



Legislation Text

File #: 06-0297, **Version:** 1

Recommendation to conduct a hearing on the appeal by Ann Cantrell and Joseph M. Weinstein of the Planning Commission approval of the proposed Sports Park located at 2801 Orange Avenue; receive the supporting documentation into the record, conclude the public hearing, deny the appeals, and adopt resolution certifying Recirculated Environmental Impact Report 08-04 (SCH No. 1999091108), approve Addenda for Site Plan 3A and 3B and further adopt findings in support of certification, and adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations and Mitigation Monitoring Program;

Project Objectives

The project seeks to accomplish two primary goals. The first is to develop a sports park within the City of Long Beach to assist in meeting the demand for adult and youth league sports facilities. This is consistent with the spirit and intent of the recently adopted Open Space and Recreation Element (OSRE) that encourages the provision of new recreation uses. The proposed sports park will also free up space for children's sports leagues in neighborhood and community parks by providing space for adult leagues in accordance with the OSRE policy to "give preference to children's sports over adult sports leagues in neighborhood parks".

The second primary goal of the project is the redevelopment of a blighted site. The proposed project will result in the viable redevelopment of a currently blighted and underused site with a use that will result in the remediation of existing soil conditions and the provision of needed recreation facilities for the residents of the City.

Original Master Plan/Planning Commission Action

The master plan that was presented to the Planning Commission for consideration on October 20, 2005 included six lighted baseball/softball diamonds, four lighted soccer fields, a skate park, batting cages, two playgrounds/tot lots, two volleyball courts, covered sports pavilions for indoor soccer, maintenance facilities and a youth golf training center.

The other project entitlements requested at the meeting included certification of the Recirculated EIR, General Plan Amendment to change the designation of the site from General Industry (LUD #9G) to Open Space and Park District (LUD#11) and Traditional Retail Strip Commercial District (LUD#8A), Zone Change from Institutional (I) and Medium Industrial (1M) to Park (P) and Community Commercial Automobile Oriented District (CCA), Conditional Use Permit, Standards Variance and Lot Line Adjustment.

Nineteen individuals spoke at the Planning Commission on this project with eight speaking in favor and eleven speaking against. The concerns raised by those in opposition of the project included loss of passive open space including wetlands and wildlife habitat, loss of topographic features and the adequacy of the EIR. After discussion, Commissioner Sramek made a motion to approve the request with a condition that, prior to the proposed project being presented to the City Council, the applicant (City) meet with all concerned parties to determine if, within a reasonable amount of time, revisions

can be made to the master plan design that include, but are not limited to, components of the alternative plans discussed at the Planning Commission meeting of October 20, 2005. Commissioner Greenberg seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0. Commissioner Stuhlberg had left the meeting and Commissioners Jenkins and Rouse were absent.

Two appeals of the Planning Commission decision were filed on October 28, 2005. Both appellants (Ann Cantrell and Joseph M. Weinstein) indicated that the reason for their appeals was based on their belief that the EIR does not fully address the impacts of the project.

Master Plan Re-evaluation

In response to the condition of approval added by the Planning Commission, the City initiated the master plan re-evaluation process. The memorandum dated February 10, 2006 from Patrick West, Community Development Director, and Phil Hester, Director of Parks, Recreation and Marine to the Planning Commission (see Attachment 4) provides a detailed account of the redesign of the sports park master plan. The following is a summary of the process to date:

- Early November 2005 - Full-day Project Team retreat to review public concerns (both pro and con) and develop alternative site plans to address said concerns. Eight (8) design alternatives were generated with three (3) of the alternatives selected for further review by the wetlands biologist, civil engineer and landscape architect.

- Late November 2005 - Review of results of analysis on three alternatives. The alternative selected for further refinement and engineering analysis. This option included removal of the golf training facility and the provision of approximately 7.8 acres of passive/ wetland open space. However, this design required additional retaining walls that would have a significant impact on project costs and a detrimental impact on project aesthetics.

- Early December 2005 - Revision of the alternative plan to remove one soccer field. This plan increased the passive/wetland open space to approximately 10 acres. The wetlands and open space area are split between the Orange Avenue frontage and the California Avenue frontage at the south end of the project.

- December 14, 2005 - The Project Team conducted a publicly noticed community meeting to present the results of the analysis and the different master plan options that were developed. The response received at the meeting was mixed with some persons critical that insufficient effort had been made to incorporate passive park/wetlands areas while persons favoring a more active park were critical of the loss of the soccer field.

- Early January 2006 - The Project Team evaluated the comments raised at the December community meeting and made further revisions in an effort to retain meaningful open space at the historic high point of the site. This plan is titled Option 3B and provides a contiguous passive/wetland open space area at the southeast corner of the project site that is approximately 10 acres in size.

- The original Sports Park Master Plan, as well as the alternatives mentioned above, were presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission on February 16, 2006. The Commission felt that any of the three options would provide increased recreation opportunities for the public and recommended approval of any of the options.

-On February 25, 2006, a second publicly noticed community meeting was held to present the revised master plan (Option 3B) and show the evolution of the project. Based on the comments at the meeting, there is still some opposition to the project because of a desire to preserve more passive and native habitat areas although there was generally acknowledgement that option 3B provides substantial progress towards meeting those desires and concerns.

In summary, the plan has evolved significantly through this process due to the public input. Staff recommends that the City Council approve the revised master plan (3B) as it achieves the core objectives of providing both active recreation opportunities and a significant amount of passive open space/wetland area.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

As indicated above, two appeals of the Planning Commission decision were filed that allege that the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) is not adequate pursuant to the CEQA guidelines. The City, as the Lead Agency, finds that the FEIR is adequate.

The FEIR identified certain potentially significant effects that could result from the proposed project. The following impacts would be reduced to a less than significant level with implementation of the mitigation measures: land use, geology and soils, water quality and hydrology, cultural and paleontological resources, public services and utilities, traffic and circulation, noise, aesthetics, and hazards and hazardous materials. The FEIR identified the following potentially significant impacts that would not be reduced to a less than significant level with the implementation of the mitigation measures: biological resources (cumulative), cultural resources (compressor building and Lomita Gasoline Company office building), public services and utilities (cumulative), air quality, traffic and circulation (cumulative). The Planning Commission adopted a Statement of Overriding Considerations for the project. It determined that the significant public benefits and economic benefits of the project outweigh the potentially significant adverse impacts of air quality and traffic impacts identified in the EIR.

The scope of the project has been modified since the Planning Commission certified the Recirculated EIR on October 20, 2006 due to the design changes that incorporate substantial open space elements. Therefore, pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act guidelines, two EIR Addenda were prepared to provide a factual basis for evaluating the environmental impacts associated with the proposed revised Master Plans 3A and 3B. The Addenda determined that there are no changes in circumstances or new information of substantial importance that would require preparation of a subsequent or supplemental EIR.

This report was reviewed by Assistant City Attorney Michael J. Mais on April 6, 2006.

The Long Beach Municipal Code requires a hearing on the appeal within 60 days. However, on December 1, 2005, the City waived its right to a timely appeal (see Attachment 3) in order to allow more time to meet with the community as conditioned by the Planning Commission.

To be determined.

MATTHEW JENKINS,
CHAIR CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

BY:
SUZANNE FRICK
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND BUILDING

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LONG BEACH (i) CERTIFYING THAT THE FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE LONG BEACH SPORTS PARK PROJECT (SCH#19990911 08) HAS BEEN COMPLETED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT AND STATE AND LOCAL GUIDELINES AND MAKING CERTAIN FINDINGS AND DETERMINATIONS RELATIVE THERETO; (ii) ADOPTING A STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS; AND (iii) ADOPTING A MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM