

APPROVED
NOV 07 2008

REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER

NO. 08-305

DATE November 7, 2008

BOARD OF RECREATION
and PARK COMMISSIONERS

C.D. 2

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT: VERDUGO AREA: ACQUISITION OF OPEN SPACE IN PARTNERSHIP
WITH THE MOUNTAINS RECREATION AND CONSERVATION
AUTHORITY AND ALLOCATION OF SUBDIVISION/QUIMBY FEES

R. Adams	_____	J. Kolb	_____
H. Fujita	_____	F. Mok	_____
S. Huntley	_____	K. Regan	_____
V. Israel	_____	*M. Shull	<i>M. Shull</i>

[Signature]
General Manager

Approved _____

Disapproved _____

Withdrawn _____

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board:

1. Adopt the Resolution, on file in the Board Office, authorizing staff to request assistance from the Department of General Services, the City Attorney and other entities in order to acquire 84.90 acres of privately owned, vacant property south of Haines Canyon Park for the agreed upon price of \$1 million;
2. Authorize the Department's Chief Accounting Employee to establish a new Subdivision/Quimby Fee Account, No. 460K-LN, with "La Tuna Canyon Park" as the account name;
3. Authorize the Chief Accounting Employee to transfer \$30,000 in fees collected in Fiscal Year 2004-05 from Subdivision/Quimby Account 460K-00 to the new La Tuna Canyon Park Account 460K-LN;
4. Approve the allocation of \$30,000 in Subdivision/Quimby fees from La Tuna Canyon Park Account 460K-LN for escrow/title report fees and other costs associated with acquisition of the site;
5. Authorize the Board Secretary, upon the successful close of escrow, to accept the Grant Deed to the entire City acquisition, which is to be set apart and dedicated as park property in perpetuity; and,

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6. Incorporate the newly acquired property north of the Foothill (210) Freeway into Haines Canyon Park and name the newly acquired property south of the Freeway the "La Tuna Canyon Park" with the address of 6801 La Tuna Canyon Road.

SUMMARY:

The Verdugo area extends ten miles along the northern edge of the Los Angeles basin and includes prominent ridgelines with scenic view points, intermittent streams and wildlife corridors. Preserving "the Verdugos" as open space for public use is the focus of a nonprofit task force of environmental groups and local agencies. City participation in this cooperative effort is strongly supported by the Councilmember for the Second District.

Over the past three years, the City has expanded the Verdugo Mountain Park through two separate acquisitions, increasing the total acreage by two-thirds. The City now has an opportunity to acquire 84.90 acres three miles to the east, where La Tuna Canyon Road crosses under and parallels the Foothill Freeway. Part of this proposed City acquisition, 12.53 acres, is adjacent to Haines Canyon Park and will expand it south to the Freeway. The Assessor Parcel Number (APN) for the property is 2572-028-028. The rest of the proposed acquisition by the City is south of this parcel and the Freeway and totals 72.37 acres (APNs 2572-026-006, -024 and part of 2572-027-031). Most of APN 2572-027-031 as well as a nearby parcel of five acres (APN 2572-027-019) will be acquired by the MRCA as part of the same transaction with the same private owners. The entire transaction totals nearly 231 acres, all of which will remain open space for use by the public.

The agreed-upon price for the total acreage is \$2.7 million. The City can contribute \$1 million, which is the sum awarded for the acquisition under the sixth competitive cycle of the Proposition K Program in Fund 43K, Department 10, Account E568. The MRCA is paying \$1.7 million. The acreage to be obtained by the City reflects its pro-rated share of the total purchase. This sum was substantiated by a Class "C" estimate of value dated July 6, 2007, from the Department of General Services and by their review on April 15, 2008, of a Class "A" appraisal previously obtained by the MRCA. The appraisal was updated on August 6, 2008; the valuation remained the same.

If the Board approves the City's acquisition, there will also be the need to pay escrow/title report fees and costs of a survey to establish the boundary of the City's portion of APN 2572-027-031. Consequently, staff seeks to establish a new Subdivision/Quimby Fee Account 460K-LN with "La Tuna Canyon Park" as the account name. Subdivision/Quimby fees of \$30,000 collected during Fiscal Year 2004-05 can be transferred from Subdivision/Quimby Account 460K-00 to La Tuna Canyon Park Account 460K-LN. The Subdivision/Quimby fees were collected within two miles of the site of the proposed City acquisition, which is the standard distance for the allocation of these fees for community parks.

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As part of the application for the Proposition K grant, a Phase I site assessment was completed in June 2007; the report found no recognized environmental conditions and made no recommendation for further study. There is no environmental impediment to the acquisition. Department environmental staff determined that the acquisition is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Article III, Section 1 (p), Class 16 of the City CEQA Guidelines. On July 11, 2008, a Notice of Exemption was filed with the Los Angeles City and County Clerks.

Public access to the hilly, chaparral-covered site south of the Foothill Freeway is by a dead-end spur of La Tuna Canyon Road. This spur also provides access to the popular Hostetter Mountain Way, part of a regional trail system that connects southward to Brand Park in Glendale and on the west to Verdugo Mountain Park. To the east of the proposed new City park is open space belonging to the California Department of Parks and Recreation. The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, a State agency affiliated with the MRCA, has acreage on the west. Since the proposed City property is off La Tuna Canyon Road, staff recommends naming the new City site south of the Freeway "La Tuna Canyon Park". Because of the configuration of the road spur with respect to the nearest edge of this proposed City park and the terminus of the trail, it is possible that the Department will need to enter into an agreement with the State and/or the MRCA or a designee in order to improve public access.

If the City acquires the property and a future source of funding, Department staff can propose to the Board a plan for increasing the public's enjoyment of the new park and of the trail system south of the Freeway. The plan might include the development of a trailhead with parking and interpretive signage.

In addition to the Office of Council District Two, the Assistant General Manager of Operations West and the Superintendent of Valley Region concur with staff's recommendations.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT:

Initial acquisition costs are estimated to be less than \$1,030,000, all from the special funds identified in this report. Annual brush clearance is estimated at \$9,000, and a budget request will be submitted for this sum.

This board report was prepared by Joan Reitzel, Senior Management Analyst in Real Estate and Asset Management, Planning and Development Division.