



Parks & Recreation Commission

CONSENT CALENDAR
January 15, 2008

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Parks and Recreation Commission
Submitted by: Virginia Aiello, Secretary, Parks and Recreation Commission
Subject: Park Bench Donation Policy

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution that: 1) limits park bench donation to sites recommended by staff; 2) approves the bench donation policy as revised, and establishes a process and conditions for granting both bench memorial and anonymous requests.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

There are no costs for the City to establish this policy.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The Parks and Recreation Commission recently concluded their revision of the City's park bench donation policy, and after receiving public comment, took action recommending that Council approve the revised policy (Exhibit A).

As a general principle, the Parks and Recreation Commission believes that donations to the City's parks by residents should support the needs of the City's parks as determined by the City's current priorities within the context of the City's Master Plan. Because space is limited in the City's parks, the Parks and Recreation Commission endorses alternatives to the donation of bench memorials. As described by the revised Park Bench Donation Policy, requests for bench memorials may be granted on a limited basis if the honoree had a record of service to the City's parks or has made an outstanding contribution to the Berkeley community (Exhibit A). A request for an anonymous donation of a park bench may also be granted if space is available on a list of sites determined by the Department of Parks Recreation & Waterfront. Requests shall be reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Commission and approved by Council if the total donation exceeds \$1000 (if the total donation does not exceed \$1000, the Department of Parks Recreation & Waterfront must approve the donation). Council and/or City staff has discretion to determine whether the proposed donation and/or honoree are appropriate.

BACKGROUND

The City has received donations of park benches for many years, and has operated a formal park bench donation policy since 1998, for both memorial and anonymous bench donations. The formal policy identified 80 suitable sites at the Berkeley Rose Garden and Cesar Chavez Park in the Berkeley Marina. As of 1999, all 80 sites had received benches and the City began a waiting list (benches have a lifespan of approximately ten years). As of 2004, there were over 40 names on the waiting list, and so the City suspended the park bench donation program until a revised policy could be developed by the Parks and Recreation Commission.

On April 26, 2007, the Parks and Recreation Commission took action recommending that Council adopt a Resolution that: 1) limits park bench donation to sites recommended by staff; 2) approves the bench donation policy as revised (Exhibit A); and establishes a process and conditions for granting both bench memorial and anonymous requests (Exhibit B). (M/S/C: Porter/Gross; Ayes: Ferrera, Price, Gurdziel, Becker, Stephens, Gross; Absent: Chavez, Huang, Porter).

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

It is not appropriate to use City parks to memorialize an individual except in instances where there is a transcendent relationship between the park and the individual or for an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the Berkeley community. Protecting our park environment, values, and the visitor experience requires that we do not detract from the visual character of our parks. As stewards of the City's parkland and urban forest, the Parks and Recreation Commission is committed to ensuring that contributions are recognized in ways that do not diminish park resources and values. To this end, it is appropriate that the City limit bench memorials and establish reasonable criteria for the granting of such memorials on a limited basis.

CITY MANAGER

The City Manager concurs with the content and recommendations of the Commission's Report.

CONTACT PERSON

Virginia Aiello, Commission Secretary, Parks & Recreation Commission, 981-5158.

Attachments:

1: Resolution

Exhibit A: Park Bench Donation Policy

Exhibit B: Process for Donating a Park Bench

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

PARK BENCH DONATION POLICY

WHEREAS, the Berkeley City Council received and filed a Park Bench Donation Policy on January 13, 1998; and

WHEREAS, sites for memorial benches were limited to the two largest parks: 48 benches at Caesar Chavez and 32 benches at the Rose Garden; and

WHEREAS, in 2004, because the 80 sites were full and there were over 40 names on the waiting list, the Department suspended the program pending a revision of the policy by the Parks and Recreation Commission; and

WHEREAS, on April 26, 2007, the Parks & Recreation Commission approved a revised policy limiting park bench donations to sites recommended by staff; and establishing reasonable criteria for granting of such memorials.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Berkeley adopts the revised Park Bench Donation Policy contained in Exhibit A and the Process for Donating a Park Bench contained in Exhibit B.

EXHIBIT A

Parks Recreation & Waterfront Department Park Bench Donation Policy

This policy has been established to ensure that appropriate oversight is provided in preserving our City parks. To protect park resources, values, and the park visitor experience, bench donations shall fully respect the Master Plan, and the priorities, purpose, and integrity of the City parks. Park bench donations shall contribute to the park visitor experience and preserve the visual character of the park setting.

Types of bench donations:

There are two types of park bench donations: a memorial park bench donation (for which a small plaque identifies the honoree) and an anonymous park bench donation (no signage identifying the donor or honoree). An application in writing is required for either donation type.

A memorial bench will be awarded in recognition of someone who had a record of service to the City's parks or has made an outstanding contribution to the Berkeley community. The honoree must have been deceased for at least one year.

Site:

Staff of the Parks, Recreation & Waterfront Department will recommend possible sites for all park bench donations. Some sites may be deemed inappropriate for memorial benches. After receiving required approvals for a bench donation, the donor may choose from the staff's list of possible sites.

Approval process:

Park bench donation requests will be processed in the order received. Requests for memorial benches must include documentation of the potential honoree's contributions to the City's parks or to the Berkeley community. The Parks & Recreation Commission will review all park bench donation requests.

Bench style:

The Department will provide the bench, which will be of a style appropriate to its site and which will meet the standards of the City for design, durability, and construction.

Cost of the bench:

The Department will determine the amount to charge for a bench donation. The fee includes the cost of the bench including tax and shipping, and the cost of installation. The donor will also pay the cost of the recognition plaque for memorial park bench donations (see below).

Bench plaque:

The City will provide a small metal plaque for installation on a memorial park bench donation to honor the person who is memorialized. Design specification for the plaque will be at the discretion of the Parks Recreation & Waterfront Department. The plaque will be securely inset or surface-mounted onto the seat back of the bench by City staff.

A marker that reads “Donated by a Friend of Berkeley Parks” will identify benches donated anonymously.

Installation of bench:

The City shall be responsible for bench installation.

Longevity of bench:

Park benches in outdoor settings have a reasonable life span of about 10 years. The City will provide for normal maintenance and repair of the bench during its useful life. If bench removal is required, due to deterioration or severe vandalism, the City is not responsible for replacement of the bench. Additionally, the City reserves the right to relocate the bench if unforeseen circumstances arise due to its location or setting.

Acceptance of the donation:

Donations of benches including installation totaling \$1000 or more must have City Council approval. Department staff will process Council approval on behalf of the donor. If the total donation does not exceed \$1000, the Department of Parks Recreation & Waterfront must approve the donation. Council and/or City staff has discretion to determine whether the proposed donation and/or honoree are appropriate.

For further information, please contact the Department of Parks Recreation & Waterfront Department, 981-6700.

EXHIBIT B

Process for Donating a Park Bench

Dear Donor:

Thank you for your interest in donating a park bench to the City of Berkeley. We appreciate your generous offer. This letter outlines the application process and the conditions for granting your request.

There are two types of park bench donations: a memorial bench (for which a small plaque identifies the honoree) and an anonymous bench (no signage identifying the donor or honoree). An application in writing is required for either donation type (see attached).

The process for donating an anonymous bench is as follows:

- A. The written request must be approved by the Parks Recreation & Waterfront Department through an application process. Applications will be processed in the order received.
- B. The Parks & Recreation Commission will review your request for final approval. You will be invited to the Commission meeting when your application is reviewed. If the Commission approves, the request will be approved at the Commission level and forwarded to either the Council (if the donation exceeds \$1000) or Parks Recreation & Waterfront Department (if under \$1000) for final approval.
- C. Upon approval of the request, the donor will select a site from a list of approved sites prepared by Parks and Recreation staff. A marker reading "Friend of Berkeley Parks" will identify the bench.

The process for donating a memorial bench is similar to that for an anonymous bench, except that:

- A. A request for a memorial bench will be granted if the honoree had a record of service to the City's parks or has made an outstanding contribution to the Berkeley community. The honoree must be deceased for one year to allow a more objective assessment of the person's contribution. The request for a memorial bench must be accompanied by a description of the honoree's relationship to the City's parks or community (as described in the attached application).

Due to current needs for park benches and availability of City staff to install and maintain benches, there may be a waiting list for both approving a bench donation and for installing a bench once the request has been approved. The Parks Facilities Maintenance Division will notify you regarding how long it will take to install the bench you have donated. Once the bench is installed, you will be sent a letter from Parks Administration acknowledging your donation and describing the location of the bench.

Thank you again for your willingness to contribute to Berkeley's parks.

Application For Park Bench Donation

Donor Name _____

Phone _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Type of bench donation (check one)

____ Anonymous bench

____ Memorial bench

For Memorial bench only:

In memory of _____

Deceased since (date) _____

Attach a short narrative and/or documentation demonstrating that the person you wish to memorialize contributed service to Berkeley park(s) or has made an outstanding contribution to the Berkeley community. (Examples of documentation would include letters of support from non-profit organizations or service clubs, newspaper articles). Documentation should be verifiable.

I have read the attached Park Bench Donation Policy and agree to the conditions outlined therein.

Donor signature: _____

Date _____

Please mail completed application to:

City of Berkeley
Parks Recreation & Waterfront Department
1947 Center Street
Berkeley, CA 94704
Attn: Park Bench Donation Request

