



CITY OF CHICO
BIDWELL PARK AND PLAYGROUND COMMISSION (BPPC)
NATURAL RESOURCE COMMITTEE
(Haar (Chair), McReynolds and Nickell)
Regular Meeting Agenda
August 15, 2018, 6 p.m.

Chico Municipal Center Council Chamber Building
421 Main Street
Conference Room 1

Materials related to an item on this Agenda are available for public inspection in the Park Division Office at 965 Fir Street during normal business hours or online at <http://www.chico.ca.us/>.

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. REGULAR AGENDA

2.1. CONSIDERATION OF THE UPPER BIDWELL PARK ROAD SURVEY RESULTS

At the 7/30/18 Bidwell Park & Playground Commission (BPPC) meeting, the Park & Natural Resources Manager provided a presentation on the Final Report of the results of the Upper Park public convenience survey conducted in March of 2018. The BPPC forwarded this item to the Committee for further discussion and public input.

***Recommendation:** None at this time.*

3. BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

Members of the public may address the Committee at this time on any matter not already listed on the agenda, comments are limited to three minutes. The Committee cannot take any action at this meeting on requests made under this section of the agenda.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Unless otherwise noticed, adjourn to the next regular meeting on September 19, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. in Conference Room 1, Chico Municipal Center Council Chamber Building located at 421 Main Street, Chico, California.



Please contact the Park Division Office at (530) 896-7800 if you require an agenda in an alternative format, or if you need to request a disability-related modification or accommodation. If possible, this request should be received at least three (3) working days prior to the meeting.



DATE: August 10, 2018
TO: BPPC Natural Resource Committee (Chair Haar, McReynolds, and Nickell)
FROM: Linda Herman, Park & Natural Resources Manager
SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF THE RESULTS OF THE UPPER BIDWELL PARK PUBLIC SURVEY

REPORT IN BRIEF:

At the 7/30/18 Bidwell Park & Playground Commission (BPPC) meeting, the Park & Natural Resources Manager presented the Final Report prepared by CSU, Chico Professor Dr. Diane E. Schmidt of the results of the Upper Park public convenience survey conducted earlier this year. A copy of the power point presentation of the results is attached as Exhibit A, and the full Final Report is available on the City's website at:

www.ci.chico.ca.us/government/minutes_agendas/documents/5.1a_2018UPPERBIDWELLSURVEYREPORT7-21-18-FINAL.pdf

The BPPC forwarded this item to the Natural Resource Committee for further discussion and public input.

Recommendation: *None at this time.*

BACKGROUND:

In the past, Upper Bidwell Park was open to vehicles from the main entrance at Wildwood Avenue to the end of the road (Parking Lot U), Tuesday through Saturday except during wet conditions. This provided public access to some of the most remote areas of the park. After heavy rain events in 2012, most of the undeveloped or unpaved sections of the Upper Park Road suffered major erosion damage and was closed to vehicles. After some repairs were made, the Horseshoe Lake (Lot E) gate resumed regular opening days and hours, but the steeper and more remote area east of the Diversion Dam gate has remained closed to vehicles due to the lack of funding to repair and improve the road to make it safe for vehicle access.

The purpose of this community survey was to acquire public feedback regarding their usage of Upper Bidwell Park's features, perspectives regarding improvements, and future development of the unpaved portion of the Upper Park Road beyond Horseshoe Lake. The survey questions focused on meeting four main goals:

- Documenting self-reported Upper Park usage data including frequency and purpose of park visits and use of park resources for locating information about park features.
- Determining public support for improvements.
- Identifying the support for expanding access (vehicle and non-vehicle) to the more remote areas of Upper Park.
- Ascertaining public support for supplemental funding including daily fees and/or annual passes for park maintenance

DISCUSSION:

Method of Distribution/Representation:

The Upper Bidwell Park Survey was available online, by mail and email, and face-to-face in Upper Park, at the Saturday Farmers market from mid-February to March 31, 2018. The total number of completed surveys collected over all formats is 2925 respondents. Some respondent groups were solicited by targeted outreach to stakeholder groups or associations, while other respondents were solicited through press releases.

The Survey results are reasonably distributed considering that it is a convenience study where the data was collected from three different formats and the participants were self-selected (i.e. not controlled for accidental bias). Except for income, most of the results are reflective of the distribution estimates established for Chico by the U.S. Census. The

income distribution is heavily weighted toward upper income residents; however, other demographic characteristics of respondents are reflective of those associated with the Chico community.

While a convenience study results may not be generalized to the general population, having respondent characteristics similar to those of the Chico community enhances confidence that the study results can and is an instructive needs assessment for decision-making regarding Upper Bidwell Park resources and amenities.

Unanticipated Drawbacks with Question #4 – Vehicle Access Beyond Horseshoe:

There was some confusion regarding wording for Question #4 when asking respondents their level of support for vehicle access beyond Horseshoe Lake (Lot E) gate. There was a minor discrepancy between the question related to the *end of the unpaved road* and the map label where it says *End of Road*. Also, respondents who did not want access expanded beyond Horseshoe Lake Gate would have to choose the option of *agree*, which may have been a bit confusing for respondents to agree to restrict access.

Furthermore, the sub-questions in Question #4 should have been coded to restrict respondents from answering all the questions. As coded, if respondents agreed to the first question “No vehicle access...” then they should not have been able to mark “agree” on any other sub-questions.

However, Dr. Schmidt found consistent and wide-spread support for vehicle access preferences by cross tabulating and comparing answers for Question #4 with answers from several of the other questions in the survey. Upon further examination, it appears that those respondents who supported access as an improvement also supported access beyond Horseshoe Lake Gate. This is true for each user group of respondents, but especially true for those who hike/walk, swim, and view wildlife.

Summary of Survey Results:

1. Survey respondents are predominately younger than 44 years old, affluent, employed, and do not have children under age 18.
2. Over 80% of the respondents visit the park either weekly or monthly, and those respondents tend to be educated and employed.
3. Park usage involves a diversity of activities and often for more than one purpose. The overwhelming favorite park activity is hiking or walking, followed by viewing wildlife and swimming.
4. Most respondents use park signage for accessing park information and many use the City website.
5. The most identified park changes are trail improvement, permanent bathrooms, and vehicle access to remote parts of the park. More water fountains and a bridge were the most commonly mentioned changes outside of the list in the survey.
6. The respondents overwhelmingly support (70%), regardless of the frequency of their visits, modest fees for paid parking either as a daily rate or annual passes. Respondents also expressed the need for reduced or no fees for the disabled, low-income residents, or seniors.

Public Comments on Survey Results:

Public comments received regarding the survey results include a letter from the Bidwell Park Municipal Golf Course (attached as Exhibit B), an email from Mr. David P. Smith (attached as Exhibit C), and two public comments provided at the 7/30/18 BPPC meeting from Neil Woodward and Steve Laurie. The Committee is seeking additional public input concerning the survey results, particularly regarding desired vehicle access and the proposed parking fees.


Attachments:

- Exhibit A: Upper Park Survey Power Point Presentation
- Exhibit B: Bidwell Park Golf Course Letter
- Exhibit C: Mr. Smith Email

EXHIBIT A



UPPER PARK ROAD SURVEY



FINAL REPORT AND ASSESSMENT
Presented by Linda Herman
Park & Natural Resources Manager
City of Chico Public Works
July 30, 2018
City Council Chamber



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SURVEY PURPOSE: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Based on a Convenience Survey

- Obtain Upper Bidwell Park user demographics, frequency of visits, purpose for visiting, and methods of obtaining information about the park.
- Determine public support for improvements.
- Identify support for expanding access (vehicle and non-vehicle) past Horseshoe Lake (Lot E).
- Ascertain whether there is public support for a daily or annual pass for parking vehicles in Upper Bidwell Park.

EXHIBIT A

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DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEY

- On-line survey on City Website and Facebook.
- Email by request from the public and through distribution from Stakeholder email list serves and Facebook posts.
- Mail (if requested.)
- Face-to-Face by volunteers at several Saturday Farmer's Markets and in Upper Bidwell Park.
- Walk-in public requests.
- 2925 total surveys collected.

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SURVEY RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

- 88% from Chico.
- Predominately younger than 44 years old (54%).
- Educated (70% have Bachelor's degree or higher).
- Employed (55%).
- Affluent (44% have annual income of \$75,000 or more).
- No children under 18 years old (68%).

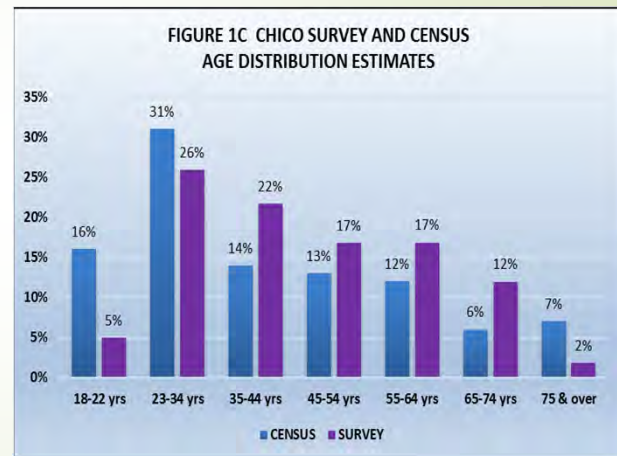
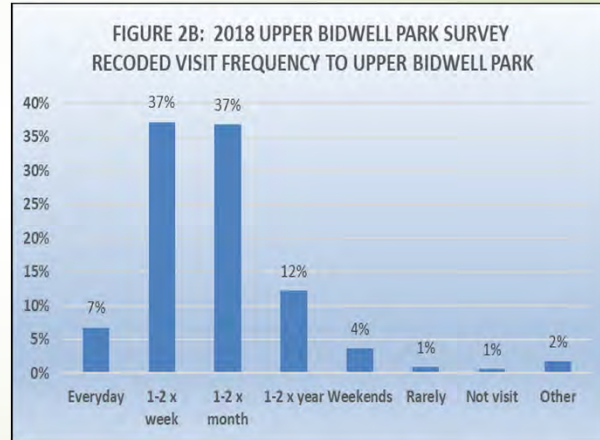


EXHIBIT A

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FREQUENCY OF VISITS

- Many (238) provided alternative visitation frequencies in the "comment" section that were not listed in the survey question.
- Over 80% visit Upper Park every day to at least 1 to 2 x per month.
- These frequent users tend to be educated and employed.



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PURPOSE OF VISITS

- Most popular reason is to hike or walk (88%).
- 46% like to see wildlife and plants.
- 40% like to swim.
- Over 60% also mountain bike or jog.

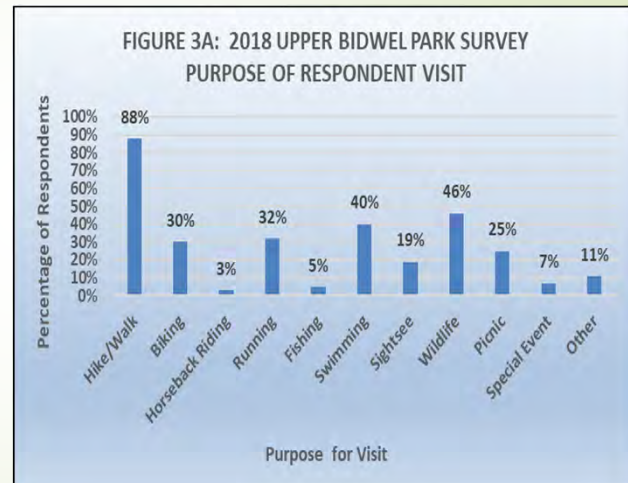
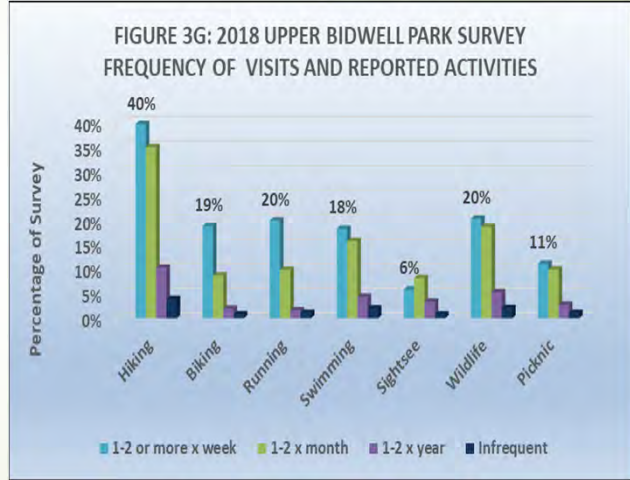


EXHIBIT A

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PURPOSE OF VISITS & FREQUENCY

- 40% of visitors use the park for hiking or walking at least once or twice a week.
- 35% of visitors use the park for hiking or walking at least once or twice a month.
- 20% of visitors use the park for viewing wildlife or running at least once or twice a week.
- Nearly 20% visit for biking or swimming at least once or twice a week.



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PURPOSE OF VISITS INVOLVING ACCESS

- Over 60% use the park for 1-3 reasons involving Hiking or Walking.
- Results show committed park users come for multiple activities that are dependent on trail access.

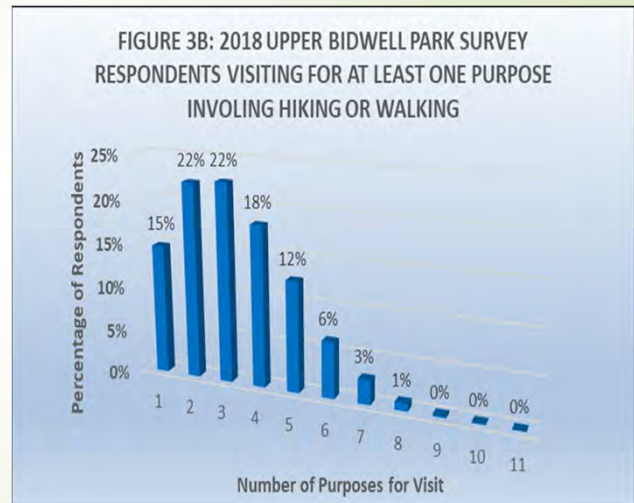
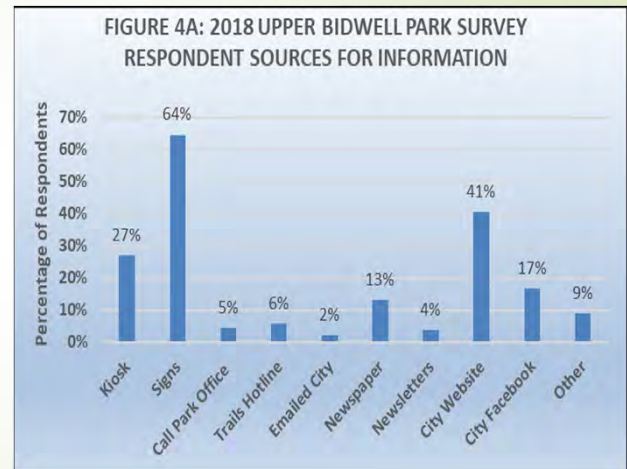


EXHIBIT A

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HOW RESPONDENTS OBTAIN INFORMATION

- 81% use 1 to 3 sources to obtain information.
- The most popular were signs and kiosks (91%).
- Next was the City's website at 41%.
- Only 17% chose Social Media (Facebook) indicating a possible need for improvement in this area.



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IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- Improved trails was the top choice at 29%.
- 22% requested more vehicle access.
- More restrooms, whether permanent or portable, was another popular improvement.
- Overall, 80% would like some form of change or improvements.

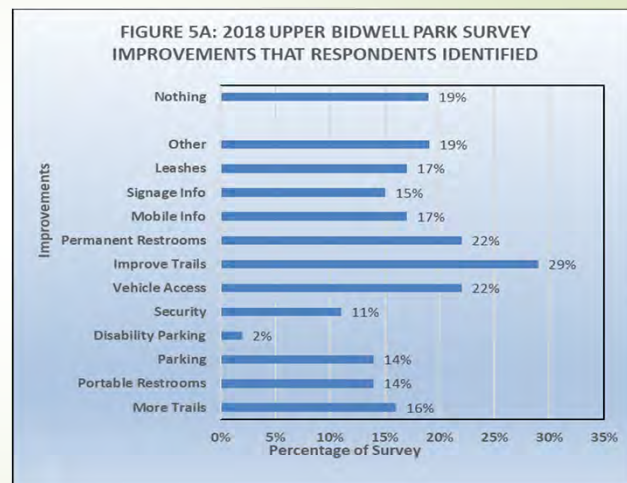
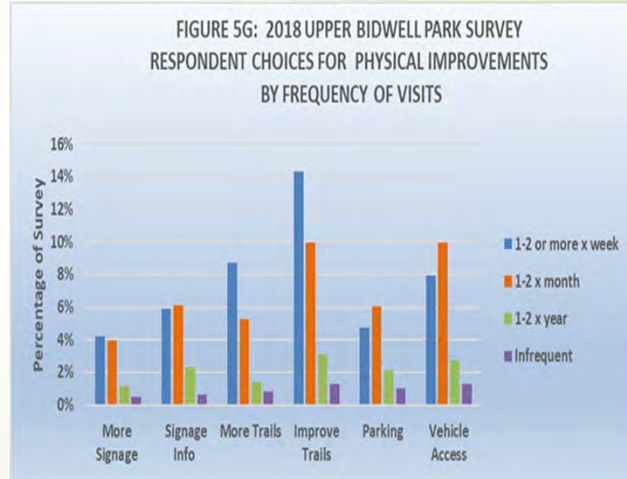


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IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED & VISITS

- A higher percentage of visitors who visit once or twice a month prefer improvements in signage, parking, and vehicle access than other visitors.
- A higher percentage of visitors who visit once or twice a week prefer more trails, improved trails, and more signage than other visitors.
- These results suggest that visitor frequency influences perspectives for improvement.



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VEHICLE ACCESS QUESTION/MAP



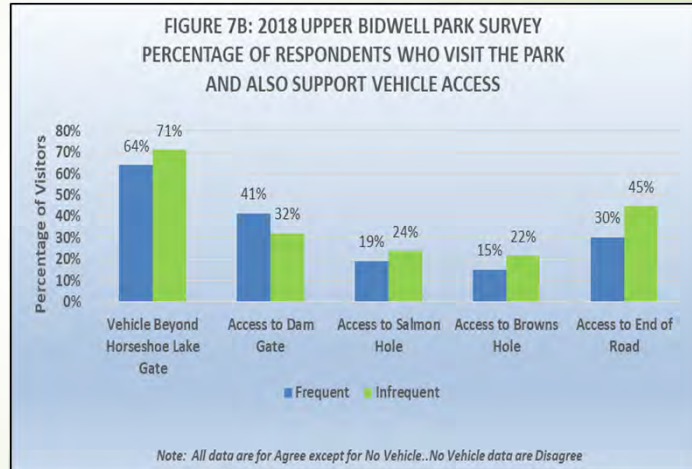
	Agree	Disagree	Feel uncertain
No vehicle access beyond Horseshoe Lake gate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vehicle access only to the gate at Diversion Dam (#4 on map).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vehicle access ending at Salmon Hole by moving the Diversion Dam gate (#5 on map).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vehicle access ending at Broom's Hole by moving the Diversion Dam gate (#6 on map).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vehicle access to the end of the unpaved road.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

EXHIBIT A

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SUPPORT FOR MORE VEHICLE ACCESS

- Nearly 2/3 of respondents support expanding vehicle access.
- Infrequent visitors comprise a higher percentage of supporters for more access.
- It appears there is more support for access to the Dam and/or the end of the road, than ending access at Salmon or Browns Hole.



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SUPPORT FOR DAILY PARKING FEE

- Nearly 80% of respondents support some form of a modest daily parking fee.
- Optimal daily parking fees appear to be \$1 to \$2 per day.
- Many expressed the need for reduced daily fees for persons with disabilities, seniors, and low-income residents.

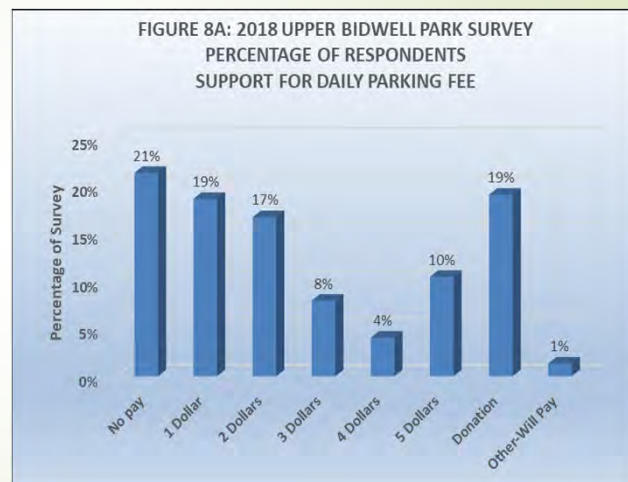
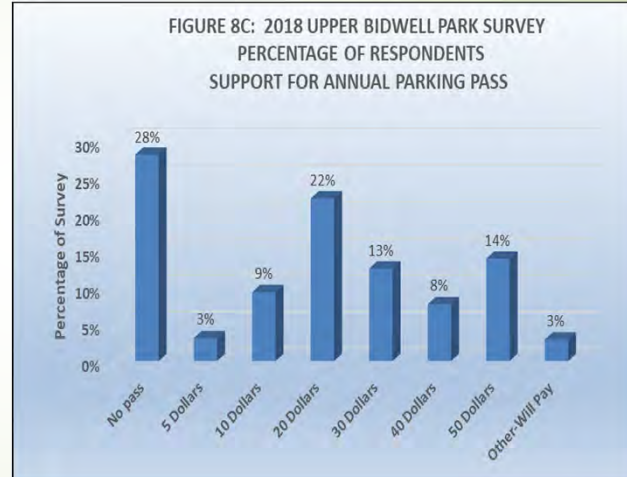


EXHIBIT A

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SUPPORT FOR ANNUAL PARKING FEE

- Over 70% of respondents support some form of a modest annual parking fee.
- Optimal annual parking fees appear \$10 to \$20 for an annual parking pass.
- Many expressed the need for reduced annual fees for persons with disabilities, seniors, and low-income residents.



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SUMMARY RESULTS

- Park usage involves a diversity of activities and often for more than one purpose.
- Most visits involve some use of trails and motor vehicle access.
- Most frequent park visitors support trail improvement, permanent bathrooms, improved signage, and expanded vehicle access.
- Over 70 percent of respondents supported some form of modest daily or annual fee dedicated to park improvement.
- Evident concern for expanded access for people with disabilities and seniors, including fee waivers for them as well as low income visitors.

EXHIBIT B



March 21, 2018

To: Bidwell Parks and Playground Commission

Subject: Parking Fee's in Upper Bidwell Park

Dear Commissioners,

The topic of parking/use fees in Upper Bidwell Park has definitely sparked some interest here at Bidwell Park Golf Course. Empire Golf runs the day to day operations of the golf course for your lease holder, Bidwell Park Golf Club Inc. and is very familiar with charging parking fee's in a similar type operation at Ancil Hoffman Golf Course/County of Sacramento which you have used as a comparison type operation (fees for use/parking). I have attended the past few meetings and understand that the discussion is that the golf course would be exempt from parking fees. Parking fee's in the park still raise some questions and concerns for you to consider as you make the decisions to charge or not charge fee's in upper Bidwell Park.

Topics of concern and issues for consideration are listed below:

- Charging a parking/use fee to anyone using the golf course or its facilities is in fact charging them twice. They already pay for goods and services at the golf course, of which the City gets a percentage of those revenues in rent from the Bidwell Park Golf Club, Inc. In fact, the City collects more in rent from the golf course than any other concessionaire in the Park.
- Restricted Access Issues
 - What would the process or procedure be to allow golf course patrons through a kiosk where parking/use fees are collected? Just the kiosk alone without proper and clearly worded signage that golf course and restaurant patrons will not be charged would be a detriment to the business and revenues of the golf course.
 - Certainly, a key for the golf course would be the location of the kiosk should the City decide on that method for collecting fees. A kiosk located east of the entrance road to the golf course would certainly eliminate a lot of the problems and concerns.
 - How would the parking in golf course be monitored by the City so that none of the Park users are parking there to avoid the parking/use fee? As with our relatively limited size parking lot there would then be no parking for our golf patrons.
 - The processing of vehicles on a busy day without delaying the golfer to make their tee time.
 - *Days of concern would be during special park events such as "Hooked on Fishing".
 - *Days where the golf course has 40-100-person events with all coming at the same time.

EXHIBIT B

- Passes for Golf Course Patrons
 - I am not sure how that would work but any burden put on the golf course to administer that would be time consuming and add additional staff hours, which the cost of would need to be reimbursed by the City.

All of these issues put aside the Bidwell Park Golf Club understands how critical revenue from the park is to the City, and I know the City understands how critical revenue is to the golf course for it to remain a viable public asset. We are available to you or any committee to discuss any and all of the opportunities and ramifications, and look forward to a mutually agreeable solution.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Your Truly,



Courtney Foster, PGA

General Manager

Bidwell Park Golf Course

3199 Golf Course Road, Chico CA 95973 • (530) 891-8417 • www.GolfBidwellPark.com

Bidwell Park Golf Course is an Empire Golf managed facility

EXHIBIT C

Linda Herman

From: Dave Smith [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, August 05, 2018 8:24 PM
To: Park Information
Subject: Bidwell Parking Fees

This email is directed to Parks and Natural Resources Manager Linda Herman:

Dear Ms. Herman:

I wanted to contact the Natural Resources Committee, but can't find member names. For now, here are my feelings on the proposal to introduce parking fees in Upper Bidwell Park. There is a lot more I can say about the Upper Park Survey, but will spare you that. It was a mess, aimed at drawing the results it found. I doubt that any professional familiar with survey design and analysis would have touched it. - DS

There is plenty wrong with the Upper Park Survey, and more wrong about "parking" fees.

First, the parking fees. Have you asked yourselves where and why Chico charges for parking now?

The meters are downtown, which you know, and Monday through Friday. They are there because the city can't not do it. It's something merchants have to put up with because without those 5 days of fees, CSU students, staff and faculty would own every parking space near the campus for the entire business day. Every retailer and every restaurant would lose customers.

On weekends the fees go away, because on those two days CSU empties out and merchants can finally be on equal footing with the big box stores' free parking to their south. The city benefits from the income the meters bring, but they are there because they insulate the downtown from the university in the only way they can both live with. The fees don't carry over to Bidwell Park. The CSU problem doesn't reach that far.

The planned Upper Park fee will be different. It will be the city's only parking fee that is there purely to generate money. And it will be the city's only 7-day-a-week fee. It falls on Upper Park users because the Wildwood Avenue entrance to Upper Park just happens to be the only place in all of Bidwell Park where the city can bring in an impressive amount of money with a smattering of staff. That part will be a bit sensitive: having shifted part of the Park's small park ranger crew to Chico PD part time, it won't look good for the Park to be taking on toll booth staff. More on that later.

The last point to make here is that the city won't have to spend the money for Bidwell Park. What the Upper Park study called for was a one-time upgrade to Upper Park Road. The Upper Park Survey finessed that into a permanent user fee, with a thoughtful invitation to respondents to identify ways the money might be used. It will in fact be spent in whatever way city council wants.

Funny that isn't how the Upper Park survey explained the fees, is it? In the survey version the city would really like Upper Park Road open if that's how survey respondents feel, but doing that will take money the city isn't sure it has. Couldn't the Survey have just said that the road is being held hostage to the city's plan for a Bidwell Park users' fee?

Now to the toll booth issue. The entry point (in from Wildwood Ave.) will need to be staffed during the hours the Upper Park is open. I put it at 3 full time employees even with somewhat shorter park hours, costing upwards

EXHIBIT C

of \$100 k per year. A dollar to get in won't cut it, good thing the Upper Park Survey trolled for higher dollar amounts, huh?

The only alternative to this \$100 k hole is an unstaffed toll gate. But those fail with wear or tampering, at which point visitors find themselves being turned away unless they have a simple way to disable the thing. But if users can do that, you will likely find it getting disabled a lot. See any problem there? And there is a second unstaffed gate issue: The toll gate will be fairly difficult to police, like other "out of the way" card machines around the U.S., which means it will invite theft if it accepts cash, and I.D. theft if it takes cards. It's why most of us almost never see unstaffed toll gates, and why, if memory serves, Consumer Reports advises its readers not to use poorly located card machines.

This covers some of the Survey and Fee headaches you face. You have a "parking fee" that looks like an entrance fee for some Park users and not others, and that looks even more to be a pure money grab with an amateurish survey to back it up. I have commented on that in my email to Park Commissioners.

My bet is that if council approves a fee there will be a "Keep Bidwell Park Free" voter petition, and it will pass.

What bothers me the most in all of this is that I would like to see a better, and dust free, Upper Park Road at least to Bear Hole, which is kind of an endpoint for families with young children. And I think the erosion points above that should have better fixes. But starting from a consultant's report that seems to have come from someone with no particular love for the Park, we somehow ended up with an amateurish "Upper Park Survey" that saw a way to hold the Road hostage to user fees.

I believe city parks should not have those. We pay for our parks with city taxes, as I imagine Annie Bidwell intended with her gift to the city a century ago. It is a city council failing that it wants to use those taxes for something else. There is nothing good I can say about the ploy of letting Upper Park visitors shoulder the whole cost for this little shell game. We're better than this. Please share this email with Committee members. I hope you will Report back to the Park Commission and to city council that user fees are a poor idea.

Yours,

David P Smith
