



City Manager's Report
September 24th City Council Meeting
Prepared by: Terry Zeller, Community Services Director
Item #: 12.2

Subject: Approve Recreation and Park Commission's Recommendation to Demolish the Restroom at Lumsden Park and Shut Off All Water to the Restroom and Lawn Area.

Purpose: Request Council action to demolish the restroom and shut off water in an effort to counteract the ongoing expense from vandalism of the restroom and remove an incentive for using Lumsden Park as a camp site for the homeless by shutting off the water to the restroom and lawn area.

Background: Over the past several years, the Community Services Department has dealt with continuous vandalism of the Lumsden Park restroom. For over a year, the damage to both the gate doors and the fixtures in the restrooms has happened on almost a daily basis, causing the restrooms to be unusable by the general public and causing daily staff time to clean up, repair and re-secure the restroom. This damage is being caused by a locally entrenched homeless population that fluctuates from a few to as many as a dozen individuals. This population uses the restroom for filling water jugs with severed water lines, sleeping in, and for drug use activities out of public view. The area behind the restroom provides a perfect hiding place for day and night activity, and the restroom is in a location that feels very unsafe for legitimate users of the park, as it is backed up to the woods and in a low area of the park.

The irrigation system that waters the lawn area in front of the restroom is also being tampered with and damaged, as the individuals camping on site regularly shut the water off in order to sleep in the lawn area and turn the irrigation system on to use as an open air shower.

Placerville PD has stepped up their patrols of the park and restroom, but is unable to disperse the homeless population in the park due to laws protecting the homeless. Damage occurs at night, and to date no one has been caught doing the damage. The restroom has steel gates on the door frames, and these gates have had their chains cut dozens of times. The toilets and sinks have been replaced many times, and the water lines and plumbing have been repaired too many times to count. Other activities by the homeless population around the restroom include using the irrigation system as an open air shower as reference above, and almost daily defecation around the perimeter of the restroom, which is a health hazard.

Discussion: The disposition of the restroom was agendized for the regular meeting of the Recreation and Parks Commission on August 21st, 2019. During the agenda item discussion, 3 residents abutting the park voiced their concerns about fire, taxpayer costs going to a nuisance issue, and the daily incidents between themselves, other park users, and the homeless population at Lumsden as being a pronounced problem, effecting the quality of life of these residents. The Commission voted 4-0 with one abstention to recommend demolition of the entire restroom

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building in order to eliminate it as a water source, and shutting off the City Water at the street to stop vandalism of the irrigation system. Staff also brought up the issue of the restroom not being up to ADA code for path of travel, door widths, fixtures and access space within the restrooms. Bringing the existing restroom up to code may not be possible considering the location in relation to the H/C parking on site and the elevation changes.

Neighborhood vs. Community Park

Lumsden is a four acre park containing the lower grass/restroom area, the playground and lower parking, and the pond/upper parking area. The vast majority of the wooded area around the park is private property, making the park appear much larger than its actual footprint. Community Parks are normally over 5 acres, and designed with amenities directed at use by the City as a whole, such as City Park with the Aquatic Center, Gold Bug with its area attraction, and Lion's Park with the softball fields. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update from 2017 lists Lumsden as a neighborhood park, along with Orchard Hill, Rotary and Duffey parks. Neighborhood parks do not normally provide restrooms, as they are meant to provide recreation for the adjacent neighborhood.

The park was deeded to the City in 1962 and has a deed restriction that the property be used for public recreation, and if abandoned for this purpose, is to be returned to the donor or their heirs. With this existing restriction, Lumsden should undergo a fresh planning process to determine what future use the community wants to see for the property.

Also, the City of Placerville General Plan establishes a standard of 5 acres per 1,000 residents for developed parkland. The City currently has 5.1 acres per 1,000, and taking Lumsden Park out of the equation would drop that acreage to 4.7 acres per 1,000 residents.

Removal of the restroom and water shutoff is an extreme action, but would eliminate the cost of staff repairing one restroom that cannot be left open for the general public and damage to the irrigation system daily. Removing the privacy walls would allow PD to easily see activity from the roadside while on patrol, and may reduce damage. The short term fix being tried at present is welding the gates shut to see if this stops attempted access and damage to fixtures. We are expecting that a big effort will be made to break these gates, if the past is any clue to what will happen next. The irrigation system will remain in place, but be shut off at the road and be turned on manually to keep the turf alive through the summer months.

Options: Options given in the Commission memo included:

1. Demolish the wing walls at the Lumsden Park restroom
2. Demolish the entire restroom building
3. Monitor damage after welding the gates.

Cost: If the restroom is left as-is, repair costs are projected to exceed the funding for Lumsden Park, and impact all other facilities and our ability to provide clean restrooms and repair damage generally in the parks and facilities. Demolition or welding can be done in-house with existing Parks and Public Works staff and equipment

Budget Impact: A detailed accounting of the staff time and repair costs has not been tracked, but daily staff time for cleanup, garbage removal and fixtures, locks, new hardware and chains will most surely exceed the \$3,000 line item allotted for the Park.

Recommendation: Approve Recreation and Park Commission's Recommendation to Demolish the Restroom at Lumsden Park and Shut Off All Water to the Restroom and Lawn Area.



M. Cleve Morris, City Manager



**Terry Zeller,
Director of Community Services**

Attachments:

- A. Minutes from Recreation and Parks Commission Mtg. Aug. 21st