

COUNTY OF SAN MATEO

Parks Department



DATE: November 23, 2016

COMMISSION MEETING DATE: December 1, 2016

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Brenda Bennett, Executive Secretary

SUBJECT: Selection of Commission Chair and Vice Chair for Calendar Year 2017

RECOMMENDATION

Select a Commission Chair and Vice Chair for 2017.

BACKGROUND

The Commission's Bylaws states that the term of office for the Chair and Vice Chair shall start January 1 and terminate December 31 of the year for which selected.

DISCUSSION

Commissioners may nominate any of the Commission membership for Chair and Vice Chair. Members as defined in Article 4 of the Bylaws are five persons appointed by the Board of Supervisors to represent five supervisorial districts. Nomination process includes the maker of the nomination and a maker of the second of the nomination. A nominee may decline nomination. The Vice and Vice Chair are elected by a majority vote of the members present.

Commissioner Enriquez is the current Chair and Commissioner Okelo is the current Vice Chair.

Gary Woodhams, retired Park Ranger, passed away on November 6, 2016. Staff requests the Commission adjourn the December 1, 2016 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting in his memory. A number of retired staff responded to the announcement about Ranger Woodhams specifically that he was the “face” of Memorial Park and the campers all loved him. Lynne Fritz, who retired as a Park Superintendent, and Mike Fritz, who retired as a Park Ranger III, in the early 2000s, wrote the following tribute to Ranger Woodhams.

Gary Woodhams,
A Classic Original Park Ranger and a First Class Park Ranger

Gary Woodhams was kind and respectful to everyone – to staff and visitors - he saw the best in everyone. He was wise, gentle, patient and compassionate, while leading and mentoring with knowledge, skill, strength, and integrity. Gary, hired in 1962 as a Park Ranger, was mentored by the first Supervising Ranger (Park Ranger IV) at Memorial Park, Henry Bloomquist (Henry was also the first county parks employee.)

Gary worked at Memorial his entire career and for at least four more Ranger IVs during his career. He “manned the compass” at Memorial as supervisors and staff changed. He was committed to the preservation and restoration of the old growth redwood understory and championed the preservation of the original WPA infrastructure of the park, repairing tables, barbeque pits and restroom buildings to maintain the integrity of the original park. He also championed the continued use of the old tools and skills that built Memorial Park and taught others those skills. The old saws, the adze, and drawknife were all used for making dimension lumber for tables and structures.

Mike remembers Gary teaching him how to use a froe and a bowling pin (as a maul) to split shingles. Lynne remembers Gary teaching her to use the stonemason tools, the stone hammer and chisel, and the mortar trowel to repair the barbeques. Gary taught people how to split logs for split rail fences. Mike remembers Gary teaching him how to build barbeque fires with fir bark and how to build a warming fire in the old shop woodstove, which Mike recalls, Gary instructing “there was the right way, the wrong way, and the Memorial way.”

Some said Gary stood in the way of progress but Gary believed in preservation not only of the environment but of historically significant facilities and structures. In the 1970s and 80s as more open space was acquired that included the removal of some old structures and facilities on those lands, Gary spoke up for preserving the history of the area and for a balance between preservation of history and preservation and restoration of the ecosystems. In the 1970s when ranger staff thought more law enforcement capabilities were needed, Gary instead spoke up for the value of good customer service skills. Gary taught staff the importance of the visitors’ first impressions, and that the gatehouse staff set the tone for the visitor experience at Memorial Park. Gary’s smile and calm nature always put people at ease. Gary’s personality and his commitment to Memorial Park and the preservation of the area’s historical and natural history is what kept Memorial Park the County Parks Department’s gem for generations past, present and towards the future.