



AGENDA REPORT

SAN CLEMENTE BEACHES, PARKS & RECREATION
COMMISSION MEETING
Meeting Date: October 13, 2015

Agenda Item 5.C.

Approvals:

Dept. Head ES

Manager _____

Admin. Assistant MS

Department: Public Works / Engineering
Prepared By: Aeryn Donnelly-Terrey, Park Planner
Tom Bonigut, Deputy Public Works Director

Subject: *PLAYGROUND REPLACEMENT PROGRAM.*

Fiscal Impact: None.

Summary: Staff recommends that Beaches, Parks and Recreation (BP&R) Commission concur with the approach discussed in this report regarding the planned playground replacements timeline and playground equipment and surfacing recommendations.

Background: The Playground Replacement program provides for replacement of equipment and surfacing at City playgrounds that have met their useful life. Each year approximately \$125,000 is budgeted to replace playground equipment and surfacing. This report presents staff's recommended long-term plan for replacing playgrounds as well as recommendations for Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 playground replacements as further discussed below.

Discussion: Playground Replacement Plan

The City currently operates and maintains playgrounds at 15 parks throughout the City. Soon there will be three new playgrounds in new parks within the Marblehead Coastal/Sea Summit development. The first of these new playgrounds will open by late November and the other two will open in early 2016. Staff has inspected the condition of equipment and surfacing at all of the existing City playgrounds and, based on the condition of the playground equipment and playground surfaces, developed a recommended annual replacement plan. Table 1 on the following page presents the recommended priority order and replacement schedule for equipment and surfacing at the playgrounds. The table also lists the manufacturer of the equipment currently in use at each of the playgrounds.

Table 1. Recommended Playground Replacement Plan

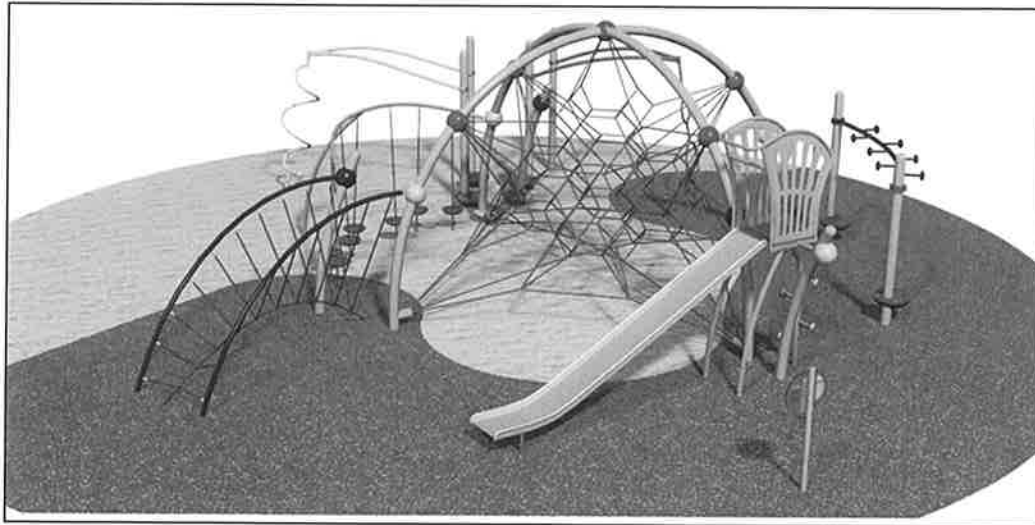
Park	Playground Equipment Vendor	Replacement Fiscal Year
<i>Existing Playgrounds</i>		
Bonito Canyon	Game Time	2016
Marblehead Inland	Miracle	2016
San Luis Rey	Miracle	2017
Rancho San Clemente	Miracle	2018
Mira Costa	Miracle	2019
Verde	Miracle	2019
San Gorgonio	Miracle	2020
Forster Ranch 1	Miracle	2021
Forster Ranch 2	Little Tikes	2021
Talega	Miracle	2022
Tierra Grande	Timberform	2023
Liberty	Landscape Structures	2024
Courtney's Sandcastle (Vista Hermosa Sports Park)	Little Tikes	2025
Linda Lane	Miracle	2026
Max Berg Plaza	Game Time	2027
<i>New Playgrounds Opening 2015-2016</i>		
Sea Summit Canyon View	Landscape Structures	2028
Sea Summit Pico	Landscape Structures	2029
Sea Summit Jim Johnson Memorial Sports Park	Landscape Structures	2030

As shown above, the two parks playgrounds which are in most need of replacement are Bonito Canyon Park and Marblehead Inland Park Playgrounds, thus they are recommended for replacement in the current FY 2016. These are discussed further in the following section. The next five park playgrounds on the list (i.e. San Luis Rey through San Gorgonio playgrounds) should be replaced as soon as practicable but have been planned as shown in the table above given past funding availability. During the upcoming FY 2017 budget process, staff will request an increased funding allocation so that these playgrounds (San Luis Rey, Rancho San Clemente, Mira Costa, Verde, and San Gorgonio) could be replaced on a quicker timeline than shown in the table above. With routine maintenance, FY 2021 is a reasonable target to replace the Forster Ranch playgrounds, and thereafter a park playground would be replaced annually. Playground equipment and rubberized surfacing has a typical lifespan of 10-15 years, where routine maintenance can extend useful life. Based on a 15-year lifespan, the playgrounds replaced this fiscal year (Bonito Canyon and Marblehead Inland) would again be due for replacement in 2031, starting a new cycle of replacements for all of the City's playgrounds.

FY 2016 Proposed Playground Replacements

Playgrounds have evolved over the years to include universally accessible components, multi-sensory play and challenging adventurous play. Recently the City

Council directed staff to explore the possibility of introducing more challenging play in some of the parks playgrounds with use of rope-based play structures as shown in the following illustration:



However, such challenging play structures are significantly more costly than playground equipment that is comparable to what is currently used in City parks. That said, even new comparable equipment includes some rope-based features and would be an improvement over existing playground equipment. When playground equipment is replaced the playground surface must also be replaced. Currently, most playground surfaces have a combination of poured-in-place rubberized surface and sand. However, the Courtney’s Sandcastle Sensory Garden also uses engineered wood fiber (known as “fibar”), which is a mixture of wood chips that meets certain specifications regarding chip size and shape. Fibar is designed to “knit together” to form a surface that is soft enough to cushion falls but firm enough to support wheelchairs. Fibar meets all applicable safety, purity and wheelchair access requirements for playgrounds, and it is less costly (both initial and life-cycle cost) and easier to maintain than rubberized or synthetic turf playground surfaces. While sand has a relatively low cost, it does not meet wheelchair access requirements. Therefore, staff recommends that fibar be used for all future playground surface replacements.

The available budget for FY 2016 playground replacements is about \$294,000, which includes carryover funds from prior fiscal years. Table 2 below summarizes estimated costs to replace the Bonito Canyon and Marblehead Inland playgrounds with equipment similar to existing City playgrounds and more challenging rope-based play equipment. The costs below include use of fibar playground surfacing.

Table 2. Estimated Costs for Bonito and Marblehead Inland Playgrounds.

	Miracle ("In-Kind" Replacement)	Landscape Structures (More Challenging Play)
Bonito Playground	\$115,000	\$135,000
Marblehead Inland Playground	\$137,000	\$194,000
TOTAL	\$252,000	\$329,000
Available Budget	\$294,000	\$294,000
Additional Funds Needed	0	\$35,000

As shown in the table, replacing playground equipment at the Bonito and Marblehead Inland parks with challenging play equipment would cost about \$77,000 more than in-kind replacement, and would exceed the current available budget by about \$35,000.

To help understand the bigger picture funding need, to do in-kind playground replacements at the seven highest-priority parks listed in Table 1 (i.e. Bonito Canyon through San Gorgonio Parks) would cost about \$840,000, while replacements with more challenging play equipment would cost about \$1.1 million, or roughly \$257,000 more. Staff recommends pursuing the in-kind replacements because this allows the City to do more with less funding, and because even the in-kind equipment is an improvement over existing equipment and will have some rope-based challenging play elements.

Another consideration for the playgrounds is whether or not to include shade structures for selected playgrounds. Research conducted by the Courtney's Sandcastle Foundation indicated that park users desire shade within the playgrounds, especially for the Ages 2-5 playgrounds. The BP&R Commission has also expressed an interest in providing shade at the Ages 2-5 playgrounds throughout the community. The best (most cost effective) time to install a shade structure is when a playground is being replaced, however a shade structure is still a significant added expense. For example, a new shade structure that will adequately cover the Ages 2-5 playground at Marblehead Inland Park would cost \$65,000. Given the estimated costs provided in Table 2 above, to include a shade structure if desired in the proposed FY 2016 project would require additional funding of about \$13,000 if included with an in-kind playground replacement. As with consideration of challenging play equipment, inclusion of shade structures increases project costs, which restricts how much playground replacement work can be accomplished unless increased funds are budgeted for these projects.

Playground Equipment "Refreshing"

Eight of the parks have playground equipment made by Miracle Playgrounds, and this company has "Miracle Refresh" program which is designed to refresh older Miracle playground equipment. The refresh process updates equipment with new paint, new decks and new components at much less cost than replacement with new equipment. Staff researched that program but none of the City's parks qualify under the company's refresh program.

Playground Equipment Donation

Staff was asked to explore the possibility of working with Kids Around the World (KATW) to donate any of the City's Playground Equipment to our sister city in San Clemente, Argentina. KATW is a local non-profit group that repurposes playground equipment that has met its useful life and donates it to other countries in need. Staff met with KATW and determined that they would only be interested in the Ages 5-12 playground equipment at Marblehead Inland Park at this time, and would only be interested in repurposing that equipment for a fee of \$20,000. Since it is less costly for the City to remove and recycle the current playground equipment staff does not recommend partnering with KATW to donate the existing equipment.

Recommended

Action: STAFF RECOMMENDS THAT the Beaches, Parks & Recreation Commission:

1. Concur with the approach to use Engineered Wood Fiber (aka "Fibar") for the playground surface in future playground replacement projects;
2. Concur with the approach to pursue in-kind replacement of playground equipment in future playground replacement projects;
3. Provide a recommendation regarding inclusion of shade structures for Ages 2-5 playgrounds in future playground replacement projects; and
4. Concur with the proposed anticipated timeline of playground replacements as presented in this report.

Attachments: None.

Notification: None.