



REPORT TO MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

DATE: April 7, 2009

SUBJECT: Memorial Field Naming At Sports Park

Report in Brief

John Gerald, of the Woodland Soccer Club had requested that the City name a soccer field within the new Sports Park in honor of Yolo County Sheriff Officer Tony Diaz who was killed in the line of duty in June 2008. This request was eventually considered by Parks and Recreation Commission and the Woodland Recreation Foundation as part of the naming rights program associated with the new facilities. Both the Commission and Foundation struggled with naming a single field in honor of Deputy Diaz because there may not be enough fields in the Sports Park to honor such requests.

Consequently, the discussion of this request generated a suggestion that the City designate one of the unnamed multi-use fields as a "Memorial Field". At this field, the City would install a 'monument' where the names of community heroes like Tony Diaz could be inscribed and added to it as necessary. The Memorial Field would be a site where the City could recognize all those who have made contributions to recreation & parks (youth, adult, soccer, baseball, coach, player, volunteer, etc), rather than an element or field within the park. Both the Commission and Recreation Foundation thought this was an appropriate concept and voted to recommend this action to the City Council.

Staff recommends that the City Council designate one of the unnamed Sports Park multi-use fields as a "Memorial Field" and list Deputy Tony Diaz as the first individual to receive this honor with his name to be placed on a plaque that would be part of a monument.

Background

In June 2008, Deputy Tony Diaz died in the line of duty during an altercation with a suspected felon. In addition to distinguishing himself as a law enforcement officer, friend, colleague and family member, Deputy Diaz was well known as an excellent youth soccer coach. His passion for youth soccer was a source of inspiration to the players he coached and other volunteers associated with the game throughout Woodland and other communities within Yolo County.

In recognition of Deputy Diaz's contributions to youth soccer and as a fitting memorial to his tragic death, John Gerald of the Woodland Soccer Club requested that the City name a field in his honor. This request was somewhat in conflict with the naming program that had been developed for the facilities within the new Sports Park and approved by the City Council. While City staff and others associated with evaluating this request were supportive of recognizing Deputy Diaz, the naming rights for the Sports Park had been developed to solicit financial contributions and recognition in order to help fund construction of the facilities. After consideration of Mr. Gerald's request, staff suggested the issue be considered by the Woodland Recreation Foundation. The Foundation was responsible for soliciting financial support for the Sports Park and staff believed that the organization could evaluate potential strategies for appropriately honoring Deputy Diaz that would consider the naming program.

The Woodland Recreation Foundation diligently deliberated on the issue of fee waivers at the Community & Senior Center and Sports Park and voted unanimously at the October 13, 2008 meeting to not recommend fee waivers for the naming program. The Foundation felt that Deputy Diaz was a worthy person to have a sports field named after him. However, they believed that approving this request would open the door for many more waiver requests by people and that was not the intention of the naming program.

At the October 27, 2008 Park & Recreation Commission meeting this issue was deliberated by the commissioners and the public for over an hour. The Commission sent the issue back to the Recreation Foundation to reconsider their position on naming the soccer field after Tony Diaz. The Recreation Foundation Board reconsidered the issue at their November 12, 2008 meeting. During the course of this discussion it was suggested to staff that the City designate one of the unnamed multi-use fields as a "Memorial Field". At this field, the City would install a 'monument' where the names of community heroes like Deputy Diaz could be inscribed and added to it as necessary. The Memorial Field would be a site where the City could recognize all those who have made contributions to recreation & parks (youth, adult, soccer, baseball, coach, player, volunteer, etc), rather than a specific memorial. In the situation involving Deputy Diaz, his passion and commitment for youth soccer were consistent with the criteria envisioned by the Foundation Board. Both the Commission and Recreation Foundation thought this was an appropriate concept and voted to recommend the concept to the City Council.

Discussion

Having one "Memorial Field" is an appropriate concept for honoring community residents who make outstanding contributions to youth and adult sports programs. This concept would allow the Council and community to recognize a much larger number of community heroes. Additionally, a memorial field allows the Recreation Foundation to continue its mission to solicit contributions for the Sports Park Project by selling naming rights on the other athletic fields in a manner this is consistent with the naming program.

Finally, this concept encourages the community to remember Deputy Diaz for his outstanding contributions to youth soccer. While Deputy Diaz died under tragic circumstances, his passion for

youth soccer and his impact on the boys and girls who he coached would be a fitting memorial as the first name to be inscribed on the plaque set upon the monument. If the City Council approves this the designation of a Memorial Field, staff will return at a future meeting with a conceptual plan providing a visual image of the monument and plaque.

Fiscal Impact

The cost of the memorial plaque and monument has not been determined at this time. Staff believes that the memorial and plaque could be funded by the Sports Park project and therefore would have no impact on the General Fund.

Public Contact

Posting the City Council agenda.

Commission Recommendation

The Parks and Recreation Commission approved the recommendation described herein.

Alternative Courses of Action

1. Designate one of the unnamed Sports Park multi-use fields as a “Memorial Field” and list Deputy Tony Diaz as the first individual to receive this honor with his name to be placed on a plaque that would be part of a monument.
2. Cease further consideration of the “Memorial Field” and direct staff to reserve a future field to be named in honor of Deputy Diaz.

Recommendation for Action

Staff recommends that the City Council approve Alternative No. 1.

Prepared by: Daniel W. Gentry, Director
Parks & Recreation

Mark G. Deven
City Manager

Attachment