Meeting Date: March 3, 2009

TOWN OF MORAGA **STAFF REPORT**

To: **Honorable Mayor, Town Council Members, and Parks and Recreation Commissioners**

From: **Jay Ingram, Parks and Recreation Director**

Subject: **Address the 2007 Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommendations as it relates to Rancho Laguna Park.**

Request

The Commission requests the following:

1) Discussions on revised Town of Moraga Municipal Code, Chapter 12.08.180 – Animals (Attachment A).

2) A Commission led process creating a vision for Rancho Laguna.

Background

The Park and Recreation Commission held two public meetings regarding off-leash animals at Rancho Laguna (January and February, 2009). The revised Municipal Code Chapter 12.08.180 - Animals will be discussed again at the March 17, 2009 Commission meeting. Town Council is scheduled to hear a first reading of the revised ordinance at their April 8, 2009 Regular Council meeting.

The original complaint that brought this issue forward was from park patrons lack of respect and how they were treated when cited by Animal Control on November 28, 2008. Town staff was directed to look into revising the ordinance. As staff reviewed the ordinance, more concerns were raised. The main issues included, safety of park patrons, liability for the Town, lack of park usage for all community interests, loss of revenue opportunities.

The revised ordinance tries to accommodate dog owners and at the same time protect the Town. It also attempts to expand the use of one of only two public parks in Moraga. At the February Park and Recreation Commission meeting, nine dog owners spoke to the need for a less restrictive ordinance than is being proposed. The Commissioners expressed a need for Rancho Laguna to serve a broader population than it currently serves.

In addition to the revised ordinance, the Park and Recreation Commission is planning to create a vision for Rancho Laguna Park. For this vision the Commission will use the 2007 Town Council accepted Parks and Recreation Master Plan document as a guide. The Commission does not see a need to develop a consultant led site master plan. The vision can be accomplished through future Commission meetings. The Town-wide Parks and Recreation Master Plan addresses Rancho Laguna by stating:

- Develop new site master plan, including the following elements:
  - Create monument entrance signage consistent with all Moraga Parks.
  - Expand bike amenities.
  - Renovate restrooms.
  - Create a new central ADA accessible play area that incorporates historical, cultural, environmental, and ages specific elements.
  - Develop a central plaza area and use as amphitheater.
  - Provide 1-2 multi-use sports fields in the existing turf area.
  - Renovate and provide new picnic area, including picnic tables for a variety of groups sized and covered picnic shelter.
  - Provide small scale sports activities, such as sand volleyball, and basketball adjacent to picnic area.
  - Renovate the creekside as a natural area with restored vegetation, ADA accessible pathways, interpretive signage, and benches.
  - Provide adequate parking for the intended uses.

With the limited public parks the Town shares with its 16,000 residents the Park and Recreation Commission would like to open Rancho Laguna park to a broader audience of users. The Commission and staff have expressed the following concerns with Rancho Laguna Park as currently configured.

1) Going back to fiscal year 2005/06, annual park revenue averages $3,900. A park of this size and characteristics should generate $20,000 to $25,000 in annual revenue.

2) Safety – A number of people do not use this park because they don't feel safe using other park elements when dogs are allowed off-leash.

3) Liability – Luckily an animal related bite or injury to a person has not been formally reported. Potential future litigation from such an incident is of concern.

4) Rancho Laguna is widely considered a dog park and because of this belief, a certain number of potential park users don't even use the park.

5) With only two parks for 16,000 residents, limiting the usage of one park is not a beneficial service to the entire community.

Fiscal Impact

None at this time.

Recommendations

1) Discuss draft revisions to Municipal Code Chapter 12.08.180 – Animals.
2) Provide comment and direction on the Park and Recreation Commission visioning process for Rancho Laguna.

Report Reviewed by: Interim Town Manager

Attachment A: Revised Municipal Code Chapter - 12.08.180-Animals

Attachment B: Communication regarding revised Municipal Code Chapter 12.08.180-Animals