

November 13, 2017

Via email only

Mr. Gary Levitt, Chair, Del Mar Mesa Community Planning Board

[gary@seabreezeproperties.com](mailto:gary@seabreezeproperties.com)

Ms. Lisa Ross, Vice Chair, Del Mar Mesa Community Planning Board

[freudsid@gmail.com](mailto:freudsid@gmail.com)

Re: Elizabeth Rabbitt Neighborhood Park on Del Mar Mesa

I have received your letter and request for information regarding the process in re-naming the new park in the Del Mar Mesa neighborhood of San Diego. This letter also serves to respond to the inquiry by Gary Levitt on the same topic, presented to the Park Board on October 19, 2017.

The process for naming and re-naming park assets is described in Council Policy 900-20 (Attached, A). The effective date for this policy was April 17, 2017. Prior to the Council Policy taking effect, the Park and Recreation Department followed Park and Recreation Board Policy No: 1001 in naming Park and Recreation facilities (Attached, B). It is important to note that the two policies do not differ in process or intent; the Council Policy provides additional policy direction regarding donations and related issues. The renaming process for the subject park was consistent with both the Park and Recreation Board and Council Policies.

In the letter of October 19, 2017, Ms. Ross states that the community of Del Mar Mesa does not have a recreation council. However, the Ocean Air Recreation Council, in its boundaries, does include the Del Mar Mesa neighborhood as well as the Del Mar Mesa Park. (See attached boundary map, Attachment C). As such, it was the Ocean Air Recreation Council which is the advisory body for specific actions for Del Mar Mesa Park, including naming processes. The Recreation Council meeting where the initial action took place was noticed to the public in an appropriate manner, in accordance with the Brown Act, as were the Area Committee meeting and the Park Board meeting in which this matter were also heard. We regret that the renaming effort was not more visible to the Del Mar Mesa Planning Board itself. It is not clear

how that did not occur in this case, but regardless, we regret that you were not aware at the time. There was significant community support for the name change provided, both in person and in writing, to each of the bodies at the meetings where the item was considered; we were unaware of any lack of support to the name change from relevant community groups at the time the name change was considered.

Both City Council Policy 900-20 and Park and Recreation Board Policy 1001 provide the same process in re-naming park assets. In your request for a review of the name change process, the specific process followed with the subject park is outlined below.

*Step 1 – The proponent brings the proposal to the local Recreation Council for recommendation.*

*Action in this case:* Dan O'Rourke, Del Mar Mesa Community Resident, initiated the re-naming request with City Council District 1, (at the time under Councilmember Sherri Lightner's administration) on October 9, 2016. Council Office Representative Steven Hadley referred Mr. O'Rourke to the Park and Recreation Department; District Manager, Mike Rodrigues outlined the process for the proponent. Mr. Rodrigues provided a detailed description of the re-naming process to Mr. O'Rourke and referred him to the Ocean Air Recreation Council staff representative, Kevin Wiggins, Recreation Center Director III. The action to re-name Del Mar Mesa Neighborhood Park to "Elizabeth Rabbitt Park" was placed on the agenda for the November 15, 2016 Ocean Air Recreation Council meeting and the item was approved 4-0-0 (meeting minutes attached, D).

*Step 2– Once the Recreation Council takes action on the proponent's recommendation, the proponent then brings the proposal to the Division Area Committee for recommendation.*

*Action in this case:* District Manager Mike Rodrigues, Community Parks Area I Committee staff representative, worked with Dan O'Rourke to request the Area I Committee chair to place the item on their agenda for the March 1, 2017 Area I Committee meeting. The Area I Committee approved the re-naming of the park, modifying the name to "Elizabeth Rabbitt Neighborhood Park on Del Mar Mesa." The vote was 6-0-0 (meeting minutes attached, E).

*Step 3 – After Area Committee action, Park and Recreation staff works with the proponent to bring the proposal to the Park and Recreation Board.*

*Action in this case: Kathryn Ruiz, Deputy Director with Community Parks I Division prepared the “staff report”, dated April 27, 2017, for the May 18, 2017 Park and Recreation Board meeting. (Report Attached, F) The re-naming of the park to “Elizabeth Rabbitt Neighborhood Park on Del Mar Mesa” was approved, 6-0-0 (meeting minutes attached, G).*

Throughout this process, Park and Recreation Department staff kept the Project Manager with the Public Works Department informed of the name change process as the park was under construction. The Council Office was also aware, as the name change request was initiated with them (it is recognized that a change in administration has occurred since the initiation).

On September 18, 2017, City Council District 1 Office representative, Hillary Nemchik emailed Angel Castro, Park and Recreation Department Area Manager, stating that she received a call from Gary Levitt, Chair of the Del Mar Mesa Planning Board who was concerned about the naming process for Del Mar Mesa Park. Ms. Castro provided the process, as described above, to the City Council representative on September 19, 2017.

On September 20, 2017, Jan Hudson, Founding Chair of the Del Mar Mesa Planning Board and Gary Levitt emailed Ocean Air Recreation Center Director, Kevin Wiggins expressing their concerns over the park re-naming process. Kevin explained the process to Ms. Hudson and Mr. Levitt and invited them both to the September 26, 2017 Ocean Air Recreation Council meeting to share their concerns directly to the Recreation Council members. Jan Hudson, Gary Levitt and Lisa Ross from the Del Mar Mesa Planning Board spoke under the agenda item ‘Communications’ in opposition to the name change; several Del Mar Mesa Community Members spoke in favor of it. As this was a ‘Communication’ item, no specific action was taken by the Recreation Council at this meeting. There was also no request to formally place this item on a future Ocean Air Recreation Council meeting agenda for action (meeting minutes attached, H).

While you did not specifically state this in your letter, should you wish for the currently adopted name to be changed, the formal initiation of that action would begin with the Ocean Air Recreation Council (as indicated in the policies attached). Please contact Area Manager Angelina Black, at (858) 552-1615 to initiate that process.

I hope that this letter provides the information you requested on the re-naming process for "Elizabeth Rabbitt Neighborhood Park on Del Mar Mesa". I understand your concern in not being specifically noticed of the meetings where the re-naming action was considered; to address that moving forward, we will ensure that all Ocean Air Recreation Council agendas are forwarded to the City staff member who supports the Del Mar Mesa Planning Board.

Sincerely,



Herman D. Parker  
Park and Recreation Director

**Attachments**

- A: Council Policy 900-20
- B: Park Board Policy 1001
- C: Ocean Air Recreation Council Boundary Map
- D: November 15, 2016 Ocean Air Recreation Council meeting minutes
- E: March 1, 2017 Area I Committee meeting minutes
- F: Park Board Report dated April 27, 2017
- G: May 18, 2017 Park and Recreation Board meeting
- H: September 26, 2017 Ocean Air Recreation Council meeting minutes

- CC: Kevin Falconer, Mayor  
Barbara Bry, Councilmember District 1  
David Graham, Deputy Chief Operating Officer  
Park Board Members  
Kathryn Ruiz, Deputy Director  
Mike Rodrigues, District Manager  
Angelina Black, Area Manager  
Mark Calleran, Associate Engineer-Civil  
Dan Monroe, Senior Planner  
Sara Toma, Assistant Planner

***Del Mar Mesa Community Planning Board***  
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October 19, 2017

Herman Parker, Park and Recreation Director  
202 C Street  
San Diego, CA 92101

Dear Mr. Parker:

The Del Mar Mesa Planning Board passed the following motion at its October 12, 2017 meeting regarding the re-naming of the new Del Mar Mesa Neighborhood Park and requests that you review the process by which this occurred.

Attached for reference is City Policy 600-33.

The Del Mar Mesa Community, as a semi-rural community has no park and recreation council of its own. Throughout the park planning process, the Del Mar Mesa Planning Board has served as advisor to the City Parks, Development Services and Planning Departments in the design and construction of the Del Mar Mesa Neighborhood Park. Despite establishing this precedent and receiving the Planning Group's assistance and time commitment to the process at that time, this board was left out of the park naming process.

History: The Del Mar Mesa Community Planning Board was formed in the mid 1990's in an effort to preserve the rural nature of this special place while still accommodating development. The Del Mar Mesa Preserve is home to highly valued endangered species, plant and animal. The Del Mar Mesa Community Planning Board is an extremely active board with a well-deserved reputation of negotiating complex projects—landmark compromises that city staff, wildlife agencies and developers have agreed to. Every single development project was poured over and negotiated with individual developer groups to ensure the best use of land with habitat impacts minimized. Thousands of volunteer hours, by about a dozen and a half residents and board members is a testament to what we have today.

Our park planning process underwent the same kind of process, except the project has extended to almost 20 years. During all that time, our board has been involved in EVERY step of our park planning---- siting, design, funding, permitting, and now construction. The board, in many instances, had to fight to keep the financing and construction momentum going.

So, despite our board being notified for years on every bit of City of San Diego minutiae, no matter how irrelevant to our community, and representatives from city parks and facilities regularly updating us on the progress of our park—— that very neighborhood park was named WITHOUT this board's knowledge or input. No other relevant community-wide groups were notified. Zero.

The Del Mar Mesa Planning Board and other involved members of the community "discovered" the new park name was officially approved at the board's September 14, 2017 meeting. We were shocked.

As a result of this action, at the October 12, 2017 meeting of the Del Mar Mesa Planning Board, the following resolution was passed with a vote of 6 in favor, two against and three abstentions:

*The Del Mar Mesa Planning Board officially requests that the Deputy Chief Operating Office for Neighborhood Services Investigate the process by which the name of the Del Mar Mesa Community Park was approved, including whether there was proper public noticing of city park council meetings, why the groups most involved in the park planning, financing and implementation were not involved, and why the Parks Department failed to advise the petitioners to obtain Planning Board and other relevant community group support.*

*Had the meetings been properly noticed and the Planning Board consulted, all residents of our community's opinion would have been considered and taken into account before a final decision was reached.*

This has caused a huge division in our lovely and until now, contented community. It is important that the city understands that "wide community support" was not obtained in the naming of this park, but driven by one neighborhood in close proximity to the new park. This park represents our community's "crowning jewel" of all our planning efforts.

The community's official planning board and the majority of the community should not have been left out of this important decision. We ask you to review and reconsider this process.

Thank you for your attention and follow up on this issue.

Respectfully,



Gary Levitt, Chair



Lisa Ross, Vice-Chair

cc : Kevin Faulkner, Mayor  
Barbara Bry, Councilmember District 1  
David Graham, Deputy Chief Operating Officer Neighborhood Services  
Kathy Ruiz, Deputy Parks Director, District 1  
Hillary Nemchik, City Council District 1 Representative  
Sara Toma, Community Planner  
Dan Monroe, Senior Planner  
Steve Hadley, District 1 Representative