everywhere else and report out on how that partnership is going.
- Include missing trees in PCA (Parks condition assessments) going forward.

## **7. Single source contracted nursery**

The city currently sources trees, plants and other nursery items from multiple sources. This procurement process is not efficient from an administrative perspective with multiple interactions between multiple private companies to supply what the city needs.

**Recommendation:**

The City should immediately evaluate using one contract nursery that carries city defined inventories for all the plants and trees used in our parks. DOT should leverage the same process. The city will pay cost plus and have a single source of plants/trees simplifying the ordering and delivery administration thru one vendor and ordering app. This will reduce costs, improve the timeliness, availability and delivery so the parks maintenance crews don't have to transport trees.

## **8. Work Uniform for Public Facing Maintenance Workers**

Parks Maintenance workers look unofficial and unprofessional when working in the parks and not in uniform. Many wear varying styles of street clothes not suitable for landscaping maintenance work environments. Their appearance doesn't instill confidence in their skills or abilities. It creates a perception of an unprofessional and poorly managed organization. Most of these maintenance employees are younger and just beginning on the work skill ladder and should be given guidance that professional appearance is critical for success. Additionally, uniforms create a sense of belonging and being on a team and creates a perception of organizational professionalism with the community. They are also very inexpensive to implement.

**Recommendation:**

PRNS immediately establish an enforced public facing uniform standard/requirement for all public facing employees working in the parks.

## **9. Volunteer Recognition Event**

On 5/16 PRNS hosted a volunteer recognition event at Lake Cunningham. An estimated 40 PRNS staff were involved for at least 4 hours and possibly many more to plan, prep the area for the event, etc. Rough estimates of attendance put the volunteer to staff ratio at only 3:1. Volunteer turnout for the event was very mediocre compared to how many people volunteered in service of the Parks so the free lunch accrued to a very small subset of our volunteers. Happy Hollow food staff catered the event. Several members of the PRNS leadership were there as well. Volunteers and staff had to drive their vehicles, many of which were city owned trucks to Lake Cunningham creating a significant amount cost associated with vehicle miles traveled and emissions.

This event likely cost PRNS at least 20k in lost productivity of staff and direct cost. These resources were provided to give a party to a small group of volunteers while the condition of our parks is atrocious. The location chosen was one of the worst maintained parks. Lake Cunningham could have better used the 20k for maintenance. These types of decisions drain resources from our Parks maintenance and distract staff from focusing on executing their day-to-day jobs.

**Recommendation:**

Discontinue events like this and do a very simple electronic recognition for our volunteers. Perhaps free parking passes for all City Parks. This accomplishes the objective of thanking our volunteers and would cost the city nothing. Our volunteers do not expect a party or need to be fed a free meal at the expense of parks maintenance.

Please seriously consider supporting these recommendations as they will drive improvement in the delivery of park maintenance services to our City Parks.

Best Regards, Ken Brennan  
District 10 Parks and Recreation Commissioner

  
[PRC10@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:PRC10@sanjoseca.gov)  




**FW: Letter for Item 3.1 Council Meeting 8/6/2024**

City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>

Mon 8/5/2024 3:50 PM

To: Agendadesk <Agendadesk@sanjoseca.gov>

 1 attachments (32 KB)

Ballot 2024Aug5 SJ Parks Advocates Item 3.1.pdf;

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**From:** jeanann2@ [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Monday, August 5, 2024 3:30 PM

**To:** City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>

**Subject:** Letter for Item 3.1 Council Meeting 8/6/2024

[External Email]

Please forward the attached letter to Council members and place in the agenda packet.

Thank-you  
Jean Dresden

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August 5, 2024

Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers,

RE: Item 3.1, August 6, 2024

**San Jose Park Advocates recommends against *this* proposed ballot measure and asks for development of a revenue plan—including ballot measures**-- to address park maintenance and the park infrastructure backlog. The Council has previously implemented comprehensive plans for transportation, housing, and homeless. **We cannot “kick the can” down the road any longer. It’s time for a comprehensive revenue plan for our parks.**

City Manager Office (CMO) staff wrote eloquently:

“The growth in the size of the park system and the parallel growth in the Department’s infrastructure backlog (due to aging) continue to challenge efforts to mitigate decreases in older facilities’ PCA [Park Condition Assessment] scores. In addition, the impact of homeless individuals living in parks diverts regular resources away from standard maintenance and creates the need for higher levels of attention. Park maintenance through the core of the City is particularly difficult to sustain as there is a constant demand to meet even basic daily needs for trash service and bathroom cleanliness. The standard parks maintenance resources are simply inadequate in these situations.” (NSE Item d1, 2/13/20)

**Even without an education or outreach plan, there is strong community support for parks—both surveys show that.** In the recent survey, 59% expressed positive views--even though the new research company designed the survey so it “pushed” voters toward a predetermined negative point of view by reading a statement about other ballot measures before asking about parks. The first survey used the more typical method asking about a ballot item first to get a pure measure of voter reaction and then asked follow-up questions. Changing methodology blurs the results and obscures the most important conclusion. **There is a strong base of voter sentiment to do something about our city’s parks.**

This current measure has no spending plan. What will the spending plan focus on? **The lack of clarity on spending objectives would make campaign messaging, volunteer recruitment and fundraising difficult.** The proposed September 2024 release of a spending plan is too late for a campaign. There would be voter concern—is it a homeless measure or a park measure? They would wonder about community oversight of this special fund. Some may worry it would supplant General Fund dollars already allocated to the park system.

**The Park System needs champions on City Council** who will maintain laser focus on the park system, to remind colleagues and staff of the critical place for parks in maintaining the physical and mental health of our children and our adult residents. The council champions must advocate to place the development of a park measure on Council Committee and departmental work plans and advocate at the Council priority setting sessions. **Who will be parks champions?**

San Jose Park Advocates are ready to work with the City to build momentum for a park measure. Our members are experienced at campaigns for other park and open space measures. We can conduct focus groups and listening sessions. We can set up information sessions with park staff as guest speakers. We can gather contact information for neighborhood thought leaders and influencers. We can do the groundwork.

**We recommend developing a comprehensive revenue plan for our park system with a spending plan and community oversight.** There are many voters who want to support our parks. Please direct staff to timely develop a revenue plan so that the voters can show their support for parks.

Sincerely,  
Jean Dresden  
Founder, San Jose Parks Advocates

## FW: potential ballot measure for parks

City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>

Tue 8/6/2024 7:48 AM

To:Agendadesk <Agendadesk@sanjoseca.gov>

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**From:** brian darby [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Tuesday, August 6, 2024 6:58 AM

**To:** City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>

**Subject:** potential ballot measure for parks

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Dear Hon. Mayor and city Council;

I understand the need to develop more consistent funding for park maintenance throughout the city of San Jose. It should be understood that the people in San Jose already pay some of the highest taxes in the nation. Adding more burdens to the taxpaying citizens would cause many undue hardship. The maintenance of parks is a basic city requirement in many of the reasons there is a major backlog of repairs and maintenance is because of poor fiscal choices. It is also clear that parks are a needed service and should be adequately funded. If you pursue a parcel tax and humbly suggest that you make it clear that if the parcel tax is approved by the voters the money will not be swept for other purposes.

I would also hope that it would be expressed on the part of the city Council their appreciation to the taxpayers of San Jose. The people of the city have given so much and it has been my observation that it is often not appreciated and at times apparently taken advantage of. Thank you for your consideration. Brian Darby

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